

Growing Up into His Likeness



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Published by CCI Publishing

ABN 68 184 867 316

Cover design by SignArt Creations

First printed in Australia: January 2000

Reprinted in Egypt: January 2006 and January 2008

Revised and reprinted in Australia: January 2009 and March 2010

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Introduction

A believer's "born again" experience in the Lord Jesus Christ marks the beginning, not the end, of an exciting new life.

Far too many Christians fail to progress beyond the *birth* phase of their spiritual experience, thinking they have arrived. Failing to progress beyond this starting point in their spiritual journey denies believers the reality of a dynamic, satisfying and fulfilling new life.

God wants His children to grow up!

Spiritual *growth* follows spiritual *birth*. Spiritual growth is an ongoing life-long process that transforms us from who we are to who we can be in God's sight – mature character reflectors of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Growing-up into the likeness of Jesus Christ is God's ultimate plan for you and me. Romans 8:29a says ...

"For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son ..."

Spiritual growth, like physical growth, does not automatically just happen. The right conditions must exist for this process to occur. God has provided us with everything we need to grow up in the Christian faith. All we need to do is decide within ourselves to seriously commit to following the steps God has clearly marked out for us in His Word. Two Corinthians 3:18 says ...

"And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more."

Take the next step

This study-guide highlights foundational steps, resulting in satisfying spiritual growth.

Each step taken will lead you further into a rich discovery of God and His special plan for your life. There is no journey more worthwhile in all of life than the journey that takes you forward in growing into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is life-transforming – you won't regret having embarked on this amazing journey.

Warning: You can expect opposition from the enemy (satan), worldly distractions and inner fleshly desires.

As you take each step, do so with the confidence that comes from believing in the promise of Philippians 4:13. Paul declared ...

"I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need."

Moving ahead in your faith, one step at a time, will give you reason to celebrate.

Growing Up – *The next step*

1

Experiencing fulfilment

When believers do not progress beyond the stage of infancy in their Christian faith, they miss out on experiencing the reality of an exciting *fulfilled* life (John 10:10b), and will stumble and suffer unnecessarily in their lives on earth.

According to God's prophet, Hosea, why were His people suffering?

Hosea 4:6 _____

Ignorance of God and His will for us is an unnecessary obstacle that blocks our progress in life:

- Preventing us from growing-up in our faith
- Preventing us from reflecting God's character, and
- Preventing us from experiencing our potential in God and life.

What is our potential in God?

Romans 8:29 _____

One of the most enthusiastic believers of all time was the Apostle Paul. His life's energy was completely directed towards his passion in life. Wherever Paul went, he urged others to join with him in life's greatest and most satisfying pursuit.

What was Paul's pursuit in life?

1 Corinthians 11:1 _____

What does it mean to *imitate* Christ?

What does it mean to *impersonate* Christ?

Imitate Christ

There is no greater pursuit in all of life than the pursuit of imitating Christ – for the satisfaction of our innermost needs in life comes from our becoming like Christ.

Learning to imitate Christ is a life-long process called “sanctification”. Sanctification is the process of learning to live a sin-free life, and all learning begins with the mind.

What does Paul urge us to do with our minds that will make it possible for us to experience God’s *good, pleasing* and *perfect* plan for our lives?

Romans 12:2 _____

His *mind*

To imitate the life of Christ we must first be like-minded with Him. God’s Word, the Bible, reveals to us the mind of Christ. All we need to know about the Lord is recorded for us in God’s Word.

How should we react to God’s Word?

1 Peter 2:2a _____

What should our next step be after taking God’s Word into our minds?

James 1:22 _____

What should happen to us when we live out God’s Word?

1 Peter 2:2b _____

The writer of the Book of Hebrews expressed concern about his spiritual “babes” (new believers). What were his concerns?

Hebrews 5:12-14 _____

What does Peter urge believers to do?

2 Peter 3:18 _____

His actions

As we continue to learn to live-out God's Word in our daily lives, we will grow-up more and more into Christ-likeness.

Having the mind of Christ makes it possible for us to act like Him; acting like Him ensures we will experience the special plan God has in mind for our lives.

What is the nature of God's plan for us?

Jeremiah 29:11 _____

What is Jesus' desire for each of us?

John 10:10b _____

His life

Growing-up into the likeness of Jesus Christ gives us a fresh and new outlook on life.

- We are able to see life as God sees life
- We are able to live life as Christ lived amongst us – abundantly!
- We are able to enjoy life more fully – as God intended for us.

Living in the likeness of Christ is not always easy to do. At times the Christian life will seem an impossible battle. Doubt and fear of failing may tempt us to retreat back into old ways of living. Believing the lie that we will not be able to succeed in our journey may even tempt us to quit.

Whenever we find ourselves in this situation we need to remember that striving forward in the likeness of Christ is not something that was ever intended to be approached in human strength. Jesus, through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, motivates, inspires and empowers us to face and overcome each and every hurdle, obstacle and challenge we encounter. It's comforting to know that **all the challenges we will face in our walk with the Lord have been carefully chosen by Him, for our good** (Psalm 37:23-24).

What does Jesus invite us to do?

Matthew 11:29a _____

What has He promised to do whenever we accept His invitation?

Matthew 11:29b _____

Yes, there is nothing more worthwhile in all of life than learning to walk and grow-up into the likeness of Jesus Christ – our peace, satisfaction and fulfilment is at stake.

Our lives no longer belong to ourselves – they now belong to Jesus Christ. He has sole right in the use of our lives for His purposes. And His purposes are always good, and right!

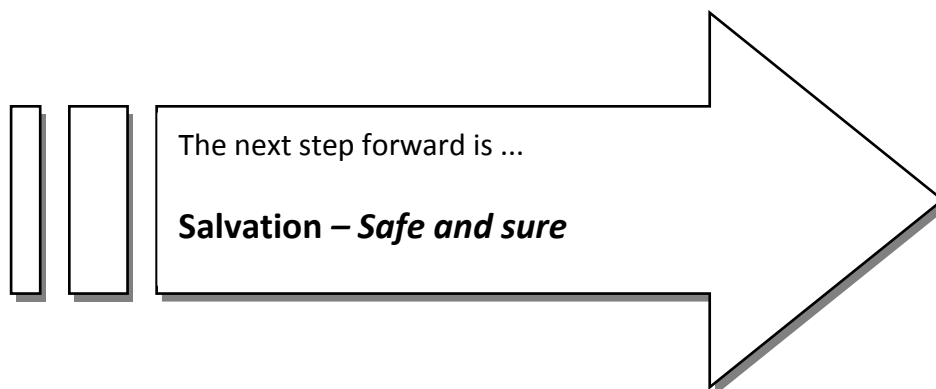
How did Paul state this truth?

Galatians 2:20 _____

Summary

Moving ahead in the Christian faith is a life-long journey that requires a serious commitment and discipline to taking steps forward into Christ-likeness.

The following sessions in this book reveal additional growth steps that will lead you forward in your spiritual “growth” journey.



Living with confidence

Spiritual growth is impossible for people who lack confidence in his/her salvation.

The Bible warns us of our adversary, satan, whose constant effort is to stop or retard our spiritual growth, robbing us of our potential in Christ and minimising our godly influence in the world.

Whenever we allow satan freedom to move in our minds he will do his best to create *doubts*, *distortions* and *deceptions* (three deadly Ds) concerning all that is true about the Lord and of life. Falling into satan's hands makes it possible for him to accomplish his diabolical schemes in and through our lives.

To safeguard us from this happening, we need to fill our minds with the powerful truths of God's promises, thereby making it possible for us to stand firm in our faith and to progress as we should in our Christian lives.

Believers in Jesus Christ have been given essential promises from God, enabling them to live confidently and victoriously in the world. Standing on these promises gives us a firm footing in our salvation that is rock-solid and more than adequately safeguards our lives from the enemy's attacks.

Safeguarded by the WORD of God

What does God's Word promise to those who "believe" in Jesus Christ?

John 1:12 _____

John 3:16 _____

Colossians 2:13-14 "F _____ for all our sins" (past)

1 John 1:9 "F _____ us each time we sin" (present and future)

1 John 5:11-13 _____

Safeguarded by the PROMISES of Christ

What safeguard does Jesus promise to those who belong to Him?

John 10:28-29 _____

John 5:24 (a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

Safeguarded by the WORK of the Holy Spirit

How are we safeguarded by the work of the Holy Spirit?

Romans 8:16 _____

Ephesians 1:13, 14 _____

The WORD of God, the PROMISES of Christ, and the WORK of the Holy Spirit combine to form a firm foundation of our salvation, keeping us safe and sure against all satanic attacks.

What does God *caution* us **not** to do?

Proverbs 3:5b _____

What does God *command* us **to** do?

Proverbs 3:5a _____

Proverbs 3:6a _____

The Apostle Paul knew what it was like to face persecution, hardship and trials in his life's ministry for Christ. He knew too well of satan's relentless attacks aimed at producing doubt, discouragement and despair in his life. No matter how tough life became for Paul his salvation's stand was always steady, "safe and sure".

What important *question* does Paul ask concerning the security of our salvation?

Romans 8:35a _____

What *answer* does he give concerning that security?

