

Heritage Christian Fellowship

Foundations Class 2008

Section 1

What is a disciple of Christ

OR

what does it mean to be a Christian?

*These lessons are intended for new Christians as a guide for a discussion class with a mature Christian instructor and a homework curriculum.

What is a disciple of Christ OR what does it mean to be a Christian?

To answer this question we will look at 4 basic elements of being a disciple or Christian. They are.....

- **Part 1:** To be a Follower of Christ
- **Part 2:** To be Forgiven, Saved and Born Again
- **Part 3:** To Love and Worship God
- **Part 4:** To be a productive member of God's Family, the Church

Part 1: To be a Follower of Christ

A disciple was *one who would follow after and learn the teaching, disciplines and tradition of its master*. Many of the Jewish rabbis of Jesus' day had followers or disciples as well as John the Baptist and of course Jesus. Being a Christian means being a disciple of Christ, a follower of Christ and belonging to Him.

When Jesus called one to follow Him, his calling was one of *total abandonment of the former life*, completely entrusting oneself to Christ and to His teachings. To follow Him with abandonment of all that we have and all that we are; to be willing to give everything to remain faithful to His teaching is what Jesus calls us to. Indeed our lives are now not ours, but His. This commitment to Christ is essential to what it means to be a disciple. When we look in the Bible, we see the kind of commitment that Jesus calls us to, and the kind of commitment His followers made.

Matthew 4:18-22 - 18 And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 And **they immediately left the nets**, and followed Him. 21 And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. 22 And **they immediately left the boat and their father**, and followed Him. NAS

Luke 5:27-28 – 27 After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." And **he left everything behind**, and got up and began to follow Him. NAS

Question #1: Referring to Matthew 4:18-22, describe the importance, urgency and commitment indicated by the disciples response to Jesus.

Question #2: In Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 5:27-28, what do we learn about importance of our relationship to Jesus? Is there anyone or anything more important than Him?

Luke 9:23-26 - He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.** 24 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, **but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.** 25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? 26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels. NASB

Question #3: From the above verses in Luke 9, what do you suppose Jesus means about denying oneself and taking up one's cross to follow Him? What does this say about our level of commitment to Him and His teaching?

Question #4: Therefore in becoming a Christian, what do these Scriptures imply about the intensity of our commitment to follow Christ? Should anything stand in the way of a wholehearted commitment to Him?

Well, it does appear that Jesus expects the highest commitment to Him, but what about my family and those who do not follow Him, won't they think I am a little too committed to Christ? What about my friends and my life apart from Christ and my allegiance to my commitments in the world and so on? What about the things I love to do in my life and the things that occupy my time, can I fit Christ in around these things? Consider here another statement of Jesus about our other relationships and things, and which ones are to take the *priority* in our life....

Luke 14:25-27 - 25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 **"if anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.** 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. NASB

Does Jesus really expect me to hate my family? No, of course not, but what He means to say here is that our relationship to Him takes a greater priority than all other relationships in our lives. The word *hate* here does not suggest positive antagonism but rather "to love less". Our love for Christ must be so strong that all other love is like hatred in comparison to it. In fact, we must hate our own lives and be willing to lose our lives and carry our own cross to follow Him. We must love Him more than our very own lives because He is more valuable than our very lives themselves.

Question #5: What should we do if members of our family or friends try to stand in the way of our faith in Christ or discourage us from following Christ?

Question #6: What do these verses in Luke 14:25-27 imply about our being willing to follow Him even to death if we must?

Revelation 2:10-11 - 10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.** 11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'** NASB

There may be many difficulties in the Christian life. Sometimes the devil seeks to test us and even harm us. But Jesus encourages us to remain faithful to Him no matter what happens in our life.

Question #7: What do these words of Jesus in Revelation 2:10-11 tell us about our reward in following Christ to death if we must? What promise do we have about life after death?

Question #8: What do these verses in Revelation 2:10-11 tell us about who are enemy might be? Do we then have cause for fear?

To be a Christian disciple is to follow Christ in a way that *emulates* Christ. This means we *imitate* Jesus and seek to act, think and talk like Him. It includes obeying the teachings of Jesus. What did the early disciples do? Well, "**they followed Him wherever He went and did whatever He did, and obeyed whatever He taught.**" And the product of their following Christ is what we see recorded in the book of Acts, it is the birth of the Church and the expansion of the Christian Church in the Roman world of the first century. During this time these men and women of the early church were first called Christians. And so what does it mean to be a Christian? It simply means to be a disciple, a follower of Christ. Going where He goes and doing what He does and what He has taught us to do. Of course there is much more to it than merely this, but this is the most basic thing about it, to be like Jesus.

