

FIRST STEPS OF DEVOTION

A BIBLE STUDY FOR NEW BELIEVERS



RIVERSIDE
CHURCH

BY STEFAN BOMBERGER

FIRST STEPS OF DEVOTION

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR DECISION TO TRUST IN CHRIST!

Now that you have received Jesus as your Savior, it's important that you learn to follow Him. But what does this really mean? And where should you begin? In Acts chapter 2, from the Bible, we get a great picture of our first steps of faith. Here, the Apostle Peter preaches the Good News about Jesus - his life, death, and resurrection. Thousands of people believe in Jesus for the first time. It's incredible! Thousands are all saved. What do they all do next?

*"So those who received his word (Gospel) were baptized (Baptism), and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they **DEVOTED** themselves to the apostles' teaching (Scripture) and the fellowship (Church), to the breaking of bread (Communion) and the prayers (Prayer)." (Acts 2:41-42)*

Notice that they "devoted" themselves. To be devoted is to be fully committed. To be all in. What were their first steps of devotion? There are six that jump out from the passage and will form the six lessons in this new believer's Bible Study:

1	GOSPEL	PAGE 2	4	CHURCH	PAGE 14
2	SCRIPTURE	PAGE 6	5	BAPTISM	PAGE 18
3	PRAYER	PAGE 10	6	COMMUNION	PAGE 22

In each lesson, you will look up four key Bible passages on each topic. Questions and comments are provided to help you think more deeply and better understand what you are learning. We recommend doing this study with another Christian friend to guide you. They can mentor you, guide you, and help you along the way. Once again, congratulations and welcome to God's family!

1 FIRST STEPS

GOSPEL

“So those who received his word were baptized...” (Acts 2:41)

INTRO

The “word” these first believers received from Peter was the gospel. The word “gospel” comes from a Greek word that simply means “good news.” Yet, in Scripture, this “good news” takes on a more narrow and precise meaning. It’s not just any good news. It’s the Good News – *“the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”* (Mark 1:1). Let’s look a little deeper into the content and nature of the gospel.

1. READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

In chapter 15 of this letter, written to the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul reminds the believers of the gospel he preached (v. 1).

a. In the beginning of verse 3, how does Paul describe the importance of the gospel?

b. According to verses 3 and 4, what is the main content of the gospel message?

c. In verse 1 and 2, what are the various ways a positive response to the gospel is described? What do you think this looks like in everyday life?

2. READ ROMANS 1:16

a. Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel?

b. How would you describe salvation?

c. Who is salvation given to?

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Sometimes, in Scripture, the gospel is referred to as “the gospel of the kingdom” (e.g. Matthew 4:23, Acts 8:12). That raises an interesting question. Is it the good news about the kingdom or is it the good news about Jesus Christ? The answer is – both. The “kingdom” is short-hand for the kingdom of God or heaven, where God dwells. The kingdom of God is sphere where God’s lovingly rules and reigns over his citizens.

In ancient times, God promised an anointed descendent, from King David, to rule over this people forever (see 2 Samuel 7). In the New Testament, that’s what the Jews were waiting for; the Messiah or Christ, which means “the Anointed one.” Jesus is that long-awaited King! Jesus Christ is the “Son of David” (Matthew 21:9)! The way we become citizens of the kingdom of God is by receiving its King, Jesus Christ.

3. READ EPHESIANS 1:13-14

In these two verses, “him” and “his” refer to Jesus Christ. To better understand the meaning, reread the two verses, substituting “Christ.”

- a. According to verse 13, what happens when a person hears the gospel and believes in Christ?

- b. The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). He’s God’s personal and powerful presence, given to live inside of Christians. According to verse 14, what does the Spirit serve as? What do you think this means?

- c. Reread the end of verse 14. Who gets praise and glory for our salvation? Why?

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

The Gospel is a message about God’s grace (Acts 20:24)! It’s not about what we do, but what God has done to save us in Christ. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). We were lost and dead in our sins, “but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...” (Titus 3:4-5). Amazing grace is what saves us, through the gospel of Jesus Christ!

4. READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:9-10

The Thessalonians were new Christians in Thessalonica that received the gospel. Paul was confident of their salvation, writing, “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1:4-5). Verses 9 and 10 describe their conversion.

a. According to verse 9, who did these new believers turn away from? What do you think this looks like?

b. What was their new attitude towards God and his Son, Jesus?

c. Reread the end of verse 10. What does Jesus deliver us from? How so?

TAKE ACTION

Are you confident you have received the gospel? If not, what do you need to do next? Why?

2 FIRST STEPS

SCRIPTURE

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...”

