

SALVATION



MENU FOR A
HUNGRY HEART

YOU ARE HUNGRY FOR MORE OF GOD. THANKS TO CHRIST'S SACRIFICE, SALVATION IS YOUR FIRST HELPING OF GOD'S ETERNAL SPIRITUAL SMORGASBORD. SO, DIVE RIGHT IN. THIS BOOKLET EXPLAINS THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION THROUGH INSPIRATIONAL PERSONAL TESTIMONIES AND BEAUTIFUL BIBLICAL TRUTHS. GO AHEAD — STARVE YOUR SINFUL NATURE, AND FEED YOUR HUNGER FOR HIM.

HUNGRY?

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Spiritual Food For Today's Student

HUNGRY?

SPIRITUAL FOOD FOR TODAY'S STUDENT
A STUDY IN THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION



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A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation

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The Assemblies of God "Our Sixteen Doctrines" (a paraphrased version of the Statement of Fundamental Truths)
The Assemblies of God "General Christian Doctrines" Foundations For Faith—A Course on Bible Doctrine, by Zenas Bicket (GPH)

sal*va*tion (n.) 1. a saving or being saved from danger, evil, difficulty, destruction, etc.; rescue 2. a person or thing that is a means, cause, or source of preservation or rescue 3. *Theology* spiritual rescue from the consequences of sin; redemption (*from Webster's New World Dictionary, © 1984*)



Lee's life was headed in the wrong direction, and fast. He had gotten into drugs, alcohol, sex, and parties. He was arrested for grand-theft auto. That was just in the seventh grade. In middle school, he was jumped* into his first gang, "13th Street Lomas," and at one point, he lived in a drug house with friends. "We would sell drugs, hang out, and party all the time," Lee said. "This was from junior high until my freshman year. As time passed, I got worse and worse. I was heavily involved; I mainly ran drugs, but I was never really the 'main hook-up.'"

Lee's troubles only compounded in high school as his "boys" kept leaving him to face the consequences alone. He eventually got jumped* into another gang, the "Riverside Crip." But problems only escalated as Lee lived on the streets and sold drugs. This lifestyle forced a constant struggle to stay "on top." "I don't think a lot of people understand what it's like to have to constantly watch your back. People are always after you. You are constantly fighting. You get in fights, get beat up, and you beat up people. You do everything you can to maintain your name, your position, and who you are." It kept adding up.

With everything Lee did, it seemed that people kept abandoning him—especially when he got in trouble.

*Often, when a person is initiated into a gang, he or she is literally attacked and beaten by the other gang members. The one being initiated is not allowed to fight back or try to escape; he or she must take the beating. This is called *jumping*. This initiation often sends the new gang member to the hospital with a concussion, cuts, broken ribs, etc. (A person can be jumped when he or she tries to leave the gang as well.)

Angela, 15, had been violated as a little girl by a family member. She hung out with the wrong crowd, and most of her friends used drugs and drank. While she never used drugs herself, she dated dealers. Angela went to church occasionally, but always with a hangover from Saturday night.

Michael grew up in a Christian home, but by his own admission, he lived two lives. "It was the worst thing I could have done. I wanted the church and my family to think I was okay in my walk with God, but in reality, I was far from Him. I didn't know Him— I only knew *about* Him." By the time he reached high school Mike figured that if he couldn't serve God fully, then why even try? "I tried to justify my foolish actions by saying, 'God hates lukewarm Christians, and right now I'm lukewarm. Since I can't stay on fire for God, then forget Him.'"

Now, Mike would give anything to go back to high school, to be on fire for God and stand his ground for what he knows is right. But he can't, and that time is lost. "I'll pay a high price for my actions, in years of regret," Mike realizes. "I wish I had challenged myself to live the way God wanted me to."

Danette was barely out of her teens when, traveling the Autobahn (European highway) on a rainy night in West Germany, she thought her life was over. "*Is this how it's gonna end?*" she thought, "*with a married man, spinning out of control, colliding into a passing car? So much for independence. Is this adulthood?*"

Smoking and drinking gave her a temporary buzz, but she also got a high from the deceptive sense that she could do as she pleased and worry about the consequences later. Having an affair was dramatic and intriguing for such a young woman. The danger of leading a double life was alluring, despite her continual guilt. Regrettably, she thought it would be as easy to glide out of this lifestyle as it was to slip into it. Now, speeding toward that red car with an obviously drunk driver, she feared that she was about to slip into eternity.



As you read this booklet about salvation and its doctrines (foundational truths and teachings) you'll find out what happened with these people. Maybe one of their stories will even remind you of your own experience in coming to Christ. By choosing to follow Jesus, you know the relief of gaining eternal life and avoiding hell and permanent separation from God. But, you may not understand all that goes along with spiritual salvation, including grace, faith, sanctification, discipleship, water baptism, etc. You don't have to be a theologian to understand these things, much less apply them to your life. But the more you understand, the more you'll grow in your relationship with Jesus and the more influence you'll have on your world—often without realizing it!

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“Teaching doctrine to our students is putting on the ‘shield of faith.’ (See Ephesians 6:10–16.) Without understanding your faith, you have no shield. And when you have no shield, then the enemy can penetrate deep within.” —Jeff Baker, youth pastor

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“As much as salvation is an initial event, it’s also a process. It’s important students understand the realities of what happened at salvation. There’s so much that is accomplished; if it’s not explained, followed up, and studied, it can be lost.” —Roosevelt Hunter, pastor and youth speaker

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Although it might sound overwhelming, doctrine simply refers to foundational teachings based on biblical truths. If you know Jesus, then the Holy Spirit lives within you, giving you the ability to grasp those truths and working to make them a reality in your life.

Salvation: What Is It and Why Do We Need It?

Simply defined, *salvation* is being saved from danger, evil, difficulty, or destruction. Basically, it is being rescued. If there were no real danger, we would never need to be rescued. Unfortunately, there is a very real—and permanent—danger. This danger involves the loss of our entire purpose for life. But even more, it includes the loss of our lives forever. Let's back up and consider how this situation came about.

God's Purpose

First of all, God created us for an essential purpose: to know Him and have a loving personal relationship with him. That includes inner peace and a fulfilling life. In fact, that's one reason Jesus later came to earth: *"Jesus said, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full'" (John 10:10).*

People's Problem

Why are most people not experiencing the life God intends for them? It all started when the first humans, Adam and Eve, believed the devil's lie, abused their God-given free will and defied Him. (See Genesis 3; Romans 5:12.) From then on, everyone has sinned, meaning they've chosen to go their own way and fallen short of God's perfect standard. (See Romans 3:23; Isaiah 53:6.) Since God is completely holy (pure, perfect, separated from evil), sin prevents us from having a relationship with Him. In fact, sin is so drastically opposed to God's character that it requires the most extreme penalty: death (Romans 6:23) and eternal separation from God.

