



- Week 1: “Church 1.0” – Membership
  - Learn more about our church, our pastors, our mission, vision, values, and other related. This is how God transforms our lives with His truth and love.
- Week 2: “Essentials 2.0” - Maturity
  - Learn about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. This equates to living a life overflowing with peace and joy, purpose and meaning. How? Among other things, by developing biblical disciplines, err, I mean *delights*.
- Week 3: “Discovery 3.0” - Ministry
  - Discover and develop the spiritual gifts that God gave you by taking a spiritual gifts assessment. This will provide the insight needed to carry out a purpose greater than yourself – an eternal purpose.
- Week 4: “Serve 4.0” - Mission
  - We were “saved to serve”. A life of service to God, His church, and the world - for something eternally significant - is where you are blessed beyond your imagination.

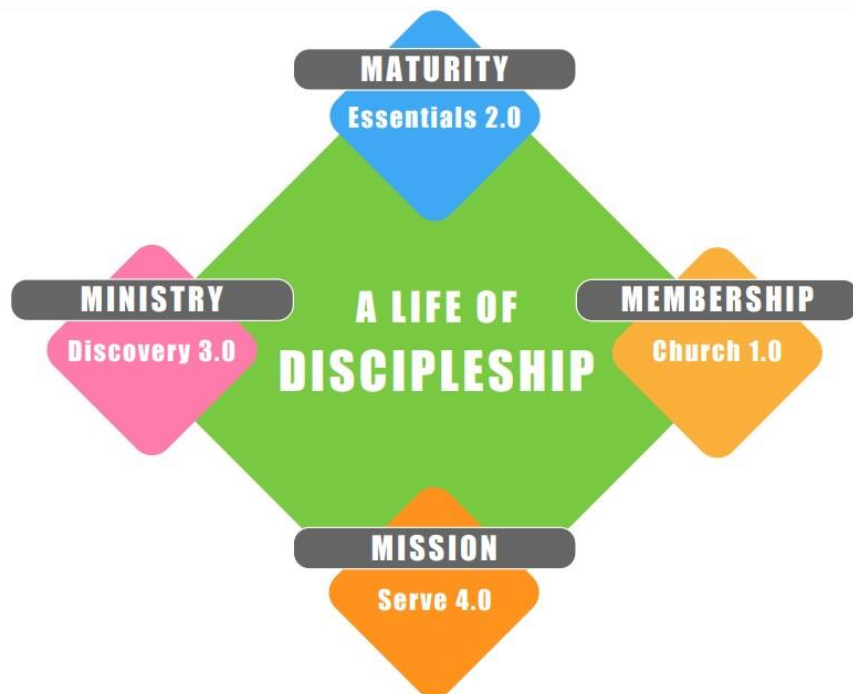
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## WELCOME TO ESSENTIALS 2.0 – MATURITY!

### INTRODUCTION

In this section, you will learn or re-learn 1) what it means to be a follower of Jesus and the indescribable blessings to be experienced, 2) the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and 3) some biblical disciplines that, when practiced consistently, will get you on your way on this life journey we call “a walk with Jesus.”

### PART 1: “FOLLOW ME”

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He called His disciples to follow Him. He literally used the words, “Follow Me.” What does this mean?

Jesus was calling them on a life-long journey. To be a disciple means to be an obedient follower and learner of someone. This is what biblical Christianity is all about.

Many people in our culture have made Jesus “Savior” of their lives. In other words, they trusted in Jesus’ claim to be eternal God who came to the earth to live a sinless life in order to be an acceptable sacrifice for their sins. After dying on the cross, on the third day He rose again. By virtue of His resurrection, He defeated sin and death and offers the free gift of forgiveness and eternal life to all who would profess their faith in Him.

Wow, that was a lot of what I call Christianese right there. What does all that mean? Well, have you heard of “The Four Spiritual Laws?”

The bible is a really big “book.” Actually, the protestant bible comprises of 66 books written by 40 authors on three different continents over the course of 1,500 years and in three different languages, but I digress.