- Acts 2:42

INTRO

Devotion to God includes devotion to his teaching as preserved in Scripture. The Bible is an incredible book! In fact, it's not really so much a book, but a collection of books. Think of the Bible as God's library. It was written by dozens of different authors over hundreds of years. But it's been pulled together into one book about God's work to save us. Many wonder, how can Scripture be written by man and still be the Word of God? That where our study begins.

1. READ 2 PETER 1:20-21

a. What are two places the Apostle Peter says Scripture does not come from?

b. In contrast, where does it come from (look at the end of verse 21)? Who carried them along?

THE LIVING WORD

The Bible doesn't simply transfer information, but also transforming power: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Wherever its message takes root, like a plant, it bears fruit and grows (Colossians 1:5-6). The gospel “increases” and “multiplies” (Acts 6:7, 12:24). God's word is alive!

2. READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

a. According to verse 16, what is the specific source of Scripture? What do you think this means?

b. Reread verses 16 and 17. List the various things Scripture is useful for.

c. According to verse 15, what do the “sacred writings” make us wise for? What does this mean?

WORSHIP AND THE BIBLE

Colossians 3:16 says: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Notice, the word of Christ (God’s Word) is to dwell richly in the Church. It’s to be central in both the Church’s teaching and also our songs (psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs). That’s why it’s so important that we keep the Bible at the center of our worship to God. Make sure you find a good church where the Bible is central.

3. READ PSALM 119:9-16

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. The theme is the greatness of God's Word. There are 22 sections that each start with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (Alef = A, Bet = B, etc.). It's like us saying today, "From A to Z, this is how great my Bible is!" We will just look at Bet, or B (verses 9-16).

a. Write out the different words used to describe the Scripture. What do these different words tell you about the nature of your Bible?

b. How does the Bible affect the writer emotionally?

c. Reread verse 11. What do you think it means to "store up" God's Word in your heart? How might you do this practically?

d. What are two benefits, mentioned in verses 9 and 11, of knowing, applying, and obeying the Bible? What might this look like in everyday life?

THE BIG STORY

The Bible is not like a chapter book, going from beginning to end. Like we said before, it's more like your school library. The Bible, like your library, is organized by themes and authors. This what makes it somewhat challenging to quickly understand your Bible, when read from cover-to-cover. It will take you a while to figure out what time-period (what chapter) you are in and what is the larger context of each book. As you grow deeper in your knowledge of God's Word, you will want to grow, not only in learning isolated stories, verses or passages, but also how it all fits together, into one big story about Jesus Christ.

4. READ ACTS 7:2-53

In this section of Scripture a church leader named of Stephen is preaching to a group of unbelieving Jews. In a span of just 52 verses he's able to summarize many of the keys stories and themes of the Old Testament and how they fit together and point to Christ!

- a. What Bible stories do you recognize from Stephen's sermon? List a few.

- b. What stories are new to you? List a few.

- c. What parts of Stephen's sermon helps you better understand the storyline of the Old Testament? How so?

TAKE ACTION

Begin in Matthew 1 and start reading one chapter of the Bible every day until you finish the entire New Testament (260 days).

3 FIRST STEPS

PRAYER

“And they devoted themselves to... the prayers.” - Acts 2:42

INTRO

Many people struggle to pray. We're easily distracted when praying alone or embarrassed when praying out-loud. If you find yourself easily discouraged, take heart to know that even Jesus' closest followers needed help in this area. Luke 11:1 says: “when [Jesus] finished [praying], one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray...’” If Jesus' inner circle needed some hand-holding in this area, how much more do we?! Want to learn how to pray? That's what this third lesson aims to teach!

1. READ MATTHEW 6:7-13

This famous prayer has been called “The Lord's Prayer.” It's a good name, because this is where the Lord Jesus explicitly teaches us how to pray.

a. Reread verse 7. What does Jesus say we should avoid when praying? What do you think this means?

b. In verse 9, Jesus tells us to pray to “Our Father in heaven...” What do you think about calling God your Father? Why?

c. List some of the things Jesus tells us to pray for. What do they reveal about our needs and God's provision?

2. READ MATTHEW 7:7-11

a. Reread verse 7. List the three actions Jesus compares prayer to. In verse 8, what is the outcome of each?

b. Reread verses 9-10. What won't parents (typically) do to their children? Why?

c. Reread verse 11. How should this encourage us to go to God in prayer?

FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

Christian prayer is directed towards all three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:18 puts it this way: "For through him (the Son) we... have access in one Spirit to the Father." We have access to the Father, through the Son, in one Spirit. This pattern is why we normally address our prayers to the Father, as Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in Heaven..." (Matthew 6:9). Jesus is our connection to the Father, which is why we pray through the Son, or in Jesus' name. Lastly, the Holy Spirit empowers and guides our prayers, even helping us to pray (Romans 8:26; Jude 20). This is why we pray in or with the Holy Spirit.

3. READ 1 JOHN 5:14-15

- a. When we pray and ask for things from God, what should our requests agree with (be “according to”)? Why?
- b. List some things that would clearly be outside of this. Why?
- c. List some other things that would clearly line up with this. How do you know?

IN JESUS’ NAME, AMEN

Have you ever noticed how most Christian prayers end? “We pray these things, in Jesus’ name, Amen”? Wonder where that tradition comes from? In John’s Gospel, Jesus tells us often:

- “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do...” (14:13)
- “...whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.” (15:16)
- “...whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.” (16:23)

Whenever we acknowledge the name and authority of Christ we’re agreeing that: “all the promises of God find their ‘Yes’ in [Christ]. That is why it is through [Christ] that we utter our ‘Amen’ to God for his glory” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

4. READ JAMES 5:16-18

a. In verse 16, what are we encouraged to do? Why?

b. In your opinion, what are some reasons we might resist doing this?

c. In verses 17-18, what examples are given of the power of prayer?

d. If another Christian told you, “Prayer doesn’t change things, it only changes us,” how would you respond?

TAKE ACTION

End this study in a brief time of prayer. Start praying a few minutes every day.

4 FIRST STEPS

CHURCH

“...there were added [to the Church] that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to... the fellowship...”

- Acts 2:41-42

INTRO

Why bother joining a church? Does church really matter? And what does “fellowship” in the church even mean or look like? That’s what we will cover in this lesson.

1. READ MATTHEW 16:13-18

a. Who is Jesus, according to verse 16?

b. Based upon this belief, in verse 18, what does Jesus promise to build?

c. Who does the church belong to? How do you know?

d. What does Jesus say “shall not prevail” against his church? What do you think this means?

2. READ ACTS 2:41-47

- a. What does it mean to be devoted? In verse 42, what did the first church devote themselves to?
- b. Reread verse 46. What are some of the places the Church met? How often?
- c. According to verse 45, what's one way the Church helped each other?
- d. Reread verse 47. What effect did the Church's life together have upon outsiders?

WHAT IS FELLOWSHIP?

“And they devoted themselves to... fellowship... all who believed were together and had all things in common” (Act 2:42, 44). The early church was devoted to fellowship. They opened up their homes and their hearts to one another. They shared their lives. That's what fellowship is: a sharing or participation in the life of another. But Christian fellowship goes even deeper. It's not simply sharing our lives; it's also sharing our rich experience of God together. It's only because God first “called (us) into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” and “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” that we can enjoy this special fellowship with one another in the Church (1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Corinthians 13:14).

3. READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-15

- a. Why did the Apostle Paul write this letter to Timothy, a church leader and his spiritual son in the faith?
- b. According to verse 15, who does the church belong to (whose church is it)?
- c. Who lives in a household? Why does Paul call the church the “household of God”?
- d. “A pillar and buttress” exists to hold something up. What does the Church hold up (look to the end of verse 15)?

CHRIST LOVES THE CHURCH

Ephesians 5:25 says: “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Jesus loves the Church like a good husband loves his bride (Ephesians 5:29). Jesus will never give up on his Church. When a man named Saul was persecuting the Church, the risen Christ rebuked him, asking: “Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Act 9:4). For Jesus, to mess with his Church is to mess with Jesus himself (see Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18, 24). That’s how much Jesus loves the Church!

4. READ EPHESIANS 3:20-21

a. What do you think it means for God to receive glory?

b. What are two places, highlighted in the beginning of verse 21, that bring God glory? Why do you think these two are put together, side-by-side?

c. How many generations glorify God in the Church? What does this mean?

TAKE ACTION

Are you committed to a local church? If not, what steps do you need to take?

2. READ MATTHEW 28:18-20

a. This passage contains some of the final instructions Jesus gave us, before he returned to Heaven. According to verse 18, who has authority? How far does this authority extend?

b. Reread verse 19. What does he want us to “make” with his authority?

c. List two ways this is accomplished from verses 19 and 20.

d. According to verse 19, what “name” are we to be baptized in?

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

“Stop – in the name of the law!” It’s the old cliché a police officer shouts when chasing down a criminal. When issuing that verbal command, what is the officer actually saying? When we appeal to the name of something, like the law, we’re appealing to its authority. In this case, he’s saying: “Stop, because I have the authority of the law of the State behind me.” As Christians, that’s why we baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. We baptize in the name and authority of the triune (three-person) God.