God's Solution

Because of His perfect justice, God could not allow sin to go unpunished. But we are not worthy to pay the penalty,

God Is...

- **Loving**—He created us for a relationship with himself and continues to patiently extend love. Some prefer to stop here, but...
- **Holy**—He's absolutely pure and separated from anything impure. This presents a problem for humanity and its choice to pursue its own imperfect, God-defying way.
- **Just**—He couldn't overlook or excuse our offenses. A penalty had to be paid. Since we couldn't pay it, God himself—because of His undying love for us—chose to provide the payment and to rescue us from the deathly consequences of our rebellion against God.



and we cannot get to God through our own imperfect efforts. (See Ephesians 2:8–9.) So God himself chose to pay sin's price, opening the way for us to reconnect with Him. He did so through His Son, Jesus. (See John 3:16.) Even though Jesus is God (John 1:1,14; Colossians 1:15), He came to earth and lived as a man—and He did that without ever sinning or defying His Father in any way (Hebrews 4:15).

Since Jesus is both God and man, He's the only One qualified to mediate—or “go between”—God and people and to restore the relationship that was broken by sin. (See 1 Timothy 2:5–6.) He did so by willingly suffering a cruel, undeserved death—in our place. (See John 10:17–18.) He took all of our wrong on himself and rescued our lives from the spiritual prison of sin. (See Mark 10:45; Romans 5:6–11.) Our own death could not have satisfied sin's penalty, because we would have simply been getting what we deserved; death would have sealed our separation from God forever. But because Jesus is perfect as God and lived sinlessly as a man, His life was a worthy sacrifice—good enough to pay sin's price once and for all. (See Hebrews 7:27; 9:26.) Jesus bridged the gap between us and God. (See 2 Corinthians 5:18–19; 1 Peter 3:18.) If we trust that “bridge,” we can cross over it into a relationship with Him.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is proof that God accepted His sacrifice for sins. (See Romans 4:25; 1 Peter 1:3.) All who accept the truth about Jesus, admit their sin, turn from their own way and surrender their lives to Him receive forgiveness (Romans 10:9–10; 1 John 1:9) and new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). They are made right with God (Romans 3:24; 5:1,9; Titus 3:7), become children of God (John 1:12–13) and are restored to the purpose for which they were created. Jesus leaves no room for compromise when He says that He is the only way to reconnect with God. (See John 14:6.)

Our Personal Response

God freely offers all people the gift of eternal life—the opportunity to know and have a personal relationship with Him and to be with Him forever—through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. As with any offer, people have a choice whether or not to accept it. But without a relationship with God there is always something missing—like a “hole” in a person's life. People try to fill this hole and escape emptiness through things such as entertainment, work, achievements, sports, music, sex, alcohol and drugs. But nothing can bring ultimate satisfaction and peace apart from God. In fact, without Him, people

are spiritually dead and without hope (Ephesians 2:1,12)—headed for eternal destruction. (See 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9.)

If we believe the Bible is God's true Word, then **everyone** needs salvation (rescue) from spiritual death, separation from God and eternity in hell.

Yet, in the current cultural climate, most people want to avoid subjects like "hell" and "eternal suffering." In fact, they are really scary subjects. Who wants to be scared into salvation? However, the Bible isn't "iffy" about these things. Revelation 19:20 paints a graphic and sobering picture of people being "thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur."

As you share the hope and life you've found in Christ with others, you shouldn't try to scare them into salvation. But one fact remains: the thought of someone you care about spending eternity in hell **is** scary! But because of Jesus Christ, we don't have to be scared. Salvation is for all who entrust their lives to Him. (See John 10:9 and Romans 10:13. Also, check the concordance at the back of your Bible. You'll find well over fifty verses referring to salvation and being saved!)

The Problem with Pluralism

People in most societies today have become increasingly pluralistic. In other words, they believe that there are many different, but equally valid philosophies and ways of doing things—including connecting with God (or their form of "god").

How did this type of thinking develop? The blending of cultures and ideas—a positive development in many ways—means that people are less likely to accept the notion of there being one right way to do certain things. In fact, many people are even offended by such a suggestion. This presents real difficulties for those whose religious faith claims to be the only way to experience life.

Christians in particular are often accused of being narrow-minded because of their beliefs, especially the assertion that Jesus is the only way to get to God. But the exclusive claims of Christianity aren't based on personal beliefs or religious bias. They are Jesus' own words as recorded in the Bible:

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6).

Those who resist the claim that there is only one way to God are resisting Jesus himself. His claims are backed up with action and by other accounts throughout the Bible. (See John 1:1,14,18; 8:23–24; Acts 4:10–12; 2 Corinthians 5:18–19; 1 Timothy 2:5.)



Grace: Unmerited Favor, Unearned Benefit

What It Is and What It's Not:

So, if salvation is the result of my choice to trust, follow and obey Jesus, what's grace got to do with it? The answer: God's grace gives you the choice in the first place. *Webster's Dictionary* defines grace as follows: "unmerited favor, unearned benefit, undeserved kindness." (There are over 100 Bible verses referring to grace!) There is nothing we can do to earn God's forgiveness. Grace is His gift, given to us before we even knew we needed it! (See Romans 5:6–8.) Think about it: the opposite of grace is legalism—trying to earn forgiveness and favor.

We'd Be Lost Without It.

The apostle Paul, one of the pioneer leaders of the early church and writer of several New Testament books of the Bible, recognized our inability to relate to God on our own. He said, "...if righteousness could be gained through the law (*doing good things*), Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:21, italics added). In fact, he later said that those who try to be justified—or made right with God—by the law have been alienated from Christ. (See Galatians 5:4.) In other words, you are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8), and you stay right with God by grace! You can't do enough or be good enough to earn a relationship with Him. Too many times, we expect ourselves and others to live up to standards that are too hard to keep. As a result, we end up depressed, we give up, or we condemn ourselves for failure.

Don't misunderstand; we need God's standards and principles. They keep our lives headed in the right direction and keep our relationships with God and others healthy. But it's our relationship with His Son, not the standards, on which God bases His acceptance of us.

An Ongoing Benefit

But, what if I sin again? It's not a matter of if, but when. Though we don't have to sin, God's Word says that our natural "makeup" is bent

CHRISTIANITY

- God's initiative
- Faith
- Assurance of salvation
- Relationship

OTHER BELIEFS

- Human effort
- Works
- Never certain
- Religion/ritual

Christianity is the only faith in which God saves people instead of people trying to save themselves. It's exclusive, but it doesn't discriminate or leave anyone out when it comes to offering salvation.

