

New Christian Study

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Week Five Things You Need To Know

Before You Begin This Study

- Pray for God to bless your study time and fellowship today.
- Quote the memory verse to your study partner.
- Talk about the Devotions you read this last week and the Spiritual Insights, Prayers, and Applications that were gleaned from these devotions. Discuss your reading from the Spiritual Journal as well.
- Discuss any question that you might have as a result of your daily Bible Reading.
- Discuss your Sermon Notes.

This Weeks Memory Verse

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Water Baptism

I think that the easiest way for Christians to understand Baptism is for them to have a clear understanding of its meaning. Consider **Romans 6.3-5**:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are _____ with him by baptism into death: that

_____ as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the _____ of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection:

The first thing Christians need to understand about Baptism is that it is a **Symbol**. This is revealed in our text by the words "like" and "likeness."

I like to use my wedding ring as a good example. I wear my wedding ring to let the whole world know that I have committed myself to my wife, for life. If I take my wedding ring off it doesn't mean I'm not married anymore, it just makes it harder for other people to know I'm married.

It's the same for Baptism, only with more meaning. **Baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** When you go under the water you are a living picture of His death, and burial. When you come up you picture His resurrection.

Contrary to what some people might teach. **Baptism does not wash away our sins,** only the blood of Jesus can do that (Colosians 1.14). Baptism does not save us, only the combination of Grace and Faith can do that for us (Ephesians 2.8-9). Baptism is the outward expression of a deep inner faith.

So, why do Christians need to be baptized? Because God commands it (Matthew 28.19-20).

Matthew 28:19-20 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, _____ them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

It is literally the first step of obedience for every new believer. Any Christian that neglects to be baptized **will never be** in complete obedience to God. It astounds me that some people would put their relationship with God at risk over something as simple as baptism.

One other important note. Baptism must follow salvation.

Read Acts 8.35-38, before you continue.

If you were baptized as a child, it doesn't count. Simply because you did not choose it for yourself.

Baptism must also be my immersion. Why? First, because our Lord was baptized by immersion. Second, because you don't just sprinkle someone with dirt when you bury them, you put them completely under the ground. Third, because the Greek word for baptism means to "put under." Immersion is the only form of baptism that is Biblical.

Every Christian should submit to believer's baptism as their personal outward expression of what Jesus Christ has done for them. In my opinion, sooner is better than latter.

Have you been baptized by immersion since you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? _____

If not, what reasons can you give for waiting?

The Tithe

Another area that is often neglected by new Christians, but can result in some truly remarkable blessings, is that of the tithe. I have heard it said, and have learned through time and experience, **that a person is not fully surrendered to God until he is surrendered in his finances.**

In our materialistic culture it is hard to believe that a person can give ten percent of their personal earnings to God, make ends meet, and be able to have or do all that they would desire. The truth is, and I am speaking from experience, that God is able to take a little and make it much or take a lot and make it little. Let me explain this concept with a personal testimony.

Shortly after I became a Christian I heard a testimony by one of the older Deacons in the Church that I was a member of. He was speaking directly to the issue of the tithe, and he said,

"I didn't believe that I could tithe and make ends meet until I found and accepted the challenge given by God in Malachi chapter three. When I read that challenge I surrendered to God and accepted it. I began to tithe and was shocked when I not only made ends meet, but also started to have a monthly surplus. I couldn't explain it, and still can't, but it's been a reality in my life ever since."

After listening to that man's testimony, I looked up the challenge myself, accepted it for myself, and experienced a Scriptural truth that has been a part of my life ever since. Consider God's challenge as it is given in His Word, look up Malachi 3.9-10:

Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have _____ me, even this whole nation.

Bring ye all the _____ into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine

house, and _____ me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not

open you the windows of heaven, and _____ you out a blessing, that there

shall _____ be room enough to receive it.

The divine challenge is simple. Bring in the tithe, **faithfully**, and see what God will do in return. Now, for your information, the tithe is the **First Ten Percent** of your earnings (Leviticus 27.30-31). It is important to understand that it is to be the first ten percent, not the last, that are to be given to God.