John 8:31-32 - 31 Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "**If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;** 32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." NASB

Ephesians 5:1-2 - Therefore **be imitators of God,** as beloved children; 2 and **walk in love, just as Christ** also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

Question #9: What do you suppose Jesus means by "*abide in my word*" in John 8:31-32?

In Ephesians 5:1-2 the idea of "walk" means to "live." In others words "live" a life of love like Jesus did.

Question #10: How does verse two in Ephesians 5 describe what it means to be an imitator of God?

Question #11: Describe several ways that you see Jesus walking in love?

Obedience to Jesus' teaching is a very important matter. This is because we have received Him as our Lord, our Master, the One who rules over us as our King and our God! Therefore to disregard His teaching is to "*sin*" against Him and it is this sin from which we were saved. Therefore we have come to Him in "*repentance of sin,*" meaning that we have "*turned our back on sin*" in order to obey Him and follow His teaching. This "*repentance*" and "*obedience*" is the main part of our commitment to Him, even unto death. This means that ***we are to obey Jesus'***

teaching no matter the cost in our life. Our commitment to obey Him is more important than anything in our life. In fact, if we really believe in Jesus, this faith will be “*evident*” or “*proved true*” by our obedience to His teaching and His commandments. Our love for and belief in Christ will be shown by our obedience to Him.

John 14:15 - 15 **"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."** NASB

“*If*” you love Me, “*you will*” keep My commandments. In other words, it will be plainly seen if you really love Me when you obey My commandments. Love for Christ produces obedience to His commandments. If we look at our lives and see disobedience to Christ’s commands, then we have good reason to question whether our love for Him is genuine. If we truly love God and Christ we will in fact obey them. This is how we prove our love for God, through our obedience to Him....

1 John 5:3 - 3 For **this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments;** and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

Question #12: In 1 John 5:3, what do the words “*are not burdensome*” imply about keeping God’s commandments for those who truly love Him and believe in Him?

Obedience to Christ is proof positive that we in fact love Him, believe in Him and honor Him from our hearts! We obey Him because we love Him and we know that His commands are what are best for us.

John 14:21-24 - **He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me;** and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, **"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word;** and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. 24 **"He who does not love Me does not keep My words;** and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. NASB

Question #13: In John 14:21, what promise does Jesus give to those who love Him and keep His commandments?

Question #14: In John 14:23-24, what is the main difference between those who love Jesus and those who do not love Jesus?

Jesus is Lord! This means He is our Master, the One who rules over us as our King and our God! Consider, if He is our Lord and God, then He is our Supreme Authority. And since He has given us high and holy commandments, our response should then be one of unwavering obedience. If a powerful earthly authority gives us a directive, what would we do? We would obey. How much more should we honor God with obedience to Him? ***Shall we “rebel” or “sin” against our maker?*** We had better be sure to obey God lest we be found to be rebels against our Sovereign Creator and our Righteous Judge! Scripture makes emphatic statements and severe warnings about His authority over all things even going so far as to say that the eternal destiny of mankind, whether they have life after death, or perish in under God’s wrath (His holy anger and punishment) forever, all hinge on their obedience to Him.

John 3:35-36 - 35 "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 36 "He **who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life**, but the wrath of God abides on him." NASB

Question #15: In John 3:36, what two things does Jesus point out are the consequences of not obeying Him?

1. _____

2. _____

Question #16: In John 3:36, what promise does Jesus give to those who believe in Him?

In order to be really clear about this matter, we are saved from God's wrath and granted eternal life because we believe in Jesus. But this "belief" or "faith" is proved genuine by our obedience to Christ. **Therefore we know and can be assured that we "believe in Him" or "have faith in Him" when we see a pattern of obedience in our life to Him.** We will discuss this further in an upcoming lesson. The Lordship of Jesus Christ is no small matter. It is the most important thing in the whole universe. As we have seen, people's eternal destiny is determined by how they respond to it. So people either willingly submit themselves to Jesus as their Lord and Master now in this life, or they will submit forcibly to Him at the final Judgment at the throne of God. The New Testament describes the fact that eventually all created intelligent beings will one day give allegiance to Christ as Lord and verbally confess His Lordship over them.