When Lee was asked if there were any close calls that made him put the brakes on his out-of-control lifestyle, he shared a sobering story:

“I went to Omaha South High School. I remember my last fight; it was a late summer night and we had been sitting outside my friend’s house smoking weed. A car full of ‘South Family Bloods’ pulled up and wanted to fight. We ended up fighting until someone pulled a gun and started shooting. No one was hurt, but everyone ran. It was the last and probably the scariest fight of my life. You’ve heard the saying: ‘All my friends are either dead or in prison.’ Well, that’s what it’s like for me. When I speak, I can honestly say, ‘I know what pain is.’ I’m 21 years old, and nineteen of my friends have been killed; I really don’t know where the rest of them are.”

By the end of his junior year, a friend invited Lee to church. Lee didn’t want to go, but his friend was kindly persistent. By how he lived, this friend showed Lee what God was really about. He patiently explained Christianity to him, and people at church started loving him, too. “All my life I’ve been called a failure and was told I would never make it. God’s the only One who’s ever really consistently stayed with me and showed me that I really *can* make it. His love is so unconditional.” Determined to give Jesus leadership and control of every area of his life, Lee gladly spent a few post-high-school years in a discipleship/ministry program called Master’s Commission.

towards sin. Here’s the good news: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). This is how we receive God’s forgiveness in the first place. It’s an act of repentance. Repentance doesn’t save us; it’s what we do when we recognize our need for forgiveness and turn from our sin, choosing instead to surrender to God and follow His way. But it’s still God’s grace that enables us to follow Him.

Does that mean I can keep committing the same sin over and over, asking forgiveness each time? Paul answers this question with a question: “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” (Romans 6:1,2). You see, God’s grace not only provides the opportunity for us to respond to God and receive ongoing forgiveness, that same grace helps us overcome that sin so we don’t continually struggle with it. If you try to figure this out, you might feel like a dog chasing its tail. This kind of unconditional love goes against our human thinking. That’s why He’s God, and we’re not!



Faith: Active Trust, Complete Devotion

While spiritual salvation comes as a gift of God's grace, it can only be received and become personally effective in individuals' lives by the response of faith. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition or requirement for receiving God's free gift of salvation. Faith is not only a matter of what a person believes about Christ, it is also how a person responds to Christ, entrusting his or her life to Him and following Him. (See Matthew 4:19; 16:24; Luke 9:23–25; John 10:4,27; 12:26; Revelation 14:4.) In other words, faith is more than intellectual acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is God's Son who died to pay the price for our sins. True biblical faith—the kind that brings spiritual salvation—involves an active trust by which a person surrenders complete control of his or her life to Christ and commits to following His purposes.

Repentance

Authentic saving faith involves sincere repentance, which implies making a complete turnaround in your life—from going your own way to going God's way. To repent means to admit and express true sorrow for sin, to turn from your own God-defying way (Acts 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10) and to turn completely toward God in order to follow Christ. (See Acts 2:37–38.)

Obedience

True faith includes obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word (the Bible). Such obedience must become a way of life, inspired by your trust in Christ, your gratitude to God and by the life-transforming work of the Holy Spirit. (See John 3:3–6; 14:15,21–24; Hebrews 5:8–9.) Romans 1:5 refers to this as “obedience that comes from faith.” For this reason, faith and obedience go together. In fact, they are inseparable when it comes to serving God and following Christ. (See Romans 16:26.)

Love and Devotion

Faith also includes passionate, personal devotion to Christ that expresses itself in complete and unselfish love and loyalty. In a personal relationship with Christ, true devoted faith cannot be separated from love; the two are completely intertwined. Both faith and love represent a personal act of surrender and self-sacrifice directed toward Christ. (See Matthew 22:37; John 21:15–17; Acts 8:37; Romans 6:17; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 6:6; 1 Peter 1:8.) Saving faith in Jesus is both the act of a single moment (when an individual initially accepts God's forgiveness and entrusts his or her life to Christ) and an ongoing attitude of

action that must continue to grow and gain strength. (See John 1:12; Romans 4:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3–9.) Trust and obedience—two of God’s primary requirements in our lives—develop into loyalty and devotion. (See Romans 14:8; 2 Corinthians 5:15.) Loyalty and devotion then develop into an intense sense of personal attachment to and love for Jesus Christ. (See Philippians 1:21; 3:8–10.)

For more in-depth study on these topics, see articles on *Faith and Grace and Regeneration: Spiritual Birth and Renewal* in the **Fire Bible: Student Edition**. To order (item #73-1885) call 1-800-641-4310 or go to GospelPublishing.com or fbse.ag.org.

Spiritual Birth: Starting a New Life in Christ

By responding to God’s grace and putting faith in Jesus Christ, a person is spiritually “born again” (John 3:3–7). This implies an inward re-creating of a person spiritually—a life transformation from the inside out. (See Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23–24.) This spiritual birth is a work of the Holy Spirit, through which God renews and cleanses a person’s spirit. (See Titus 3:5.) It marks the beginning of a new and personal relationship with God for those who entrust their lives to Christ. (See John 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:11.)

Spiritual birth is the way a person becomes a child of God (John 1:12; Romans 8:16–17; Galatians 3:26) and a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:9–10). A person who is truly born again spiritually will no longer conform to the ungodly beliefs, behaviors and lifestyles of the world. (See Romans 12:2.) Instead, he or she is “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

Though spiritual birth is an immediate experience that takes place as soon as a person truly repents and accepts God’s forgiveness, God continually renews and transforms a Christian’s mind (Romans 12:2) and inner being (Ephesians 4:23). This spiritual renewal is an ongoing, “day-by-day” process. (See 2 Corinthians 4:16.)

Spiritual birth involves a transition, or complete change, from an old life of sin (going our own way in opposition to God) to a new life of obedience to Jesus Christ. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Colossians 3:10.) This means that there should be noticeable changes in a Christian’s attitude and lifestyle. (See 1 Peter 4:1–2.)



Other Biblical Words for Salvation:

Redemption—The root meaning of “redemption” (Gk. *apolutrōsis*) is ransom by the payment of a price. To be redeemed means to be paid for, purchased, bought back or restored. It implies being rescued, liberated and set free. Jesus paid and secured our ransom by shedding His own blood and giving His life in our place. (See Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18–19.) By accepting Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins and surrendering our lives to His authority, we are freed from Satan's control and from the guilt and power of sin. (See Acts 26:18; Romans 6:7,12,14,18; Colossians 1:13.) This freedom, however, does not mean that we can do as we please. Since God has paid our ransom, we become His property. Choosing Christ's freedom from sin makes us willing slaves of God (Acts 26:18; Romans 6:18,22; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 7:22–23).