Romans 8:38-39 _____

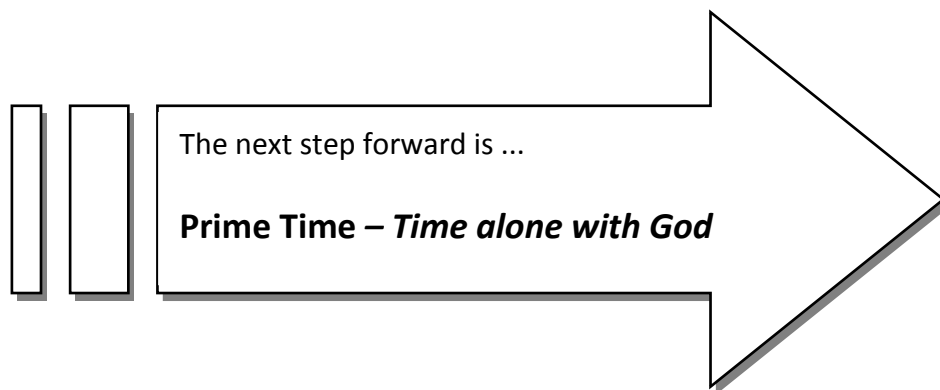
The late Russell Kelso Carter, a Methodist minister, authored a hymn that embraces the essence of this study. Verse two of this hymn, entitled “Standing On the Promises”, declares:

*Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.*

Summary

Knowing and standing on the promises of God is a prerequisite to experiencing your salvation – “safe and sure”.

Remember to always stand on (do) what God says – never on what you, the world or anyone else thinks or feels (Proverbs 3:5-6).



Getting close to God

The most important time of every day in the life of a believer is the time that is dedicated to meeting *alone* with God. This special time is an essential key to developing a close walk with God and ensures steady spiritual growth.

In this special time of intimate communication with God we learn:

- More of His plan for our lives
- More of His guidance, and
- More of His nature.

Christians who live victoriously agree that having a “prime time” session with God is the most vital part of their day.

The Bible implies in several places the need for us to discipline and devote ourselves to having a special time every day with God and His Word. Note: This discipline is for our benefit, not God’s.

What do the following references say to you about having a special time with God?

Psalm 1:1-2 _____

2 Timothy 2:15 _____

1 Peter 2:2 _____

Having a special time with God does not just happen naturally. It requires commitment and dedication to the following “prime time” disciplines:

- Plan
- Place
- Bible study, and
- Prayer.

Plan

Without proper planning, distractions, interruptions and conflicts will prevent us from having a special time with God. Satan is the master of distractions and disturbances, and will do everything in his power to keep us from this important time of intimacy with God. So, planning to meet with God alone is critical to your journey with Him.

Some Christians have found that early morning is the best time for them to meet with God, others prefer late at night. There is no right or wrong time for this special meeting. The important thing is to plan a time when you can be alert and able to think clearly. As a starting point, set aside ten to twenty minutes – ten minutes to read the Bible and five to ten minutes for prayer.

When did the psalmist and Daniel plan to meet with God?

Psalm 55:17 _____

Psalm 119:97, 164 _____

Daniel 6:10 _____

Note: Start slowly, be consistent and let this time grow naturally.

Place

Finding a place that is free from distractions and interruptions is the next key to enjoying a special time with God. If possible, find a place where you can pray aloud and even sing. This will help to safeguard your mind from being distracted.

What was Jesus' discipline in this matter?

Mark 1:35 _____

Bible study

The winning combination of a prime time session with God is Bible study and prayer. There are two ways to go about Bible study during your devotional time.

One way is to use a good Bible-based devotional book that is recommended to you.

The Journey Series[®] books are excellent choices. This wide selection of 40 titles contain easy to understand biblical treasure maps that will help you make amazing spiritual discoveries in God's Word, guiding you safely and successfully in your journey with the Lord.

These books may be obtained through Cells-*church* Consultants International.
(See Additional Resources, page 68, for more details.)

Another way is to have an independent study program. Following this approach, you would study the Bible one paragraph or chapter at a time, reading the passage slowly several times while considering some basic questions.

- a) Does this reveal to me any sins I should forsake?
- b) Are there promises to claim?
- c) Are there examples to follow?
- d) Are there warnings to consider?
- e) What does it teach me about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- f) What should I do about these things?

Using an inexpensive notebook to record daily discoveries will help to underscore learning and will aid progress and faithfulness in your walk with God. You may like to record any discoveries and decisions you make to live differently for God.

Two Timothy 3:16-17 gives four practical reasons why we should develop a keen interest in God's Word.

List these reasons in the space below:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____

Prayer

God's Word is *bread* for the soul and prayer is *breath* for the soul. Prayer is simply speaking to God with words that are natural and comfortable to you. Prayer is of equal importance with God's Word in our prime time sessions with Him. Prayer is an important discipline in the life of every growing believer. God wants to speak with us throughout the day, every day – "without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Here are some prayer tips to consider:

- As a starting point, five minutes of your time each day should be spent alone with God in prayer.
- Pray aloud if this helps to keep your thoughts focused.
- Use the Prayer Guide shown on the last page of this book to aid your memory (cut carefully along the line and store it for regular use in your Bible).

Remember: *Quality* prayer is more important than *quantity* prayer.

Practice

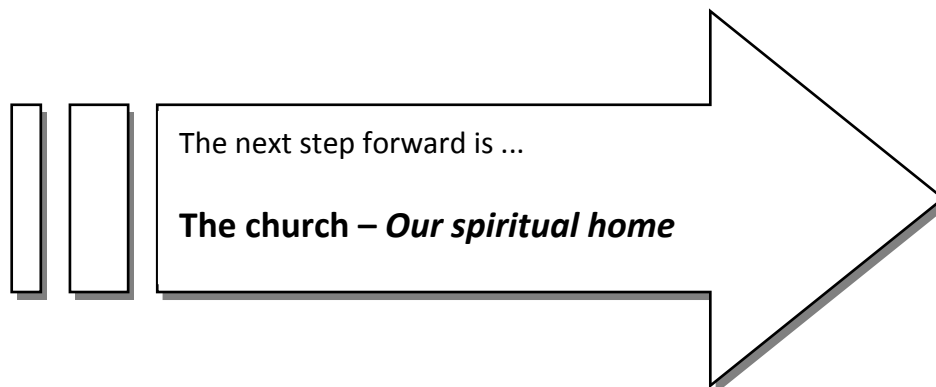
The following Bible passages are ideal for practicing the above approach to having prime time sessions with God. Choosing one passage, follow the above steps and share the results with the person who is coaching you in your spiritual growth journey.

- Romans 12:9-21
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-7
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- Philippians 4:4-13
- Colossians 3:5-17.

Summary

Your spiritual growth is largely dependent upon the quality and consistency of your prime time sessions with God. As you meet with God each day in this special way, the Lord will reveal to you *the next step* in your growth journey with Him.

Remember: *"The steps of the godly are directed by the Lord"* (Psalm 37:23a).



The Church – *Our spiritual home*

4

God's family to which we now belong

Has anyone ever commented to you, “You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian?” Do you agree with that statement? Is the statement biblically correct?

As God’s primary interest in our lives is to grow us to full maturity in Christ-likeness (Romans 8:29), you will discover in this spiritual growth step that the church is God’s family to which you now belong, specially designed for your spiritual nurture, development and wellbeing (Acts 2:41-47).

- The church is not a place to visit dutifully each week but a *family* where you belong, from where you can draw your daily sustenance for living your new life in Christ.
- The church is indispensable for the spiritual growth of all believers.
- The church is God’s means for reaching a lost world with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that church involvement is not an option for believers who:

- Desire to experience spiritual growth
- Desire to experience meaning and purpose in their lives
- Desire to be a channel of blessing to others
- Desire to live lives that are pleasing to God.

This discovery session looks at:

- What is the church?
- Why is the church necessary?
- Signs of a healthy church

What is the church?

The word church is used in two ways in the Bible:

At times, church refers to the entire *universal* body of Christians, and, at other times, church refers to a *specific group* of believers meeting in a specific place (i.e., the local church).

The church is often called the Body of Christ. This means that every Christian is a living and essential part of the spiritual Body of Christ as it ministers in our world today.

What term is given to refer to *individual* believers in the church?

1 Corinthians 12:18 _____

What term is given to refer to the *collective* believers in the church?

1 Corinthians 12:27 _____

New believers are made “life members” of the Body of Christ through their baptism in the Holy Spirit, immediately at the time of their conversion to Christ.

Why is the church necessary?

The church is necessary for a number of reasons.

a) It provides opportunity for group WORSHIP

God created us to live in a worshipful relationship with Him, individually and within the context of His family (the church). Therefore, we need to understand that our worship is to be both personal and corporate. Group worship can be experienced in a small group and the wider church body through: silence, surrender, Scripture, singing, supplication (personal prayer requests) and willing service. This honours God and helps us in our spiritual growth.

What do the following references say about worshipping God?

Matthew 4:10 _____

Hebrews 13:15 _____

b) It provides FELLOWSHIP

We have been created to worship God and fellowship with one another.

What do the following references say about our fellowship responsibility towards one another in the church (in small groups)?

Galatians 6:2 “We are to _____”

Ephesians 4:3b “We are to _____”

Ephesians 4:15 “We are to _____”

Ephesians 4:16b “We are to _____”

Hebrews 10:24 “We are to _____”

Hebrews 10:25 “We are to _____”

c) It provides sound TEACHING

A healthy church provides sound biblical teaching for its members and offers a variety of spiritual training and leadership development opportunities.