Now, there are some that are eager to exclaim, "that is Old Testament, it does not pertain to us today." In the New Testament Jesus told the religious leaders that they ought to tithe, and to have a proper attitude at the same time (Matthew 23.23). We are also told in the New Testament that those that work with the Word of God ought to live off of the offerings of the people (1 Corinthians 9.9-14; 1 Timothy 6.18). Keep in mind that Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5.17-18).

Remember that the tithe is not about your duty to the Church. **It is truly a reflection of the depth of your relationship with our Lord and Savior.** If you are fully surrendered to Him, then it will only be natural to be obedient in every aspect of your life, including your finances.

Are you currently tithing of your first fruits? _____

If not, do you desire to take God at His challenge, and receive the abundant blessings that only He can give. If you do then write a brief statement that reflects how you are going to meet God's financial challenge.

Faithfulness and Fruitfulness

It seems that a trend has developed in Christian Churches all across America in recent years. There seems to be a prevailing attitude that so long as an individual is faithful in Church attendance, then they must be surviving spiritually. I'm not convinced that faithfulness without fruitfulness indicates spiritual well being. It seems to me that one of the driving principles of the New Testament is that if a Christian is growing in Christ, then he or she will most certainly influence others through their lifestyle, conversation, and example. It seems obvious throughout the New Testament that spiritual faithfulness almost always bears results, fruitfulness.

Consider what Jesus said in **John 15.4**:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear _____ of itself, except it _____ in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

It is clear from this passage that abiding is connected to the fruit. There does not seem to be any suggestion that an abiding branch may not bear fruit. In other passages the principle seems just as clear. In the parable of the talents faithfulness produces the expected result of fruitfulness (Matthew 25.14-30). In the parable of the sower Jesus clearly taught that the seed that fell into the good ground represents those that hear the Word, keep it, and bear much fruit (Luke 8.15).

If faithfulness is divinely connected to fruitfulness, then we must come to understand just what the resulting fruit will look like. Look up **Galatians 5.22-23**:

But the _____ of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Notice the list of the Fruit of the Spirit. These are not outward actions, but they are inward realities of the heart. This is a list of the characteristics of a Christian. Jesus taught that it is the things that come out of a person that defiles them, because that things that come out of a person come out of their heart, or the core of their being (Matthew 5.16-20). Our actions and words are the result of who we really are. Therefore, the Holy Spirit of God strives to deal with us at the heart of who we are. He strives to mold and transform our character. For if our heart is right, then our conversation and actions will be right as well.

Look up **Proverbs 11.30**:

The _____ of the righteous is a tree of _____; and he that winneth souls is wise.

Now, just think about this for a moment. If we are healthy, spiritual Christians with healthy God molded characters, then the result of our lives should produce fruit as well. Another type of fruit spoken of in the Bible is the outward fruit of the lives changed because of our godly influence. The New Testament tells us that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us He will empower us to be witnesses for Jesus Christ (Acts 1.8). That divinely powerful witness should flow from who we are in Christ, and will certainly result in changed lives all around us.

Therefore, it is clear. Faithfulness is divinely linked to fruitfulness. Spiritual fruitfulness within a Christian will undoubtedly manifest itself in an individual's life, and influence all that come into contact with them.

How has this study on faithfulness and fruitfulness challenged you?

What will you do as a result of this study?

Fellowship

Nothing will strengthen a Christian in his walk like the encouraging words of a trusted and faithful brother of our Lord. No Christian should underestimate the value of those relationships that surround their faith. For indeed those relationships are the anchors that hold us to the solid rock of Jesus Christ. Consider **Galatians 6:2**

Bear ye one another's _____, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Now fellowship is more than just social engagement. It's more than just being in close proximity to another person. Fellowship is the actual sharing of burdens. It is to take those things that are dearest to your heart and to allow someone else to help you to bear up under that concern. Therefore, the most important aspect of fellowship is the relationship.

If our relationships are only surface then no real fellowship can take place. Trust, honesty, and confidentiality must mark a Christian relationship that demonstrates real fellowship. You will not share your deepest concerns with someone that you feel might use your burden against you. You will not entrust the burden of your soul with someone that demonstrates no integrity. You most certainly would not share your trials with the local neighborhood gossip. Yet we are told to bear one another's burdens.