3. READ ACTS 8:29-39

In this passage, we witness Philip, an evangelist, lead an Ethiopian official (eunuch) to Christ.

a. Reread verse 35. What did Philip tell the official? What does this mean?

b. Reread verses 36-38. After the official believed in Jesus, what did he want to do next?

c. Reread the end of verse 39. After he was baptized, how did the official feel? Why?

WHAT DOES BAPTISM MEAN?

When God makes a promise or agreement (a covenant), he connects it to a visible sign. For example, the rainbow after the flood of Noah's day was a sign God wouldn't flood the entire world again. Circumcision was the old sign you belonged to his people, the Israelites. Through Christ, God has made a new promise to the world, and baptism is the sign.

Think of it like a wedding ring in our culture. The ring is our sign that an adult is married. It shows the world that they belong to their spouse. It is the sign of the union. Similarly, baptism shows the world that you belong to God. It is the sign of your union with Christ (see Galatians 3:27). Below are a few more beautiful truths baptism displays!

My sins have been washed away

Acts 22:16

I am united to God's one global Church

Ephesians 4:4-6

I have a good conscience toward God

1 Peter 3:21

I have been buried and raised with Christ

Col. 2:11-12, Romans 6:1-4

4. READ ACTS 2:37-41

This is our theme passage. The Apostle Peter has just preached the gospel, that Jesus died and rose again, and the non-Christian listeners ask him, “What shall we do?”

a. In verse 38, what two things does Peter tell them to do?

b. What do you think it means to repent? Have you done this?

c. According to verse 41, all those baptized also “were added” to the church in Jerusalem. Why do you think it’s important to join a local church?

TAKE ACTION

Have you been baptized? If not, what steps do you need to take to schedule it?

6 FIRST STEPS

COMMUNION

“And they devoted themselves to... the breaking of bread...”

(Acts 2:42)

INTRO

After getting baptized and joining the church, these new believers devoted themselves to the breaking of bread. Though they certainly enjoyed entire meals together, this phrase more specifically refers to Communion, sometimes also called the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist (meaning “give thanks”). This is a spiritual meal the Lord Jesus himself gave to the Church to celebrate.

1. READ MATTHEW 26:26-29

a. According to verse 26, what does the broken bread we eat represent?

b. According to verse 28, what does the cup of wine (fruit of the vine) represent?

c. Reread verse 28. Why did Jesus pour out his blood?

2. READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26

a. According to verse 23, who did Paul receive these instructions on communion from? Why is this important?

b. Reread the ends of verses 24 and 25. Why do we do communion?

c. According to verse 26, when you eat the bread and drink the cup, what do you proclaim? For how long?

THE PASSOVER MEAL

Just prior to his death, during the Passover meal, Jesus celebrated the very first communion with his disciples (Luke 22:15; Mark 14:1). Passover is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the time of Israel during their Egyptian captivity. God sent ten plagues. During the final plague, lambs were sacrificed and their blood caused God's judgment to "pass-over" the people (Exodus 12). Now, Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)! During Passover, Jesus shed his blood on the cross, so God's judgment would pass-over us (John 19:14-15)! Taking communion, we remember, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

3. READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:16-17

a. Reread verse 16. What is the communion cup called? Why?

b. What do we “participate in” when we take communion? Why are each so central to the Christian faith?

c. According to verse 17, how does communion show our unity with the body of Christ (the Church)?

SELF-EXAMINATION

During communion, we always look outward to Christ. We focus on both his death (the past) and his return (the future). But we must also look at ourselves. “Let a person [taking communion] examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Corinthians 11:28, c.f. 17-34). Are you harboring any resentment or unforgiveness? Go and be reconciled first (Matthew 5:23-24). Are you living in any unrepentant sin? If so, use the moments prior to taking communion for confession. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us... the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:9, 7).

4. READ JOHN 6:33-35

a. In verse 35, what does Jesus call himself?

b. According to verse 33, where did Jesus come from? What does he do?

c. At the end of verse 35, what does Jesus say will happen when we come to him and believe in him? What do you think this means?

d. How does communion remind us of these truths?

TAKE ACTION

After you have been baptized, start taking communion with your new church. Use it as a time to examine yourself, confess your sins, and remember the sacrifice of Jesus as the basis of your forgiveness.

YOUR ADVENTURE HAS JUST BEGUN

CONGRATULATIONS ON FINISHING YOUR FIRST STEPS!

