



Becoming
a
Christian

Phil Sanders

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In Search of the Lord's Way
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Phil Sanders



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P.O. Box 371

Edmond, Oklahoma 73083

800-321-8633

searchtv@searchtv.org

www.searchtv.org

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Becoming a Christian

Thank you for accepting this booklet; we hope it will be a blessing to you. Please read it with your Bible open. The Bible called the ancient Bereans fair-minded, because “they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). We hope you too will search the Scriptures to know the truth. “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3–4). He cares about every individual and wants you to be His child. When you become a Christian, you will be a child of God. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26–27). When you become a Christian, God will bless you with the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.

You should carefully consider the importance of becoming a Christian. It is more serious than the purchase of a house or getting married. It is the critical decision affecting your eternal destiny. Because of this, the decision to become a Christian is not for little children. It requires serious thought, a change of life, and the willingness to make a total commitment. It is the most serious decision you will ever make.

We urge you to become a Christian soon, but remember that becoming a Christian is a total commitment from that day forward. The Lord Jesus said,

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:23–26). Jesus also said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

The Bible makes a distinction between those who belong to Christ and those who do not. Paul described the status of people before they became Christians in Ephesians 2:1–3:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were

by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

In a later verse, Paul reminded those Ephesians of their spiritually hopeless state. He urged them to remember “that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

Once they became Christians, however, Paul said, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). When we become Christians, we cease to be people without God and without hope and become members of the family of God!

Becoming a Christian is a new birth. The Lord Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:3–7).

Becoming a Christian and being born again brings newness of life.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:3–7).

Paul further said, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Though one is lost and a slave to sin, once one becomes a Christian he is freed from sin and becomes a servant of God.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became

slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:16–18).

No matter what your past has been, no matter how many sins you've committed, the grace of God is greater than your sin. A whole new life awaits you, a life filled with love and righteousness. God wants to take away your sin and give you an abundant life in Christ (John 10:10).

To find life, however, you must come to the source of life, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). You cannot find eternal life in any other way or from any other source; "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Only by turning to Jesus can we hope to find the forgiveness of our sins and an eternal home in heaven. Becoming a Christian, then, is absolutely necessary.

What Is a Christian?

The word "Christian" appears only three times in the New Testament. The first occurrence is in Acts 11:26: "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Many people think that the word "Christian" means Christ-like, but it actually refers to one who belongs to Christ and follows Him. However, anyone who really belongs to Christ and is committed to Him will surely want to be like Him.

The believers at Antioch were first disciples before they were called Christians. A disciple learns and imitates his master. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master" (Matthew 10:24–25). While some believe the name "Christian" came from the pagans at Antioch who used the term to slander the believers, the word "called" in the Acts 11:26 suggests something different. This word "called" (*chrematisai*) suggests God gave them this name, for the word is only used when God calls or names something. The Lord promised His people, "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name" (Isaiah 62:2). The name "Christian" is the fulfillment of this promise.

A Christian believes in and is committed to Jesus. Jesus said to them all,

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it

to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels (Luke 9:23–26).

A Christian has been saved by the blood of Christ by obeying the gospel.

He [God the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13–14).

Because we are saved by His blood, we may surely claim what God says of us.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9–10).

“Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:8–9).

A Christian belongs to Jesus and regards Jesus as His Lord.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15).

A Christian sets the Lord Jesus apart from all others and devotes himself to the service of the Lord. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

A Christian cares for others and keeps himself unspotted from the world. “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

A Christian is willing to suffer for the name of Christ. “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Peter 4:15–16).

A Christian realizes he must not change what the Lord teaches. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31–32).

Paul warned the Galatians,

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:6–9).

John said, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9).

Why Should I Become a Christian?

We would not ask you to become a Christian, if we could not give you sufficient reasons to do so. We are asking you to follow the Lord Jesus who created you and the Father who has provided every good gift you possess.

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16).

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning (James 1:17).

The Lord has blessed us in many marvelous ways; it is only natural that we should commit ourselves to Him in love.

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s (Psalm 103:1–5).

We ask that you give careful thought to these reasons to become a Christian.

First, *because the Lord Jesus loves each person, He loves you.*

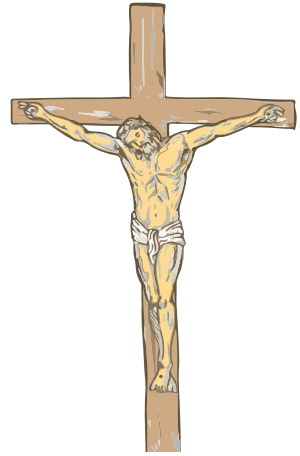
“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The Lord loves every person young or old, male or female.

