



*12 Questions for a Strong Foundation  
In Faith and Practice*

*Wednesday Night Bible Study  
7:00 PM*

Some topics in Scripture are worth turning to again and again as the Spirit of God works in the heart and life of the believer to make them more and more like Jesus in moral character and spiritual faith. We're going to revisit 12 of these topics. For some it will be review. For others all new. For everyone an opportunity to invest in your relationship with Jesus.

### TOPICS

*Why "Back to Basics"?*

*Can I be certain I'm a Christian?*

*What are "personal devotions"?*

*What does it mean for Christ to be "Lord"?*

*How can I learn to pray?*

*Is there an easy way to share the gospel?*

*Does everyone have the fruit of the Spirit?*

*How does a person know God's will?*

*Is it okay to set goals in my life?*

*Why does life have to be so hard?*

*Am I ready to be baptized?*

*Does God care how I spend my time?*

*Who is the Holy Spirit?*

*What is "true fellowship"?*

*How much obedience is enough?*

*How can I be less negative?*

*Does anger ever serve God's glory?*

*Where does gratitude come from?*

*What is the difference between humility and humiliation?*

## Why Back to Basics

2 Peter 1:3–12 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

Why back to basics? Why is it good to return to some basic discipleship topics? Peter gives us five reasons:

1. v. 3 God's abundant provision of love, grace, and power
2. v. 4 God's abundant provision of restoration of His image in our lives
3. v. 5 God's abundant provision of an imperative to personal engagement in the process of sanctification
4. v. 8 God's abundant provision of a goal for your life in the world
5. v. 11 God's abundant provision of an entrance into the eternal kingdom

## Can I be certain I am a Christian?

It is one thing to believe in Christ. It is another to know with certainty that what we believe has gained for us what is promised. Are there assurances in the word of God that I am saved, that my faith is enough?

Jesus said, "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." It is likely, if you have any faith at all, it is at least like a grain of mustard seed. But Jesus is not pointing to the quality or quantity of your faith here. He is pointing to the quality and quantity of His faith in His Father and His Father's plan for you.

It is not that your faith is enough. It is that Christ is enough for your faith. "All the promises of God are 'Yes' and 'Amen' in Christ."

Let's take a closer look at the question, "Can I be certain I am a Christian?"

**1 John 5:11,12** *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

**1 John 1:8-9 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* <sup>9</sup> *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

**2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* <sup>18</sup> *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;* <sup>19</sup> *that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* <sup>20</sup> *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* <sup>21</sup> *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Philippians 1:6 (ESV)** *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

**John 10:28 (ESV)** *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

**Romans 8:29-30 (ESV)** <sup>29</sup> *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* <sup>30</sup> *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

**Jude 1:17-23 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.* <sup>18</sup> *They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."* <sup>19</sup> *It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.* <sup>20</sup> *But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,* <sup>21</sup> *keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.* <sup>22</sup> *And have mercy on those who doubt;* <sup>23</sup> *save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by*

*the flesh.*

“Semi-Pelagianism,” a common misconception among believers, requires that good works on our part augment grace on God’s part in order for us to be saved. Doubt arises, then, because we can never be certain that our works are good enough. The truth is, good works flow from us BECAUSE we are saved, as a result, not a cause.

Assurance of salvation depends objectively and solely on the quality of the life and death of Jesus Christ the Son of God to accomplish God’s eternal purpose, all of which was certified by God when He raised Jesus from the dead.

God is ALL that He is at all times and in all places. That is the nature of His glory. We know that God is good, and just, and perfect, and holy. We know that God is right and true. Since God is ALL that He is at all times and in all places, it is inherently and infinitely true that God cannot and will not abandon His glory with a lie.

God does not lie, deceive, mislead, mispresent. He is not false, deceptive, or untrustworthy. God is true. God is truth. Therefore, the assurances He provides must also be true and trustworthy because He will never be less than He is. Not with you. Not with anyone. Ever.

Faith builds not on feelings but facts. Our assurance is not in what we feel (our emotional and experiential state) but Who God is and what He says (our faith state). In other words, we may, subjectively, experience doubt as a Christian, but, objectively, theologically, truthfully, there can be no doubt because salvation is not dependent on any work of the believer but solely on the grace and goodness of God our Savior.

So, how can we build a faith that silences doubt? Live what you know.