Being that the bible is a really big “book,” is there a simple way to understand the Gospel message? (The Gospel, by the way, is defined as the good news regarding Jesus and the way to be saved.) Yes, there is!

The Four Spiritual Laws provides a simple and easy-to-memorize framework of understanding the Gospel message. Let’s dive in.

## THE FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS

### **LAW 1: God loves us and has an indescribably amazing purpose and plan for our lives.**

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

*John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*

### **LAW 2: We were born with a sin nature and therefore cannot experience this amazing purpose and plan.**

*John 8:34 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*

*Romans 3:23 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*

*Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### **LAW 3: Through Jesus' death on the cross, we are offered forgiveness of our sins.**

*Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance<sup>[a]</sup>: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...*

### **LAW 4: God's amazing grace enables us to believe in Jesus' claims and receive His offer of forgiveness, and through our obedience as followers and learners of Jesus, we get to experience this amazing purpose and plan He has for us.**

*John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...*

*Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.*

The above framework explains concisely what the Gospel message is and how we can be saved from our sins. In other words, *the Four Spiritual Laws* explains how to receive Jesus as “Savior” of our lives.

*Yet, this framework doesn't provide adequate insight as to how to make Jesus “Lord” of our lives.*

To call Jesus Savior points to a fancy Christianese doctrinal word: “salvation.” Yet to call Jesus Lord points to another fancy doctrinal word: “sanctification.”

One of the main themes of the book of James in our bible is that, yes, we are saved by the grace of God which enables us to have faith in Jesus’s claims and to accept His free offer of forgiveness of our sins and become “born again” Christians. Yet, the question must be asked:

*What type of faith did you exercise?*

James teaches that there are different types of faith. There is a “dead” faith, which has no evidence of a changed life. And there is a “dynamic” faith, a faith that is evidenced by a changed life. The Holy Spirit has taught His church through the book of James that if there is no changed life, then perhaps one may not have become a born-again Christian after all.

A vast majority of people who claim to be Christians have not made Jesus Lord of their lives. In other words, they have fallen into the deception of what is called “easy believism.”

In the words of gotquestions.org:

*Easy believism is a somewhat derogatory term used by opponents of the view that one needs only to believe in Jesus in order to be saved. From this they conclude that those who hold to sola fide (“faith alone”) teach that no corresponding need exists for a committed life of Christian discipleship as proof of salvation; however, that is not what sola fide means. **True faith in Christ will always lead to a changed life.** Another common usage of **the term easy believism is regarding those who believe they're saved because they prayed a prayer—with no real conviction of sin and no real faith in Christ.** Praying a prayer is easy—thus the term easy believism—but **there is more to salvation than mouthing words.***

*Much of the debate over easy believism is unnecessary and is based on a misunderstanding of the Scriptures. **The bible is clear that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.** The essence of this doctrine is found in Ephesians 2:8–9: “For by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” So we see that faith, given as a gift by God, is what saves us. But the next verse tells of the results of that salvation: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” **Rather than being saved by some easy act of our own wills, we are saved by the hand of God Almighty, by His will and for His use.** We are His servants, and from the moment of salvation by faith, we embark on a journey*

of pre-ordained good works that are the evidence of that salvation. **If there is no evidence of growth and good works, we have reason to doubt that salvation ever truly took place. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20), and a dead faith is not a saving faith.**

"Faith alone" does not mean that some believers follow Christ in a life of discipleship, while others do not. The concept of the "carnal Christian," as a separate category of non-spiritual believer, is completely unscriptural. The idea of the carnal Christian says that a person may receive Christ as Savior during a religious experience but never manifest evidence of a changed life. This is **a false and dangerous teaching in that it excuses various ungodly lifestyles: a man may be an unrepentant adulterer, liar, or thief, but he's "saved" because he prayed a prayer as a child; he's just a "carnal Christian." The bible nowhere supports the idea that a true Christian can remain carnal for an entire lifetime.** Rather, God's Word presents only two categories of people: Christians and non-Christians, believers and unbelievers, those who have bowed to the Lordship of Christ and those who have not (see John 3:36; Romans 6:17–18; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:18–24; Ephesians 2:1–5; 1 John 1:5–7; 2:3–4).