The Lord Jesus died on the cross for everyone. “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2). The word “propitiation” refers to an atoning sacrifice. Jesus was willing to die on the cross so that we might be forgiven and become friends with God. When people take a long look at the what Jesus did on the cross, they will learn to love the Lord Jesus too. Jesus said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32).

If we could but comprehend how great “the width and length and depth and height” of the love of God is, we would not hesitate to return a deep and committed love to Him. Paul described Christ’s surprising love in Romans 5:6–8:

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The Lord Jesus endured mocking, beatings, false accusers, a crown of thorns, scourging, and crucifixion in order to save us. Though He could have called twelve legions (72,000) of angels to stop His suffering and death, He was willing to endure it all because of His love for us. Scourging alone often caused the death of men. A scourge was a whip containing pieces of glass, metal, or bone that tore into the flesh and caused great pain.



Crucifixion was the worst kind of death one could endure, designed to produce the utmost pain prior to death. The Roman soldiers nailed Jesus’ hands and feet to a cross and lifted the cross up so the weight of His body painfully rested on the nails. The position put extreme pressure on the chest until the heart could take it no more. Jesus endured this extreme pain for six hours on the cross. No one can deny the great love He demonstrated to us, especially when we consider that we were all helpless, ungodly, and sinners. If there were no other reason than the love of our Lord Jesus to be a Christian, this one reason would be sufficient.

Second, *because the way of the Lord is the right way, we should*

follow Him. The Lord Jesus said,

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:13–14).

The Lord has provided for us a way that leads to life, to heaven, and to the Father. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

The Lord’s way is a good way that God designed to bless mankind. Every law of God was given for our good and to protect us from the dangers and pain of sin. God loves us, and His ways provide the best life possible. When we follow His commandments, we demonstrate our love: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). God is not in the business of burdening our lives with meaningless rules.

Jesus said,

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30).

When we begin to follow the Lord, we’ll see the promise of Jesus start to come to pass. The Lord Jesus said, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Third, *because Jesus is everything He claimed to be, we can place our utmost trust in Him.* The New Testament provides two lines of evidence to provide that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The first line is fulfilled prophecy. Peter told the Jews, “But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled” (Acts 3:18). Jesus’ death and resurrection happened according to the prophecies found in Scripture. Paul said, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4; *cf.* Psalm 16:10).

The prophet Micah predicted in the eighth century B.C. Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and indeed He was (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4). Six times in Isaiah 53 (eighth century B.C.) the prophet said the Messiah Jesus would render Himself as a guilt offering and bear the sins

of the people, and indeed He did (1 Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 10:1–10; 1 Peter 2:24). David in Psalm 22:16 predicted the death of Jesus by a piercing of the hands and feet one thousand years before it happened (Matthew 27:35; John 20:25). There are at least one hundred prophecies dealing with the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no other book in all of ancient literature that contains specific predictions made hundreds of years before they were fulfilled. When prophecies are literally, exactly fulfilled, as are those in the Bible, the proof is undeniable that the prophecies are from God. God said,

Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, “My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure” (Isaiah 46:9–10).

The second line of evidence comes from the record of His resurrection from the dead. “He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). His disciples saw, heard, and touched Jesus Christ after His resurrection, to satisfy their own question as to whether or not God raised Him from the dead (1 John 1:1–4; Luke 24:36–43).

Historians and scholars recognize that the tomb of Jesus was empty. An angel said to the women,

Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you (Matthew 28:5–7).

The disciples found inside the tomb the linen wrappings used to bury the body of Jesus.

Then Simon Peter came, following him (John), and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself (John 20:6–7).

If the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus, why would they take time to unwrap the body and leave the linen wrappings behind? How could a group of Jewish disciples have scared away the guards in order to get the body out of the tomb? Pilate told the Jewish leaders, “You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as you know how.” So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard

(Matthew 27:65–66).

The disciples were fearful and unbelieving of the resurrection at first. “Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen” (Mark 16:14). Thomas doubted to such an extent that he said, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). Jesus did not get angry with Thomas, but a week later said, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” (20:27–28).

