

# LORDSHIP



FREEDOM  
CHURCH

# LORDSHIP

Responding to the Good News of Jesus Christ

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Chapter 1: Creation and Sin.....5

Chapter 2: The Good News .....15

Chapter 3: Our Response.....23

Chapter 4: The Holy Spirit.....35



# Chapter 1: Creation and Sin

The goal of this booklet is to help you understand the good news of Jesus Christ and the process of becoming his disciple. If you are already a committed follower of Jesus Christ, this booklet should be a good review of the foundations.

## Beginning in the Beginning

Jesus is Lord. This is the essential confession of every follower of Jesus Christ. But what does that confession mean? To understand how the first followers of Jesus Christ would have understood this statement, we need to begin in the beginning.

Read the following passages from the first chapter of the Bible.

*<sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

*<sup>3</sup>And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.*

*<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

*<sup>27</sup>So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup>And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

<sup>31</sup>God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31

**What is implied about God, human beings, and the purpose of our existence? Discuss (or write down) your observations before continuing.**

You may have made some observations similar to the following.

- God is the uncreated ultimate authority over all that exists. He has total control over the material creation.
- Human beings, both male and female, are like God in a way that nothing else in the material creation is — we are made in his image. Therefore, we have intrinsic value.
- God speaks; he is personal (not just a cosmic force). He engages in relationship with human beings.
- Because God speaks to human beings, we can know something about him and about the world we live in.
- God makes judgments about what is good. He is by nature a moral being.

- God loves us and desires our good. (Note again verse 28: “God blessed them...”) He wants more of us around. (“Be fruitful and increase in number...”)
- God has made us rulers, in some sense, over the earth.
- God expects us to obey the instructions he has given to us.
- God provides for our needs.

**Do your own views about God, the universe, and human beings align with these observations from the book of Genesis?**

## **Something’s Not Right**

For most of us, life is often frustrating, painful, and disappointing. God seems distant. Truth is unclear. Relationships are difficult. What happened to the orderly and “good” world of Genesis 1?

Jesus began his public ministry with the following message:

*“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

*Matthew 4:17*

This is a striking statement. On the one hand it is bold (and even offensive) — Jesus is implying that we are the problem, and that we need to change! On the other hand, it is full of hope and promise — God is bringing his life-giving kingdom into our world! We should ask three important questions. Who is this man Jesus to make such bold statements? Why do we need to “repent”? How can we be a part of God’s kingdom?

## **Jesus Christ**

Who is Jesus of Nazareth? A good religious teacher? A revolutionary? A prophet? His earliest followers certainly considered him to be an exemplary human being. But it is also clear that they considered him to be more than that. The first chapter of the Gospel of John says the following about Jesus (referring to him as “the Word”).

*<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*<sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*John 1:1-5, 14*

## **Evidence for Jesus' Divinity**

It was quite a leap for a Jewish man or woman in the first century to worship a human being as God. Why would the first disciples have come to the conclusion that Jesus is the divine Son of God? The Gospel records demonstrate the following.

- Jesus claimed to have divine authority to forgive sins.<sup>1</sup>
- Jesus demonstrated authority over evil spirits.<sup>2</sup>
- Evil spirits recognized Jesus as the holy one of God.<sup>3</sup>
- Other people successfully invoked Jesus' name to exorcise evil spirits.<sup>4</sup>
- Jesus demonstrated authority over nature.<sup>5</sup>
- Jesus performed miracles of healing and was able to transfer this authority to his disciples.<sup>6</sup>
- Jesus claimed that the Jewish Scriptures spoke of him and that he was the fulfillment of those Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>
- Jesus claimed an authority in his teaching equal to (or even greater than) that of the Jewish Scriptures, which Jews considered to be the words of God.<sup>8</sup>

- Jesus claimed that he was the Lord of the Sabbath, the day of the week that was set apart as holy to God.<sup>9</sup>
- Jesus claimed he will be the judge on the final day.<sup>10</sup>
- Jesus claimed that only he truly knew God and that only he could truly make God known to others.<sup>11</sup>
- Jesus accepted worship from his followers.<sup>12</sup>
- Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, and taught that the Messiah was something more than the human descendant of King David, the greatest king of Israel.<sup>13</sup>
- Jesus identified himself with the figure in Daniel 7:13-14 who is served by all peoples and nations.<sup>14</sup>
- Jesus spoke of the angels as *his* angels and the elect people of God as *his* elect.<sup>15</sup>
- Jesus predicted his own resurrection from the dead.<sup>16</sup>

Because Jesus of Nazareth is also the divine Son of God, his followers throughout the centuries have granted his words absolute authority in their lives. There is no one more trustworthy to assess our deepest needs and to show us what we should do. And Jesus indicates that we all need to repent.