To what did the three thousand new believers devote their lives?

Acts 2:42(a) “They devoted themselves to the Apostles _____”

d) It provides an opportunity for SERVICE

A healthy church also empowers its members to take up positions of service.

God gives spiritual gifts (special abilities) to every believer to exercise within the life of the church for the mutual nurturing and development of its members and the growth of the church through ministry and mission service opportunities. Small groups are ideal contexts to discover, practice and develop your special God-given gift/s.

What does God say about our service to others in the church?

Hebrews 6:10 _____

Through serving others, we grow, our church grows and the Kingdom of God grows.

e) It provides ORGANISATION

An effective and orderly home functions with a certain degree of organisation.

A healthy church provides organisation that enables the nurturing, growth and development of all believers and allows for effective and efficient operation of ministry and mission to the unchurched community.

What do the following verses say about this?

1 Corinthians 14:33 _____

1 Corinthians 14:40 _____

Signs of a healthy church

The following are “health” signs to look for when considering a suitable church to call “home”:

- The church is “Kingdom of God” minded, not denominationally minded
- God’s Word is the standard for faith and practice
- Prayer is keenly encouraged
- Fellowship is promoted, and community building is achieved by the members through a coordinated network of Spirit-driven small groups
- Is compassionate to the unchurched – and outreaches to them
- Encourages its members to develop their leadership potential
- The Good News of the church is always about the Lord Jesus Christ
- Ministry opportunities are provided for people of all age groups
- Church belief is matched by the behaviour of its members
- Personal spiritual growth is fostered
- Every person is highly valued for who they are, not for what they do.

Summary

Believers who are serious about growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ see that the church is of critical importance to their growth, and the growth of others in the church. Why? Because ...

- Spiritual growth stifles and stagnates outside of church life
- God designed the church to be their spiritual home.

The church is your spiritual home – designed by God for your growth, for the growth of others, and for the expansion of His Kingdom.



The Holy Spirit – *Empowers us for living*

5

Strength beyond our own

It is impossible for any person to live victoriously the Christian life and grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ in human strength alone.

Supernatural ability is needed if believers are to stand firm in the Christian faith and be able to confidently follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ as He inspires and leads them through the challenges of life. Believers struggle unnecessarily and fail in their Christian lives because they rely completely on their natural strength instead of drawing upon the supernatural strength that comes from God.

Taking hold of the following biblical truths will prevent frustration and defeat in your life as you seek to follow after Jesus Christ.

Power SOURCE

Firstly you need to understand the nature of the power source for Christian living.

In your own words, write down what Jesus says in Acts 1:8 concerning this power source.

Who is the power source for Christian living?

Acts 1:8 _____

Believers have been called by God to live their lives as full-time witnesses of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the power source who makes this possible.

When Jesus says, “*You shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ...*” He is saying you shall receive His **ability** so you can live powerfully and unashamedly for Him in your private and public life.

This being the case, we have no valid excuse for not stepping forward in our lives by living as authentic witnesses of Jesus Christ for the entire world to see. In the context of living wisely, and with regards to the Holy Spirit, what does the Apostle Paul strongly urge us to do?

Ephesians 5:18b _____

Power EXPLAINED

“Be filled with the Holy Spirit” is the clear command of Ephesians 5:18. What does the term “be filled” with the Holy Spirit mean?

The verb “be filled” is present tense, which means a continuous action. This means we are to be filled continuously with God’s Spirit – an everyday filling experience.

To “be filled” with the Spirit in a very real sense means to be filled with Christ – where Christ essentially lives His life *in* us and *through* us.

What does Galatians 2:20a say about this?

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul compares the effect of being filled with the Holy Spirit with drunkenness. The intention of his comparison is to show that being filled is basically a matter of control. The person who is drunk is controlled by alcohol in his bloodstream. He is no longer behaving normally or with self-control. The person filled with the Spirit is controlled by Christ and is also not behaving normally. Either way the person is no longer living his/her life controlled by self.

Even though we are saved from our sins and belong to God we do not live on “auto pilot” with God making the decisions for us. The decisions affecting our lives are ours to make. We have been given the freedom to choose to live worldly lives through our natural self-control, or godly lives through Holy Spirit-control.

Choosing to “be filled” with the Holy Spirit is choosing to “be controlled” by God. Making this wise decision enables us to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord – enabling us to follow after Him confidently and successfully through every challenge in life.

Power PROMISES

Whenever you choose to live under the control of the Holy Spirit you can expect to experience and enjoy all the promises of God for your life.

Read through the following references and write down some of these promises. The Bible is a treasure chest full of God’s promises, waiting to be discovered and enjoyed by every believer.

John 10:10b _____

John 14:26 _____

John 15:7, 16b _____

Acts 1:8 "Power (ability) to _____"

2 Corinthians 3:18b _____

Power CONDITIONS

There are certain conditions which must be met before we can be filled with God's Holy Spirit – filling us with His infinite power for victorious Christian living.

Note: The following power conditions need to be met continuously. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a continuing act. It is not so much the product of "asking" as it is of "meeting certain conditions".

These conditions are: Desire, surrender, obedience and confession.

Desire

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a voluntary act. Without expressing a personal desire you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit.

In the following verse, what words does Jesus use to illustrate desire?

Matthew 5:6 _____

Surrender

Without surrender you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit.

In the following verse, what does Paul urge us to surrender (present) to God "*that is our reasonable act of worship*"?

Romans 12:1 _____

Obedience

Without obedient living you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What is proved by living obediently to God?

1 John 2:3 _____

Confession

Without confession you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Whenever we sin we take back control of our lives. When this happens we are no longer filled with the Holy Spirit and therefore we forfeit the guidance and power of

God in our lives. Note: Corrective action is needed if supernatural power is to be restored.

What does God promise to do whenever you confess your sins to Him?

1 John 1:9 _____

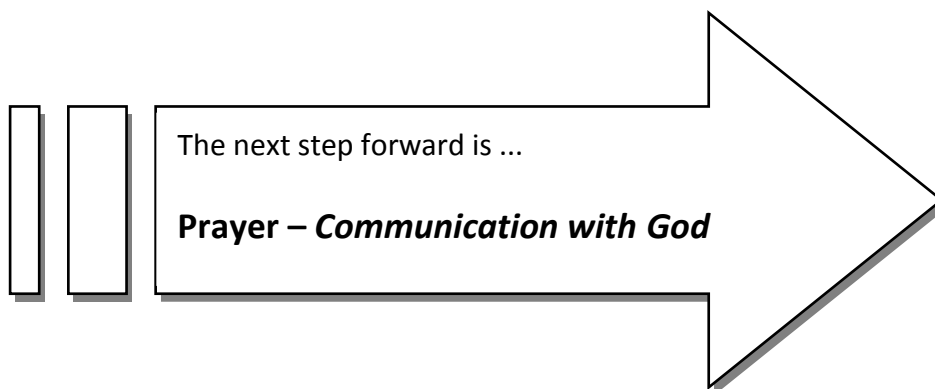
Summary

Each time you realise the step of confession needs to be taken in your life, the steps of desire, surrender and obedience must also be retaken if you are to experience a restoration of God's power.

It is only when confession is present in your life that you can begin to experience the transforming power of God's Word in your life.

Living in a Spirit-filled state is tremendously satisfying and rewarding – ensuring victory and effectiveness in your life.

Caution: Avoid power failure in your life by remaining connected to God. Be filled, and continue being filled, with the Holy Spirit!



Vital key

Prayer is another vital key to victorious Christian living. It is impossible for believers to grow in their relationship with Christ if prayer is absent or weak in their lives.

Consider these biblical truths:

- Prayer satisfies the deepest needs of the human heart (Psalm 42:1-2)
- Prayer aids our fight against sin and temptation (Matthew 26:41)
- Prayer is the way God has given us to deal with worry (Philippians 4:6-9)
- Prayer is a means of discovering God's guidance (James 1:5)

Prayer is the second part of our line of communication with God. God speaks to us through His Word and by His Spirit, and we respond to Him through prayer.

Prayer is simply talking with God from the heart in a language that is natural and comfortable to you. As breathing is necessary for your physical life, prayer is necessary for your spiritual life.

While breathing is an automatic function, prayer is not. You therefore need to learn the discipline of daily prayer if you are to enjoy the benefits that come from regularly communicating with God.

The following four elements will help you to pray "prayers that work".

Direction

For prayer to be effective in your life it must be aimed in the right direction.

What do the following references tell you about where to direct your prayers?

Matthew 6:9 _____

Philippians 4:6 _____

The next important step to consider is ... Self-Preparation.

Self-Preparation

The following elements of self-preparation are prerequisites for an effective prayer life.

a) Right heart

How will a wrong heart affect your prayers?

Psalm 66:18 _____

b) Right motive

What does this verse reveal about praying with a wrong motive?

James 4:3 _____

c) Right relationships

Having right relationships will aid your prayers. What's your responsibility in relationships?

1 Peter 3:7 _____

What happens if you ignore this instruction? _____

d) Right confidence

In whom should you place your confidence when you pray?

1 John 5:14a _____

e) Right condition

What condition does God place upon your prayers before He will hear you?

1 John 5:14b _____

The next important step to consider is ... Message presentation.