The disciples once convinced were willing to endure persecution, imprisonment, pain, and death for their faith in the risen Lord Jesus. They continued preaching Jesus, risen from the dead, to everyone regardless of the personal cost of their faith. Men suffer for what they know is the truth, and no one doubts the disciples had a firm conviction that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

Fourth, *because we are accountable to God, we need to be prepared to face judgment*. “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). People who have not put their trust in Christ are not prepared to face judgment. All men stand in need of the grace of God and need to be saved by the blood of Jesus.

Fifth, *because the Lord Jesus has prepared a place for the saved, heaven is too good to miss*.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3–5).

Heaven is a place without crime, without sin, without disease, without mourning, and without death. Heaven is the place where God dwells and blesses His children. Nothing is more important than going to heaven to be with God forever and ever. Jesus reassured the disciples when He said,

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:1–3).

Sixth, *because hell is real, we must stay close to the Lord Jesus*. The Lord said, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Hell is a place of outer darkness, where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:30). It is “the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelation 20:14).

Because Jesus cares for everyone, He warned, “And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched’” (Mark 9:47–48). Hell is real, and Christians take seriously their need to follow Jesus to avoid that terrible place.

Seventh, *because you will never regret doing the right thing, do not put off doing what is right*. The sinner's cry at the judgment is always one of regret for having failed to serve the Lord. Because they will be punished for their sins, they wish they had lived differently and regret their sinful behaviors.

Sometimes people suffer for doing what is right. Joseph avoided the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife and ended up in prison (Genesis 39). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego suffered being thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image (Daniel 3). Daniel was thrown into a lion's den, because he prayed to God and would not yield to the king's edict (Daniel 6). The Jews stoned Stephen and Herod killed James for because of the faith of those godly men. (Acts 7:57–60; 12:2).

If we were to speak to the dead and the lost, they would urge us not to live in sin but to follow Christ and be saved. They would plead with us not to allow anything to come between God and our souls. They regret not having served Jesus Christ.

But if we were to speak to the dead and saved who did serve Jesus, they would not regret their sufferings for His name. They would clearly and boldly tell us to remain faithful and committed to the Lord Jesus all of our days. Paul, who suffered much for the cause of Christ, said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

When this life is over, you will never regret serving the Lord Jesus.

If you had to face the Lord Jesus today, would you face Him with joy or with regret?

How Do I Become a Christian?

No one can earn his salvation or become good enough by his own efforts to be right with God; “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). We all need the grace of God to be forgiven and to have a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8–10).

Someone has well said the grace of God is God’s redemption at Christ’s expense. The Lord Jesus died upon the cross for our sins so that we might be right with the Father in heaven. Jesus “Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree [cross], that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). The Lord Jesus bore the punishment we should have received for our sins. His suffering allows us to be healed spiritually from all the many problems sin brings.

People tend to downplay sin, but sin is our greatest enemy. Sin brings nothing but destruction and heartache. Sin deceives, hardens the heart, and leads people into unbelief (Hebrews 3:12–13). When lawlessness abounds, “the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). Sin ruins lives, divides families, and destroys cities and nations. James wrote,

Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (James 1:13–15).

Sin is the transgression of God’s commandments (1 John 3:4). When people disregard what God teaches and follow their own desires, they will surely fall into sin and lose their souls. John warned the people:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15–17).

We all need the grace of God to be delivered from this present evil age (Galatians 1:4). Just as Peter encouraged the people on the day of Pentecost, so we encourage you, “Be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40).

How are we saved? We are saved by the grace and mercy of God, but we respond to this grace of God through faith in Christ. The word “faith” sums up the many things God requires to respond to His kindness and goodness. When the Bible speaks of faith, it is not thinking of faith alone as some suggest. Rather the Bible requires a living and active faith that responds in obedience. Paul preached in order to bring about the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26). Acts speaks of many priests who were “obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). The Hebrews writer said, “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:8–9). It is not merely those who believe but those who by faith do the will of the Father who will enter the kingdom of heaven. The Lord Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

The necessity of faith. “But 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 diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). The Lord Jesus said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18).

Believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, means believing what He teaches. If one does not believe what He teaches, one questions His identity and character as the Son of God who teaches only the truth. The gospel is the good news about the salvation that comes through Jesus. Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Faith in Christ leads to obedience; Jesus said, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

The necessity of love. Jesus said, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” (Mark 12:29–30). When a

person loves the Lord, he will serve Him. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). The Lord Jesus expects us to love Him more than anything else. Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37). We must love the Lord than anyone else and put Him first in our lives.