The only way for a Church to experience the type of fellowship and unity spoken of in the New Testament is for its members to develop real relationships with each other. It's not easy to find these types of relationships. They are truly rare indeed. The truth is, the types of relationships that produce fellowship require a lot of work and effort. Fellowship will not be the result of a Sunday Morning only effort, unless that experience is on going for an extremely long period of time with the same people all of the time.

The truth is that God expects you to not only join, and attend your local Church, but He also wants you to be involved with the people that make up your Church body. Know who they are, get involved with their families, and strive to build the types of relationships that will result in real spirit led fellowship.

Do you currently experience burden-bearing fellowship?

What will you do to build relationships in coming days?

The Spiritual Battle

Living the Christian life is certainly not easy or simple. It is the richest and most fulfilling thing that you will ever experience, but it is a daily challenge. As you read through the New Testament you will be regularly reminded that you will face struggles and trials along the way. There will be difficult decisions to be made. There will be hard questions to answer. There will most certainly be challenging people in your path. As a Christian you must always remember that you are our Lord's Ambassador to this world today, and you must learn to be as disciplined and faithful in character and action as a soldier must for any army.

Consider the **1 Timothy 6:12**:

Fight the _____ fight of faith, lay _____ on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

What a wonderful gift we have received from our God through the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He has given us eternal life as our hope for the future, and the promise of an abundant life in relationship to Him for each and every day. There is no greater desire in my heart than that I might take hold of the awesome opportunities that Almighty-God will place before me today. I hope that you will make that your focus and hearts desire as well.

Read **2 Timothy 2:3**:

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good _____ of Jesus Christ.

Having spent nine years in the United States Marine Corps, I think I know a little about what makes a good soldier. A good soldier must know, understand, and believe in his purpose and mission. A good soldier must know that his readiness is truly contingent upon discipline. A good soldier must know his position in the unit or team, and must have the integrity to perform at the appropriate time, the well being of the unit will depend upon him.

It is the same for us as Christians. If we are going to have a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ, then we are going to have to develop heart felt integrity and discipline in those things that will spiritually mature us for our Lord. What are the essential disciplines for a Christian?

1. Daily time in God's Word and Scripture Memorization.
2. Constant private, regular, and collective prayer.
3. Personal self-evaluation and meditation.
4. Commitment to a local Church body in fellowship.
5. A deep personal desire to spiritually mature.

Without these five essential elements a new Christian risks becoming lukewarm and a faithful adherent to the religious systems that are cold and traditional. The terrible truth about hard cold religion is that it misses the fullness of the relationship that God truly want every Christian to experience. My dear friend, don't ever forget, God loves you and wants to make your life into something wonderful and dynamic for Him. However, He will not force Himself upon you. You must decide whether you will allow Him to mold you into a living example of Jesus Christ. Will you let go and let God?

What are your thoughts about the spiritual struggle ahead?

How will you develop the spiritual disciplines your life?

Your Spiritual Growth assignment for the rest of your life:

1. **Read your Bible everyday.** Hopefully, by now your daily bible reading has become a habit or discipline in your life. Make a personal commitment to read you Bible everyday. When you complete the New Testament go back and read it again and don't ever stop.
2. **Read the Daily Devotion** in the devotion guide that accompanies this study. Hopefully, you have made journaling a habit or discipline in your life as well. The Devotion guide ended this week. I suggest that you get a monthly our quarterly devotional from your Church or from the Christian book store and continue your devotions with it. You may decide to use a different devotional each year in order to get some different insights each year. Just be sure you continue to glean these essential spiritual insights.
3. **Attend Church Sunday and take Sermon Notes in your Spiritual Journal.** Continue to use your Spiritual Journal to take sermon notes. Taking notes helps you toe remember and teach others.
4. **Memorize the Memory Verse** - Now look for and memorize verse of your choosing.
5. **Continue to Study** - Now that this New Christian Study is completed, perhaps you would consider continuing your studies with the **Impact Study Series**. Whatever you do, don't stop studying God's Word. Once you stop it's hard to get started again. If you do stop for a time, get started again. You need to feast on God's Word continuously.