While the security of salvation is a biblical fact based upon the finished work of salvation by Christ, it is certainly true that some of those who seemed to have "made a decision" or "accepted Christ" may not genuinely be saved. As noted before, **true salvation is not so much our accepting Christ as it is His accepting us. We are saved by the power of God for the purpose of God, and that purpose includes the works that give evidence of our conversion.** Those who continue to walk according to the flesh are not believers (Romans 8:5–8). Therefore Paul exhorts us to "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). The "carnal" Christian who examines himself will soon see that he/she is not in the faith.

James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" The type of "belief" demons have can be compared to the intellectual assent made by those who "believe" in Jesus in the fact that He exists or that He was a good person. Many unbelievers say, "I believe in God" or "I believe in Jesus"; others say, "I prayed a prayer, and the preacher said I was saved." But such prayers and such belief do not necessarily signal a change of heart. The problem is a misunderstanding of the word believe. **With true salvation comes genuine repentance and real-life change. Second Corinthians 5:17 says that those who are in Christ are a "new creation." Is it possible that the new person Christ creates is one who continues to walk in the carnality of the flesh? No.**

Salvation is certainly free, but, at the same time, it costs us everything. We are to die to ourselves as we change into the likeness of Christ. Where easy believism fails is its lack of recognition that a person with faith in Jesus will lead a progressively changed life. **Salvation is a free gift from God to those who believe, but discipleship and obedience are the response that will no doubt occur when one truly comes to Christ in faith.**

Now that you have been taught, or re-taught what it means to follow Jesus, how about we move on to learning about the most indescribable blessing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

But first, a few questions for discussion.

**Questions for Discussion**

- 1. What does it mean to follow Jesus as both Savior and Lord?

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- 2. How can you identify areas in your life where "easy believism" may have influenced your faith journey?

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- 3. What steps can you take to ensure your faith is "dynamic" and evidenced by a changed life?

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## PART 2: THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The bible clearly teaches that it is God's will for all members of His church to walk in what Jesus described in John 10:10 as "life to the full." The question I have is, "Why are so many not experiencing what the bible reveals as an indescribably amazing life filled to overflowing with peace and joy, purpose and meaning?"

One textbook answer is that one has not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune God. There are three workings of the Holy Spirit that I'll touch on. (The words that have quotations around them are Greek words.)

1. The "para" work of the Holy Spirit. This is the **outside** work that one experiences throughout their life of the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin and their need to repent and accept Jesus' offer to follow Him.
2. The "en" work of the Holy Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit coming into, or **inside** one's life and making His home inside that person. Such a person becomes "born again." This is a supernatural one-time experience. At this point one begins the process of regeneration and the effects of sin and death begin a reversal process due to becoming a temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells.
3. The "epi" or **coming upon** of the Holy Spirit. When one experiences this for the first time, this is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Future occurrences of this work would be called "re-fillings" of the Holy Spirit.) THIS IS WHERE THAT "LIFE TO THE FULL" (John 10:10) THAT JESUS PROMISED BECOMES A REALITY!

Ever wonder why people who claim to be Christians don't go to church regularly? They rarely read their bible and when they do, they don't understand what they're reading? They end up suffering with depression and despair, broken marriages and addiction?

When you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. . .

You have this insatiable hunger for the Word of God. You can't put it down. You begin to understand it more and more.. and it becomes breathtaking.

Your prayer life becomes vibrant. Your prayers take on a supernatural power.

You used to go to church because you felt like you were supposed to. Not anymore. Now, you LOVE to!

You're telling others about how this relationship with Jesus is radically transforming your life. You're praying for them and desiring that they experience what you have.