We learn to love the Lord by taking a long look at the cross of Christ. “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32). The more we think on how much He has loved us, the more we will naturally love Him and be sorrowful for our sins. We are commanded to love the Lord, because it is so easy to forget all He has done for us. Christian love is a lifelong commitment to serve and follow Christ. Remembering the cross of Christ helps us to keep our love for Christ alive.

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:14–15).

The necessity of repentance. Jesus said, “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is vitally important to our salvation. The Lord said,

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:29–30).

Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of life. Repenting is similar to the old military command, “About face!” Repenting means one turns from his old ways of sin to live a new life of righteousness and faithfulness to the Lord.

One cannot continue in sin and please the Lord. The apostle Paul told a group of pagans,

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30–31).

God does not want anyone to be lost but for all turn their hearts and

lives toward him. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Please stop reading for a moment and think about the sins you have committed in your past. “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). A person sins when he ignores or violates God’s commandments and laws and does as he pleases. Your sins have not only offended God but, they are also the reason Jesus endured the agonizing pain of the cross. Jesus bore the punishment that you should have received. Consider what harm your sins have done.

My friend, what are you going to do about your sin? Will you get angry, as some do, because someone pointed out that you have sinned? Will you ignore your old sins and hope they will be forgotten? Will you deny you have done anything wrong? The only thing you can do about your sins is to repent of them and to respond to the grace of Christ. God’s grace is powerful and wonderful, but it works with your repentance, not in spite of it.

Suppose we were traveling down the road and happened upon a car accident in which a man had broken his leg to such an extent that the bone was visible. One might give him a shot of morphine to deaden the pain, but unless the leg is set back in place, the man will be a cripple. Setting the leg will likely be painful and may even require surgery; but it is a crucial step to healing. Repentance is like that; it heals and puts things back the way God intended them. When the Lord speaks to us of repenting, He is speaking of a crucial step to the healing of our souls. Grace may take away the sting of sin, but repentance sets the soul on the right course. What will you do with your sin?

The necessity of confession. The Lord Jesus said,

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:32–33).

When Jesus asked the apostles who they thought He was, Simon Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Confession is the act of making known our faith in Jesus as the Christ. The apostle Paul said by inspiration,

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is

made unto salvation (Romans 10:9–10).



The necessity of baptism. The Lord Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15–16). Faith and baptism come before salvation in this verse. When people heard and believed

the gospel, they naturally wanted to be baptized into Christ, so they could be saved.

Jesus revealed the necessity of baptism when he told the ruler, Nicodemus,

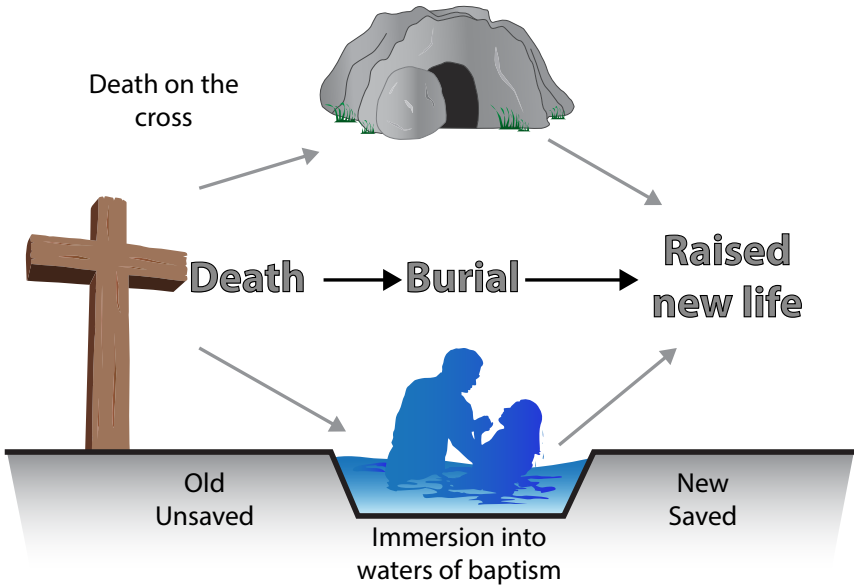
“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:3–5).