Philippians 2:9-11 9 Therefore also **God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name**, 10 that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NASB

Romans 14:9-12 - 9 For to this end Christ died and lived *again*, **that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living**.....For **we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God**. 11 For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." 12 So then **each one of us shall give account of himself to God**. NASB

Question #17: In Philippians 2:9-11, how many knees will bow and how many tongues will confess that Jesus is Lord? How important then is this matter of Jesus being Lord in people's lives?

Since our faith or belief in Jesus is being proved genuine by our obedience to Him as our Lord and Master, we need not be despairing when we fail in our battle to overcome sin and obey Christ. At times it will be a very difficult struggle. But we should see a pattern of increasing obedience to Jesus and a decreasing frequency of sin in our lives. Then we will not be ashamed of lives when we give an account of our faith to God at the judgment. However let us never forget that Jesus is Lord, and our obedience to Him is of first importance in our lives.

Part 2: To be Forgiven, Saved and Born Again

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. God the Father sent God the Son to be the Savior of the world, redeem mankind from sin, rescue mankind from the power of the devil and deliver us from death. This is because mankind is in a desperate state of sin and death after Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they plunged all of mankind into this state of sin and death. Now, all mankind sins against God by nature, are hopelessly fallen away from Him, are in rebellion against His authority, and continue to sin and violate His commands.

Genesis 2:16 -17 - 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 **but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.**" NASB

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

Question #1: What did God command the man not to do; and what was the consequence of disobedience according to Genesis 2:16-17?

Question #2: In Romans 6:23, how does the Bible describe the payment or "wages" of sin? Why do we die?

In this discussion of mankind and the effects of sin and death, consider also the following Scriptures:

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

Romans 5:12 - 12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so **death spread to all men, because all sinned** NASB

Question #3: Referring to Romans 3:23 and Romans 5:12, how many people have sinned against God?

Question #4: According to Romans 5:12, how did death enter the world?

It is rather apparent to us then that all people are guilty of sin. Surely we all realize that we have broken many of God's commandments many times in our lives. Because of this, mankind is in a desperate state of rebellion against God and will face Him in judgment, after they die. At this judgment, God will bring the ultimate consequence of sin to bear upon all who do not have the forgiveness of their sins. This consequence is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (this will be covered in a later lesson).

Hebrews 9:27 - 27 And inasmuch as **it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,**

NASB

Revelation 20:12-13 - 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; **and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.** 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and **they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.** NASB

Question #5: According to Hebrews 9:27 and Revelation 20:12-13, what happens after we die?

It is very important then, that people be forgiven of their sins. There is a great need for people to be forgiven by God for all the sins that they have committed against Him. This need arises out of the fact that sin's "wages" or payment is death (eternal separation from God). So then, if people do not receive this forgiveness, God will hold their sins against them, and they will pay the penalty for their sins, and this will be a very terrible and final predicament. There will be no second chance or way to be delivered from this after one dies.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 **dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** 9 **And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,** 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. NASB

Question #6: Here in 2 Thessalonians the penalty of disobedience to the gospel is described as _____ destruction, _____ from the _____ of the Lord. Here we see that it is eternal separation from God.

But the forgiveness of sins is offered freely to all in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Everyone who believes in Jesus, turning from their sins to follow Him can receive this forgiveness.

Acts 10:43 - 43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that **through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.**" NASB

Acts 2:38 - 38 And Peter *said* to them, "**Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;** and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." NASB

Question #7: According to Acts 10:43, what is required to receive the forgiveness of sins?

Question #8: In Acts 2:38 it says that we should " _____ and let each one of you be _____ in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins."

Repentance simply means to "**stop sinning**" or "**turn your back**" on your sins. Anyone who is truly remorseful and wants forgiveness from God will be willing to repent of their sins, and they will receive forgiveness. This forgiveness of sins is also called "**justification**" and it means to be "**declared righteous**" by God. Many times the Bible speaks of being justified before God by faith in Jesus. This justification means that because Christ died in our place to pay the penalty of sin for us, we no longer have to pay that penalty, and on this basis God declares us

“righteous” or to have “right standing” with Him. He therefore no longer holds our sins against us, because Jesus took the punishment for our sins upon Himself on the cross.