- **You know God calls everyone to repent, so repent.**

**Romans 2:4 (ESV)** *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

**2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)** *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

**Revelation 3:19 (ESV)** *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*

- **You know God calls everyone to trust Him, so trust Him.**

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.* <sup>6</sup> *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

- **You know that those who love Jesus obey His commands, so obey.**

**John 14:15 (ESV)** *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

- **You know that the premier command Jesus gave us was to love, so love.**

**John 15:12 (ESV)** *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*



## What are personal devotions?

The easy answer is this: all the time and effort you spend developing your own personal, intimate relationship with God.

While theology and doctrine are essential to faith, God's intent in salvation is a relationship that is formed and nurtured by Truth (theology and doctrine.) He intends that our personal, experiential knowledge of Him make us more than walking theological libraries. He intends a soul-satisfying, heart-changing, life-transforming, mind-stretching, emotionally intimate relationship with Him as we take on, day by day, through the Spirit and the word, the likeness of Jesus.

Jesus practiced personal devotion to His Father.

**Mark 1:35 (ESV)** *And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.*

Genuine Christian faith engages the whole person in a relationship with God: heart, mind, spirit, body. Personal devotions are the relational exercise that builds strong faith and strong practice. Personal devotions are to the soul what going to the gym is to the body.

Here are Oswald Chambers thoughts regarding personal devotion in a devotional article titled, "The Conditions of Discipleship," in his devotional book, *My Utmost for His Highest*:

*If any man come to Me, and hate not ..., he cannot be My disciple. Luke 14:26, also 27, 33.*

If the closest relationships of life clash with the claims of Jesus Christ, He says it must be instant obedience to Himself. Discipleship means personal, passionate devotion to a Person, Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a difference between devotion to a Person and devotion to principles or to a cause. Our Lord never proclaimed a cause; He proclaimed personal devotion to Himself. To be a disciple is to be a devoted love-slave of the Lord Jesus. Many of us who call ourselves Christians are not devoted to Jesus Christ. No man on earth has this passionate love to the Lord Jesus unless the Holy Ghost has imparted it to him. We may admire Him, we may respect Him and reverence Him, but we cannot love Him. The only Lover of the Lord Jesus is the Holy Ghost, and He sheds abroad the very love of God in our hearts. Whenever the Holy Ghost sees a chance of glorifying Jesus, He will take your heart, your nerves, your whole personality, and simply make you blaze and glow with devotion to Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is stamped by 'moral spontaneous originality,' consequently the disciple is open to the same charge that Jesus Christ was, viz., that of inconsistency. But Jesus Christ was always consistent to God, and the Christian must be consistent to the life of the Son of God in him, not consistent to hard and fast creeds. Men pour themselves into creeds, and God has to blast them out of their prejudices before they can become devoted to Jesus Christ.

Chambers, O. (1986). *My utmost for his highest: Selections for the year.* Oswald Chambers Publications; Marshall Pickering.

Here are four verses to think about relative to the topic:

**Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)** *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*  
<sup>6</sup> *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

**Luke 10:38-42 (ESV)** <sup>38</sup> *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. <sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

**1 Timothy 4:7-8 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;*  
<sup>8</sup> *for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

Like any good, healthy, meaningful relationship, our relationship with God through Christ takes time, effort, intent, and discipline. The relationship God commits to with us is not meant to be stagnant but to grow, develop, deepen over time, and we have a role in developing and nurturing that relationship. We are not meant to simply put our faith in Jesus and stop at conversion. We are meant to increase in love and grace and power and faith until we reach full maturity in Christ (see Ephesians 4:13). This maturity is accomplished partially through intentional, focused, private time spent in Bible study, prayer, worship, and obedience.

This personal worship has many of the marks of the Sabbath. It is time spent in worship and rest and spiritual renewal to which God Himself has called and commanded us. Words like *consistency, continuity, commitment, contentment, communication, and confirmation* are rightly associated with the discipleship practice of personal devotions. Jesus said that knowing the one true God was eternal life. Time spent in personal devotion and worship is an investment in knowing God and therefore an investment in the acquisition of eternal life promised us by Christ through Christ.

The call to commitment to personal devotion (as both practice and life-style) is grounded on:  
The mercies of God

**Romans 12:1 (ESV)** *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

The goodness of God

**1 Samuel 12:24 (ESV)** *Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.*

The call of God.