**What do you believe about Jesus Christ? How do your beliefs about Jesus impact your life? How would you respond to someone who thinks Jesus was just a good religious teacher, but not God?**

## Sin

To repent means to change one's mind and go in a new direction. It is an admission that we are wrong about some things and that we need to act and think differently. More specifically, it is an acknowledgment that we have not lived before God as we know that we should. This is the important concept of sin.

Human beings have rebelled against God and this rebellion is the root cause of the brokenness we experience in this life. Some people dismiss the whole concept of sin as premodern and unenlightened. Others consider themselves to be basically good people who really have no need to repent. But the consistent message of the prophets in the Old Testament, Jesus in the Gospels, and the early church leaders in the New Testament is that human beings are sinful. Consider the following representative passages.

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way...*

*Isaiah 53:6a*

*Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure;  
I am clean and without sin"?*

*Proverbs 20:9*

*<sup>22</sup> ... There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*

*Romans 3:22-23*

Jesus goes beyond observing the simple fact of human sinfulness and speaks to our enslavement to the power of sin.

*<sup>31</sup>To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. <sup>32</sup> Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

<sup>33</sup>*They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"*

<sup>34</sup>*Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."*

*John 8:31-34*

**How does the Bible define sin? Do you recognize where sin is present in your life?**

## **The Wrong Gods**

Idolatry is one of the persistent sins mentioned in the Old Testament. Although we may not construct physical idols for ourselves like many ancient peoples did, we often treat other things in our lives as substitute gods — things we look to for security, identity, and good fortune. Consider this passage from the prophet Jeremiah.

<sup>23</sup>*This is what the Lord says:*

*"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom  
or the strong boast of their strength  
or the rich boast of their riches,*

<sup>24</sup>*but let the one who boasts boast about this:  
that they have the understanding to know me,  
that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness,  
justice and righteousness on earth,  
for in these I delight,"*  
*declares the Lord.*

*Jeremiah 9:23-24*

**What might play the role of an idol in our lives today? Is there anything functioning like an idol in your own life?**

## Judgment

Jesus was once asked which of God's commandments is the greatest.

*<sup>37</sup>Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

*Matthew 22:37-40*

All sin is ultimately a violation of one or both of these two fundamental commands. Will God forever allow human beings to persist in dishonoring him and hurting one another? The Scripture teaches that we will all be held accountable for our actions in a future judgment. The author of Hebrews writes:

*...people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...*

*Hebrews 9:27*

The apostle Paul describes the nature of this judgment in his letter to the Romans.

*<sup>6</sup>God "will repay each person according to what they have done."  
<sup>7</sup>To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. <sup>8</sup>But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. <sup>9</sup>There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; <sup>10</sup>but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>11</sup>For God does not show favoritism.*

*<sup>12</sup>All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. <sup>13</sup>For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. <sup>14</sup>(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature*

*things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. <sup>15</sup>They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) <sup>16</sup>This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.*

*Romans 2:6-16*

**What do you notice about the nature of this judgment? Is it fair? Considering our earlier observations about human sinfulness, how do you think you would fare in such a judgment?**

God is just and, as Paul writes in Romans 2:6, "will repay each person according to what they have done." This is a sobering reality. But, thankfully, this is not the end of the story.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 2:1-12

<sup>2</sup> Mark 1:21-28

<sup>3</sup> Mark 1:24

<sup>4</sup> Mark 9:38

<sup>5</sup> Mark 4:35-41

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 9:35 - 10:1

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 4:16-21; 24:25-27; John 5:39-40

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-34, 38-39, 43-44; 24:35

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 12:1-8

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 7:22-23

<sup>11</sup> Luke 10:22

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 14:22-33

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 22:41-46

## Lordship

<sup>14</sup> Mark 14:61-62

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 24:30-31

<sup>16</sup> Mark 8:31-33; 9:30-31; 10:32-34; 14:57-58

# Chapter 2: The Good News

## A Way Into the Kingdom

The word “gospel” means good news, and Jesus announced that he had good news that should be believed. This good news concerned the arrival of God’s life-giving Kingdom and the possibility that sinful people like us might still, somehow, be able to participate in it. Though we all deserve wrath, God’s great love prompted him to extend mercy to us.