Justification—“To be justified” (Gk. *dikaioō*) means to be “righteous in God's sight” (Romans 2:13; 5:18–19), to “establish as right” or “put something right.” In a judicial sense, it means to be acquitted or declared “not guilty.” It is directly related to God's forgiveness made available through Jesus' sacrifice. Originally, all people are sinners in rebellion against God. According to His perfect law, we are pronounced “guilty” and condemned to eternal death. But those who truly repent—who admit their sin, turn from their own way, surrender to Christ and begin following His purposes—enter a right relationship with God. From His perspective, when a person accepts Christ's sacrifice, in that moment the individual becomes as if he or she had never sinned. God credits Christ's righteousness to those who receive and follow Him. (See Romans 4:24–25; Philippians 3:9.) This is what allows God to accept humans into heaven, since no one could ever be good enough to merit a place in heaven on their own.

***If you've
accepted Christ,
but haven't totally
changed your life,
are you really
saved?***

“Accepting Christ” is not a biblical concept. Throughout the Bible you will find passages that challenge you to “believe in” or trust Christ; but “accepting Christ” puts the wrong person in charge. Romans 15:7 says that Christ accepts us, not the other way around. When you become a Christian, you take yourself off the throne of your life (your thoughts, desires, ideas, emotions, will, actions, etc.). In place of your own self-rule, you surrender control of your life to Jesus. You choose to follow Him—His commands, His instructions, His interests, His desires and His purposes—rather than yourself. Simply “accepting” Christ adds Him to your life, but it

never really yields control to Him. Without submitting to Him, you are still “god” of your own life. But if you truly submit to Him as God, things will change. You won’t immediately become perfect, but your thoughts, attitudes, desires, and actions will all be strongly affected. People will notice.

Ever notice how some people get excited about things that totally change what they talk about, what they think about, and how they spend their time? Maybe they adopt some new causes like animal rights or equality for all races. Then again, it could be something as simple as finding a new recording artist or seeing a movie that deeply affected them. All of a sudden, that’s all they want to talk about, all they seem to care about. Everything else becomes secondary. These changes are usually temporary. But a similar thing happens in a much deeper and more permanent way when we fall in love with Jesus and choose to follow Him. Our desire becomes to please Him, and that begins to change what we do, think, and even who we are. If that change doesn’t occur, then we’ve just added Jesus to our long list of interests and haven’t really made Him the Lord of our lives.

Lordship: Surrendering to Christ's Authority

Think about how Jesus interacted with others. He simply said, “Follow me.” When He did that, people left everything behind and totally devoted their lives to Him. (See Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; John 10:27; 12:26.) At other times, He asked people to make changes they were unwilling to make because they wanted to stay in charge of their lives. When this happened, they went away sad, knowing they weren’t truly ready to follow Him. (See Mark 10:21; Luke 9:59.) For us, the question is not “Will I accept Christ?” but “Will I follow Him?”. If we change the paths we are taking, there will be noticeable differences in our lives. Don’t simply adopt a different set of rules, but choose to live in such a way that pleases the One you love the most.

Religious Wimp or Radical Believer?

By choosing to live in a manner that pleases Christ, you give Him lordship over your life. That means you give Jesus complete leadership and ruling authority over every aspect of your life. Simply put, lordship is the difference between convenient and inconvenient Christianity. After all, anyone can claim that Jesus is his or her Savior; who wouldn’t want to be saved



from eternal punishment? But, you must surrender to Jesus what He owns in the first place—you, your family, your stuff, and your decisions—by your own free will. That's lordship. Jesus challenged His followers, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Lordship means total commitment to obedience. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself [*the "wants" we can all live without if Jesus asks*] and take up his cross [*boldly identify with Christ and put God's will above our desires*] daily and follow me [*anywhere, under any circumstances*]" (Luke 9:23, italics added).

At the end of Angela's freshman year in high school, a couple of her friends invited her to youth group. That night she saw students who were desperate for God. Some were on the floor, crying out to God with their hands raised, and some were worshipping. Right then, she realized that she needed God. She committed her life to Him that night. "I had to give up most of my friends and a relationship with a guy I'd dated for three years. It was hard, but I knew I wasn't strong enough to resist the negative influences," she said. Right away, she got involved in anything that could help her grow in her relationship with God—youth camp, a small group, youth service, even a mission trip that year. She surrounded herself with people who loved Jesus and encouraged her to get into God's Word and prayer. Those closest to her walked her through a time of emotional healing—that only Jesus can give—from her painful past. "These people taught me what it really means to be a Christian... to build a relationship with Jesus Christ by spending time with Him and learning what pleases Him."

Lordship Christianity isn't always convenient. But considering that people often give up money, time, energy, and even their lives for causes with no eternal value, the lordship of Jesus Christ—who gives eternal life—is an enormously positive trade-off for our sin. Regardless of what we give to (or give up for) Jesus, we're getting an infinitely better deal.

One of the things that sets Christianity apart from other religions is that we *can* have the relationship with God that we've been talking about in this booklet. In John 15:14,15, after Jesus told His disciples (which includes His followers to this day) to obey His commands, He said, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." No other "god" calls his followers friends. That should make us want to give Him lordship!

Sanctification: Purity, Purpose and Process

Just like a meaningful, long-lasting friendship, your relationship with Christ cannot be stagnant. It will either be growing or declining. Ideally, it continues to change and develop once you give Him lordship. For example, when a new student comes to your school, you are not best friends immediately. Through conversations in the lunchroom, discussions in chemistry study groups, and celebrations after team victories, you learn more about each other and find that you enjoy spending time together. Eventually, you may even become such great friends that when people think of one of you they automatically think of the other. That's what can happen as you grow in a relationship with Jesus and become known for your devotion to Him.

Set Apart for a Purpose

Sanctification means to make holy, which means morally pure, spiritually whole, separated from evil and dedicated to God. Sanctification implies being set apart from sin in order to have close companionship with God and serve Him effectively. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24.) In practical terms, sanctification involves an ongoing process of spiritual growth, development and maturity by which God refines His people spiritually, prepares them for His purposes and involves them in His plans.

Hebrews 12:14 says that without holiness, we can't see God. Holiness (sanctification) starts inside and works its way out into our lifestyles. This is why just saying a "salvation prayer" doesn't cut it as "fire insurance" to escape hell. If your life doesn't begin to change after you say "Amen," what's the point? That's like buying a brand new sports car, driving it home, parking it, and never driving it again. Or it's like getting a Christmas gift, taking it home, setting it on the shelf and never opening it.