Romans 3:22-24 - 22 even the **righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being **justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption** which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

Titus 3:5-7 - 5 **He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness**, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that **being justified by His grace** we might be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. NASB

Question #9: Here in Romans 3:22 “the righteousness of God comes through _____ in Jesus Christ for all those who _____.” And in verse 24 they are “justified as a _____ by His grace.” What does this imply about our ability to earn or merit God’s righteousness and justification?

Question #10: In Titus 3:5-7, “He saved us _____ on the basis of deeds” but instead verse 7 says that we are “justified by His _____.”

This receiving of forgiveness and being justified is what it means to be **“saved.”** It means we have received “salvation” from our sins and the consequences of them, the wrath of God. So when we speak about being **“saved”** or **“salvation,”** we mean that we have been forgiven and justified by God. And this saves us from the consequences of our sins. It means we are saved from the wrath of God and are no longer doomed for judgment and death (eternal separation from God).

Romans 5:9 - 9 Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.** NASB

Question #11: According to Romans 5:9, after being “justified by His blood, we shall be _____ from the wrath of God through Him.”

So then, being a disciple of Christ or a Christian means to be forgiven of all of our sins and saved from the wrath of God through believing in Jesus and what He has done. But there is more to it than only these things. Salvation is something that God does **“in us”** as much as it is something that He does **“for us.”** It is this work that God does in us that we look to understand now. It is called **“regeneration”** or being **“born again.”** Being born again is a supernatural spiritual work that God does inside our soul, which transforms us and imparts spiritual life to us. In this work God raises us from spiritual death and gives us the renewal of the Holy Spirit. When we are born again, we become new creations in Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:5 - 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the **washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,** NAS

2 Corinthians 5:17 - 17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, **he is a new creature;** the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. NASB

Question #12: How does Titus 3:5 describe the means by which God saves us?

Question #13: In 2 Corinthians 5:17, it describes being a Christian in what terms?

This work of regeneration is essential to salvation. Without it, no one can be or is saved. In other words we could state this truth in this way, **“you cannot be a Christian unless you are born again by the Spirit of God.”** And this is something that God does so we are dependent on Him to do it. We must come humbly to God desiring to be saved and seeking His forgiveness, and it is in this contrite spirit that God saves us. This matter is so important that Jesus told us that if we were not born again, we could not be saved.

John 3:3-7 - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, **'You must be born again.'** NASB

Question #14: Here in John 3:3-7, Jesus tells Nicodemus that he “must be born again.” In verse 3 He explains that being born again enables one to _____ the kingdom of God. In verse 5 He explains that being born of water (baptism, symbolic of coming to Christ by faith) and being born of the Spirit allow one to _____ the kingdom of God. In verse 6 he tells him that being born again is being born of the _____.

The spiritual birth is what happens when we get saved. God does a supernatural work of transformation in our soul to impart His spiritual life in us. This life from God is eternal life and we pass from death to eternal life and we will never die (spiritually) because we have passed from death to life.

John 5:24 - 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life,** and does not come into judgment, but **has passed out of death into life.**" NASB

When this happens we receive an understanding from God about His kingdom, about sin and about Jesus being the provision of God for our sin. This is because in the new birth, God transforms our mind and gives us the capacity to understand spiritual realities. We begin to hunger and thirst for the words of the Bible, the Word of God, and a desire to fellowship with God’s people, the Church.

1 Corinthians 2:12-16 - 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God,** 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those **taught by the Spirit,** combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for **they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them,** because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? **But we have the mind of Christ.** NASB

Question #15: In 1 Corinthians 2:12-16, in verse 12 Paul tells us that we have received the Spirit of God, “that we might _____ the things freely given to us by God.” Then in verse 13, he tells us that these things are “not taught by _____ wisdom, but instead “those _____ by the Spirit.”

Because we have received the Spirit of God by being born again, we are now taught by the Spirit of God the things of God. But in contrast to this consider what Paul says in verse 14 about the “natural man” (the person who has not been born again by the Spirit).

Question #16: In 1 Corinthians 2:12-16, verse 14 tells us that the “natural man does not _____ the things of the Spirit of God; for they are _____ to him, and he _____ understand them.

This means that anyone who has not been born again by the Spirit of God, does not have the ability to understand the things about God, Christ and His kingdom, or salvation. This understanding comes from the Spirit of God and this is why Jesus said **“you must be born again.”** So when we truly and genuinely come to Christ in repentance and by faith, God saves us by making us into a new creature, and we are born again by the Spirit of God. This is a work that only God can do by His Spirit and His Word. It is a supernatural and powerful work that God does in our soul.