**1 Thessalonians 2:12 (ESV)** *we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

The death of Christ

**2 Corinthians 5:15 (ESV)** *and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

Our creation

**Psalms 86:9 (ESV)** *All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord,*



*and shall glorify your name.*

Our preservation

**Isaiah 46:4 (ESV)** *even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.*

Our redemption. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

The conduct of our personal devotions should be:

With our spirit

**1 Peter 4:6 (ESV)** *For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.*

With our bodies

**1 Corinthians 6:20 (ESV)** *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

**Romans 6:12-13 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.*

**1 Peter 4:2 (ESV)** *so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.*

With our best commitment

**Exodus 22:29 (ESV)** *“You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me.*

**Proverbs 3:9 (ESV)** *Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce;*

With our unreserved commitment

**Matthew 6:24 (ESV)** *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

**Luke 14:33 (ESV)** *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

With abounding commitment

**1 Thessalonians 4:1 (ESV)** *Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.*

With persevering commitment

**Luke 1:74-75 (ESV)** <sup>74</sup> *that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,* <sup>75</sup> *in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

**Luke 9:62 (ESV)** *Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

With a whole life commitment

**Romans 14:8 (ESV)** *For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.*

**Philippians 1:20 (ESV)** *as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.*

The content of our personal devotional practice should be exhibited in:

Loving God

**Deuteronomy 6:5 (ESV)** *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

**Luke 10:27 (ESV)** *And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."*

Serving God

**1 Samuel 12:24 (ESV)** *Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.*

**Romans 12:11 (ESV)** *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.*

Walking worthy of God

**1 Thessalonians 2:12 (ESV)** *we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

Doing all to God's glory

**1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)** *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

Self-surrender

**Mark 8:34 (ESV)** *And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*

Living to Christ

**2 Corinthians 5:15 (ESV)** *and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

Total commitment

**Matthew 19:21 (ESV)** *Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess*

*and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."*

**Matthew 19:28-29 (ESV)** <sup>28</sup> *Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* <sup>29</sup> *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.*

Torrey, R. A. (1897). The New Topical Text Book: A Scripture Text Book for the Use of Ministers, Teachers, and All Christian Workers (New, revised and enlarged edition, p. 68). Fleming H. Revell.

So, the practical questions becomes, "How do we have personal devotions that are both meaningful and helpful?" Here are a few guidelines

1. Set aside time, daily. Same time, same place every day is a best practice.
2. Find a quiet place where you can concentrate and don't take your phone!
3. Have a Bible, a hymnal, a notebook, and a pen handy.
4. Ask God to be present with you as you worship and invest yourself in Him.
5. Prayer, worship, Bible reading are means of investing in this relationship. Listening to sermons or good, solid, Bible teaching can be a part of this time. Some people use devotional books along with their Bibles to augment their efforts.
6. What other resources or practices can you think of that will help you know Christ better and follow Him more faithfully from the heart?
7. In order to develop a solid, meaningful devotional habit, some re-prioritizing often has to happen in our lives. What activities may have to be shifted in order to make personal devotions a priority in your life?

Prayer, Bible reading, and worship are essential components of personal devotional practice. While we are thinking about how to engage in personal devotions, let's consider some good advice regarding devotional Bible study. This excerpt comes from the book, *Biblical hermeneutics: a comprehensive introduction to interpreting Scripture* (2nd ed., pp. 46-49) from Broadman & Holman.

The potential for practical, moral, and theological error is great among those Christians who have little knowledge of applying the Bible personally. Awareness of these problems must guide Christians as they practice devotional study of the Scripture.

Devotional study aims at changing personal behavior. Those who practice devotional study must approach the Bible with a desire to listen readily to God's voice. Several procedures can be used to assure wisdom and accuracy in making application of Scripture.

### **Guidelines in Practicing Devotional Study**

Some who use the Bible to promote moral and spiritual growth can abuse Scripture. Some

Christians will feel that any means for obtaining a blessing is justified in Bible study. The following principles are intended to provide a wise use of the Bible in moral and spiritual growth.

First, those who practice devotional study of the Bible must understand the true grammatical-historical sense of the verse or section of the Bible. Some well-intentioned Christians, eager to find a practical use of Scripture, will utilize an application which violates Scripture's meaning. The result can be either trifling or confusing. At a time when few medicines were available to treat illnesses, Paul advised Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach problems and for his numerous weaknesses (1 Tim. 5:23). A Christian with a nervous stomach today should not take this suggestion as a guideline for personal physical problems.