God's Part/Our Part

Sanctification is both a work of God and a work of His people. (See Philippians 2:12–13.) On God's part, the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Jesus' followers to do many things. The Spirit frees them from slavery to sin (Romans 6:1–19), separates them from the ungodly patterns and practices of the world (Romans 12:1–2), renews their nature and character to be like Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17),



produces in them the fruit (the effects and character traits) of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16,22–23) and enables them to live in a way that influences others to follow Christ (John 17:15–19,23). On our part, we must participate in the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work by refraining from evil (Romans 6:1–2), by purifying ourselves "from everything that contaminates body and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1) and by keeping ourselves from being polluted morally and spiritually by the world. (See Ephesians 4:31; 5:18; Colossians 3:5,10; Hebrews 6:1; James 4:8.)

Worldliness does not simply refer to ungodly habits or activities. And separation from worldliness does not mean withdrawing from society altogether and only hanging out with other Christians. The Bible tells us repeatedly to go into the world and tell spiritually lost people about Jesus. However, worldliness does have to do with the attitude and spirit of the one who takes part in a questionable habit or activity.

A Process, Not Perfection

You're not perfect the moment Christ enters your heart and assumes leadership of your life, but the more time you spend with Him, the more you begin to look and act like Him. In almost every area of life—whether it's a job, a class, or a hobby—we start out knowing very little, if anything. It takes time to learn. The more we learn, the more we grow.

Sanctification isn't just a new set of rules, but it's a new way of life and thinking. For example, as Christians, the closer we get to God, the more repulsed we become by sin and anything contrary to what we see in Jesus. "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). This does not mean it's all up to us. Remember that grace factor you read about earlier? It's always there to help us in the sanctification process: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:11,12).

Sanctification is not only the process of separating ourselves from evil but also the way of identifying ourselves with things that are good and morally pure and giving Jesus lordship of our lives. (There's that lordship again.) All this doctrine (teaching and basis of belief) is tied together to lay an incredibly stable foundation for your spiritual growth.

Think of it like this: salvation happened the moment you recognized and admitted your sinfulness to God, received His forgiveness and asked Jesus Christ to be Lord of your life. Sanctification is what happens when you give Jesus His rightful place as Lord of your life every day. That happens as you spend time getting to know Him and discovering His plans for you. And that happens by reading your Bible, asking God to speak to you through His Word, imitating Jesus' character and responding to His guidance in daily life.

Sanctification also happens when you take God up on His offer of grace to help you say “no” to the wrong things and “yes” to the right ones. This continues throughout a Christian's entire lifetime. John 17:17 reminds us that we're sanctified through the truth, which is God's Word. When sin tempts you, instead of kicking yourself, rely on Jesus to help you stand strong, and remember you are being sanctified. You are literally a work in progress.

For more in-depth study on this subject, see article on *Sanctification* in the **Fire Bible: Student Edition**. To order (item #73-1885) call 1-800-641-4310 or go to gospelpublishing.com or fbse.ag.org.

Is “eternal security” all that secure?

Some people believe in something called eternal security. They claim that once you're saved you can never lose your salvation—even if you don't live according to God's Word. They point to Ephesians 2:8,9, which says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Since salvation is a gift you can't earn by your works and efforts, they also believe that you can't lose salvation because of your works (or lack thereof). But, the very next verse (Ephesians 2:10) tells us that “We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Some who hold a belief in “eternal security” would not necessarily claim that a person can do whatever he or she wants and still be saved. Rather, they believe that if a person doesn't continue to demonstrate a life of faithfulness and obedience to God, then he or she was never really saved in the first place. However, the Bible certainly seems to indicate that a person can legitimately receive salvation, follow Jesus, then later rebel against God by choosing to turn away from the faith and refusing to follow God's purposes.



In John 15:1–8, Jesus uses the analogy of a vine and its branches to illustrate how a believer is connected to God through a relationship with Jesus. He describes how the believer (the “branch”) who remains united in relationship with Christ (the “vine”) is spiritually secure and has life. However, if that believer becomes spiritually rebellious toward God and chooses to break from his or her grace-union with Christ, then he or she becomes cut off from the source of life. A person who remains in this condition will, in the end, lose his or her life eternally, just as one who never accepted Christ. (See John 15:6.)

The Bible gives urgent warnings about this grave possibility. These warnings are designed both to alert us to the deadly danger of abandoning our union with Christ and to motivate us to remain faithful and obedient to Him. We must not ignore or treat lightly these warnings. Rather, we must take them seriously, realizing that they directly apply to how we use our time on earth until we receive ultimate salvation in eternity with God.

A few of the many warnings in the New Testament are: Matthew 24:4–5, 11–13; Luke 12:46; John 15:1–6; Acts 14:21–22; Romans 11:17–21; 1 Corinthians 15:1–2; Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 4:1, 16; 6:10–12; 2 Timothy 4:2–5; Hebrews 2:1–3; 3:7–19; 4:1, 6–7; 6:4–9; 10:26–31; 12:25; James 5:19–20; 2 Peter 1:10; 2:20–22; 1 John 2:23–25.

Note: Don't argue with other Christians over this matter. If they're not willing to listen, agree to disagree and move on!

We can't simply use salvation as a “get-out-of-hell” pass. Even though we don't earn it, continued salvation is conditional on our continued belief and repentance—that is, turning from our own way and actively pursuing God's purposes. Philippians 2:12, 13 encourages us to “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you....” You can't lose your salvation, but you *can* choose to turn away from Jesus. In the Book of Revelation, the angel says, “To him who overcomes, I will give...” a promise, a gift, or a right of some kind. (See Revelation 2 and 3.) If God promises believers these things if they overcome, that means believers can choose not to overcome. But why take chances? *(For more on this subject, see article on Individual Apostasy in the **Fire Bible: Student Edition**. To order (item #73-1885 call 1-800-641-4310 or go to fbse.ag.org.)*

Discipleship: Connecting Beliefs to Behavior

Where the Spiritual Rubber Meets the Eternal Road

Two elderly women were driving a large car, both barely tall enough to see over the dashboard. As they cruised along, they came to an intersection where the stoplight was red. They just went on through. The woman in the passenger seat thought, "I must be losing it; I could have sworn we just went through a red light." After a few minutes, they came to another intersection, the light was red, and again they went right through. This time, the passenger was almost sure that the light had been red, but was also concerned that she might be seeing things. She was getting nervous and decided to pay very close attention. At the next intersection, sure enough, the light was definitely red and they went right through it. She turned to her friend and said, "Mildred! Did you know we just ran through three red lights in a row? You could have killed us!" Mildred turned to her and cried, "Oh, no! Am I driving?!"