The new birth of water and the Spirit refers to being baptized. When a person is baptized, he receives the newness of life and freedom from his sins. Romans 6:3–7 explains:

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Romans 6:3-7

Colossians 2:12-13



When a person is baptized, he dies to his old body of sins. Because he is baptized into the death of Christ, crucified with Him, he comes into contact with the blood of Christ that cleanses him from sin. God gives a person newness of life in baptism; this is how a person is born again.

In Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, Peter and the apostles spoke about the cross and how they had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pentecost was celebrated as a feast just fifty days after the death of Jesus, and many of those who witnessed his death heard the apostles words. Peter concluded his sermon, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37–38).

While some people confuse what “for the remission of sins” means, the Scriptures help us to understand clearly. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, He said, “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Peter was

present when the Lord said this, and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) led Peter to use the same words in discussing the need to repent and be baptized. Just as Jesus suffered on the cross so that people might receive the remission or forgiveness of sins, so we must repent and be baptized so that our sins might be forgiven.

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them (Acts 2:36–41).

“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). When a person is baptized and saved, the Lord adds him to His church.

In later days Philip went to Samaria to preach the gospel and bring people to Christ. “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12). Notice that men and women were being baptized, not little children. Baptism is for those who are old enough to make a life commitment after they have confessed their faith and repented of their sins. There is no record of any infant being baptized in the New Testament.

An angel and the Spirit later led Philip to approach an Ethiopian eunuch who was traveling in his chariot on the road to Gaza after worshiping in Jerusalem. The eunuch was reading from Isaiah but did not understand what the prophet was teaching. Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, *here is* water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36).

So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:38–39).

The eunuch’s baptism took place in the water. They went down into the water, Philip baptized the eunuch, and they came out of the water. The word *baptism* means immersion, a dipping in water. Romans 6:4 speaks of being “buried with Him through baptism.” The concept of sprinkling or pouring water on someone for baptism is not from the New Testament but came much later. If we seek to obey the Lord, we will be immersed as the Scriptures teaches, rather than following an uninspired, human tradition.

After Saul of Tarsus was blinded and had a conversation with the Lord Jesus, he was directed to go into Damascus where “you will be told what you must do” (Acts 9:6). Nothing was said about his salvation. Saul fasted and prayed for three days (Acts 9:9, 11). When Ananias came to Saul, he said, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Saul was not saved by an experience on the road or by prayer. The Lord washed away his sins when he was baptized.

The Scriptures teach that when one is baptized, he becomes a child of God. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26–27).

When a person is baptized (immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ upon repentance and the confession of faith) the Lord washes away his sins, adds him to the church, causes him to be born again, makes him His child, buries him with Christ, raises him up with Christ, and gives him newness of life. God works upon us in baptism. When someone says one doesn’t have to be baptized to be saved, they are speaking falsely! They are actually saying this person doesn’t have to have God working on his soul and in his life. Baptism is necessary to salvation!

The urgency of obedience. Throughout the New Testament, people treated their need to become a Christian with great urgency. When the people heard what they needed to do to have the forgiveness of sins on the day of Pentecost, three thousand gladly received his word and were baptized that very day (Acts 2:37–41).

Philip preached Christ to the city of Samaria; and “when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12).

When the Ethiopian eunuch saw water, he immediately asked, “What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36).

When the Philippian jailer heard about Jesus and salvation, he was baptized the same hour of the night, even though it was midnight (Acts 16:29–34).

When the twelve disciples of John learned of Jesus Christ, they were immediately “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5).

When Ananias came to Saul of Tarsus, he said, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

In each of these cases, those who heard and believed the good news were baptized into Christ that very day. They realized being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus was necessary to obey the gospel and to receive the forgiveness of their sins. They did not wait for a more convenient season. They obeyed immediately because they wanted to be saved right then. We pray you will do the same.

How urgent is it that you come to the grace of the God to deal with your sins? Today is the best day to come to the Lord.

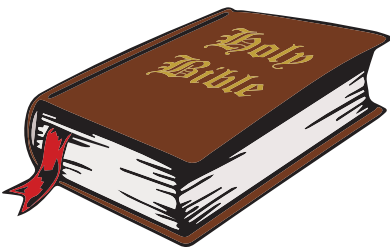
How Do I Live the Christian Life?

Remaining faithful to the Lord. Becoming a Christian is just the beginning of our life with Christ. One cannot abandon his faith after he becomes a Christian and imagine that he can remain right with God. The Lord Jesus said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). Becoming a Christian is a lifelong commitment. The Lord Jesus encouraged the persecuted Christians in Smyrna,

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw 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 (Revelation 2:10).