Message presentation

Here are some practical suggestions for preparing your prayers (messages).

a) Be balanced

Avoid praying the same prayer all the time. Vary and balance your prayers using the three essential elements stated in Philippians 4:6-7. These elements are:

- Personal requests: Personal needs and desires you express to God
- Petitions: requests you make for other people and projects
- Thanksgiving: Thank the Lord in **advance** for His answers and provision for your needs.

Read Philippians 4:6-7.

b) Be specific

A common mistake is to be too general in prayer. Be specific about everything. This is the type of prayer you will be able to see when answered by God.

What specifics does Jesus teach in the prayer He modelled to His disciples?

Matthew 6:7-13 _____

c) Be persistent

Many Christians often pray once for something and no more, or they become discouraged and stop praying for something after just a short time. Keep in mind that the Lord often delays answers to our prayers for good reasons.

Patient persistence demonstrates your willingness to trust God and His perfect timing for answers.

Why did the judge finally give in and satisfy the woman's grievance?

Luke 18:1-8 _____

d) Be systematic

Using a simple prayer list will help you to remember each of your prayer concerns.

Note: Satan will do his best to steal away the memory of your prayer points.

What did Paul boast about in the following verse?

1Thessalonians 1:2b _____

e) Be consistent

Consistency is a vital element in effective prayer. Praying short prayers throughout the day as concerns come to mind is what being constant is all about.

What do the following references say about this?

Romans 12:12b _____

1 Thessalonians 5:17 _____

Finally, we need to consider the ... Message ending.

Message ending

Your prayer requests need to be made in the “name of Jesus Christ”. To pray in Christ’s name is to express a prayer that is consistent with His life and teaching – such a prayer that Jesus would pray if He were in your situation.

Jesus says in John 14:13: “... *Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*”

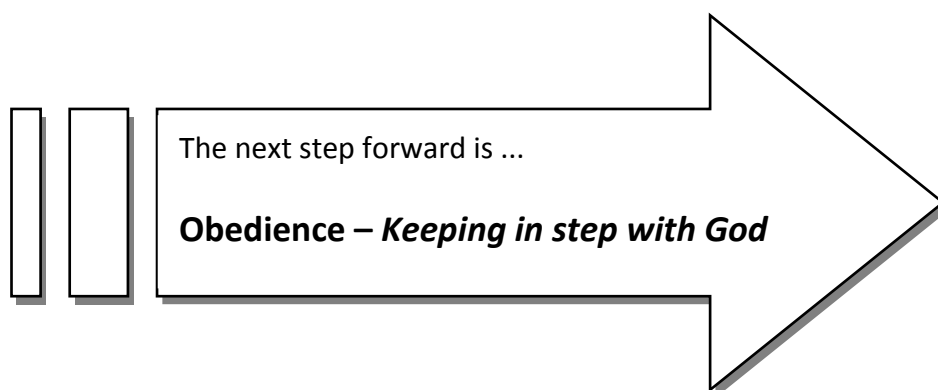
Summary

When your prayers have the right direction, preparation, presentation and ending you can be confident that God will always answer your prayers in ways that are best for you. Be prepared. For your benefit, the Lord may answer you in one of the following ways:

- No (1 Chronicles 28:2, 3; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9)
- Not now (Psalm 27:14, 40:1)
- Yes, or (1 Kings 3:12; Matthew 8:5-13)
- Yes, plus! (1 Kings 3:13,14; Ephesians 3:20)

It’s worthwhile to commit to memory the following promise ...

“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results”
(James 5:16b).



Obedience – *Keeping in step with God*

7

Experiencing God's promises

Keeping in step with God through obedience is crucial to our experiencing His promises of safety, wellbeing, peace, joy, provision and much more. The world in which we live is a spiritual war zone, heavily mined with explosive devices set in place and camouflaged by satan to harm us.

Through obedience we can walk safely in step with the Lord Jesus as He leads us through each and every circumstance of life with absolute confidence that His way is the right way – the best and safest way to go.

The Bible tells us in 1 John 2:3 ...

*“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we **keep** His commandments”* (walk in step with Him).

Our journey in this world is fraught with many dangers we cannot possibly see. Jesus, however, knows exactly where each and every danger lies and He invites us to follow closely in His footsteps. He wants us to grow-up into His character likeness, that we may begin to experience the depth and breadth of His promise of an abundant life (John 10:10b).

Remember:

- Living in obedience to God does not come naturally for anyone – it has to be learned.
- Living in obedience to God is often not easy to do and requires discipline and commitment on our part to say “no” to anyone or anything that will cause us to fall out of step with Him.
- Living in obedience to God glorifies Him and blesses others and ourselves.

The following Scripture references focus on the *why* and *how* to live a life of obedience to God.

Obedience – Why?

There are a number of practical reasons that should motivate a strong desire within you to live an obedient life.

Read the following Scripture references and write in your own words the reasons why you should obey God.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 _____

Psalm 86:13 _____

Jeremiah 29:11 _____

Matthew 6:33 _____

1 John 4:16 _____

Obedience – *How?*

The following four suggested ways will show you how you can succeed in living an obedient life.

Knowing God's commands

It is important to have an increasing knowledge of God's Word so that you may see more of what He desires for you. Throughout the Bible, God's truth lights up the way ahead for us to walk, saving us from stumbling.

What do the following Scripture references say about this?

Psalm 119:11 _____

Psalm 119:105 _____

Psalm 119:130 _____

2 Timothy 3:16-17

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

Operating in God's power

It is impossible to obey God in all things in your own strength. God strengthens you through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Session 5 of our study revealed to you the following conditions for being filled with the Holy Spirit daily ...

- You must desire and ask God to control your life
- You must willingly surrender control of your life to God
- You must obey God's commands; and
- You must be cleansed whenever you sin through sincere confession.

What do the following Scripture references say about God's provision of supernatural power for believers?

Acts 1:8 _____

Philippians 4:13 _____

Having the right attitude

Having a right attitude towards serving God will do much in helping you enjoy an obedient life. The Word of God lists several attitudes you can develop which will help you in your desire to live in obedience.

What right attitudes are expressed in the following references?

Deuteronomy 26:16 _____

Psalms 40:8 _____

Luke 8:15 _____

Remaining alert to temptations

Experiencing success through obedience will require you to remain alert to temptations – a real and present threat to your walk with God. In the next study you will learn how to experience victory over temptations. In the meantime, see what God says to you about temptations you can expect to face in your life on earth?

1 Corinthians 10:13 _____

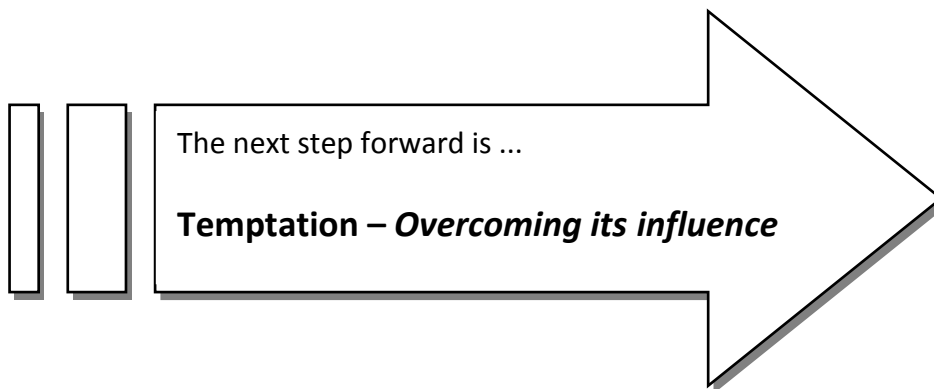
Summary

It is to your advantage to strive to live obediently in every area of your life. You can succeed in every circumstance of life if you keep in step with God through obedience in thoughts, attitudes and actions – in your home, at school, at work, at church and places of sport and recreation.

The first verse of the well known hymn, “Trust and Obey”, says it well:

*When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.*

Keeping in step with God through wholehearted obedience is the safest, securest and most satisfying way to journey in your life.



Temptation – *Overcoming its influence*

8

The lure to sin

The next step in your spiritual growth journey is the need for you to have an adequate understanding of temptation and how to overcome its power to lure you into sin.

What is temptation?

Temptation is a lure that influences us from within to commit sin. In itself, temptation is not sin. However, if not dealt with correctly and speedily it can easily draw us into sin.

What does the following reference say about temptation?

James 1:14-15 _____

Satan is the author of all temptation and is relentless in his efforts to use old and new ways to bait us with attractive lures that are aimed at snaring us with sin's harmful barbs.

How does the following reference characterise satan and reveal his intentions?

1 Peter 5:8 _____

Although temptation's power cannot take away our salvation, it can have a serious effect on our spiritual growth, causing disharmony with God and with one another.

God's desire and plan for all believers is that we would enjoy and celebrate His gift of an abundant life by overcoming the power of temptation (John 10:10b).

This session focuses on the:

- Sources of temptation, and
- Conditions for overcoming its power.

Flow of temptation

The Bible teaches that temptation to sin comes to us from three directions, but from the one source (satan):

- Satan
- The flesh; and
- The world

Satan

Satan is clearly shown in Scripture as the chief source of temptation to sin. From the opening book of Genesis to the closing book of Revelation we see satan at work seeking to deceive and tempt people into sin.

How did satan succeed in tempting Eve? Look carefully at what he said to her.