You develop these amazing relationships with people you never met before as you allow your heart to be woven together with other hearts to be unified for an eternal purpose:

*To be witnesses (Acts 1:8-9) and make disciples (Matt 28:18-20).*

At this point you may be asking, “How do I get baptized in the Holy Spirit?” Simple. Just ask from a sincere heart. The supporting Scripture, as well as a couple of others on the topic, are below:

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

*The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. <sup>16</sup> John answered them all, “I baptize you with<sup>[b]</sup> water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with<sup>[c]</sup> the Holy Spirit and fire.” – Luke 3:16-18*

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

In the book of Acts, baptism in the Holy Spirit sometimes resulted in speaking in tongues. However, in other instances, people received baptism in the Holy Spirit, but nothing is said of tongues. The bible makes it abundantly clear that not every believer speaks in tongues (1 Cor 12:27-31). As a result, there is no specific sign that a believer should expect when they receive baptism in the Holy Spirit.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What impact does the baptism of the Holy Spirit have on a believer's daily walk with Jesus?

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2. What steps, if any, should you take to prepare your heart to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

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3. How would your life change if you were filled with an insatiable hunger for God's Word and a vibrant prayer life?

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I barely scratched the surface of all the amazing blessings of being an obedient learner and follower of Jesus which requires being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Here's more:

### **PART 3: BLESSINGS**

This section presents an opportunity for you to conduct what is called a "word study." What does the bible teach regarding the blessings listed below? Be encouraged to look up the verses corresponding to the blessing.

In fact, you could look up any word in the bible by googling, for example, "bible verses that have the word joy in them." You could also find an online concordance, which is a tool that essentially does the same thing.

If you've never done this before, then be encouraged to ask a fellow believer in Christ how to do so. Who knows? Perhaps the Lord desires for the person whom you ask to disciple you on your journey; in other words, to take you under their wing and show you what this new life in Christ is all about.

Not to get off the subject here, but this is worth mentioning. Every disciple of Christ should have a "Paul," a "Timothy," and a "Barnabas." Paul mentored Timothy in his faith. Timothy was Paul's protégé. Barnabas was an equal of Paul's. The role that each individual played in the other's lives was crucial in meeting the constant goal of growing in their faith.

Regarding the word at the beginning of each horizontal list of bible verses below, look up all of those verses in order to gain a robust understanding of what the Bible teaches about that word. Also, and this is really important, read a few verses below and after each verse so that you can learn about the word *in context*.

1. Joy – Eccl 9:7; Prov 10:28; 1 Pet 1:8-9; Rom 15:13; Lk 15:7; Rom 14:7
2. Hope – Jer 29:11; Isa 40:31; Rom 5:3-4; Heb 10:23; Prov 13:12; Rom 5:5
3. Peace – Jn 16:33; Jn 14:27; Phil 4:6-7; Isa 26:3; Col 3:15; Psa 46:10
4. Rest – Matt 11:28-30; Heb 4:9-11; Psa 23; Psa 37; Exo 20:8-10; Mk 2:27

### Questions for Discussion

1. Who is your “Paul,” your “Timothy,” and your “Barnabas?” How have they contributed towards your development towards spiritual maturity?

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2. What role does both joy and hope play in your daily life, especially during times of struggle or uncertainty?

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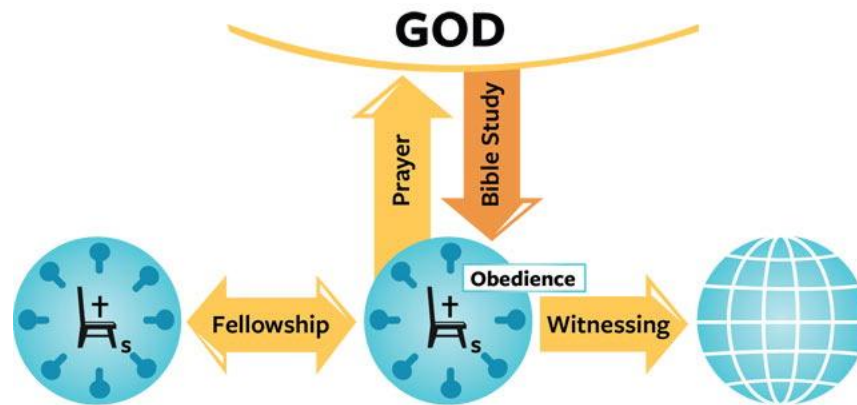
3. How can you intentionally cultivate peace and rest in your relationship with God amidst life's challenges?