Discipleship is the factor in Christianity that keeps you from driving along aimlessly in your spiritual life. But, if someone isn't "at the wheel" in your relationship with God—or much less knows what it takes to "drive" your spiritual vehicle—red lights will be the least of your worries! This isn't a perfect analogy, because Jesus should be the One in control of your life. But you probably get the point about the recklessness of life if you personally are not engaged in the journey and are not steering your life according to God's guidance and direction.

Historically, Jesus' followers were called "disciples" before they were called "Christians." Unfortunately, in contemporary culture, we tend to lump everyone who doesn't sell drugs or kick their dogs into the general "Christian" category, while thinking of only pastors, evangelists and the most radical believers as "disciples." But essentially, all true followers of Christ are to be disciples.

Simply put, a disciple is a student or disciplined learner, one who adheres to the teachings of a leader and assists in spreading them. A disciple of Jesus makes Christ's teachings the basis of his or her thinking, priorities and lifestyle. Discipleship involves connecting your beliefs to your behavior and putting God's principles into practice. How do you know how to apply these



things to your life? Whether you received this booklet from a youth pastor, a friend, at a retreat, camp, or youth group, there's someone who cares about your spiritual growth. This person may not have all the answers, but ask him or her anyway. At one time, he or she likely searched for the same answers you seek now, and they can help you discover the help and inspiration you need to proceed in your walk with Christ.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). Every Christian needs another mature Christian to help him or her grow in Christ—someone of the same sex makes more sense because he or she can relate better. (This also helps you avoid an inappropriate or distracting relationship or interaction.) The New Century Version of the Bible puts that same verse, "As iron sharpens iron, so people can improve each other" (NCV). Let someone else help to challenge and "improve" you in your walk with Christ. Let another disciple—one who has been where you are—disciple you and help you get to the point where you can lead someone else.

What's the Holy Spirit's job in your life? (See pages 30–31.) Among other things, He guides you, teaches you, and convinces you of your need for God. (See John 14:26.) Remember Michael? He finally got tired of being Mr. Two-Lives-in-One-Body and feeling constant conviction. (By the way, don't let pop-psychology gurus talk you out of the healthy guilt that comes when you do something that's actually wrong. That's the work of the Holy Spirit exposing your sin and your need for forgiveness.) Mike realized he never really opened himself to God, but he said, "When I got down on my face and said, 'God, I need you more than anything,' He came to my side, giving me all the joy I wanted." Mike got away from bad influences; he got plugged into a group of Christians who were walking the talk and, in his words, "started doing things for the Lord I never thought I'd do, and it's the greatest feeling to know that you're doing God's will."

How do you lead someone else to Christ?

The first and most powerful effect you'll have on someone else will be with your life. If you live in such a way that others become interested in your relationship with God and the quality of life you lead, it will give you many opportunities to talk and pray with others about their spiritual lives. The Bible teaches us to be "salt" and "light." (See Matthew 5:13–16.) Salt makes people thirsty, and light reveals what is hidden and shows the way to something. That

means you need to live sincerely and honestly, without hypocrisy. Your character, attitudes and behavior should give people an accurate impression of what Jesus is like. Your life should demonstrate what a relationship with Jesus means on a day-to-day basis. People need to see that when you struggle, you turn to Jesus for answers. When you face the storms of life, you rely on Him for guidance and peace. And when you need direction, Jesus is your moral compass. People need to see that you have more than just a set of beliefs; you have a living, ongoing, loving relationship with the God of the universe.

We also need to be knowledgeable.

That doesn't mean you need to become a Bible Quiz master. But it helps to know some basic biblical answers about why and how to know God through faith in Christ. (See 1 Peter 3:15.) The reason most Christians don't share their faith is that they simply aren't sure what they would say if they actually got into a conversation about Christ or the Bible or faith. If you remove that obstacle—by studying God's Word regularly—you'll be prepared when the opportunity arises to talk about your faith.

Finally, you need passion! When people love something intensely, they talk about it, dream about it, base their choices on it, and center their lives around it. If you have that kind of intense love for Jesus, then you will find that it's not awkward to talk about your faith. It will come naturally and sincerely.

There's no formula for witnessing. What may "open the door" with one person may not work for another. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the people you want to lead to Jesus. *Bottom line: you stay hungry, and that will likely make them hungry!*

**SALVATION
VERSES**

The following list of Scripture references takes you through the gospel—the "Good News" of Jesus Christ— from God's purpose to His invitation to the assurance of eternal life. List these passages at the front of your Bible for quick access.

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

John 3:16

John 10:10

Romans 5:8

1 Peter 3:18

John 14:6

Ephesians 2:8–9

Romans 10:9

1 John 1:9

2 Corinthians 5:17

1 John 5:13



Prayer: Conversing With the Creator

Some people call it “quiet time.” Others call it “devotions” or “God time.” Whatever you call it, spending time talking with, listening to and learning from God is the most important thing you do as a Christian. It's direct contact between your mind and God's heart by reading the Bible and praying. God wants your fellowship—hanging out together. In fact, He looks for people who pursue a deeper relationship with Him! (See John 4:23.)

So why is prayer often difficult? Because we tend to make it difficult. Praying itself isn't hard; it's simply a matter of communicating with God. Yet, when it comes to clearing our minds of other junk and disciplining ourselves to make time to pray, that can be the hard part. But, it's worth any sacrifice of time and energy, because He's worth it. If Jesus, God's own Son, constantly prayed to His Father while on earth, it was high on Jesus' priority list (Luke 22:44) and should be at the top of ours too.

Speak Up!

No matter how long you've been a Christian—two days or twenty years—God loves to hear from you! Whether you have the vocabulary of a toddler or a literary scholar, God loves it when you talk and listen to Him! He's not hung up on how you pray. He just wants to have a relationship with you, and prayer is the way to develop it. Think about it: you wouldn't tell your friends not to call until they can speak a certain way or only call at certain times or when they need something, would you? Would you spill your guts or share your secrets with your best friends if they only hung out with you, say, on Tuesdays and major holidays for a couple hours? If they put on you those same limitations, you probably wouldn't be friends for long.

You can't have a growing relationship with God without talking to Him regularly. What time and how long you pray is between you and Him. How much you want to know God will determine how much time you pray. That may sound harsh, but again, think about those with whom you're closest. You spend more time with them than your casual acquaintances.

What can you pray about? Anything and everything! Tell Him things, ask questions, ask for help and direction, ask forgiveness for sins, ask for things you need and want for yourself, your friends,

family, community, and people in other countries, and thank Him for everything He's done for you. Ephesians 6:18 talks about praying with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Listen Up!