Genesis 3:1-5 _____

Throughout our earthly lives, satan will never stop trying to tempt us to do wrong by creating **D**oubt, **D**istortion and **D**eception in our minds.

The flesh

This source refers to the old sin nature within every person. This old nature fights a lifelong battle with our new Christian nature, seeking to draw us into old habits that are sinful (Galatians 5:17).

What are the characteristics of our *old* nature?

Galatians 5:19-21 _____

What are the characteristics of our *new* nature?

Galatians 5:22-23 _____

The world

This source of temptation involves the subtle influences and promptings for us to conform to the attitudes and actions of our earthly environment. The following are worldly temptations to look out for:

- Security in possessions or accomplishments
- Viewing life as liveable apart from a vital relationship with God
- Opinions and ideas that spring from a godless and fallen society.

What important instructions do the following verses give concerning this matter?

Romans 12:2 _____

1 John 2:15-17 _____

Overcoming temptation's power

The Bible outlines a number of general conditions for overcoming the power of temptation. Consider the following advice:

a) Be alert

We live in an environment of constant temptation. We need to be on guard and alert at all times.

What caution is found in 1 Peter 5:8a? _____

b) Be filled

You can never defeat temptation in your own strength. You need to be filled with supernatural power.

What is the source of this special power?

Acts 1:8 and Ephesians 5:18 _____

c) Be quick

You can't afford to delay when tempted. You need to act immediately! The longer you entertain temptation the weaker you will become to its lure.

Describe the stages of progression into sin.

James 1:14-15 _____

d) Know biblical escapes

With every temptation God promises a way of escape. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the Lord tells you how you can gain victory over temptation. The Bible is filled with His ways of escape. For this reason, a growing knowledge of God's Word is essential to your success in this critical area of life.

What advice is given in the following references about escaping from the lure of temptation?

Matthew 4:1-11 _____

James 4:7 _____

e) Act by faith

It is important to always take biblical escape routes whether you *feel* like it or not. If you rely on feelings to motivate you to deal with temptations you will have already lost the battle.

What should be the motivation of your actions in life?

Philippians 2:13 _____

f) Prayer

Prayer plays an essential role in achieving victory in the fight against succumbing to temptation. The Bible clearly commands prayer for both your personal victory and the victory of others.

What do the following references instruct you to do?

Matthew 26:41 _____

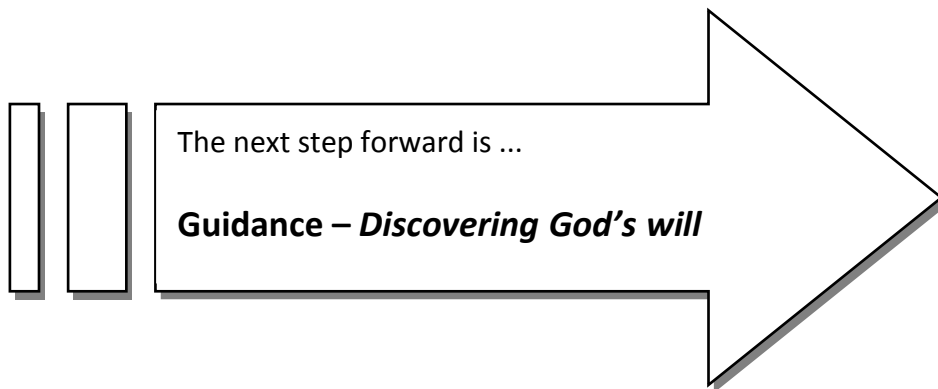
Philippians 1:9-10 _____

Summary

These are the conditions for overcoming the power of temptation:

- Be alert
- Be filled
- Be quick
- Know biblical escapes
- Act by faith; and
- Prayer.

Satisfy these conditions and you can be assured of living in safety against the destructive forces of sin.



Privileged travellers

Life can be a painful and futile “hit and miss” journey of aimless wanderings or it can be a fulfilling journey that is divinely directed for success. Christians are privileged travellers who have been promised faithful and perfect guidance in life by their loving God.

God says to us in Isaiah 42:16 ...

*“I will lead blind Israel down a new path,
Guiding them along an unfamiliar way.
I will make the darkness bright before them
And smooth out the road ahead of them.
Yes, I will indeed do these things; I will not forsake them.”*

You don’t have to live as a victim of blind chance or be reliant upon your human ability for knowing the right way forward in life. Through God’s guidance you can know how to stay in the centre of His will and enjoy a purposeful and satisfying life.

What do the following verses say about the quality of life that you can expect from following God’s guidance?

Jeremiah 29:11 _____

Romans 8:28, 29 _____

Romans 12:2 _____

God has a *perfect* plan for each of us. Unless we see our need to come to Him for special guidance we will fail to discover His good, pleasing and perfect plan for our lives.

Promises about finding God’s will

Consider these four promises the Bible gives regarding finding God’s will – His plan for your life.

God will give you precise *guidance* and *direction*

God promises to show you the right way ahead in your journey of life.

What do the following verses say about this?

Psalm 37:23 _____

Proverbs 3:5-6 _____

God will give you *wisdom* to discover His will

God doesn't hide His will from us. He wants us to know His will, but it's up to us to seek after it.

What do the following verses say about this?

Ephesians 5:17 _____

James 1:5 _____

God gives you a *desire* to do His will

From the moment you became a Christian, God began to work within you, helping you to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

What has God done to help you know His will?

Philippians 2:13 _____

God *warns* you when you depart from His will

This built-in warning device is called the "peace of Christ" in your hearts. Whenever you sense the loss of this peace you need to stop and see where and how you have strayed from God's will.

How is this truth expressed in the following verse?

Colossians 3:15a _____

The word "rule" comes from a Greek word that refers to the decision of a judge in an athletic event. It is the final deciding factor of knowing when you are in or out of God's will.

Steps to finding God's will

There are certain steps that must be taken if you are to know God's leading in particular situations. The following five steps are vital in this matter.

Present your body to the Lord as a living sacrifice

God is not pleased with anything less than the willing sacrifice of your whole life. You must give yourself completely to Him before He can guide you in the discovery of His will for your life.

How does Paul present this truth?

Romans 12:1 _____

Presenting yourself sacrificially to the Lord is a daily act of worship. As *living* sacrifices we have a tendency to crawl off the altar of sacrifice when "things get too hot".

Study God's Word

Much of God's will concerning our living with right attitudes and actions is revealed in the Bible. You need to take these truths and store them in your mind for actioning.

The following verses reinforce the role of Scripture in your life for discerning God's guidance.

What benefit comes from following God's Word?

Joshua 1:8 _____

Psalms 119:105 _____

Obey what is shown to you

It is important that you obey every instruction, warning, direction and command given by God.

Your obedience is a test of your genuine desire to understand and follow His will for your life. It is important to act on what has been revealed to you. God will not reveal the second step unless you obey the first.

God seldom shows us the end from the beginning. He only reveals as much to us as we can respond to safely and correctly. Discovering more of God's will is dependent on your readiness to obey.

What element is conditional to you "receiving from God whatever you ask"?

1 John 3:21, 22 _____

Counsel with mature Christians

In seeking to know God's will in certain matters, it is wise to consult with mature Christians who know you. Their counsel can be helpful because of their knowledge of God's Word and their sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's voice. Although you must not look to your counsellors to make your decisions, their advice can be very helpful.

How does the following verse state this truth?

Proverbs 11:14 _____

Pray consistently

It is through prayer you gain a sense of intimate communion with God and can be more alert and open to His guidance. As you pray, much will be shown to you.

You must be patient, however, allowing God to reveal His will for you according to His perfect timing.

What advice is given through the following verses concerning prayer?

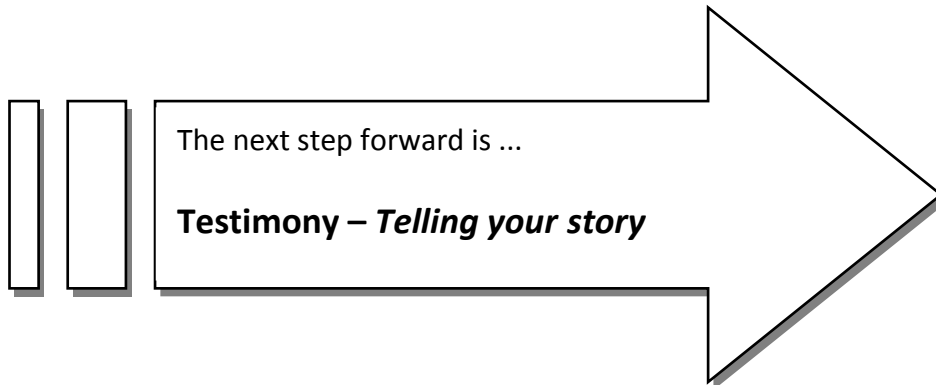
Matthew 7:7-8 _____

James 1:5 _____

Summary

As you apply the truths of this lesson you will increasingly discover God's direction for your life.

Stepping out in faith and doing all that God directs will keep you satisfied and safe in His good, pleasing and perfect plan.



A privileged experience

One of the most exciting moments in the life of a Christian is when asked by an unchurched friend to give an explanation of the Christian faith. Such a privileged moment should not be thought of as an uncommon event in the life of a committed believer.