*<sup>1</sup>As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

*Ephesians 2:1-7*

Paul repeatedly indicates in this passage that the blessing of being rescued from the wrath that our transgression and sin deserve has come through Jesus Christ. What exactly does Paul mean by this? How is it that Jesus enables us to participate in the Kingdom of God? Paul explains in his letter to the Romans.

*<sup>25</sup>God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood — to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — <sup>26</sup>he did it to*

*demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

*Romans 3:25-26*

To atone means to make amends for an offense or a crime. Christ's death on the cross was an atonement for our wrongdoing. He was punished in our place. Remarkably, this "sacrifice of atonement" was written about centuries earlier in the book of Isaiah. In chapter 53, the seemingly tragic fate and subsequent vindication of an unknown servant in Israel is predicted and explained.

*<sup>4</sup>Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.*

*<sup>5</sup>But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.*

*<sup>6</sup>We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.*

*<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.*

*<sup>8</sup>By oppression and judgment he was taken away.  
Yet who of his generation protested?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was punished.*

*<sup>9</sup>He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth.*

<sup>10</sup>Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

<sup>11</sup>After he has suffered,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,  
because he poured out his life unto death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:4-12

**Explain how Jesus' death on the cross enables us to receive the forgiveness of God (who is just) and participate in his Kingdom.**

## **Raised to Life**

Jesus' disciples were shocked when he was arrested and subjected to Roman crucifixion, an excruciating and humiliating way to die. But they were even more shocked when several days later his tomb was discovered empty and he appeared to them alive! Amazingly, Jesus' resurrection was also alluded to in the book of Isaiah.

<sup>10</sup>Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

<sup>11</sup>After he has suffered,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied...

Isaiah 53:10-11

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is significant in a number of ways. It was obviously a powerful confirmation of all that he taught about himself and

the Kingdom of God. In fact, the early church regularly pointed to Jesus' resurrection as the verification of the message they proclaimed. Paul concluded a famous sermon to a group of Greek philosophers with the following words.

*He has given proof of this (that is, the gospel message Paul was proclaiming) to everyone by raising him (Jesus) from the dead.*

*Acts 17:31b*

Jesus' resurrection was also the event through which God rewarded Jesus' perfect obedience by establishing him as the eternal human king of creation. Before becoming a human being, Jesus, the divine Son of God, reigned in heaven with God the Father. But, as we saw in Genesis, God is committed to establishing his rule on earth through human beings. Since all human beings succumbed to sin and failed to properly rule both themselves and the rest of creation, God chose to have his Son Jesus become a human being. Jesus humbly obeyed his heavenly Father to the point of a submitting to a humiliating death in our place, earning the right to be crowned the human (and still divine) king of creation. Now, as our divine and human king, Jesus has been granted all authority and given the royal title "Son of God in power." He shares the unique divine name of his Father, the God of Israel. Jesus is Lord.

*<sup>16</sup>Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

*Matthew 28:16-18*

*"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."*

*Acts 2:36*

*<sup>1</sup>Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — <sup>2</sup>the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures <sup>3</sup>regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup>and*

*who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Romans 1:1-4*

*<sup>5</sup>In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

*<sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

*<sup>7</sup>rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

*<sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death —  
even death on a cross!*

*<sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,*

*<sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*<sup>11</sup>and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

*Philippians 2:5-11*

**Why is Jesus' resurrection significant? What does the passage in Philippians indicate about Jesus' authority? How might this encourage us when we pray?**

## **Many Blessings**

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

*Ephesians 1:3*

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ secure a sweeping array of blessings for those who repent and believe the good news. These gracious gifts are described with a variety of key words and metaphors.

We have been justified;<sup>1</sup> that is, God, our judge, has handed down to us a sentence of “not guilty.” We can stand before God without fear of eternal punishment.<sup>2</sup> There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

We have been set free from sin.<sup>4</sup> As we saw earlier, apart from God’s saving power, we are not just guilty of sin, we are stained by sin and slaves to the power of sin.<sup>5</sup> Our natures are corrupt and we are unable to live how we know we should.<sup>6</sup> But through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, we have been born again.<sup>7</sup> We have been sanctified (that is, made holy).<sup>8</sup> We are new creations.<sup>9</sup> Our old selves have been crucified with Christ, and we no longer live, but Christ lives in us.<sup>10</sup>

We have become children of God.<sup>11</sup> He has adopted us and welcomed us into his family and we are now heirs with Christ of God’s kingdom.<sup>12</sup> We have an inheritance from God that can never perish, spoil, or fade.<sup>13</sup> We have the hope of experiencing the glory of God in new bodies that will be given to us when, like Christ, we also are resurrected to new life.<sup>14</sup> We have the confident expectation of living in a new heavens and new earth in which there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.<sup>15</sup> We will be rewarded for our faithfulness in this life by being granted joy, honor, and greater responsibility in the next life.<sup>16</sup>