You did it! You finished your first Bible study as a new Christian. When a baby takes their first steps, they never go back to crawling. Likewise, now that you have started to grow, don't go back. Keep on growing! Jesus tells us that there are only two kinds of lives in this world. Wise lives that are built on a rock – a firm foundation – and foolish lives built on shifting sand. Listen to how he describes the wise builder in Matthew chapter 7:

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (v. 25) And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock” (vv. 24-25).

The quality of your foundation has a direct relation to how your life will stand up in the storms of life. Since that's true, nothing is more important than what foundation you build upon. Build it on Christ and his word. The Bible reveals all you need to know to build correctly for this life and the next!

If you haven't joined a local church yet, that is your next step. Don't put it off. Find a good church where they will disciple you and you can keep growing. Additionally, if you haven't been baptized, meet with the pastor and share your testimony. Tell him you want to get baptized and why. Once again, congratulation on finishing the study. It's been a privilege helping you along in your first steps of devotion to Jesus Christ!

ANSWER KEY 1: GOSPEL

1. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

- a. In the beginning of verse 3, how does Paul describe the importance of the gospel? ***The message “of first importance.” This means it comes first. It’s most important. The gospel is the center of our faith.***
- b. According to verses 3 and 4, what is the main content of the gospel message? ***The person of Jesus Christ (who he is) and the work of Jesus Christ (what he has done to save us). Christ died for our sins (v. 3), Christ was buried (v. 4), Christ was raised on the third day (v. 4), and the risen Christ appeared to hundreds of eyewitnesses (vv. 5-8).***
- c. In verse 1 and 2, what are the various ways a positive response to the gospel is described? What do you think this looks like in everyday life? ***You “received” (the gospel, v. 1), you “stand” (in the gospel, v. 1), you “hold fast” to the word (the gospel, v. 2), you “believed” in (the gospel, v. 2). This describes a person who receives, believes, stands and holds fast to the Good News about Jesus. It is the center of their life - of first importance.***

2. ROMANS 1:16

- a. Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? ***He is not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God (God’s power) of salvation. He is not ashamed because the gospel unleashes God’s power to save us.***
- b. How would you describe salvation? ***Salvation is about being saved. The Bible teaches that Jesus saves us from the judgment of God, the power of Satan, and our enslavement to sin! We are saved from Hell to Heaven; from darkness to light!***
- c. Who is salvation given to? ***Salvation is given to “everyone who believes” in the gospel. The Jew and Greek (Gentile) is a statement of full inclusion, regardless of nationality/ethnicity. The gospel saves everyone in the world who believes.***

3. EPHESIANS 1:13-14

- a. According to verse 13, what happens when a person hears the gospel and believes in Christ? ***We are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. God, through his Spirit, comes into our life and marks us forever as belonging to him.***

- b. According to verse 14, what does the Spirit serve as? ***What do you think this means? The Holy Spirit is “the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it...” This means he guarantees that we belong to God and will go to Heaven, which is when we will acquire full possession of our inheritance in Christ (i.e. resurrection, glory, peace, etc.).***
- c. Reread the end of verse 14. Who gets praise and glory for our salvation? Why? ***Our salvation is to the praise of his glory. God through Christ gets all the glory for our salvation, because he is the one who saved us. It is his work. We are saved by God and for God - all the praise of his glorious grace!***

4. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:9-10

- a. According to verse 9, who did these new believers turn away from? What do you think this looks like? ***They turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. They abandoned false gods, alternative spiritualities, and dead superstitions. They repented of heart-idols, including money, sex, self, etc.***
- b. What was their new attitude towards God and his Son, Jesus? ***They began to serve God - the living and true God. They used their time, money, and effort to serve him. They began to eagerly await for the return of Christ - waiting for God’s Son from heaven.***
- c. Reread the end of verse 10. What does Jesus deliver us from? How so? ***Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come. Jesus saves us from our sin and God’s future holy wrath against sinners revealed on the Day of Judgment. Through the forgiveness that comes from the atoning death of Jesus, we have been delivered from God’s wrath into God’s love.***

ANSWER KEY 2: SCRIPTURE

1. 2 PETER 1:20-21

- a. What are two places the Apostle Peter says Scripture does not come from? ***(1) The prophet’s own interpretation. (2) From the will of man. This means the Bible isn’t any human beings personal opinion, interpretation, preference, or idea.***

- b. In contrast, where does it come from (look at the end of verse 21)? Who carried them along? ***Men spoke from God. The Holy Spirit carried them along. This means the Bible is God speaking. The Holy Spirit is the source of their writings.***