When the Lord said to His disciples in Acts 1:8, *“You will tell people about Me everywhere”*, He revealed to them their life’s mission on earth. Our “story-telling” is not to be a one-time isolated event in life. Telling others about Jesus is why we are here. We are to live our lives as His witnesses – “His-story” tellers.

Most people become Christians through friends who explain their faith to them in ways that are non-threatening, simple and clear, resulting in understanding.

What two things does the Lord instruct you to do that will make it possible for you to “be” an effective witnesses?

1 Peter 3:15 _____

God instructs us to always be ready (equipped, willing and available) to give an appropriate explanation of the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ to those who ask. This is called sharing your testimony. Your personal testimony consists simply of the facts surrounding your first encounter with Jesus, your subsequent conversion and ways your life has changed.

This session is dedicated to showing you how easily you can prepare your testimony (your story), expressing in simple and clear terms how the Lord drew you to Himself and the wonderful changes He has subsequently brought about in your life.

In this session we will look at:

- Biblical examples
- Preparing your story
- Outlining your story; and
- Ted’s story.

Biblical examples

The Apostle Paul was someone who was always ready to give an explanation of his faith in Christ. Wherever he went, no matter what was happening around him, he was constantly looking for opportunities to share his faith. The incident recorded in Acts 26:1-23 demonstrates Paul's readiness and capability to share his faith in Christ.

While reading this passage you will notice that Paul's testimony consists of three parts:

Part 1: Paul's life – **before** meeting Christ (v1-11)

Part 2: Paul's life – his **conversion** encounter with Christ (v12-18)

Part 3: Paul's life – his **post-conversion** life (v19-23)

Preparing your story

Your faith story is as unique as you are – there is no other story like your story. That makes your faith story very special, and, that makes your story worth telling.

The following is a list of things to consider that will help you in the preparation of your Good News story.

- a. Pray and ask God for wisdom before you write (James 1:5)
- b. Develop your testimony around a three point outline:
 - 1) State attitudes and actions *before* you became a Christian
 - 2) Relate your growing understanding and circumstances leading to your conversion encounter with Christ
 - 3) List changes in your attitudes and actions *after* you surrendered your life to Christ.
- c. Keep your testimony short (a maximum of one A4 hand written page).
 - 1) If you became a Christian as a child, emphasise point "b. 3)" above
 - 2) Be specific
 - 3) Give enough details to arouse interest
 - 4) Use Scripture only if it strengthens your testimony (don't preach)
 - 5) Edit and rewrite until it communicates simply, clearly and logically
 - 6) Be sure to define Christian terms that unchurched people might not understand. Where possible, refrain from using Christian jargon
 - 7) Read sample testimonies, if available, and listen to others give their testimonies to help you find ways to improve yours
 - 8) Memorise it
 - 9) Keep copies handy to give away when opportunities arise.

Outlining your story

List in point form:

A. Your attitudes and actions before you became a Christian

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____
- g) _____

B. Circumstances that led to your conversion

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____
- g) _____

C. Changes that took place in your life after receiving Christ – your new attitudes and actions.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____
- g) _____

The next step is to string together all the above points into a smooth, free-flowing story that stirs interest in the minds of listeners. Invite your mentor to offer fine tuning suggestions. When you think your story is ready to go public, make copies and ask

close friends to read your story and evaluate it for clarity, simplicity and understanding.

When no other improvements can be made to your testimony, make copies and keep them on hand to use when the Lord gives you opportunities to share your story.

Ted's story

Some time ago at Southport in Queensland, Australia, the Lord ministered through me when I shared "my story" with Ted Hodgson, a cleaner at the Police Station. At that time I was in service as a police officer in that state.

Ted subsequently yielded his life to the Lord and followed the above suggestions in preparing his story.

He wrote:

As a child I went to church and Sunday school. I didn't really understand what it was all about. My past life was full of ups and downs with moments of joy and disappointment. There wasn't any real purpose in my life. I used to enjoy most forms of gambling very much.

A person I came to know at work told me about Jesus and His love for me. One day he asked me if I would like to invite Jesus to come into my life and I said, "Yes." So on that day I was born again (spiritually) and my whole life began to change.

Since that day I no longer have the desire to gamble. I read the Bible every day and I enjoy it very much. I try to obey God at all times and I have discovered that He answers all my prayers. I have been baptised and I now belong to a loving church family. I read a prayer that tells of how I feel about the Lord Jesus Christ. It reads:

*Lord Jesus Christ, my heart is yours,
My mind is yours; my whole being is yours,
You are my King, my Creator,
And my everlasting Lord, Amen.*

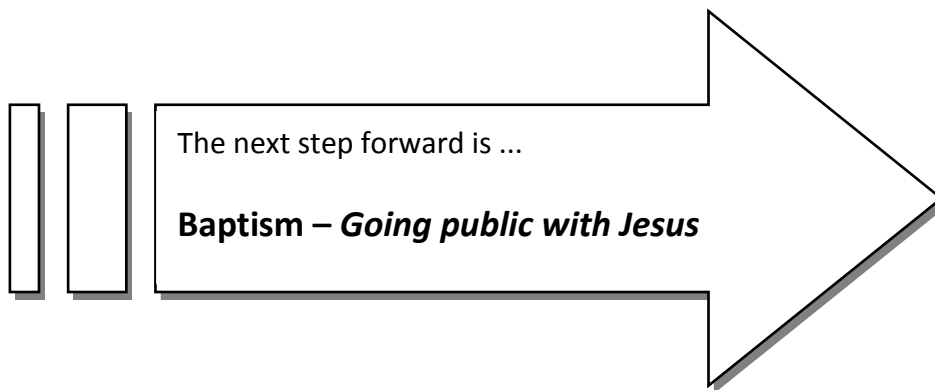
I am very happy in my new life and so glad that God accepted me into His family.

Ted Hodgson
(Ted has since gone to be with the Lord)

Summary

By God's grace and under His guidance, your readiness and willingness to tell your story can help and inspire someone else to take their own steps towards experiencing a new life in Jesus Christ.

When you prepare your testimony, remain "on the ready" to give an explanation of your faith, as the Lord creates opportunities.



Stepping out in faith

Spiritual growth results from a private and public commitment to Jesus Christ through obedience to His revealed Word. This next step in your spiritual growth journey is focused on the need for you to “go public” with your faith. Jesus publicly identified with us (sinners) and now, through baptism, He calls you to publicly identify with Him and His church.

Although baptism is only a symbol of your salvation, it is a very important step for you to take in your obedience to Him.

How important is obedience in your relationship with God?

1 John 2:3 _____

Six aspects of baptism

- Commanded
- Symbolic
- Form
- Responsibility
- Biblical examples; and
- Your example

Commanded

Through obedience to His Father, Jesus began His public ministry by travelling to the Jordan River where He publicly submitted to baptism by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13).

What instruction does Jesus give to His disciples concerning baptism?

Matthew 28:19b _____

Baptism is an obligation for those who are born again – that is, those who have repented of their sins, welcomed Christ into their lives, believed in His name and have decided to follow Him with their lives.

What did Peter instruct those who responded to his preaching to do?

Acts 2:38b _____

What was the result of Phillip’s message about the Kingdom of God and Jesus?

Acts 8:12b _____

What did the eunuch say immediately after he believed that Jesus is the Son of God?

Acts 8:36-37

Symbolic

Baptism is characterised in the New Testament by three different pictures:

Firstly, baptism symbolised imitating Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

Read Romans 6:3-6.

Baptism is symbolic of a watery grave. In the act of baptism we bury our dead/sinful nature and, as Jesus was, we are resurrected to a new and eternal life – a life lived completely for God’s Kingdom and in obedience to Him.

Secondly, baptism is a picture of being submerged into God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, just as a fish is submerged and lives completely surrounded by and filled with water. We are baptised into the Trinity and then live our lives completely surrounded by and filled with God. This is often referred to as putting on Christ, like wearing a new and permanent piece of clothing.

Read Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:16, 19:5; 2 Corinthians 1:13; 10:2 and Galatians 3:27.

Thirdly, another picture of baptism is one of a new baby being welcomed into the Family of God. Just as a baby is born in a burst of water, so the believer’s spirit is reborn and he/she becomes a new child of God. In the Jewish faith into which Jesus was born, the new member of the family was initiated with a rite of circumcision, which was for boys only. But Jesus replaced this initiation rite with baptism which is inclusive of women and men, girls and boys.

Read John 3:3-8, Galatians 3:27-29 and 1 Peter 1:23.

Form

There are two basic forms baptism takes in Christian churches: immersion and pouring or sprinkling.

Immersion

In churches that focus on the symbolism of dying and rising with Christ, similar to going down into the grave and rising again, baptism is usually performed by immersing the believer under the water. This is also an apt and beautiful picture of being immersed in the Trinity.

Pouring or sprinkling

In churches that focus more on the symbolism of initiating the new believer into the Family of God, baptism is usually performed by pouring or sprinkling water on the new believer.

And what should you do?

Since neither form is clearly commanded in the New Testament, you are free to make that choice for yourself. It is suggested that you follow the traditional form that is practiced by your church. Whichever you choose, your baptism experience will declare all three symbols:

- 1) Death and resurrection,
- 2) Immersion in the Trinity, and
- 3) Initiation into the New Covenant Family of God.

Responsibility

- a. Baptism symbolises your union with Christ. This union carries a responsibility.

What is this responsibility?

John 15:16b _____

What does the following reference say?