We are given the gift of “spiritual” family so that we don’t have to live in loneliness.<sup>17</sup> In addition, God fills us with his own presence through the person of the Holy Spirit to lead us, to teach us, to comfort us, and to be our advocate.<sup>18</sup> He empowers us with this same Holy Spirit in order that we might live in holiness and accomplish the mission he has given to the church.<sup>19</sup> He equips us with special gifts and abilities,<sup>20</sup> and gives us a vital role to play among his people and in the world. He lavishes us with his love<sup>21</sup> and graciously gives us everything we need to live a godly life.<sup>22</sup>

**How should these realities impact how we understand our own identity? Do these blessings from God imply that the lives of those who follow Jesus will be easy? How do these blessings help us?**

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:22-24; 1 Corinthians 6:11

<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:15; 1 John 4:16-18

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:1

<sup>4</sup> Romans 6:18

<sup>5</sup> John 8:34; Romans 6:17

<sup>6</sup> Romans 7:14-15

<sup>7</sup> John 3:3-6; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:3

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:11

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>10</sup> Galatians 2:20

<sup>11</sup> 1 John 3:1

<sup>12</sup> Romans 8:15-17

<sup>13</sup> 1 Peter 1:3-5

<sup>14</sup> Romans 8:18-21; 1 Corinthians 15:42-57

<sup>15</sup> Revelation 21:1-4

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27

<sup>17</sup> Mark 10:29-30

<sup>18</sup> John 14-16

<sup>19</sup> Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:22-23; Acts 1:8

<sup>20</sup> Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

<sup>21</sup> 1 John 3:1

<sup>22</sup> 2 Peter 1:3

# Chapter 3: Our Response

## Responding to the Gospel

Jesus proclaimed the good news concerning the arrival of God's kingdom, and the apostles explained how Jesus' death and resurrection opened the way for sinful people to be welcomed into it. How should we respond? How can we be a part of God's kingdom? The apostle Peter addressed this question at the conclusion of the first sermon preached in the new testament church.

*<sup>36</sup>"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."*

*<sup>37</sup>When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

*<sup>38</sup>Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

Acts 2:36-38

Similarly, the apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, also explained that receiving the salvation offered to us through Jesus Christ is not complicated or inaccessible. It's a simple matter of confessing that Jesus is Lord and believing in God's ultimate validation of Jesus' earthly ministry — his resurrection from the dead.

*<sup>9</sup>If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

*<sup>10</sup>For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. <sup>11</sup>As*

*Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."*

*Romans 10:9-10*

We find in these important passages four key elements of an appropriate response to God's good news: repentance, water baptism, confession of "Jesus is Lord," and belief in the gospel message.

**What is your understanding of how a person becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ? What do the above passages teach?**

## **Belief in the Gospel Message**

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus told the crowds, "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" Throughout his ministry, the people who received life-giving power from Jesus were those who had faith in him.

*<sup>24</sup> ... A large crowd followed and pressed around him. <sup>25</sup>And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup>She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. <sup>27</sup>When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup>because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." <sup>29</sup>Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.*

*<sup>30</sup>At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"*

*<sup>33</sup>Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.*

*<sup>34</sup>He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."*

*Mark 5:24-30, 33-34*

**What do this woman's thoughts and actions teach us about faith in Jesus Christ? Describe your understanding of the biblical concept of faith.**

After his death and resurrection, Jesus told the skeptical Thomas, "Stop doubting and believe."<sup>1</sup> Paul and Silas told a fearful jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household."<sup>2</sup> So what is biblical faith?

Biblical faith certainly includes agreement with basic theological ideas concerning God's nature and character, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the core components of the gospel message which we have already outlined. But it also involves a personal confidence in Jesus Christ and his ability to save us. Biblical faith engages the head and the heart. As he neared the end of his life, Paul wrote to Timothy:

*"I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day."*

*2 Timothy 1:12*

**Do you believe the gospel message as it has been outlined in this booklet? Are you ready to personally trust Jesus Christ with your life?**

## **Repentance**

The word *repent* (and other forms of the word with the same root) appears frequently in the New Testament. Although the word may have an antiquated feel for some, the concept is very important. One standard dictionary (Merriam-Webster) gives the following definitions for repent.