1 Peter 1:3 - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, NASB

1 Peter 1:23 - 23 for you **have been born again** not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. NASB

Here Peter tells us that God has **“caused us to be born again.”** God has caused us; it is His work. Jesus explained in John 3:3-7, this is a spiritual birth caused by the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit). Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:23 that this birth comes **“through the living and abiding word of God.”** So we are born again by the Spirit and this happens through the Word of God. In other words, we are born again when we see and hear (with our physical eyes and ears) the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Word of God, and the Spirit of God quickens us to see and hear with the understanding of our mind and heart (our spiritual eyes and ears). In Ezekiel chapter 36, God explains this new birth to us in a clear and concise manner.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 - 26 "Moreover, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;** and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** "And **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes,** and **you will be careful to observe** My ordinances." NASB

Question #17: According to Ezekiel 36:25-27, what kind of heart and spirit do we get within us and who gives it to us?

Question #18: Also in Ezekiel 36:25-27, what will God do to help us obey and live by His statutes and ordinances?

So we see here in Ezekiel that another important thing that happens when we are born again is that we receive power from God to overcome sin in our lives and begin to live by God’s Word. He will **“cause us to walk in His**

statutes” and we **“will”** then **“observe His ordinances.”** This is a very important matter. When we get saved and come to Christ, we come in **“repentance of our sins,”** meaning that we **“turn our back”** on our sins to prove our genuine heart of sorrow over sin and desire to follow Christ and obey His teaching. When we are truly saved and born again, we receive power from God to do exactly that. We are given the Spirit of God so that we can put sin to death in our life and live in a way to please God and obeys His commandments.

1 John 3:9 - 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and **he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** NASB

Question #19: Here in 1 John 3:9, what two things are we told about people who are born of God in regard to sin?

1. _____
2. _____

Because the Spirit of God now lives inside of us, we have been given understanding so that we can know God intimately, and experience a personal relationship with Him, and live in a way that pleases Him and obeys His commandments. More than this Jesus Himself, keeps us so that the power of the devil to make us live in a continual pattern of sin is broken so that we are free to obey God.

1 John 5:18-20 - 18 We know that **no one who is born of God sins;** but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. **19** We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. **20** And we know that the Son of God has come, and **has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true,** and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. NASB

Question #20: According to 1 John 5:18-20, what does “He who was born of God” (that is Jesus) do for us?

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It is important then to realize that because we have received power from God to overcome sin, we must live in this power He has given us and **“put to death”** our sins. We must be sure not to **“practice sin”** or live in a continual pattern of sin. If we have truly been born again, we cannot live like this. We will have struggles with sin for the rest of our lives, but we will not continue to be overcome by sin and temptation so that we practice it regularly. Truly, we have power from the Spirit to put it to death.

Romans 8:12-14 - 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh **13** for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but **if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** **14** For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. NASB

Question #21: According to Romans 8:12-14, how and by what power do we put to death the misdeeds of the body?

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Here then we have seen that being a disciple of Christ means to be forgiven of all of our sins, saved from the wrath of God and to be born again by the Spirit of God. To be a Christian means we have been forgiven, saved, and born again. Let us be careful then to see to it that our lives genuinely reflect these characteristics.

Part 3: To love and worship God

The most important thing in life is to love God with everything that is within us. This Jesus says is the great commandment.....

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.**" 38 "**This is the great and foremost commandment.**" 39 "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." NASB

This, says the Lord in verse 38, is the **"great and foremost commandment."** In other words, this is what is **MOST** important in life, the main thing, the first thing, the great thing, the foremost thing, the thing which is front and above all others. Jesus says **"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."** The entire Old Testament, all 39 books, all 929 chapters, 23,214 verses, all 590,439 words says Jesus **"depend on these two commandments."**

Question #1: Of all of the things that God has commanded us to do, what is the most important?

Question #2: If we have this great commandment from God, could there be a higher priority in our life? Describe a few ways in which you should/could express your love toward God?

Consider another place where Jesus speaks about this priority of loving God.

Mark 12:33 - 33 "and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, **is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.**" NASB

Burnt offerings and sacrifices is a reference to the religious system practiced by the Jews of Jesus' day. This was the true religion of God at that time; however, they had put a so much emphasis on their religious duties, they had forgotten God. They had forgotten to love God and worship him with hearts motivated by love and genuine affection. Jesus then pointed out that loving God was **"much more important."** Much more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices, more important than all our religious endeavors, more important than anything else in the world, is this foremost commandment.