When you spend time with God, don't forget to listen for His answers and responses so that you learn to recognize His voice. Don't simply tell God what's on your mind; take time to listen for promptings—sometimes subtle, sometimes strong—that His Spirit gives you that tell you what He's thinking, wanting for your life, or asking of you. It only makes sense that what God wants to say to you is just as important—and more—than what you have to say. After all, God already knows your needs and desires. Yet, because of

Try keeping a prayer journal. Write down your prayer requests, and as time goes on, you can keep track of how God has answered your prayers!

His desire to have a relationship with you, He wants you to tell Him whatever is on your mind, and He chooses prayer as the vehicle by which you get to know and communicate with Him.

If a husband and wife read the same book, why would they discuss it? Because they want to interact, know each other's thoughts, and be influenced by each other's intellect. Not to

mention, they like hanging out together. How much more do you think your heavenly Father likes to spend time with you?

Prayer builds your relationship with God in a way that church attendance and Bible study can't, although they're important for your spiritual growth, too. C. S. Lewis said, "I pray, not because it changes the mind of God, but because it changes me." The cool thing is, God answers. "When you look for me, you will find me. When you wholeheartedly seek me, I will let you find me." (See Jeremiah 29:12-14.)

God didn't force you to surrender your life and will to Him, and He won't force you to spend time with Him in prayer. But, as this verse implies, He wants to be found by you! Imagine that. The God of the universe wants you to hang out with Him! How cool is that?!

*(For more on this subject, see article on Effective Praying in the **Fire Bible: Student Edition**. To order [item #73-1885] call 1-800-641-4310 or go to gospelpublishing.com or fbse.ag.org.)*



The Bible: God's Answers Before We Ask

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:2).

If you pray but don't spend time in God's Word, you might enjoy a degree of peace and relief from the issues of life, but you won't be acquainted with God's standards and instructions to guide your life. In fact, you won't know God like you could, since His Word is the way He has chosen to reveal himself and His plans.

While much of our praying is asking for answers, the Bible is one of God's main ways of answering...even before we ask! If you want to know God's heart for the world and for you, read the Bible. Not every detail of our modern lives is spelled out, but the most important facets of life—relationships, work ethic, marriage, parenting, church, and even money management—are in the Bible! Now, do you see why prayer and Bible study go hand-in-hand? Like vitamins and minerals, they are both essential to your spiritual health! Jesus said, “People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every word of God” (Matthew 4:4, NLT).

For one thing, the Bible is God's Law—the moral foundation upon which all other ethical laws are based (though you won't hear many people admit that). It was written a long time ago by men; but with the Holy Spirit's influence and leading, God told those prophets what to write. In the Assemblies of God, we believe:

- 1) The Scriptures—God's written Word—are God's revelation of himself to mankind,
- 2) They are infallible (never wrong and always effective), and
- 3) They are God's authoritative guide for our faith, belief, and manner of living. (See 2 Timothy 3:15–17, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:21.)

If we didn't believe these things, then we'd have no dependable standard on which to base our lives. Contrary to pop culture, truth is not “relative”—shifting with and depending on beliefs, preferences and circumstances. However, it is relevant. Because God does not change (James 1:17), we can be confident that His Word doesn't change either.

*“How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to Your word” (Psalm 119:9).*

The Bible is our guidebook to not only help us know what *not* to do, but even more it shows us what we *are* to do. Youth speaker Jeanne Mayo says, “Either sin will keep you from this Book or this Book will keep you from sin!” Joshua 1:8 tells us to study God’s Word day and night and to obey everything written in it if we want to be successful. It won’t do you any good to read it if you don’t obey it. Above success, knowing God means knowing how to overcome temptation, how to fulfill God’s plans for your life, and having both peace and perspective beyond this world.

Bible Study Tips

- 1) Study a person in the Bible (e.g., David, Paul, Esther, Ruth, or Jesus).
- 2) Study a certain topic or characteristic of God, and look up key words that fit that topic (e.g., forgiveness, love, joy, authority, friendship, money, prayer, worship).
- 3) Follow a one-year Bible plan that leads you to specific passages each day.
- 4) To mix it up and keep it fresh, read a chapter a day on a four-day cycle:
 - Day 1—Old Testament
 - Day 2—Psalms
 - Day 3—Proverbs
 - Day 4—New Testament
- 5) Get a **Fire Bible: Student Edition**, which is packed with study tools and practical helps, including extensive verse notes, articles, reference tools and training sections for student ministry. (To order [item #73-1885], call 1-800-641-4310 or go online at www.GospelPublishing.com or fbse.ag.org.)
- 6) Buy a study book at your local Christian bookstore. There are plenty of topics from which to choose.
- 7) Use the Bible Quiz (BQ) devotional. Each year, BQ focuses on a specific book(s) of the New Testament. This verse-by-verse look will truly challenge you as you walk through a book of the New Testament! (To order, call 1-800-641-4310 or go online at www.biblequiz.com.)

In all cases, pray before you read, and ask God to speak to you and make himself more real to you. Keep a journal or note pad and pen close by to record what you feel God is saying and things that are meaningful to you. Underline or highlight verses that God uses to teach you something or that you want to memorize. Speaking of memorization, when God’s Word is fresh in your mind, you’re more likely to stay close to His heart in times of temptation, depression, or frustration.



"I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).

It's the same with your time in the Word as it is your time in prayer: it doesn't matter as much how you do it as it does that you just do it and that you respond to it in daily life!

Water Baptism: Going Public

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Do I need to be baptized to be saved? Nowhere in the Bible does it even suggest that baptism saves a person. If that were true, a dying person who accepted Christ as Savior would still be lost if there were no opportunity for baptism. On the other hand, if a person isn't saved when he or she is baptized, he or she goes into the water a dry sinner and comes up a wet one.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness'" (Matthew 3:13–15).

Jesus didn't have sin to repent of like we do. He didn't have to change His ways or prove to anyone that He was a follower of God. The passage above is a great picture of Jesus setting the example for us. In these verses, the Son of God submits himself to His father in a public expression of devotion. It's no coincidence that Jesus' baptism preceded His three-and-a-half-year earthly ministry. Water baptism is an outward sign to the world of the inward change that has taken place through spiritual salvation. Imagine this word picture in your mind:

- 1) Christ died for our sins and was buried. Picture Jesus on the cross and then in the tomb.
- 2) Baptism (going under or being "immersed" in water) represents the believer's sinful, God-defying nature—dead and buried.
- 3) Christ rose from the grave in new life!
- 4) The baptized believer is raised to a new life in Christ!