**repent** (verb)

1. to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life;
2. a. to feel regret or contrition;  
b. to change one's mind

Psalm 51 provides us with a very powerful example of repentance. David, the King of Israel, made the terrible decision to use his position of power to commit adultery with a woman he saw bathing. After he became aware that the woman was pregnant, he arranged to have her husband killed in battle. Eventually David's sins were exposed by God through the prophet Nathan. Psalm 51 is David's prayer of repentance.

*For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.*

<sup>1</sup>*Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.*

<sup>2</sup>*Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.*

<sup>3</sup>*For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.*

<sup>4</sup>*Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.*

<sup>5</sup>*Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

<sup>6</sup>*Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.*

<sup>7</sup>*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

<sup>8</sup>*Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*

<sup>9</sup>*Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.*

<sup>10</sup>*Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

- <sup>11</sup>Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- <sup>13</sup>Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.
- <sup>14</sup>Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
you who are God my Savior,  
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- <sup>15</sup>Open my lips, Lord,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- <sup>16</sup>You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;  
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- <sup>17</sup>My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart  
you, God, will not despise.
- <sup>18</sup>May it please you to prosper Zion,  
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- <sup>19</sup>Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,  
in burnt offerings offered whole;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Psalm 51

### **What does this psalm teach us about genuine repentance?**

Many people are inclined to feel regret for their sins when their misdeeds are exposed and they are forced to face the ramifications of their actions. But often this regret stays on the surface. They are sorry that they were caught, but they are not concerned that they have offended God's holiness or caused deep pain to others. The apostle Paul addresses this 'worldly sorrow' by describing true 'godly sorrow' in a letter to the Corinthians.

<sup>9</sup> ...yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by

us. <sup>10</sup>Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. <sup>11</sup>See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. <sup>12</sup>So even though I wrote to you, it was neither on account of the one who did the wrong nor on account of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are.

2 Corinthians 7:9-12

## What does godly sorrow produce?

### Guidelines for expressing true repentance

- 1. Confess your sins out loud to God.** The prayers of the men and women in the Bible were rarely silent. It is helpful to hear ourselves vocalizing our own thoughts to God.

<sup>3</sup>When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup>For day and night  
your hand was heavy on me;  
my strength was sapped  
as in the heat of summer.

<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, "I will confess  
my transgressions to the Lord."  
And you forgave  
the guilt of my sin.

Psalms 32:3-5

- 2. Be specific.** Vague confessions such as “I need to do better” can keep us from acknowledging significant areas of transgression that God wants us to expose and turn from.
- 3. Confess your sins to a mature believer.** James gives the following instructions to his readers.

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

*James 5:16*

- 4. Reconcile with another person when necessary.** Jesus emphasized the urgency of reconciliation in what has become known as his Sermon on the Mount.

*<sup>23</sup>“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

*Matthew 5:23-24*

- 5. Take appropriate action.** True repentance is accompanied by a change in behavior. John the Baptist gave a number of specific instructions to those who were coming to him to repent.

*<sup>7</sup>John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup>Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup>The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

*<sup>10</sup>“What should we do then?” the crowd asked.*

<sup>11</sup>John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

<sup>12</sup>Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

<sup>13</sup>"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

<sup>14</sup>Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely — be content with your pay."

Luke 3:7-14

**Have you repented from the sins in your life? If not, are you willing to do that now?**

## **Confessing "Jesus is Lord"**

Closely related to the act of repentance is making the confession "Jesus is Lord." We have already spent some time unpacking the theological significance of this statement. We have seen that Jesus is a human and divine king, the eternal Son of God. But making this confession also implies that we intend to live in obedient, worshipful submission to Jesus' kingly rule.

<sup>46</sup>"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?

<sup>47</sup>As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. <sup>48</sup>They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. <sup>49</sup>But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation.

## Our Response

*The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”*

*Luke 6:46-49*

Jesus expects us to obey him and the above parable indicates that disobedience has disastrous consequences.

### Exercise

For each of the following areas of your life, take a moment to evaluate what might need to change in order for you to fully obey Jesus.

- Your relationships with the opposite sex and/or spouse
- Your use of money
- Your use of time
- Your habits
- Your leisure and entertainment
- Your schooling or career
- Your future in general
- Your friendships
- Your family
- Your attitude
- Your speech

### Water Baptism

The final words of Jesus recorded in the gospel of Matthew are the following.

<sup>18</sup> ... "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
<sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them  
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
<sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.  
And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

We should respond to the gospel message by being baptized because this is what Jesus commanded. After his inaugural sermon, when Peter instructed his repentant hearers to be baptized,<sup>3</sup> he was simply carrying out Jesus' instructions.