Second, we must view the Bible more as a book of general principles than as a collection of detailed directions. If the Bible were too specific, it would be linked to a time and a culture. If the Bible were a collection of rules, then a Christian might obey the letter of the rules and miss the spirit of genuine godliness. The words of James in 2:1-7 are not relevant in providing instructions for seating in most Christian churches. Most churches have seats which are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Normally the poor are not placed in uncomfortable seating in comparison to the wealthy. The words of James, however, do provide guidance for Christians in dealing with the problem of bias against the poor and toward the rich. The principle of the passage is thus useful in our time and culture to stimulate us to show compassion for the poor.

Third, some commands of Scripture are to be obeyed according to their spirit rather than in a literal fashion. Literal obedience would sometimes entail drastic consequences. Jesus' suggestion in Matthew 5:29-30 to pluck out offending eyes and cut off offending hands is not to be taken literally. Jesus is eager that Christians confront personal sin with relentless firmness rather than pamper and nurture it in any form.

Fourth, the student should correlate the passage with other sections of Scripture. This principle represents an effort to compare the topic or the passage being investigated with other passages which teach the same truth. Jesus' teaching about prayer in Matthew 7:7 seems to be an unqualified promise of an answer for those who continue asking. We should modify our understanding of this Scripture in the light of such passages as James 4:3 and 1 John 5:14-15 which show that the motives of the petitioner and the will of God are also factors in answered prayer. Our correlation of the passage which we are studying will help us to realize that sometimes the Bible writers do not provide discussion about the possible applications of a passage when they initially discuss it. Our comparison of one passage with another which deals with a similar topic can assist us in making a wise application.

### **Practicing Devotional Study**

In practicing devotional study of Scripture, we can list the specific areas in which the truth from a writing can be applied. We can apply the truth personally and to others. We can apply truths in the political, economic, and social arenas as well as in the spiritual arena. In probing areas of application, it is helpful to use key questions. Among questions which we can address to a passage are:

1. What am I to believe as a result of this passage?

2. What am I to do as a result of this passage? Are there actions which I must begin or change? Are there attitudes which I must confront such as fear, worry, hate, resentment, or jealousy?

3. What have I learned about relationships? Does this passage teach me a new truth about my relationship with God? Do I see new insights into my relationship with others in my family, community, congregation, or world?

4. Is there a promise that I need to claim? Are there conditions for claiming this promise? Is there some word of encouragement or hope for me?

We must not use these questions in a mechanical way. They serve as an aid in probing possibilities for application. To assure that all application moves from theory to practice, it is helpful to state a devotional application in the form of a principle. This principle will provide a goal toward which we can direct our own energies in devotional application.

Corley, B., Lemke, S., & Lovejoy, G. (2002). *Biblical hermeneutics: a comprehensive introduction to interpreting Scripture* (2nd ed., pp. 46–49). Broadman & Holman.



## What does it mean for Christ to be “Lord” of my life?

### The Mariner’s Message

Imagine a ship guided by a skilled captain. The captain owns the ship, employs the crew, negotiates for the cargo, determines the destination, names the price of stowage and passage. The captain’s authority in regards to and onboard his ship is absolute. The captain dictates the ship’s purpose, complement, course, speed, and activities. The entire crew looks to the captain to supply their needs, order their tasks, distribute the rewards, apply the discipline, and provide direction. Nothing on board the ship is considered outside the captain’s authority or concern. The captain is lord and master of the ship and all the lives aboard for the duration of the voyage. To take any other perspective is mutiny.

The expectation of God, as revealed in His word, is that those who answer the call of Jesus, “Come, follow me,” will continue in the life of faith with Jesus as their Leader, their Teacher, their Lord. Jesus does not call those first disciples from the boat to the shore and then commend them for their faith and leave them their on their own, to do their own thing henceforth. He calls them to a commitment to follow Him into His agenda for their lives. Their acceptance of His call is an assent not only to His invitation but to His ongoing agenda, to what they will become as a result of being His followers.