Sprinkles are best reserved for donuts and ice cream.

We don't want to put down other beliefs, but you need to understand that the New Testament was first written in Greek. The Greek word for *baptize* means "to go down under, to dip, to immerse, to submerge." This ceremony represents our identification with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, as in the previous word picture. That's why each believer should be submerged in water at baptism. Every New Testament example of water baptism involved "much water." (See Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:5; Acts 8:36–38.) Also, Jesus and other people in the Bible were baptized in public for a reason. Public baptism is a testimony of our unashamed surrender to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and the fact that we are now committed to live for Him.

The Holy Spirit: Personal Power Source

Extra Part or Vital Organ?

Who is the Holy Spirit? Is He more like the holiday decorations you use only once a year or the specialized tool that you need only for certain jobs? Or, is He like a vital organ, as necessary to your spiritual life as your heart is to your physical health?

Many people view the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force or concept that represents God or His presence. But the Bible describes the Holy Spirit in personal terms, not as a mere influence or spiritual power. Throughout God's Word, the Spirit is revealed as a distinct individual. (See 2 Corinthians 3:17–18; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:2.)

The Bible reveals God as a single Being (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:21; Galatians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 8:5–6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5), existing in three distinct but interrelated and completely unified persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (See Matthew 3:16–17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4–6; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 1:20–21.) Each person of the Trinity—the One true God in three distinct, interrelated and unified persons—is fully divine (i.e., fully God) and equal, possessing all the attributes of God. Yet, they are **not** three Gods (or three parts of God), but one God.

We must be careful **not** to misinterpret this as if the One true God has simply revealed himself in three different "modes" or expressions at different times throughout history (as if God the Father in the Old Testament was Jesus in the New



Testament and is the Holy Spirit now). Through the centuries such false teaching has brought division in the church. The correct understanding of this doctrine is that all three persons of the Godhead exist distinctly at the same time and are so completely united that they form the One true and eternal God.

John 15:26 talks about the Trinity when Jesus (God the Son) tells His disciples that, “when the Counselor (God the Holy Spirit) comes, whom I will send to you from (God) the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father will testify about Me.”

“But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13).

Jesus told His first followers that one of the main reasons He had to leave them shortly after His resurrection was so that the Holy Spirit would come and be with them from then on. (See John 16:5–7.) Jesus himself called the Holy Spirit the Counselor—one who comes alongside as a Helper. (See John 14:16,26; 15:26.) When you’re saved—or “born again” spiritually, the first thing the Spirit does is bring your spirit to life by actually coming to live inside of you.

“The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by the same Spirit living within you...For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:11,16, NLT).

When people sense things about God “in their hearts” or consciences, it is often the work of the Spirit, prompting them toward God or leading them into a closer relationship with God. It’s the Holy Spirit who encourages Jesus’ followers to read the Bible and pray. He often leads us with inner nudges and helps us understand God’s Word with our heart and our spirit, not just our intellect and emotion.

On one occasion, while he [Jesus] was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4–5).

Is the fact that the Holy Spirit lives within you as a result of salvation different than being baptized in the Spirit? And do I still have the Holy Spirit if I don't speak in tongues? Yes and yes. The Holy Spirit "moves in" at the same time Jesus does because, remember, they're Three-in-One. You don't have to earn the Holy Spirit. You certainly won't be excluded from God's kingdom if you haven't yet received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is a separate experience—another gift of God—to which all believers are entitled and are encouraged to accept. (See Acts 8:14–17.)

The primary purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to bring the personal boldness and power of God's Spirit into a Christian's life so that he or she can accomplish Christ's purposes with His authority. This spiritual power ultimately is aimed at making Christ's followers effective in spreading His message throughout the world. (See Acts 1:8; 2:14–41; 4:31; 6:8; Romans 15:18–19; 1 Corinthians 2:4.)

Ask your youth leader or pastor about praying for this powerful gift. There's a booklet available in this *Hungry?* series called *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, which goes into more depth about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Stay hungry for more! To order, call 1-800-641-4310 or visit the online store at www.youth.ag.org.

*For more in-depth study on many of the topics contained in this booklet, plus a wide array of Bible study tools and practical helps on Christian living, personal ministry and communicating your faith, get a copy of the **Fire Bible: Student Edition**. To order (item #73-1885) call 1-800-641-4310 or go to GospelPublishing.com or fbse.ag.org.*

By God's grace, Danette didn't slip into eternity that rainy night in West Germany. After burning out on sin, she repented, got a life—a prayer life—was plugged into a great youth and young adult group, and made herself accountable to godly women who disciplined her out of stupidity and into the wisdom of Christ! Since then, she's been teaching and discipling teenagers and young adults for over twenty years and now writes for and about them. God certainly *can* use anyone! (*Danette Matty is co-author of this booklet.*)



HOW TO KNOW GOD

GOD'S PURPOSE: ETERNAL LIFE

God loves you and created you for a purpose: to know Him and have a personal, eternal relationship with Him, including inner peace and a fulfilling life.

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

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

PEOPLE'S PROBLEM: SIN AND SEPARATION

People miss the life God intends for them because they choose to go their own way and fall short of His perfect standard. Defying God in this way is called sin, which separates us from God and prevents us from having a relationship with Him. In fact, sin is so radically opposed to God's perfect character that it requires the most extreme penalty: death and eternal separation from God.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

GOD'S SOLUTION: JESUS CHRIST

We cannot earn or make our way to God through our own imperfect efforts. So God himself chose to provide the perfect payment for sin. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die in our place, bridging the gap between himself and humanity. We can only come to God on His terms.

"Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6).

YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSE: CONFESSION AND FAITH

You must personally respond to Jesus' sacrifice by turning from your old sinful life and trusting Him to give you a new life. Salvation through Christ is a free gift. Accepting it is an act of faith.

"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

If you're ready to entrust your life to Jesus, pray something like this:

Lord Jesus, I've gone my own way and sinned against You. Have mercy on me and forgive my sin. I believe You are God's Son who died in my place, then rose from the dead with the power and authority to give me a new life. Thanks for making me a child of God. I now surrender my life to You and Your purposes. Give me, by your Holy Spirit, the boldness to confess my faith in You to others. I ask this in Your name, Jesus. Amen.

WHAT NOW?

- **Tell Someone.** This helps confirm your decision and can inspire you to demonstrate a real change.
- **Start Praying.** This helps you grow in your relationship with God and keeps you connected to his power and guidance.
- **Read the Bible.** This helps you get to know God better and to discover his plans for your life.
- **Get Involved.** Becoming active in a strong Bible-based church can help you grow spiritually, provide accountability and allow you to use your unique gifts to honor God and help others.