What is water baptism? The Greek word *baptizo* that we translate *baptize* means to plunge, dip, or immerse. During the ministries of Jesus and his forerunner, John the Baptist, those who wanted to be cleansed of their sins would be completely submerged in water by the person performing the baptism. This outward act of being submerged in water was a vivid depiction of God's invisible act of washing the repentant man's sins away.

In the early church, after Jesus' resurrection, those participating in baptism made the public confession "Jesus is Lord" at the time of their baptism. The apostle Paul explained that going under the water and coming out again was a powerful portrayal of a disciple's participation in Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>4</sup> Water baptism, then, is a public ceremony of commitment to Christ in which God meets us with his grace. We confess "Jesus is Lord" and are submerged in the water; God cleanses us of our sins and unites with Christ.

How important is water baptism? In the New Testament, salvation is often closely associated with water baptism. In particular, the following descriptions of salvation are explicitly mentioned in connection with water baptism: having our sins forgiven,<sup>5</sup> being saved,<sup>6</sup> participating in Christ's death and resurrection,<sup>7</sup> being clothed with Christ,<sup>8</sup> and being called to eternal life.<sup>9</sup>

What if we are not baptized? Are we denied these gifts? The Bible does not directly answer this question. What is clear, however, is that in the

early church, water baptism was considered an essential component of discipleship.

## **A Few Points of Clarification**

Although water baptism is closely associated with salvation in the New Testament, water baptism does not, by itself, save anyone. Water baptism is mentioned many times in the New Testament, but not nearly as often as repentance and faith. Though (from a biblical perspective) an individual's salvation experience would be incomplete without water baptism, repentance and faith are clearly given greater emphasis in the Bible. Thus, if an individual has been baptized, but has never really repented of his sins or put his faith in Christ, he is in no better position before God than any other person who is not a follower of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, water baptism should only be administered to those who have personally repented of their sins and trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord. This, of course, would exclude infants. Though parents are right to dedicate their children to Christ, water baptism was not instituted by Jesus for that purpose.

Thirdly, following the pattern of the early church, those undergoing baptism should be immersed completely in water when possible.

Fourthly, Matthew's gospel and the book of Acts present us with different "formulas" for baptism. The former speaks of baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The latter regularly refers to baptism "into the Lord Jesus Christ." We should not make too much of this difference; either phrase (or both) can be used. God certainly knows that we are intending to follow Jesus' instructions.

**Have you been baptized since repenting of your sins and putting your faith in Jesus Christ? If not, are you ready to do so now?**

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<sup>1</sup> John 20:27

<sup>2</sup> Acts 16:31

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:38

## Lordship

<sup>4</sup> Romans 6:1-4

<sup>5</sup> Acts 2:38; 22:16

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 3:21

<sup>7</sup> Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12

<sup>8</sup> Galatians 3:27

<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 6:12

# Chapter 4: The Holy Spirit

## The Person of the Holy Spirit

As Jesus neared the time of his crucifixion, he spoke to the disciples about “another advocate” that he would send to them after his departure — an advocate “to help you and be with you forever.”<sup>1</sup> This advocate (or encourager or counselor, depending upon the translation) is the Holy Spirit. Those in the early church did not think of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force, but as a fully divine person. Because God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son are also both fully divine (yet distinct persons from the Holy Spirit in an important sense), the church eventually articulated the important concept of the trinity.

Why did the early church come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is a fully divine person? It had a great deal to do with how the authors of the New Testament documents spoke about him. As we have seen already, John refers to the Holy Spirit as “another advocate.” This language implies that Jesus was the disciples’ advocate up to that time and that the Holy Spirit would be like Jesus in the role he would play in their lives. The Scripture also speaks of the Holy Spirit teaching, reminding, proving, speaking, testifying, interceding, having a mind, and being grieved.<sup>2</sup> These are attributes of personhood. In addition, a number of scriptures speak of God (the Father), the Lord (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit with a parallelism that indicates that they are of equal status in nature and being.

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...*

*Matthew 28:19*

*<sup>4</sup>There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. <sup>5</sup>There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.*

*1 Corinthians 12:4-6*

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

*2 Corinthians 13:14*

*<sup>1</sup> ... To God's elect... <sup>2</sup>who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood...*

*1 Peter 1:1-2*

**What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit? How would you describe who the Holy Spirit is?**

## **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Our Lives**

The Law of Moses played an unparalleled role in the daily lives of the ancient Israelites. The law's regulations touched on everything from moral behavior and religious worship to dietary regulations and treating skin diseases. The Law of Moses directed nearly every part of life. When we come to the New Testament (so named because through Jesus Christ God established a new "covenant" or way of relating with his people), we find that what the Law of Moses was to the ancient Israelites, the Holy Spirit now is to followers of Jesus Christ.