Galatians 3:27 _____

- b. Baptism also symbolises your union with the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). This too carries a responsibility for every believer.

What is this responsibility?

Ephesians 4:16 _____

Biblical examples

The following biblical references show that immediately *after* a person declared belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, baptism **followed**. There was no waiting time to analyse feelings or gauge public opinion. God commanded – they obeyed.

Acts 2:41; 8:12-13; 8:36-39; 9:17-18
Acts 10:47-48; 16:14-15; 16:31-33; and 18:8.

However, as the church grew, it became apparent that some people were not living the Christian life, even though they'd been baptised. They were causing much confusion and many unnecessary problems in the churches. They hadn't really understood what they were committing to – that becoming a student of Jesus usually meant a radical change in lifestyle. The church then instituted a time of teaching about what this really meant for their lives before baptising them. In some very pagan cultures, this could be as much as a year or more of instruction.

Read Matthew 19:29-30; 22:37-39; Mark 8:34-37 and Luke 14:25-33.

Your example

Jesus went public with His life and love for you and me. He went as far as the cross and beyond.

Have you gone public with your life and love for Jesus through baptism?

To know Him is to love Him. And as we grow in our love for Him we will gladly obey Him (1 John 5:3).

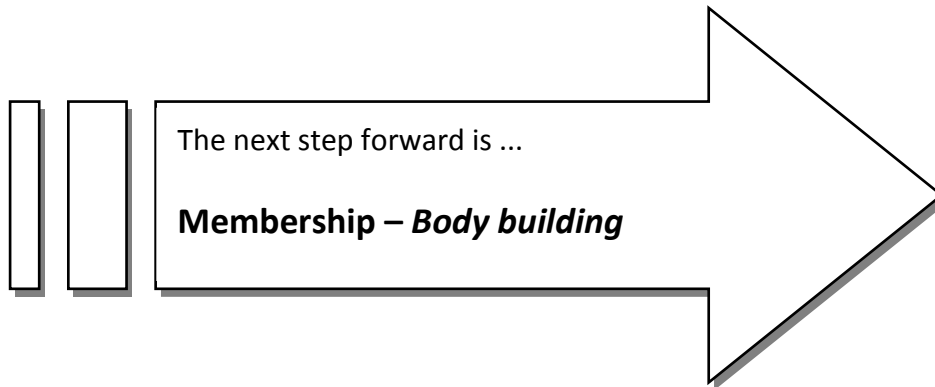
Note on confirmation

Many people who were baptised by their parents as babies, but who, until now, have not been true followers of Jesus, wonder if their baptisms “worked”, or if they should be baptised again now that they have made their own decision to follow Him. This is a matter for each person to decide for themselves.

If they decide their baptism was valid, they may then choose not to be re-baptised, but instead to stand up in front of the congregation and give public testimony of their choice to be true followers of Jesus, confirming their parents' faithful commitment made years ago, and dedicating their lives from this point on to being His disciples. This is confirmation. Some churches regularly practice this for children who have been baptised as babies and who then want to make their own commitment as teenagers.

Summary

Baptism is the first step of obedience commanded by the Lord to those who profess belief in Him. Baptism is publicly identifying in faith and practice with Jesus Christ and His church. When should a believer be baptised? Scripture implies: NOW is always the best time to obey the Lord – NOW is the best time to *go public with Jesus* through baptism.



Playing your part well

The very moment you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ He received you into His Body – His universal and local church as an eternal life-member.

Membership into the church is a privileged gift to all believers. With this privileged membership, however, comes responsibility. Membership into the church means much more than just receiving a handshake and having your name entered into a church register.

Membership is all about responsible function – *playing your part well* in the everyday life of your church. Through active membership the following is accomplished:

- Personal growth
- Growth of other believers in your church
- Kingdom of God growth, through reaching out to your unsaved friends through practical expressions of love and sharing with them the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The following Scripture references are helpful in gaining a better understanding of what membership is about and will help to motivate you to live as an active member in your church, serving others through your unique personality, character, spiritual gifts, experiences and talents. Note: Nothing in your past, present or future life is of waste.

Biblical Perspective

What term does Paul use to depict *believers* in the church?

1 Corinthians 12:12a _____

What term does Paul use to depict the *church*?

1 Corinthians 12:12b _____

List the different things Paul says in the following five references about members in the church.

a. 1 Corinthians 12:14 _____

b. 1 Corinthians 12:18 _____

c. 1 Corinthians 12:25b _____

d. 1 Corinthians 12:26 _____

e. 1 Corinthians 12:27 _____

How is the joining and knitting together the whole body of different members in the church accomplished?

Ephesians 4:16 _____

What is the goal of your serving in your church through membership?

Ephesians 4:12, 13 _____

Biblical Practice

The New Testament Church exploded in size after Peter's open-air sermon at Pentecost. At that time about 3,000 new believers were added to the existing 120 disciples.

Following this large addition to the size of the existing church, how did the new believers express their on-going commitment to God and each other through membership?

Acts 2:42 tells us ... *"They continued steadfastly in ..."*

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

What else did the members of this new church do?

Acts 2:44 _____

Summary

The life of a believer is not to be an isolated affair. By God's design you are to function as a committed community member of His Body, the church – contributing together that which the Body needs for growth – contributing your uniqueness and God-given gifts, time, talents and treasure to this aim.

You are, and have, what your church needs to grow

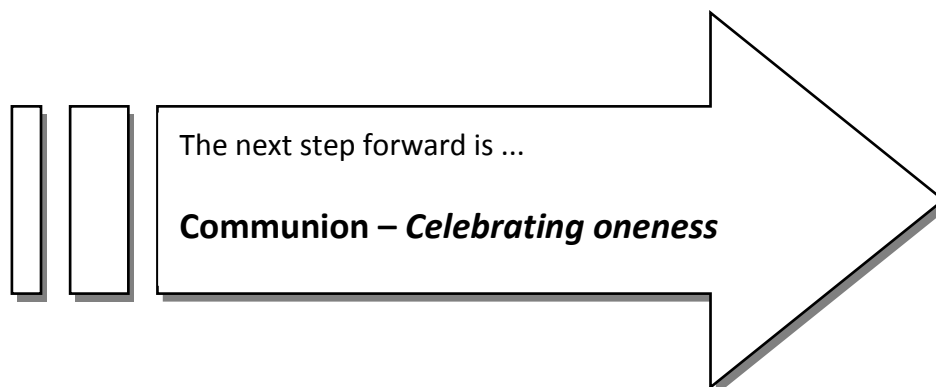
Through a responsible involvement in the church, you and other believers can enjoy unity, harmony, peace and spiritual growth through a commitment of mutual love towards each other ...

- Membership is ordained by God
- Membership is good for you and others
- Membership is not an option for those who are genuine about spiritual growth
- Membership is critical to church growth.

If you are not a member of your church, take urgent steps as soon as you can and become one. Have your membership acknowledged publicly in the presence of your church family. Begin to serve the Body of Christ, your church, using your special gifts and talents. Your growth and the growth of your church depend upon your membership being active.

Right now, decide on being a *server*, not an *observer* in your church.

Take this important next step in your spiritual growth – be a Body Builder through being an active member of your church.



Remembering Jesus

Jesus left His followers two ordinances to help them to remember Him: *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper* (sometimes called Communion or Eucharist). These two ordinances are purely symbolic and can be defined as outward rituals commanded by the Lord to be observed by all believers throughout their lives on earth.

The Lord's Supper should be seen by all believers as a very special event in their lives and in the life of their church, reminding them of their hope which is in Christ's death and resurrection.

Having a right understanding of what Communion is about will make it possible for you to share in the joy and blessings of this victory celebration. It will also help deepen your relationship with God and with other believers in your church.

In this session, we will consider various aspects of the Communion Supper:

- Authority
- Symbolism
- Reflection
- Benefit; and
- Frequency.

Authority

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus and celebrated with His disciples on the night of His betrayal and arrest (Matthew 26:26-30 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Symbolism

According to 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, what do the symbols used in the Lord's Supper represent?

The Bread (v. 23-24) _____

The Cup (v. 25) _____

Both together (v. 26) _____

Reflections

When celebrating the Lord's Supper we can experience the Lord in unique ways. At this time we have an ideal opportunity to reflect ...

- **Backward:** Gratefully remembering Christ who suffered and died for us (sinners)
- **Forward:** Reminding ourselves of Jesus' promise to return for us; one day we will be with Him in Heaven
- **Inward:** Examining our lives – confessing any sins and re-dedicating our lives to the Lord
- **Outward:** The Lord's Supper is a communion, an honest sharing *together* in *oneness* with other believers. We have been united through Jesus. A question to ask yourself at this time is: *"How is my relationship with others?"*

Benefit

The benefit in sharing in the Lord's Supper has both a spiritual and physical dimension.

Spiritual

By eating and drinking the Communion elements you show your acceptance of all that is signified by the body and blood (death and resurrection) of Jesus.

What does 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 says about this?

Physical

The Communion elements also represent the physical dimension of food and drink, necessary to sustain our physical lives. Our need for physical food reminds us of our need for the Lord Jesus Christ – our spiritual food.

What does Jesus say about this in John 6:35?

Frequency

Scripture does not say how often we should observe the Lord's Supper. Some churches celebrate Communion weekly, some bi-monthly, and others monthly.