Growing spiritually.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:12–14).



“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Study your Bible every day. Love the word, read the word, memorize the word, obey the word, and share the word with others.

Seek God’s help. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you

will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8). “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul is not saying we must pray every second; He is saying that we should not abandon praying altogether. Prayer should be part of our everyday lives.

“You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:2–3).

Loving others.

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:44–45).

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matthew 6:14–15).

Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12).

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34–35).

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away (1 Corinthians 13:4–8).

Involvement with the church. When you become a Christian, the Lord will add you to His church (Acts 2:41, 47). The Lord wills that you get involved with the worship and the ministries of the church. As a member of the church, you have the opportunity to draw strength from other Christians, but other Christians also depend on drawing strength from you. If you are involved with the church, you can help others remain faithful and involved. If you withdraw from the church, you weaken

others who need your strength and example of faithfulness.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24–25).

Worshipping the Lord with other Christians. Since you love the Lord, you should worship Him reverently and in spirit and in truth. Our God is holy, and He wants His people to show Him respect and reverence when they worship Him. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God *is* a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28–29).

The Lord wants His people to worship Him genuinely and according to His teaching. The Lord Jesus said,

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23–24).

In worship God is the audience, and we are to show Him our love and respect. When we worship God, we should seek to please Him and not merely please ourselves. We cannot confuse worship with entertainment. Worship is not a time for performances. The Lord Jesus said,

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward (Matthew 6:5).

When people perform for others, they fail to worship as God.

Ways People Worship in Church

First, *by singing praise to God.*

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:19–20).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).



“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15). We have no record or command of any church worshiping the Lord God in song with the use of instrumental music. Churches on their own initiative departed from the teaching of the New Testament and began using instruments. Worship in

spirit and in truth avoids such innovations and seeks to follow the ways found in the New Testament.

Second, *by praying to God*. “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Timothy 2:1–2).

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8).

Third, *by studying the Word*. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5:42). “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13).



Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (2 Timothy 4:2–4).

Fourth, *by partaking of the Lord’s Supper*.

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight (Acts 20:7).

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and

when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

Christians take the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s day, the first day of the week.



Fifth, *by giving financially.*

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come (1 Corinthians 16:1–2).

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work (2 Corinthians 9:6–8).

Living Morally as Jesus Lived.

Because you belong to Christ, you should live a moral life that reflects your relationship with Jesus Christ.

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

Our bodies do not belong to us, so we must be careful to avoid the sinful use of our bodies.

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:18–20).

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

When you become a Christian, you too must put away the sin and live righteously. Paul asked, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans 6:1–2).

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law (Galatians 5:19–23).

Serving as Jesus Served

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:16–18).

Winning Souls as Jesus Won Souls

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen (Matthew 28:18–20).

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:15–16).

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:42).

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19–20).

Firmly Holding to the Truth.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:1–2).

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ (Colossians 2:6–8).

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Conclusion

Earlier we asked you to stop and consider the cross of Christ and the love God has demonstrated to us. Then we asked you to think long about your past sins and how hurtful they were to God. Now we ask you, what will you do? Will you demonstrate your love for the Lord by obeying the gospel of Christ?

We urge you to find a Church of Christ in your area. Tell them you have been studying the Word of God and realize your need to repent, confess, and be baptized so that you may become a Christian. Get involved with these Christians, continue studying the Bible, worship with them, participate in their ministries, and become part of the family of God.



In SEARCH of the Lord's Way is a 30-minute weekly television program committed to "speaking the truth in love." It consists of congregational singing, Scripture readings, prayers and a Bible message. Basically, it is the kind of service one experiences when attending your local church. The entire program is closed captioned for the hearing impaired, and always ends with an invitation to join those who worship with the church in your community. *SEARCH* is overseen by the elders of the Edmond, Oklahoma, Church of Christ and produced locally. Supporting congregations and individuals make it possible for *In SEARCH of the Lord's Way* to be broadcast on radio and television stations throughout the world each week.



Phil Sanders is the speaker on the international television and radio ministry, *In Search of the Lord's Way*. The 33-year broadcast makes a gospel sermon available to millions of households every week. Phil is married to former Jackie Dodgen. They have four daughters and ten grandchildren.

P.O. Box 371 Edmond, Oklahoma 73083
800-321-8633 searchtv@searchtv.org