### The Disciple Question

Disciples of Jesus accept and commit themselves to the Lordship of Jesus. But what exactly does it mean for Christ to be Lord of my life? What does it mean for me, in faith, to surrender to Christ and make Him the captain of my ship? Let’s consider the answer to the question in terms of four spiritual conditions that accompany genuine faith in Christ: calling, commitment, conduct, commission

### The Lordship Conditions

**The disciple is called to both faith and service**

**Romans 10:8-9 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);* <sup>9</sup> *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

**Acts 2:36 (ESV)** *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

A person is saved (justified before God) by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. A disciple, saved by faith, develops in the life of faith as they learn to yield more and more of their life to Christ’s present and continuous authority. Christ is not only the believer’s Savior, a position provided by God, He is also the disciple’s Lord, a position required by God.

The titles “Lord” and “Christ” denote more than mere identifiers. They reveal how any given person must relate to Jesus if they are to be “in relationship with Christ.” Jesus is not only One who “does things for us,” He is the One, by God’s command, to Whom we owe allegiance and obedience. He is both God’s anointed One (“Christ”) and His appointed and authorized One.

To have Christ as the Lord in our lives means first of all to be called by God into a relationship with Christ that begins with faith in Him and continues in faithfulness to Him. That ongoing, increasing faithfulness is called “commitment.”

**The disciple commits their life to faith and service**

**Luke 9:57-62 (ESV)** <sup>57</sup> *As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you*

*wherever you go.”<sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”<sup>59</sup> To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”<sup>60</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”<sup>61</sup> Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”<sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

That Christ is both Savior and Lord in our lives means that we humbly and intentionally submit not only in faith in His death on the cross and seek forgiveness of sin through Him but also that we measure every single aspect of our lives against His character and His will for us. We commit our will to His will. We yield to His plan to transform us into His likeness. We actively pursue God’s ongoing transforming power and grace. We hold nothing back from Christ. We refuse to retain authority over anything in our lives, yielding every aspect of our self to Him: what we think, what we love, what we desire, what we reject, how we relate and respond, what we are. Everything surrendered to Him in order that He might make us like Him.

### **The disciple conducts their life in faith and service.**

**John 13:13-14 (ESV)** *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.*

**John 20:28 (ESV)** *Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”*

Put another way, salvation in Christ has both a moral and an ethical component. The effect of saving grace on the state of our soul is life-saving. The effect of sustaining grace is life-changing. There is grace that changes our standing with God. We call that saving grace or justifying grace. There is also grace that changes the way we live before God, the way we conduct our lives in the world before Him, the way we practice our lives, conduct ourselves and behave in the world. Christ expects His followers to become like Him in what they believe and think and in how those beliefs and convictions impact and guide their living.

When Jesus the Lord commands His corps of disciples, “Love one another!” He intends them to conduct their lives in a manner characterized by the love for the Father and for one another that He has so vividly demonstrated to them. He expects them to adopt for themselves His life in the world. How does Jesus commit Himself to the Father’s will and conduct Himself in the world? The answer to that question is how the disciples of Jesus are expected to conduct themselves in the world.

### **The called and committed disciple conducts their life commissioned to faith and service.**

**Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”<sup>19</sup> Go therefore 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> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Jesus, fully authorized by God, fully vested with God’s sovereign authority to accomplish God’s will in the world, commissions His disciples to the work of making disciples. To live under the lordship of Jesus is to be called to faith in Him, committed to faithfulness to Him, conducting one’s life in accordance with His life, and faithfully pursuing His commission in the world.





## How can I learn to pray?

### Luke 11:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." <sup>2</sup> And he said to them, "When you pray, say: . . .

Prayer is as natural to a disciple of Jesus as breathing. Talking to God as walking. Innately, disciples want to fellowship with the Teacher and prayer is an active means for fellowship.

But how do we go about praying? Is there a form or formula? Are there right ways and wrong ways to pray? Do some prayers please God and others elicit an angry response? How can I learn to pray?

Like any other learned activity, you first have to start. Longing for fellowship with Christ is good and desire to pray is healthy but at some point, whatever else you do, you just have to start. Will it feel awkward? Will you stumble? Have you ever seen a baby learn to walk? Sure, it may take a while for you to feel totally comfortable but the effort IS the process. Don't wait for a lesson. Try.