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## PART 4: BIBLICAL DISCIPLINES



The above diagram does a good job in introducing four of the core biblical disciplines that will be taught in this section. Developing these disciplines will provide a good foundation in your relationship with God.

Prior to learning about these four disciplines, err, I should say *delights*... because it should be a delightful thing to, for example, pray and read your Bible. Why is that?

Because this is about *relationship* with your Heavenly Father and fellow siblings in Christ. I don't know about you, but I don't think of having quality time with my wife or children as a discipline.

Prior to learning about these delights, I'll provide some insight into the diagram.

Your life is represented by the blue circle in the middle. Jesus is on the throne of your life, and you're kneeling before it in worship. (The "S" stands for self.)

All of the small dark circles with the stems pointed towards the throne are all of the aspects of your life, e.g., your career, hobbies, friends, marriage, and so on.

Everything is orderly and has purpose, because every aspect of your life is bringing glory to Jesus. This is due to your obedience to Him.

Prayer is how you speak to God, and Bible study is the primary way He speaks to you.

The circle to your left represents fellow believers in Christ and you have wonderful fellowship with them, especially in a church setting.

The circle to your right represents the world and you are on mission to be a witness to your unsaved family, relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and schoolmates, as you share your story with them regarding how you got saved, inviting them to follow Jesus.

Now that you understand the diagram, let's learn more about these four core disciplines, err, I mean delights.

1. **Prayer: The most basic definition of prayer is "talking to God." Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is direct address to God.** It is the communication of the human soul with the Lord who created the soul. Prayer is the primary way for the believer in Jesus Christ to communicate his emotions and desires with God and to fellowship with God.

Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal. All prayer must be offered in faith (James 1:6), in the name of the Lord Jesus (John 16:23), and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26). As the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* puts it, "Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit" ("Prayer" by J. C. Lambert). The wicked have no desire to pray (Psalm 10:4), but the children of God have a natural desire to pray (Luke 11:1).

Prayer is described in the bible as seeking God's favor (Exodus 32:11), pouring out one's soul to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:15), crying out to heaven (2 Chronicles 32:20), drawing near to God (Psalm 73:28, KJV), and kneeling before the Father (Ephesians 3:14).

Paul wrote, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Worry about nothing; pray about everything.

Everything? Yes, God wants us to talk with Him about everything. How often should we pray? The biblical answer is "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should keep a running conversation going with God all day long. There is really no special formula for how to pray in the bible. We should just do it. We can pray under any and all circumstances. Prayer develops our relationship with God and demonstrates our trust and utter dependence upon Him.

Prayer is the Christian's primary way of communicating with God. We pray to praise God and thank Him and tell Him how much we love Him. We pray to enjoy His presence and tell Him what is going on in our lives. We pray to make requests and seek guidance and ask for wisdom. **God loves this exchange with His children, just as we love the exchange we have with our children. Fellowship with God is the heart of prayer. Too often we lose sight of how simple prayer is really supposed to be.**

When we make petitions to God, we let God know exactly where we stand and what we

would like to see happen. In our prayers, we must admit that God is greater than we are and ultimately knows what is best in any given situation (Romans 11:33–36). God is good and asks us to trust Him. In prayer, we say, essentially, “Not my will, but your will be done.” The key to answered prayer is praying according to the will of God and in accordance with His Word. Prayer is not seeking our own will but seeking to align ourselves with the will of God more fully (1 John 5:14–15; James 4:3).