*...we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

*Romans 7:6*

*<sup>16</sup>So I say, walk by the Spirit... <sup>18</sup> ...if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*Galatians 5:16, 18*

The Holy Spirit is active in every stage of discipleship. He plays an instrumental role in drawing us to God<sup>3</sup> and making us new. It is the Holy Spirit who purifies our hearts from sin,<sup>4</sup> regenerates us,<sup>5</sup> and leads us into obedience to God's commands.<sup>6</sup> He develops the fruit of godly character in our lives.<sup>7</sup> The Holy Spirit takes up residence inside every disciple of

## The Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ so that individually and collectively we become new 'temples' where God dwells.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, just as the Holy Spirit led Jesus all throughout his earthly ministry, so the Holy Spirit will lead us as we continue to follow Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will show us what to say in difficult situations.<sup>9</sup> He will help us pray when we don't know what to ask.<sup>10</sup> He will lead us into significant ministry opportunities and call us into mission.<sup>11</sup> He will redirect us when we're not going the way God wants us to go.<sup>12</sup>

But perhaps the most prominent role the Holy Spirit is distinguished as playing in the gospels and the book of Acts is that of empowering people for ministry. Jesus brought attention to this reality at the beginning of his public ministry. The power that Jesus displayed in his public ministry was not primarily a manifestation of his divine nature, but the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life.

*16 ... [Jesus] stood up to read, 17and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*18"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*20Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

*Luke 4:16-21*

All four gospels take note of the Spirit coming upon Jesus at the time of his baptism.

*<sup>21</sup>When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.*

*Luke 3:21-22*

A fullness of the Spirit characterized Jesus' ministry.<sup>13</sup> By the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus healed the multitudes, performed great miracles, and drove out demonic spirits.<sup>14</sup> Jesus told his disciples that God would give to all men and women this same Holy Spirit if they would only ask him.<sup>15</sup> This was a fulfillment of a promise that had been given centuries earlier.

**Have you experienced the Holy Spirit in any of the ways described in this section?**

## **The Promise of the Holy Spirit**

Under the old covenant, inaugurated through Moses, only a few individuals were empowered with God's Spirit. This included prophets like Moses and Elijah, national liberators like Gideon and Samson, and kings like Saul and David. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these individuals signified that God had specifically designated and empowered them for important roles of leadership.

On one occasion, Joshua, who was an aide to the great leader Moses, became greatly concerned when the Holy Spirit rested on several other men among the Israelites, enabling them to prophesy (that is, to speak direct messages from God). Joshua was afraid that Moses' unique position of leadership would be compromised if others manifested the power of the Holy Spirit in the Israelite camp. Moses' response to Joshua is the statement of a hope that would ultimately be fulfilled centuries later.

*...Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!"*

*Numbers 11:29*

## The Holy Spirit

Many years after this incident, a prophet named Joel brought God's word to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. His prophecies included the following message.

<sup>28</sup>*"And afterward,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your old men will dream dreams,  
your young men will see visions.  
<sup>29</sup>Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*

*Joel 2:28-29*

What was previously expressed only as Moses' hope for God's people, was confirmed by God through the prophet Joel. This passage and a number of others in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament created an expectation among the Israelites that God's messiah would bring the power of God's Holy Spirit to all God's people. John the Baptist voiced this expectation in Jesus' day.

<sup>7</sup>*And this was [John's] message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup>I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

*Mark 1:7-8*

As we have already seen, Jesus spoke to his disciples about the Holy Spirit on a number of occasions during the years of his public ministry. After his resurrection from the dead, it was one of the last topics he took up with his disciples.

<sup>4</sup>*On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup>For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

*<sup>6</sup>Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

*<sup>7</sup>He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

*<sup>9</sup>After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

Acts 1:4-9

**What expectations concerning the Holy Spirit did the first disciples have? For what reason was God going to empower them with the Holy Spirit?**

## **The Fulfillment of the Promise**

On the day of Pentecost, a Jewish holiday which occurred fifty days after Passover (the time at which Jesus was crucified), God fulfilled his promise and empowered the disciples with the Holy Spirit. This momentous event marked the birth of the church.