Prayer really is a simple conversation with God from the heart. Start there. Tell God what is on your heart. Tell Him what is on your heart about Him. Tell Him what is on your heart about you and the people you love. Tell Him what is on your heart about the world and what's happening around you. Tell Him what you've found in His word, what is instructive and what is puzzling. Tell Him something. Tell Him everything.

Then listen. Like any good communication, prayer is a two-way street. Some talking, some listening. Listen when you pray because God will speak. He may bring a particular Scripture to mind relative to what you are praying about. He may leave you with an impression that does not fade away but seems to urge attention and action. He may bring to mind some attribute of His character that bears consideration: how are you like this or how are you not like this?

Some prayer is intentional. Some is casual. Some prayers lead with adoration and worship. Other prayers, born in crisis and trouble, rise like a call for help from faltering lips. Prayer is the heart and soul reaching out to God like a thirsty man reaches for a glass of water on a sun scorched summer day.

Remember this, when God's beloved children pray, they do not have to negotiate for His attention. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ear is inclined to their prayer.*

Probably the greatest hindrance to prayer, other than guilt, is the reluctance to simply try. Let that reluctance pass. God is eager to hear from you, eager to speak with you, eager to fellowship with you, eager to love you.

Want to learn to pray? Try.

What keeps me from trying to grow in prayer?





## Is there an easy way to share the gospel?

### Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore 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> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

First, you need conviction

- That the authority of Jesus is real and applicable now
- That you are obligated by grace to share the gospel
- That the gospel actually has the life transforming message of grace people need
- That love and duty compel you to live, love, and share the gospel.

Second, you need confirmation

- That you know the gospel well enough to share it
- That your life exemplifies the gospel well enough to support it

Third, you need

- To train yourself to recognize or make opportunities to share the gospel
- To remember that the ultimate responsibility falls on the Spirit, not you
- To practice until talking about Jesus and the grace of God is second nature

Fourth, you need

- An opening that you know well and are so comfortable with you can adapt it on the spot
- A ready mind, an eager spirit, an open heart, and a determined will
- A biblically informed expectation

The Parable of the Four Soils (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23)

How will the gospel seed fall on the hard heart?

How will the gospel seed fall on the stony heart?

How will the gospel seed fall on the thorny heart?

How will the gospel seed fall on the ready heart?

How does the insight Jesus provides in this parable make sharing the gospel easier?



## Does everyone have the fruit of the Spirit?

### Galatians 5:22-24 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

What is the spiritual expectation of “fruitfulness” in the Bible?

Commanded by God

Of Adam

**Genesis 1:22 (ESV)** *And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”*

**Genesis 1:28 (ESV)** *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

Of Noah

**Genesis 9:1 (ESV)** *And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.*

**Genesis 9:7 (ESV)** *And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.”*

Of Abram

**Genesis 17:6 (ESV)** *I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.*

Of Jacob

**Genesis 35:11 (ESV)** *And God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.*

Preached by John the Baptist

**Matthew 3:8 (ESV)** *Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.*

**Matthew 3:10 (ESV)** *Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Expected by Christ

**Matthew 12:33 (ESV)** *“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit.*

**Luke 6:43-44 (ESV)** <sup>43</sup> *“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, <sup>44</sup> for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.*

**John 15:5 (ESV)** *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in*

*him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

**John 15:8 (ESV)** *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

**John 15:16 (ESV)** *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.*

Nurtured by the Spirit

**Romans 6:21-22 (ESV)** <sup>21</sup> *But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.* <sup>22</sup> *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*

**Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* <sup>23</sup> *gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Produced by Faithfulness

**Colossians 1:9-10 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,* <sup>10</sup> *so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

Fruitfulness is the supernatural response of the soul and spirit, heart, mind, and body to the saving work of God in Christ and the sanctifying work of the Spirit as God transforms the inner life and outer conduct of a believer into the likeness of Christ. It is the direct result of keeping covenant with God for it depends on the working of God in the garden of the heart and hearts of His people. In other words, spiritual fruit is not the result of self-effort on our part but of real spiritual activity on God's part. We are simply the context in which God does His work, the branch that bears the grapes, the field that yields the harvest, the garden in which the fruit of faith matures to readiness.

Keeping in mind that spiritual fruitfulness is commanded by God and is the work of God in the heart and life of His people, we can now focus on the fruit of the Spirit and ask these four questions:

- What are the "fruit of the Spirit"?