The bible contains many examples of prayer and plenty of exhortations to pray (Luke 18:1; Romans 12:12; and Ephesians 6:18). God’s house is to be a house of prayer (Mark 11:17), and God’s people are to be people of prayer: “Dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God’s love” (Jude 1:20–21).

(Source: GotQuestions.org)

### Questions for Discussion

1. How does prayer deepen your relationship with God and demonstrate your dependence on Him?

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2. What steps can you take to develop a more consistent and meaningful prayer life?

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3. How can praying according to God’s will shape your understanding of His plans for your life?

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2. **Bible: Is the bible truly God's Word? Our answer to this question will not only determine how we view the bible and its importance to our lives, but also it will ultimately have an eternal impact on us. If the bible is truly God's Word, then we should cherish it, study it, obey it, and fully trust it. If the bible is the Word of God, then to dismiss it is to dismiss God Himself.**

The fact that God gave us the bible is an evidence and illustration of His love for us. The term "revelation" simply means that God communicated to mankind what He is like and how we can have a right relationship with Him. These are things that we could not have known had God not divinely revealed them to us in the bible. Although God's revelation of Himself in the bible was given progressively over approximately 1500 years, it has always contained everything man needs to know about God in order to have a right relationship with Him. If the bible is truly the Word of God, then it is the final authority for all matters of faith, religious practice, and morals.

The question we must ask ourselves is how can we know that the bible is the Word of God and not just a good book? What is unique about the bible that sets it apart from all other religious books ever written? Is there any evidence that the bible is truly God's Word? These types of questions must be seriously examined if we are to determine the validity of the bible's claim to be the very Word of God, divinely inspired, and totally sufficient for all matters of faith and practice. **There can be no doubt that the bible does claim to be the very Word of God.** This is clearly seen in Paul's commendation to Timothy: "... from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

**There are both internal and external evidences that the bible is truly God's Word.** The internal evidences are those things within the bible that testify of its divine origin.

**One of the first internal evidences... that the bible is truly God's Word is seen in its unity.** Even though it is really sixty-six individual books, written on three continents, in three different languages, over a period of approximately 1500 years, by more than 40 authors who came from many walks of life, the bible remains one unified book from beginning to end without contradiction. This unity is unique from all other books and is evidence of the divine origin of the words which God moved men to record.

**Another of the internal evidences... that indicates the bible is truly God's Word is the prophecies contained within its pages.** The bible contains hundreds of detailed prophecies relating to the future of individual nations including Israel, certain cities, and mankind. Other prophecies concern the coming of One who would be the Messiah, the Savior of all who would believe in Him. **Unlike the prophecies found in other religious books or those by men such as Nostradamus, biblical prophecies are extremely detailed.** There are over three hundred prophecies concerning Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. Not only was it foretold where He would be born and His lineage, but also how He would die and that He would rise again. There simply is no logical way to explain

the fulfilled prophecies in the bible other than by divine origin. There is no other religious book with the extent or type of predictive prophecy that the bible contains.

**A third internal evidence... of the divine origin of the bible is its unique authority and power.** While this evidence is more subjective than the first two, it is still powerful. The bible's authority is unlike any other book. This authority and power are best seen in the way countless lives have been transformed. Drug addicts have been cured, homosexuals set free, derelicts and deadbeats transformed, criminals reformed by it, sinners rebuked by it, and hate turned to love by it. The bible does possess a dynamic and transforming power that is only possible because it is truly God's Word.

**There are also external evidences... that indicate the bible is truly the Word of God.**

**One is the historicity of the bible. Because the bible details historical events, its truthfulness and accuracy are subject to verification like any other historical document. Through both archaeological evidences and other writings, the historical accounts of the bible have been proven time and time again to be accurate and true.** In fact, all the archaeological and manuscript evidence supporting the bible makes it the best-documented book from the ancient world. The fact that the bible accurately and truthfully records historically verifiable events is a great indication of its truthfulness when dealing with religious subjects and doctrines and helps substantiate its claim to be the very Word of God.