Question #3: According to Matthew 22:36-40 and Mark 12:33, what then is the great and central principle in Christianity?

This is why the commandment states, you shall love the Lord your God **"with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."** This means that we are to love God with everything that is within us. It means we are to devote to Him everything we own and every part of our life.

- **with all your heart** - this speaks of our emotions, our inner being is to be wholly devoted to God with strong affection
- **with all your soul** - This means, to love God more than our life, to be willing to give up your life to him, and to devote it all to his service; to live for him, and to be willing to die at his command.
- **with all your mind** - We are to love God with our intellect, with all the powers of our mind, bringing memory, thought, imagination, reason, judgment, and all our mental powers, as willing subjects to bow at God's feet in adoration and love. He is to occupy our thinking. To love His Word and His gospel more than we do the vain thoughts of our own minds, the entertainment, comedy and communications of the world, and to give our time unto the meditation, contemplation and worship of God.
- **with all your strength** - with all the faculties of soul and body. To labor and toil for his glory, and to make that the great object of ALL our efforts.

God is supremely valuable. Because He is the Creator of everything, He is infinitely more valuable than everything that exists. It is only proper then, that we love Him with a wholehearted devotion worthy of His honor. The kind of devotion to God that honors Him consistent with who He is, takes the commitment of all that we are. This is what it means to be a Christian, to devote our whole lives to the love and worship of God. Consider how this is expressed in the following Scripture from Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 - 12 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but **to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the LORD'S commandments** and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? NASB

Question #4: In Deuteronomy 10:12-14 there are five verbs which express our devotion to God. Can you name them? 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

These verses we have seen no doubt call us to a wholehearted devotion to God. But consider that this kind of love and devotion to God also brings about great blessing in our lives. God blesses those who seek Him. He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6 - 6 "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and **that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**" NASB

Only when we come to love God with our whole being will we be truly satisfied. Only then will we be content and fulfilled! This is the purpose for which we were made. But we cannot properly love God apart from obedience to His Word. It is imperative then that we cultivate our love for God by seeking Him in the Bible, the Word of God. This is because God has given us a special revelation of Himself in the Bible. God has revealed Himself in the written Word of God (we will discuss this further in a later lesson). Therefore as we seek God in His Word, we learn many profound truths about Him and His kingdom. We should be cultivating a love for God and His Word by daily reading and meditation. Consider how this love and obedience to God is expressed in Psalm 119:1-6.

Psalm 119:1-6 – "**How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the LORD. 2 How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart.** 3 They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways. 4 Thou hast ordained Thy precepts, That we should keep *them* diligently. 5 Oh that my ways may be established To keep Thy statutes! 6 Then I shall not be ashamed When I look upon all Thy commandments." NASB

Question #5: In Psalm 119:1-2, there are four things listed that bring blessing. Can you name them?

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____

Question #6: In Psalm 119:5-6, what is the writer longing for? And what will be the result of it?

This idea of being blessed and satisfied because of meditating on God's Word is a major theme in the Bible. This is because when we spend time in the Word of God, it changes our thinking and we respond to the circumstances in our life in a way that pleases God and God then blesses us because of our obedience to Him. Consider another similar passage in Psalm 1.

Psalm 1:1-3 – “**How blessed is the man** who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But **his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.** 3 And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And **in whatever he does, he prospers.**” NASB

Question #7: In Psalm 1:1-3, what three things is the blessed man encouraged not to do?

Question #8: In Psalm 1:1-3, how often does the blessed man meditate on the Word of God (law of the Lord)?

It is important to remember that our love and worship of God cannot be separated from our obedience to Him. We do in fact need to obey Him and this is the way we worship in an acceptable manner.

John 14:15 - 15 “**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.**” NASB

“*If*” you love Me, “*you will*” keep My commandments. In other words, it will be plainly seen if you really love Me when you obey My commandments. Love for Christ produces obedience to His commandments.

1 John 5:3 - 3 “For **this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments;** and His commandments are not burdensome.” NASB

Therefore we offer our lives in obedience to God, giving Him our time, our talent, and our treasure, as a sacrifice. This is the way we worship. This means that we no longer live for the worldly endeavors we once did, but now we have God's agenda to pursue. We offer our life in service to God and this is worship.