Frequency is therefore a matter of personal choice. It's up to each individual church to decide. However, care must be taken to prevent the Holy Communion from becoming a meaningless ritual.

The elements commonly used to symbolise the body and blood of Christ are bread and grape juice, or wine (according to the tradition of your church).

Summary

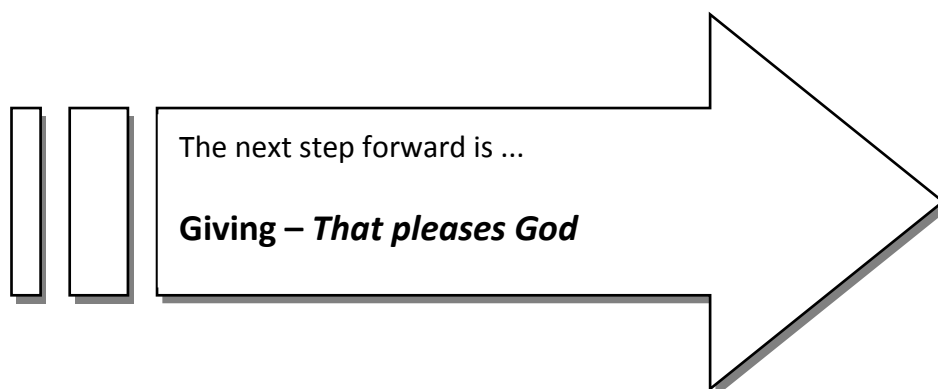
The Lord's Supper should be practiced as a very special celebration event in the life of every believer and church:

- It's a special time to express your heart felt thanks and gratitude to your Heavenly Father for the sacrificial gift offering of His Son through His death on the cross and His resurrection
- It's also a special time to remember your eternal hope which is in Christ. You are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- It's also an opportune time to be honest about your relationship with others in your life. Communion with the Lord demands communion with one another.

Sharing Communion in our Lord is a privilege and should always be taken very seriously.

Enjoy this special time with a sincere heart of thanks and with a spirit of celebration because, through Jesus, you are being reminded that you *have* the victory over sin and death.

Communion also reminds us of our eternal *oneness* with Jesus, our God and Saviour, and with each other.



He wants us to give like Him

The next step forward in your journey of spiritual growth looks at the discipline of giving to your church a portion of your income in support of God's work on earth.

Perhaps nothing else in life makes us more uncomfortable than the matter of giving money. Why?

Because of our sinful nature, selfishness makes us reluctant and hesitant to give in ways that are right and pleasing to God. Whenever this happens, selfishness robs us from experiencing one of life's most wonderful and satisfying joys and prevents God from blessing others through our lives. We lose – everyone loses!

God's nature is quite different. He is a giver and He loves to give.

God loves to give good things to those who belong to Him – those who purposefully live in ways that are pleasing to Him.

To grow-up into the likeness of Jesus Christ requires that you take this next step forward in the matter of giving in a manner that pleases God.

God wants you to *be* like Him – and therefore He wants you to *give* like Him.

The following five aspects of giving are necessary to your understanding before your giving can be pleasing to the Lord:

- Authority
- Amount
- Attitude
- Purpose; and
- Promises.

Authority

The practice of giving a portion of one's income to support God's work on earth is an ancient practice found in the Old Testament.

Write down what God instructs the Nation of Israel to do about giving.

Deuteronomy 14:22 _____

Giving to God is based on the belief that we are stewards of His property. Everything we have, including our lives, comes from the hand of God. Money and material possessions that we gain are not ours. They belong to God. They are given to us in trust as His stewards and we are responsible for the way they are used (invested).

God is our authority for giving.

Amount

The Old Testament is the only place in the Bible that actually specifies an *amount* concerning giving from our income.

What amount did Jacob and Abraham pledge to God?

Genesis 28:22 _____

Hebrews 7:2, 4 _____

What amount did God expect from His people?

Malachi 3:10 _____

Tithe means the giving of 10% of one's income.

What was God's accusation against those who refused to tithe?

Malachi 3:8 _____

Today we live in the New Testament age of *grace* and therefore are not bound by the Old Testament *law* of tithing. Although we don't have to give 10% of our income, as stewards of all that God has entrusted into our care we still have an obligation to give.

Many Christians today use the principle of tithing as a good starting point for how much to give to God's work on earth.

The amount you decide to give to God is always a personal matter.

A good principle to live by is ... *Give in proportion to what the Lord is giving to you.*

Attitude

The giving that pleases God must also result from a right attitude.

Read the following verses and identify the attitudes that should be present in your giving.

1 Chronicles 29:17b _____

Ezra 2:68 _____

Matthew 6:4 _____

2 Corinthians 9:7b _____

When you give *willingly, generously, discreetly* and *cheerfully* your giving will be pleasing to God.

Remember: With God, *attitude* is always more important than *amount*.

Purpose

Psalm 50:10-12 makes it very clear that God is the owner of everyone and everything. The purpose of your giving, therefore, cannot be because God has a need for your money.

We learn from God's Word that the purpose of our giving is to teach us to have a right view of money, material things, and of God.

Having a right view of things and of God will give you the right focus you need in life.

What does Jesus say is the right priority of focus in life – and what does He promise you when you live with this right focus?

Matthew 6:33 _____

You are to pursue God, not things.

The main purpose of your giving is to grow your faith and dependence on God's promises to meet **all** your "needs". When you trust God in your giving, your faith will grow in other areas of your life. Each time you give to God you practise your trust in Him.

Another important purpose of your financial giving is to enable the planned ministries of your church to be accomplished.

God has given you gifts of time, talent and treasure and has placed you in His church to help meet its needs according to His leading and purposes.

In 1 Chronicles 29:3 and Nehemiah 10:38-39, the people of God were directed to give directly to the House of God.

According to the following reference what is the House of God?

1 Timothy 3:15 _____

The financial support of your church is the responsibility of every believer. God has entrusted into your management His resources for the life, ministry and mission of His church. Your church cannot grow and function as it should without your faithful giving. You cannot grow without giving what God has/will entrust into your care and management.

Promises

When believers give in ways that please God they can expect tremendous promises from Him.

What promises are contained in the following references?

Luke 6:38 _____

Acts 20:35 _____

2 Corinthians 9:6 _____

What general challenge does God extend to you in the matter of giving?

Malachi 3:10 _____

Summary

God has entrusted everything in life into our care. As God's stewards, we are to manage (use, not store away) His things correctly. If we want much out of the Christian life we must learn to give much, but remember: our giving must always be in ways that are pleasing to God – always according to His:

- Authority
- Amount
- Attitude
- Purpose; and
- Promises.

Where to now?

The fourteen steps you have taken through these topical studies represent the *foundation* phase of your spiritual growth journey. Remember: You haven't arrived, but you have made a great start.

Beware of the temptation to stop at this stage of your journey. There is much more of this new life waiting ahead for you to experience and enjoy.

Remember that your goal in life is to grow-up fully, spiritually mature, so that your life may become more and more an "imitation" of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is God's ultimate plan for you. Remember what the Lord says in Romans 8:29 ...

"For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son ..."

Progress in your spiritual growth is dependent upon your commitment to remain enthusiastic, ready and willing to take the next step forward in your faith journey. This journey is life-long!

Additional growing steps for your consideration:

- Discover and develop your spiritual gifts through service in the life of your church
- Learn how to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in a simple, clear and friendly manner
- Maintain healthy connections with your unchurched friends
- Deepen your spiritual walk through good devotional studies
- Join a purposeful small group in your church
- Undergo training to be a facilitator of a small group in your church.

As you journey in your faith, be sure to keep hold of God's promise ...

"The steps of the godly are directed by the Lord, He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand" (Psalm 37:23-24).

Growing-up into the likeness of Jesus Christ will take place as you continue following in His footsteps.

I wish you well in this most satisfying and rewarding life-transforming journey.

Bill Joukhadar
Founding Director
Cells-*church* Consultants International (CCI)

Additional Resources

By Bill Joukhadar

Small Groups Development

The 7 session Small Groups Development course is a proven strategy; inspiring, equipping and empowering ordinary believers in churches around the world to come together, embracing a simple to understand Bible-based plan to build authentic community, lay-leaders and the Kingdom of God through expanding networks of Spirit-filled small groups in their churches.

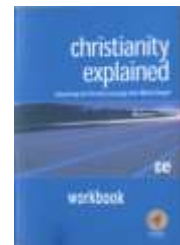


Cost: \$14.95 (plus postage)

by Michael Bennett

Christianity Explained – workbook

This workbook is an ideal, practical tool for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with an unchurched friend in a simple, clear and unrushed manner ... helping the hearer to make an intelligent decision concerning Christ. This workbook is designed to be used in conjunction with the main textbook "Christianity Explained".



Cost: \$A6 (plus postage)

by Joel Comiskey

- **Home Cell Group Explosion ...**
How your small group can grow and multiply
- **The Relational Disciple ...**
How God uses community to shape followers of Jesus
- **The Spirit-filled Small Group ...**
Leading your group to experience the spiritual gifts
- **Discover ...**
Use your gifts and help others find theirs
- **Coach ...**
Empower others to effectively lead a small group



All books may be ordered through
Cells-church Consultants International

+61 432 780 340/8
info@cells-church.com

Prayer Guide

*“Always be joyful. **Keep on praying.** No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus”
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).*



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Promise: “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results” (James 5:16).