NEXT STEPS

EVERYONE DISCIPLING SOMEONE

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Independently published

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Welcome

My name is Casey Butner. Thank you for picking up this copy of *Next Steps*. I am so glad to share it with you!

In my pastoral ministry, I am broken hearted over seeing both families and individuals who are torn apart and wrecked by sin. Their lives are "*…destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6).

When Jesus saw the crowds of people, "*He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things"* (Mark 6:34).

Jesus said "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6). Christ alone can bring good news to the spiritually bankrupt, healing to the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the downtrodden. Only Christ can bring God's favor to man (Luke 4:18-19).

I wrote Next Steps as a guide to help people teach others about Jesus Christ. Teaching others about Christ our Savior and showing them how to follow in His steps is called discipleship.

Husbands can disciple their wives. Families can disciple their children and grandchildren. Individuals can disciple their fellow church members, neighbors, co-workers, and friends.

Next Steps has been a labor of love for me. I have worked on and refined this discipleship manual over the course of the many years of my pastoral ministry. I have seen countless lives transformed by introducing people to Christ and studying His Word.

Will you join me in following Christ and making disciples?

Introduction

Jesus said, “Follow Me” (Mark 1:17). That is a command, not a suggestion. And it is the reason why following Christ is synonymous with being a Christian. But it’s easier said than done in a world that relentlessly competes for our devotion. To follow Christ is to walk in His steps and pattern our life after His. Jesus said we would truly be His disciples if we “*continue in My word*” (John 8:31).

This booklet is a guide through five biblical steps that God has called us to pursue as Christ’s followers. No matter your biblical knowledge or Christian maturity, *Next Steps* provides a clear, logical, and God-honoring path forward in your life as a disciple of Jesus. Within each of these steps are Bible passages to read, questions to answer, discussions to have, and tasks to accomplish.

I recommend the following format for each discipleship session:

- **Meet where you can talk**
- **Bring your Bible**
- **Meet weekly for an hour**
- **Ask how each other are doing**
- **Open in prayer**
- **Read *Next Steps***
- **Discuss subjects as needed**
- **Take your time**
- **Ask good questions**
- **Seek Truth from the Word**
- **Avoid personal opinions**
- **Listen well**
- **End at the agreed time**
- **Mark where you stopped**
- **Close in Prayer**

Next Steps is not some secret sauce for growing your church numerically. Jesus placed Himself in charge of that when He said, "I will build My church" (Matt 16:18). This short book addresses your own Christian responsibilities: Personal growth in Christ and obedience to His Word. There is simply no loftier goal or more noble pursuit you could have in this life.

As we begin to follow Christ, it really helps to have some basic steps mapped out. These are not all of the steps in the Bible. But these are the basic steps forward that will lead you to a continual walk with Christ that will delight your heart and please your Creator.

To begin with, write out John 17:17

_____

What is Jesus saying in this verse?

_____

Before we embark on the first step, it is important to realize that we are all at different stages of spiritual growth. Some of us have just begun our walk with Christ. Others have walked with Christ for a long time and made much spiritual progress.

Consider 1 John 2:12-14

The first stage of spiritual growth is for those who have had their sins forgiven. They know God (1 John 2:13) and have been saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

The second stage of spiritual growth is for those who have "*overcome the evil one*" (1 John 2:13) in their life through the

power of Christ. They are studying, learning, and abiding (John 15:4-11) in the Word.

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The third stage of spiritual growth is for those who have matured in their faith and truly "*know*" (1 John 2:14) the Father deeply, hence the repetition of this concept in verses 13 and 14 of 1 John 2. Fathers are people of spiritual maturity and godly character. They are not ashamed of the gospel and share salvation with the lost (Rom. 1:16). They nurture children and lead them in their next steps (Titus 1:4). They rightly divide the word of God (2 Tim. 2:15) and teach sound doctrine (Titus 2:1).

The purpose in recognizing these growth stages is to develop the conviction to "*continue in My word*" (John 8:31) and grow strong in your faith. Abraham is our father in the faith (Rom. 4:16) and he "*grew strong in faith, giving glory to God*" (Rom. 4:20).

If you have come to saving faith, you are (1) a Child of God. If, as a result of your conversion, you are learning, growing, and overcoming, then you are a (2) Youth in the faith. If you are a mature believer that is faithful to God, continuing in His word, faithful to a local church, continuously working on your own character, and are actively reproducing disciples of Jesus, you are a (3) Father in the faith.