**Another external evidence... that the bible is truly God's Word is the integrity of its human authors.** As mentioned earlier, God used men from many walks of life to record His words. In studying the lives of these men, we find them to be honest and sincere. The fact that they were willing to die often excruciating deaths for what they believed testifies that these ordinary yet honest men truly believed God had spoken to them. The men who wrote the New Testament and many hundreds of other believers (1 Corinthians 15:6) knew the truth of their message because they had seen and spent time with Jesus Christ after He had risen from the dead. Seeing the risen Christ had a tremendous impact on them. They went from hiding in fear to being willing to die for the message God had revealed to them. Their lives and deaths testify to the fact that the bible truly is God's Word.

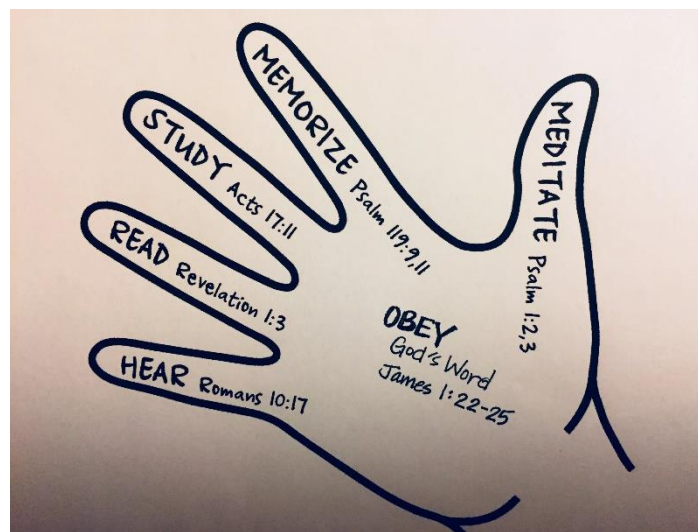
**A final external evidence... that the bible is truly God's Word is the indestructibility of the bible.** Because of its importance and its claim to be the very Word of God, the bible has suffered more vicious attacks and attempts to destroy it than any other book in history. From early Roman Emperors like Diocletian, through communist dictators and on to modern-day atheists and agnostics, the bible has withstood and outlasted all of its attackers and is still today the most widely published book in the world.

Throughout time, skeptics have regarded the bible as mythological, but archeology has confirmed it as historical. **Opponents have attacked its teaching as primitive and outdated, but its moral and legal concepts and teachings have had a positive influence on societies and cultures throughout the world. It continues to be attacked by pseudo-**



science, psychology, and political movements, yet it remains just as true and relevant today as it was when it was first written. It is a book that has transformed countless lives and cultures throughout the last 2000 years. No matter how its opponents try to attack, destroy, or discredit it, the bible remains; its veracity and impact on lives is unmistakable. The accuracy which has been preserved despite every attempt to corrupt, attack, or destroy it is clear testimony to the fact that the bible is truly God's Word and is supernaturally protected by Him. It should not surprise us that, no matter how the bible is attacked, it always comes out unchanged and unscathed. After all, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Mark 13:31). After looking at the evidence, one can say without a doubt that, yes, the Bible is truly God's Word.

(Source: GotQuestions.org)



### Questions for Discussion

1. What evidence for the Bible being the Word of God do you find most compelling, and why?

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2. How can the Bible's unity, fulfilled prophecy, and transformative power impact your faith and daily life?