2. 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

- a. According to verse 16, what is the specific source of Scripture? What do you think this means? ***All Scripture is God-breathed. This means that God is the source. It comes from his mouth.***
- b. Reread verses 16 and 17. List the various things Scripture is useful for. ***Scripture is useful for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. It thoroughly equips us for every good work.***
- c. According to verse 15, what do the “sacred writings” make us wise for? What does this mean? ***They are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. This means they give us the saving knowledge we need about Jesus Christ so that we can put our faith in him and be saved. The Bible prepares us for salvation.***

3. PSALM 119:9-16

- a. Write out the different words used to describe the Scripture. What do these different words tell you about the nature of your Bible? ***God’s word, (verses 9, 11, 16), his commandments (verse 10), his statutes (verses 12, 16), the rules of [His] mouth (verse 13), God’s testimonies (verse 14), precepts and ways (verse 15). They show that the Bible has God’s authority and instruct and guide us in the His ways.***
- b. How does the Bible affect the writer emotionally? ***He delights in God’s Word (verses 14, 16). The Bible makes him happy!***
- c. Reread verse 11. What do you think it means to “store up” God’s Word in your heart? How might you do this practically? ***It means to memorize it, to keep it stored away for later. He will not forget it (verse 16). This means we are committed to learning the Bible. We can do this with apps, flashcards, reciting verses, reading the Bible often, songs, and more.***
- d. What are two benefits, mentioned in verses 9 and 11, of knowing, applying, and obeying the Bible? What do you think this looks like in everyday life? ***It keeps our way pure, so that we might not sin against God. It means that the Bible shapes our conscience so that we live pure and holy lives. It helps us know what is right and wrong (sin).***

4. ACTS 7:2-53

- a. What Bible stories do you recognize from Stephen's sermon? List a few. **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve patriarchs, Joseph, Egyptian slavery, Moses, burning bush, Egyptian deliverance, Wilderness wanderings (40 years), 10 Commandments at Mount Sinai, Tent of witness (tabernacle) in the wilderness, Joshua entering the promised land, David's son Solomon builds the first Jewish temple in Jerusalem.**
- b. What stories are new to you? List a few. **(SAME - see above)**
- c. What parts of Stephen's sermon helps you better understand the storyline of the Old Testament? How so? **It shows the sequence of God calling Abraham and his descendants from the Prophet Moses to King Solomon. It shows how God fulfilled his promise to Abraham to multiply his decedents and give his children the Promised Land. It shows how God make a great nation out of a small family and gave us His Word. It quickly shows how it all fits together in order.**

ANSWER KEY 3: PRAYER

1. MATTHEW 6:7-13

- a. Reread verse 7. What does Jesus say we should avoid when praying? What do you think this means? **Do not "heap up empty phrases" and "many words" as unbelievers (the Gentiles) do. This means not to pile on lots of sayings, incantations, or fancy phrases that don't mean anything to us (empty). We should speak simple words from our hearts. We don't need to be wordy.**
- b. In verse 9, Jesus tells us to pray to "Our Father in heaven..." What do you think about calling God your Father? Why? **It's a special privilege given to followers of Jesus - we become God's children. If you have a bad earthly father that lets you down, know that God is perfect and will never fail you. If you have a good earthly father, know that God is even better - He's the best Father ever!**
- c. List some of the things Jesus tells us to pray for. What do they reveal about our needs and God's provision? **"Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." God is holy and we should pray for his perfect will. We pray for bread, because God is our provider. We pray for forgiveness, because we are sinners before him. We pray from deliverance from temptation and evil, because we are vulnerable and need God's protection.**

2. MATTHEW 7:7-11

- a. Reread verse 7. List the three actions Jesus compares prayer to. In verse 8, what is the outcome of each? **Asks (Receives), Seeks (Finds), Knocks (Opened).**
- b. Reread verses 9-10. What won't parents (typically) do to their children? Why? **Parents don't normally give bad gifts (likes stones or serpents) to their children because they love their kids.**
- c. Reread verse 11. How should this encourage us to go to God in prayer? **Earthy parents are evil (sinful) and give good gifts. If we expect good things from them, we should expect even greater things from our Heavenly Father who is perfect!**

3. 1 JOHN 5:14-15

- a. When we pray and ask for things from God, what should our requests agree with (be "according to")? Why? **It must be according to God's will. God won't give you things that are evil because he is good. God will never violate his character.**
- b. List some things that would clearly be outside of this. Why? **Premarital sex, self-exaltation, vain glory, a sinful relationship, piles of money to blow and squander, etc. These things dishonor God.**
- c. List some other things that would clearly line up with this. How do you know? **Grace to forgive someone who hurt you, boldness to share your faith, power from the Holy Spirit, wisdom to choose the right path, etc. These things honor God and are revealed in Scripture as his will for our life.**