Name them:

Identify them as a group:

- What are the spiritual antitheses of the fruit of the Spirit?



**Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,* <sup>20</sup> *idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,* <sup>21</sup> *envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Name them:

Identify them as a group:

By this quick exercise you should see that our lives produce either the “works of the flesh” (which lead to death and exclude us from the kingdom of God) or the fruit of the Spirit (about which there is no judgment and which are the result of crucifying the flesh and its works.)

It is so very important, especially in our day as the evil one actively deceives the people of this world into compromise and lies, that we grasp the reality of a changed life through the work of the Holy Spirit. We must commit in faith and through faith to that transformation in our own hearts from lives lived according to the desires of the sinful nature (the flesh) to the life lived in the Spirit, in trust and obedience to active working and direction of God.

- How are the fruit of the Spirit gained?  
See Ephesians 5:1-21 (especially verse 18)
- Does everyone have the fruit of the Spirit? (How do the fruit of the Spirit differ in this from the gifts of the Spirit?)



## How does a person know God's will?

### **James 4:13-15 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" – <sup>14</sup> yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."



## Is it okay to set goals in my life since God is supposed to be in charge?

1. Proverbs 15:22; 20:18 (We should seek the counsel of others to help us plan and set goals.)
2. Proverbs 16:3 (We should commit our plans to the Lord.)
3. Proverbs 20:4 (There is a right time to do certain things. Our goals should reflect the proper timing.)
4. Proverbs 21:5 (We should plan carefully and not hurry into action.)
5. Isaiah 30:15–18 (God must be at the center of our plans.)
6. Matthew 6:33–34 (Our first goal must be to “seek God’s kingdom.”)
7. Matthew 7:12 (Our goals should respect others.)
8. John 6:6 (Jesus knew what he was going to do—he had goals.)
9. Philippians 3:12–14 (Paul’s goal was to serve Christ with his life.)
10. Philippians 4:13 (God will give us strength to carry out our plans.)
11. Hebrews 12:1–3 (We should get rid of anything that hinders us from following Christ.)
12. 2 Peter 1:5–9 (One of our spiritual goals should be to increase our faith.)

### Strive For the Goal

Distribute copies of Philippians 3:12–4:1. Introduce the passage by mentioning the fact that the Bible repeatedly uses athletic effort as a model for thinking about spiritual growth. Some students may be helped by having you mention several other significant passages: 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; 1 Timothy 4:7–10; Hebrews 12:1–2. Have someone read the passage aloud. Choose from the following questions for your discussion:

What different ways did Paul use to describe where he was in living life as a Christian?

How did Paul describe his goal? What other specifics did he add to his initial description (see verses 20–21)?

What do verses 15–16 teach about goals?

How did Paul describe the goals of those who resist Christ?

How did Paul express the fact that we can count on help in setting our goals?

Paul was coming to the end of this letter and he wanted to emphasize how important these directions were for the Philippians. How did he convey his seriousness?

### Related Bible Verses

Genesis 9:1; 11:1–9—Personal goals vs. God’s will

2 Samuel 2:20–23—Make sure your goals are worthy

Psalms 97:10—Make your goals God’s goals

Ecclesiastes 12:13–14—The ultimate goal in life

Philippians 3:12–20—Keep focusing on your goals

James 4:13–16—Make sure your goals please God

(From Youth Meetings for Lessonmaker [Goals])



## **Why does life have to be so hard?**

### **John 16:33 (ESV)**

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*





## **Am I ready for baptism?**

### **Romans 6:1-4 (ESV)**

*<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*



## **Does God care how I spend my time?**

### **Ephesians 5:15-16 (ESV)**

*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*



## Who is the Holy Spirit and what is my relationship with Him?

### John 14:15-17 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*



**Is it possible for believers to truly be of one mind and heart and enjoy true fellowship?**





**How much obedience is enough?**



**How can I become less negative?**

Joy may be full . . .



**Does anger ever serve God's glory?**



**How can I cultivate more gratitude in my life?**

NOTES:

Lined area for notes with multiple horizontal lines.



**What is the difference between humility and humiliation?**



1 Cedar Grove Lane PO Box 662  
Grand Marais, MN 55604

218-387-2090

[cornerstone@cscchurch.com](mailto:cornerstone@cscchurch.com)  
[www.cscchurch.com](http://www.cscchurch.com)