*<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

*<sup>5</sup>Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. <sup>7</sup>Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes and*

## The Holy Spirit

Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup>(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” <sup>12</sup>Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

<sup>13</sup>Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

<sup>14</sup>Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

<sup>15</sup>These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup>“In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup>Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.

<sup>19</sup>I will show wonders in the heavens above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

<sup>20</sup>The sun will be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood  
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

<sup>21</sup>And everyone who calls  
on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Acts 2:1-21

**What happened when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit?  
Describe the scene.**

Note also what Peter goes on to tell the crowd in Acts 2:38-39.

*<sup>38</sup>Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

Acts 2:38-39

## **A Pattern to Follow**

The book of Acts contains several other descriptions of men and women receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. These descriptions are found in the following passages: Acts 8:4-25; Acts 9:1-19; Acts 10:23-48; and Acts 19:1-7. As we read through these passages, an important pattern emerges.

1. Receiving the power of the Holy Spirit is typically an event that is consciously experienced.
2. Receiving God's Holy Spirit is usually preceded by believing the gospel message and being baptized in water. (Note, however, that water baptism sometimes takes place after Spirit empowerment. This was the case with Cornelius's family and friends and seems to have been the case with the apostle Paul/Saul.)
3. The Holy Spirit is frequently received through the laying on of hands.
4. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is often accompanied by speaking in tongues, prophecy, and exclamations of praise.

That Paul expected this to be the usual pattern is illustrated by his interaction with a group of "disciples" in Acts 19:1-7.

*<sup>1</sup>While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples <sup>2</sup>and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"*

*They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."*

<sup>3</sup>So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

<sup>4</sup>Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." <sup>5</sup>On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. <sup>7</sup> There were about twelve men in all.

Acts 19:1-7

These general conclusions are supported in several other places in the New Testament. Jesus, as we already saw, was empowered by the Holy Spirit for ministry after being baptized by John. Paul reminds Timothy that he was empowered by God's Spirit through the laying on of Paul's hands.<sup>16</sup> Paul also reminded the Galatians of their experience of receiving the Holy Spirit while writing to them about faith and the Law of Moses.<sup>17</sup> The author of Hebrews includes the laying on of hands as one of the basic teachings that all disciples should be familiar with.<sup>18</sup>

Through the Holy Spirit, God supplies us with his power to accomplish his mission. For this reason Jesus told his disciples, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."<sup>19</sup>

**Have you been empowered by God's Spirit in this way? If so, what happened?**

## **Eagerly Desire Gifts of the Spirit**

The believers in Corinth had extensive experience with the gifts of God's Spirit. In fact, at the beginning of 1 Corinthians, Paul comments:

*<sup>5</sup>For in [Christ] you have been enriched in every way — with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge... <sup>7</sup>Therefore you do not*

*lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.*

*1 Corinthians 1:5, 7*

The latter part of Paul's letter indicates that the Corinthians had experience with healing, miracles, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and a variety of other gifts. Somewhat surprisingly, then, Paul gives the Corinthians the following instructions:

*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit...*

*1 Corinthians 14:1*

If Paul could tell these believers to actively pursue gifts of the Spirit, we should certainly not take a passive approach! We should eagerly desire the empowerment of God's Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts.

When we ask God to empower us with his Spirit, we can be confident that he will hear us. Jesus told his disciples:

*<sup>11</sup>"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

*Luke 11:11-13*

To accomplish the mission that God has given to us, we need the power of his Holy Spirit.

**Do you eagerly desire gifts of the Holy Spirit? What gifts would you like to see operate in your life?**

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:16

<sup>2</sup> John 14:26; 16:8; Acts 13:2; Romans 8:16; 8:26; 8:27; Ephesians 4:30

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

## The Holy Spirit

- <sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 36:25-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- <sup>5</sup> John 3:1-8; Titus 3:3-7
- <sup>6</sup> Romans 8:1-17
- <sup>7</sup> Galatians 5:22-23
- <sup>8</sup> John 14:17, 23; 1 Corinthians 3:23; 6:19-20
- <sup>9</sup> Matthew 10:17-20
- <sup>10</sup> Romans 8:26-27
- <sup>11</sup> Acts 8:26-40; 13:1-3
- <sup>12</sup> Acts 16:6-7
- <sup>13</sup> Luke 4:1, 14
- <sup>14</sup> Matthew 12:28
- <sup>15</sup> Luke 11:11-13
- <sup>16</sup> 2 Timothy 1:6-8
- <sup>17</sup> Galatians 3:1-6
- <sup>18</sup> Hebrews 6:1-3
- <sup>19</sup> John 14:12



# Notes

## Lordship