Romans 12:1-2 – 1 “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.** 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” NASB

Question #9: According to Romans 12:1-2, what is our spiritual service of worship to God?

Question #10: In Romans 12:2, it states “do not be conformed to this _____, but be _____ by the renewing of your mind.” What do you suppose is meant by, “do not be conformed to this world”?

Worship is not just something we do at church on Sunday morning, but rather a life lived to the glory of God. We worship God in everything that we do. Even the most mundane activities of our lives are seen as a way to glorify God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 - 31 “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.**” NASB

Question #11: In 1 Corinthians 10:31, how many things do we do to the glory of God?

To be sure, worship does include gathering with the church to sing and praise God, and to learn from gifted teachers under the preaching and teaching of God’s Word.

Colossians 3:16-17 - 16 “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, **with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” NASB

Question #12: According to Colossians 3:16-17, describe how it says we are to let the Word of Christ richly dwell within us.

Question #13: Referring to Colossians 3:16-17 again, with what attitude are we to sing and to live?

But worship goes beyond just our gathering with the church to the way we treat people around us everyday. This is very important to the way we worship God with our lives and it pleases God when we are kind to people and treat them in a loving way.

Hebrews 13:15-16 – 15 “Through Him then, **let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. 16 And **do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.**” NASB

Question #14: From Hebrews 13:15-16, name some sacrifices that God is pleased with.

It is clear to us then, that being a Christian or a disciple of Christ also means that we are devoted to the love and worship of God. And this means that we have devoted our entire lives, all that we have and all that we are, to living in a way that expresses our worship to God. This is what it means to be a Christian, to love and worship God.

Part 4: To be a productive member of God's Family, the Church

One of the great truths of the Christian faith is that of **"Adoption."** Adoption is the fact that when we are born again by the Holy Spirit, we are **"adopted"** into God's family the Church and become His children. This means we receive a whole new family of people, God as our Father, and the people of the Church as our siblings. Stated another way, Christians are now our brothers and sisters and we all have one heavenly Father, God. We have been given this right and privilege when God adopted us as His children, when we believed in Jesus Christ.

John 1:12-13 - 12 "But as many as received Him, to them **He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,** 13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." NASB

Therefore we have also received all of the privileges of being God's children. These privileges are many. Consider just a few from this Scripture in Romans chapter 8:

Romans 8:14-17 - 14 "For **all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.** 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,** 17 and if children, **heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,** if indeed we suffer with *Him* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*." NASB

Question #1: From Romans 8:14, what does the Spirit of God now do for us, and how does it describe our relationship to Him?

The words, **"Abba! Father,"** are endearing words which describe God's relationship to us as our Father. It is much like saying **"daddy"** in modern English. This describes that we have an *intimate* fellowship with God and can now trust Him as our Provider and Protector.

Question #2: Referring to Romans 8:16, what does the Spirit of God now tell us?

Question #3: Also, in Romans 8:17, what privilege is now described as being ours because of this new relation of sonship?

In order to make it really clear to us, God repeats this understanding in this passage in Galatians.

Galatians 4:3-7 - 4 "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, **that we might receive the adoption as sons.** 6 And because you are sons, **God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"** 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and **if a son, then an heir through God."** NASB

Question #4: Referring to Galatians 4:6, what has God sent into our hearts?

Question #5: Concerning the above Scriptures on sonship, what do you suppose this teaches about how much God loves us and how He is committed to our welfare?

The fact of the matter is, we are God's children if we have been saved and born again. This is what it means to be a Christian or a disciple of Christ, to be God's very own children. It is because of this fact that we now have God's favor and His profound love, much like the way an earthly father loves his children, except that God is perfect in His love which is far more pure and intense than that of men.

1 John 4:16 - 16 "And **we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love**, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." NASB

1 John 3:1 – "**See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God**; and *such* we are." NASB

Now because we have become God's children, all Christians have become our siblings, our very own brothers and sisters. And just as we have a responsibility to our earthly families to love and care for them, we also have this privilege with our heavenly family, the Church. In fact, our love for the Church at times will exceed even our love for our own blood relatives. We have this responsibility to love, care for and serve our fellow disciples in the Church.

1 John 4:11-12 - 11 "Beloved, if God so loved us, **we also ought to love one another**. 12 No one has beheld God at any time; **if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.**" NASB

Question #6: Concerning 1 John 4:11, what should we do to our fellow Christians?

Question #7: What two things do 1 John 4:12 tell us are the results of loving our fellow Christians?