4. JAMES 5:16-18

- a. In verse 16, what are we encouraged to do? Why? **Confess our sins to one another and pray for one another so that we may be healed.**
- b. In your opinion, what are some reasons we might resist doing this? **We fear being vulnerable. We are afraid of what others might think. We want to appear strong.**
- c. In verses 17-18, what examples are given of the power of prayer? **Elijah prayed and God stopped and started the rain!**
- d. If another Christian told you, "Prayer doesn't change things, it only changes us," how would you respond? **Prayer does change us, but it also makes a big difference in the world! It is God's sovereign and ordained means of accomplishing his purposes in the world.**

ANSWER KEY 4: CHURCH

1. MATTHEW 16:13-18

- a. Who is Jesus, according to verse 16? ***Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the Living God!***
- b. Based upon this belief, in verse 18, what does Jesus promise to build? ***Jesus promises to build his church.***
- c. Who does the church belong to? How do you know? ***It belongs to Jesus, because he says that it is his (my church).***
- d. What does Jesus say “shall not prevail” against his church? What do you think this means? ***The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ. This means that all the forces of evil, Satan, death, and darkness will never be able to win. The church will stand against them until the end!***

2. ACTS 2:41-47

- a. What does it mean to be devoted? ***In verse 42, what did the Church devote themselves to? It means to be committed. They were committed to the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread (communion) and the prayers.***
- b. Reread verse 46. What are some of the places the Church met? How often? ***They met in the temple (publicly) and in their homes (privately). They met day by day. Their faith wasn’t a one-day-a-week thing. It was a 24-7 thing.***
- c. According to verse 45, what’s one way the Church helped each other? ***Radical generosity. They sold their possessions to help each other out. As a spiritual family, they took care of one another.***
- d. Reread verse 47. What effect did the Church’s life together have upon outsiders? ***They had favor with all the people. This means outsiders saw them and liked what they saw. Their community was attractive and day after day new people were getting saved and added to the Christian community!***

3. 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-15

- a. Why did the Apostle Paul write this letter to Timothy, a church leader and his spiritual son in the faith? ***So Timothy (and we) would know how we ought to behave in the Church - how to live out Church-life together.***

- b. According to verse 15, who does the Church belong to (whose Church is it)? ***It is the Church of the living God – meaning it is God’s. The Church belongs to the Living God.***
- c. Who lives in a household? Why does Paul call the Church the “household of God”? ***A family lives in a household. The Church is called God’s household because we are his spiritual family. He is our Father and we are his children.***
- d. “A pillars and buttress” exists to hold something up. What does the Church hold up (look to the end of verse 15)? ***The Church is a pillar and buttress of the truth. We must support and hold up the truth – God’s truth – in the world.***

4. EPHESIANS 3:20-21

- a. What do you think it means for God to receive glory? ***This means that God is exalted, lifted up, worshipped, adored, honored, revered, feared, loved, etc.***
- b. What are two places, highlighted in the beginning of verse 21, that bring God glory? Why do you think these two are put together, side-by-side? ***God is glorified in the Church and in Christ Jesus. Jesus died to ransom the Church, to purchase a people would bring God glory. Jesus glorifies God by saving the Church. The Church glorifies God by living lives of gratitude for this salvation.***
- c. How many generations glorify God in the Church? What does this mean? ***The Church will glorify God throughout all generations, forever and ever. This means we are meant to glorify God, in the Church, in our generation today!***

ANSWER KEY 5: BAPTISM

1. MATTHEW 3:13-17

- a. Whose voice spoke from Heaven? What did he say? ***God the Father. “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”***
- b. Who descended and came to rest upon Jesus? What form did He take? ***The Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit). The Spirit looked like a dove (bird).***

- c. Jesus is God's eternal Son, who put on the flesh (see John 1:1, 14). How does this passage show God as three-in-one (Trinity) – Father, Son, and Spirit? ***Jesus, the incarnate Son of God is being baptized, while God the Father is pronouncing his pleasure and the Holy Spirit is resting upon Christ.***

2. MATTHEW 28:18-20

- a. According to verse 18, who has authority? How far does this authority extend? ***Jesus has all authority, both on heaven and on earth. His authority is unlimited.***
- b. Reread verse 19. What does he want us to “make” with his authority? ***To make disciples (of Jesus Christ) of all nations. A disciple is a follower or learner, in this case, of Jesus.***
- c. List two ways this is accomplished from verses 19 and 20. ***Baptizing them and teaching them to observe (obey) all that Christ has commanded us.***
- d. According to verse 19, what “name” are we to be baptized in? ***We are to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.***