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3. What practical steps can you take to deepen your study of the Bible and rely on it as your final authority for faith and practice? How valuable would it be for you to hear, read, study, memorize, and meditate on the bible? Would there be any value to NOT obeying what the bible teaches?
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**3. Witness:** Acts 1:8 says, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be My witnesses...” (Jesus). **A “witness” is someone who attests to a fact, so in order to be an effective witness for Christ, one must have firsthand knowledge of Him.** John the Apostle speaks of this in 1 John 1:1-3, when he says, “That . . . which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.” Today, we who have experienced new life in Christ give an account of His love and forgiveness, both verbally and in the way we live our lives. This is witnessing. To be effective in our witness, we should remember several basic things:

**1) The THEME of our witness is Jesus Christ.** Paul defined the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). If we aren’t explaining the sacrifice of Christ, then we’re not really sharing the gospel. (See also 1 Corinthians 2:2 and Romans 10:9-10.) An important part of this theme is the fact that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation, not just one of many ways. “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

**2) The POWER of our witness is the Holy Spirit.** It is the Spirit who transforms a life (Titus 3:5), and a transformed life is evident to all. As we witness, we should spend much time in prayer, appropriating the Spirit’s power so that we are enabled to let our light shine in such a way that others will recognize the power of God in us (Matthew 5:16).

**3) The VALIDITY of our witness will be shown in how we live our lives.** Philippians 2:15 sets this goal for us: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” The effective Christian witness will live his/her life above reproach in the power of the Holy Spirit, whose fruit we exhibit when we remain in Christ (John 15:1-8; Galatians 5:22-23).

**Perhaps most importantly, we must be familiar enough with the Scriptures to be able to present the gospel accurately and coherently to others.** “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). Always being prepared means diligent bible study, memorizing Scripture, and praying for God-given opportunities to share with those whose hearts have been prepared by the Lord to hear His message of salvation.

(Source: GotQuestions.org)

### Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean to you to be a witness for Christ in both your words and actions?

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2. How can you rely on the Holy Spirit to empower and guide your witness for Christ?

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3. What steps can you take to prepare yourself to share the gospel accurately and confidently with others?

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4. **Fellowship:** In order to understand the importance of Christian fellowship, we must first understand what Christian fellowship is and what it isn't. The Greek words translated “fellowship” in the New Testament mean essentially a partnership to the mutual benefit of those involved. **Christian fellowship, then, is the mutually beneficial relationship**

**between Christians, who can't have the identical relationship with those outside the faith.**

The mystery and privilege that is Christian fellowship is that it exists because God has enabled it by His grace. **Those who believe the gospel are united in the Spirit through Christ to the Father, and that unity is the basis of fellowship.** This relationship is described by Jesus in His high-priestly prayer for His followers: "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). The "complete unity" He refers to is the oneness that Christians experience in true fellowship, oneness with one another, with Christ and with the Father. Just as the Father is in Jesus, so is Jesus in us, and we have unity with one another because of the uniqueness of that relationship (1 John 1:3).

This relationship must be the basis of Christian fellowship. We can have friendships and relationships with unbelievers, but true Christian fellowship can only occur within the body of Christ. We are united to one another by common beliefs, purposes and goals. Our hearts and minds are "other-worldly" because we follow Jesus Christ, who said that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). We know that we are strangers in this world, and we long for the time when we will be in our true home, heaven.

**The importance of true Christian fellowship is that it reinforces these things in our mind and helps us to focus on Christ and His desires and goals for us.** As iron sharpens iron, in true Christian fellowship Christians sharpen one another's faith and stir one another to exercise that faith in love and good works, all to God's glory.

(Source: GotQuestions.org)

### Questions for Discussion

1. What does true Christian fellowship mean to you, and how is it different from other types of relationships?

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2. How can Christian fellowship strengthen your faith and help you stay focused on Christ's purposes for your life?

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3. What steps can you take to deepen your fellowship with other believers and contribute to their spiritual growth?

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### **CONCLUSION**

We just learned, or re-learned, some breathtaking truths: 1) what it means to be a follower of Jesus and the indescribable blessings to be experienced, 2) the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and 3) some biblical disciplines that, when practiced consistently, will get you on your way on this life journey we call “a walk with Jesus.”

By thoughtfully and prayerfully meditating on these truths and applying them in our lives, we can be confident that we surely will experience that “life to the full” that Jesus talked about!