1. _____
2. _____

Furthermore, because we have become part of the family of the Church, it is important for us to use our gifts and talents to serve God in the Church. We have been given "**gifts**" by God to use in service in the Church. It is important then for us to put these gifts to use because each one of us has a vital role to play in the ministry to our Lord. This is how we serve God as His servants. We employ our gifts and talents, our money and our time to further God's agenda in the Church and in the world. We do this by serving together with the family of Christ. This is also referred to as the "body of Christ" (by analogy).

Romans 12:4-8 - 4 "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 **so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another**. 6 And **since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us**, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who

teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” NASB

Question #8: In Romans 12:5, “we, who are many, are one _____ in Christ, and individually _____ one of another.”

Question #9: According to Romans 12:6, “we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. What does verse 6 say we should do with these gifts?”

Someone might ask, “*How do I know what gifts I have been given by God to serve in the Church?*” Well, this is not always the easiest question to answer but here are a few principles to know in answering this.

- 1) Spiritual gifts are usually talents that God has given us which help further the agenda of the Kingdom of God in the Church by helping the Church fulfill its ministry to the Christians and the world. Examples would be like those listed in Romans 12:7-8, “teaching, giving, showing mercy, leading, serving, etc....”
- 2) The gifts that we have as individuals are usually things we are very good at and also enjoy doing.
- 3) The gifts that we have are usually evident to us and others because they see that we do them well. People will often comment about how well we serve in a given way when we are gifted at it.
- 4) The gifts that we have will always build others up and encourage and help them. This should always be our goal in our service in the Church.
- 5) The gifts that we have will always be consistent with Scripture and obedient to God’s Word, the Bible.
- 6) It normally takes us many years of growth in the Christian faith before we really learn what our gifts are and how to effectively use them. We must be patient as this happens.

It is important then to realize that our effectiveness in ministry (service) to God and the Church comes as we grow and mature in the faith. This is why the Church is devoted to serving each other. It is to help us all “*grow up*” in the faith to be “*mature*.” It is important then to take some time to study and learn and grow so that you can eventually learn to become an effective servant in the Church and serve our Lord Jesus in an excellent way. This is why He has given gifted evangelists, pastors and teachers to the Church. The evangelists help get you saved by telling you the Gospel, and the pastors and teachers teach you how to understand the Word and grow in your faith. They help the Church to grow and mature and “*build itself up in love*.” Consider Ephesians chapter 4:11-16..

Ephesians 4:11-16 - 11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, 12 **for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;** 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to a mature man,** to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are **no longer to be children,** tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 **but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him,** who is the head, *even* Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, **according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.** NASB

Question #10: Referring to Ephesians 4:12, what two things do the ministry of the pastors and teachers provide for us?

1. _____
2. _____

Question #11: According to Ephesians 4:13-14, we grow “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a _____ man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are _____ to be children”

Question #12: In Ephesians 4:16, when each individual part has its “proper working,” what two things does this cause?

1. _____
2. _____

Therefore we see that as we each use our gifts and talents to serve the Church, we all grow up in the faith and are built up in love. It is very important for us to understand that effective service in the Church is our role and responsibility as individual family members. So we must strive to continue to live at peace with our Christian family, humbly serving them with our gifts and talents. We must love them and be unified with them.

Colossians 3:12-14 - 12And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these **things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.** NASB

Question #13: Colossians 3:12-14 explains what God’s love looks like as we relate to one another in the Church. What are some of the words that stick out to you in this passage about the character of God’s love in the Church?

Question #14: According to Colossians 3:13, what should we do when we have a complaint against someone in the church?

This is pleasing to God and glorifies Him. It displays His love to the world around us. It sets us apart from the world so that the Gospel of our Lord becomes a very attractive thing to the people in the world who desperately need to be saved. By this love that we Christians have for one another, they will know that we follow Christ.

John 13:34-35 - 34 "A new commandment I give to you, **that you love one another, even as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. 35 "**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**" NASB

Question #15: According to John 13:35, how will people know that we are Christians?

We have now seen, from the Bible, many important things which characterize our lives as disciples of Christ. We have learned some basic things about what it means to be a Christian. It is important now for us to make every effort to live our lives according to these principles. Take some time and pray and ask God to fulfill these good things in your life by His Spirit and through the Word. Ask Him for “hearing ears and seeing eyes” as you continue to search out His treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the Bible. To Him be glory forever!