3. ACTS 8:29-39

- a. Reread verse 35. What did Philip tell the official? What does this mean? ***He tells him the good news about Jesus. The good news is the Gospel. He tells him about the perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection of Jesus. Good news indeed!***
- b. Reread verses 36-38. After the official believed in Jesus, what did he want to do next? ***He wanted to be baptized in water as soon as possible.***
- c. Reread the end of verse 39. After he was baptized, how did the official feel? Why? ***He went on his way rejoicing. He was forgiven and saved! His baptism was a joyous confirmation of his newfound faith in Christ!***

4. ACTS 2:37-41

- a. In verse 38, what two things does Peter tell them to do? ***Repent and be baptized.***
- b. What do you think it means to repent? Have you done this? ***It means to change one's mind and turn, to turn from sin and self-righteousness, to turn to Jesus as one's only hope in this life and the next.***

- c. Why do you think it's important to join a local church? [*See the fourth Bible study lesson.*] *When God saves us, he saves us into his family, the Church. The Christian life is meant to be lived in community together, in the context of the local church.*

ANSWER KEY 6: COMMUNION

1. MATTHEW 26:26-29

- a. According to verse 26, what does the broken bread we eat represent? *The broken bread represents the broken body of Jesus, who suffered for us. He was beaten, flogged, punched, spit upon, wore a crown of thorns, pierced, crucified, and speared. His body was broken for us.*
- b. According to verse 28, what does the cup of wine (fruit of the vine) represent? *It represents the blood of the new covenant; that is Jesus' blood shed on the cross.*
- c. Reread verse 28. Why did Jesus pour out his blood? *Jesus poured out his blood for the forgiveness of the sins of any and all who would trust in him (the "many").*

2. READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26

- a. According to verse 23, who did Paul receive these instructions on communion from? Why is this important? *The instructions Paul delivered on communion he received from the Lord (Jesus Christ). This is important, because he's faithfully passing along Jesus' instructions on communion, for us to repeat today in the Church.*
- b. Reread the ends of verses 24 and 25. Why do we do communion? *Jesus told us to "do this (the bread) in remembrance of me... [and] drink [the cup], in remembrance of me." We take communion to remember Jesus; his broken body (bread) and shed blood (cup).*
- c. According to verse 26, when you eat the bread and drink the cup, what do you proclaim? For how long? *You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. This means we, the Church, continue this memorial meal as a way to proclaim the saving sacrifice of Jesus until he returns ("comes") from Heaven.*

3. READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:16-17

- a. Reread verse 16. What is the communion cup called? Why? ***The cup of blessing. It is called this, because the blood of Jesus purchased for us every spiritual blessing we enjoy; both now and forever (see Ephesian 1:3). Also, his sacrifice cancels the curse of sin in our lives (see Galatians 3:13-14). Jesus drank the cup of wrath we deserved, so we could drink from this cup of blessing (c.f. Matthew 26:39; Isaiah 51: 17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15).***
- b. What do we “participate in” when we take communion? Why are each so central to the Christian faith? ***We participate in the blood of Christ and the body of Christ. Each are central to our faith, because they are the sacrificial means by which Christ purchased our eternal salvation.***
- c. According to verse 17, how does communion show our unity with the body of Christ (the Church)? ***The bread represents the body of Christ. When we partake of that one bread, we show that we are each part of that one body; the Church (c.f. Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 24). This shows our unity with our specific local church congregation – we are one as we take communion together. This also shows our unity with the global Church throughout all time – past and future – because we all partake of the same sacred meal until Jesus comes back.***

4. READ JOHN 6:33-35

- a. In verse 35, what does Jesus call himself? ***Jesus calls himself both “I AM” (the name for God, see Exodus 3:14) and “the bread of life.”***
- b. According to verse 33, where did Jesus come from? What does he do? ***Jesus comes from heaven. Jesus gives life to the world.***
- c. At the end of verse 35, what does Jesus say will happen when we come to him and believe in him? What do you think this means? ***Whoever comes to Jesus shall not hunger, and whoever believes in him shall never thirst. Jesus satisfies our spiritual hunger and thirst; both now and forever.***
- d. How does communion help remind us of these truths? ***As food and drink satisfies our physical hunger and thirst and gives us physical life, the bread and cup reminds us of the one who satisfies our spiritual hunger and thirst and gives us spiritual life.***



RIVERSIDE
CHURCH

WWW.954CHURCH.COM