What stage of spiritual growth are you in?

_____

So, whether you need to be saved, have been saved, are overcoming and learning, or are making disciples, we are all called to obey Christ's directive to "*continue in My word*" (John 8:31).

The enemy of Christianity wants us to stagnate in our faith. *Next Steps* is designed to spur one another forward in our faith by encouraging each other from God's Word to faithfully follow in Christ's steps.

10

Read Hebrews 10:23-25

List the commands found in each verse

V.23

_____

V.24

_____

V.25

_____

Discuss:

How shall we hold fast without wavering?

How do we stimulate one another to good works?

How do we assemble together?

Jesus is our example (John 13:15) and He personally discipled men, taught publicly, and was regularly in church (synagogue). The apostle Paul also personally discipled men and gave us a model to follow.

Write out 2 Timothy 2:2

_____
_____
_____
_____

The discipleship downline model in this verse is from Paul, to Timothy, to faithful men, and to others also. This is how the gospel spreads and disciples are made.

11

Making disciples of Christ is a slow process. True disciples are not mass produced like merchandise in a factory. Authentic growth and life transformation takes time. More often than not, we need someone who is on a higher level of spiritual maturity to imitate.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1

What is Paul asking?

_____

_____

Did you know that discipleship is an Old Testament expectation?

"*Only be careful for yourself and watch over your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons*" (Deut. 4:9).

Following Christ is, in some ways, more caught than taught. That is true especially for those in the early growth stages. We develop more personal beliefs and behavioral traits by watching others as opposed to merely listening to others.

It is therefore very beneficial to have a Mother or Father in the faith whom you can look up to and learn from. This is one of the best ways to grow strong in the faith.

One who is worthy of imitation would be a mature believer who displays the fruit of the Spirit and Christ-like character traits.

12

List the fruits "of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22

_____
_____
_____

List the character traits in Titus 2:1-3

_____
_____
_____

Your willingness to obey Christ's command to "*continue in My word*" is all that is needed. *Next Steps* will guide you as you progress from each stage to the next.

Are you faithful to God and studying His word? Are you available to meet each week for one hour to discuss *Next Steps* either in person, online or on the phone? Are you teachable? The number one characteristic of a disciple is that they are learners. Know-it-alls and conversation dominators create growth barriers for themselves, become stagnant in their faith, and grieve God along the way. We should always remain humble and teachable before one another and especially under the authority of God's holy Word.

Are you faithful, available, and teachable?

Is there a time and place that works best for you?

Each meeting can start and end with brief prayer. Prayer and fellowship are essentials of the local church (Acts 2:42) and very important. However, in order to continue in God's word and prevent stagnation, it is best to stay focused on the *next step* for the disciple and not let the meetings erode into just fellowship. The objective is to keep moving forward.

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These meetings are essentially participation in the Great Commission where our Savior calls us to make disciples, baptize them and teach them (Matt. 28:19-20). The Great Commission is the mission of every Christ follower. *Next Steps* will guide you into being on mission with Christ.

As for these meetings, you can stop at any time, mark your place, and pick up from there the next time you meet. There is no rush or set time frame. Some steps will take more time than others.

Note for meetings: the discipleship relationships should be of the same gender, unless you are family, or are in a group setting. An older person should not be alone with a child or a youth, even if they are the same gender. These rules are based off what Jesus and Paul did as an example to us and are for your best interest. Furthermore, the meetings should center on the Scriptures for spiritual growth and not slip into personal counseling.

As you continue in Christ's Word, you will bring joy to God. In John's third letter, he reports how it brought him great joy when he heard of the children in the church who were personally learning the truth of Scripture despite present hardships. The extended application of this verse is that when we continue in God's Word, we bring Him joy.

Read 3 John 1:1-4

Remember, as you strive forward in your walk with God, there will be obstacles to overcome in order to continue walking in the truth. Perhaps there will be even strong personalities who will try and discourage you. That is nothing new, so do not be distracted. We are instructed to continue in Christ's word even while some may try to stop us.

Read 3 John 1:9-11

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The Gospel of Matthew contains Jesus' great teaching that is commonly known as the Beatitudes. Starting in Matthew 5:3, the word "Blessed" is repeated in every verse through Matthew 5:11. "Blessed" means happy.

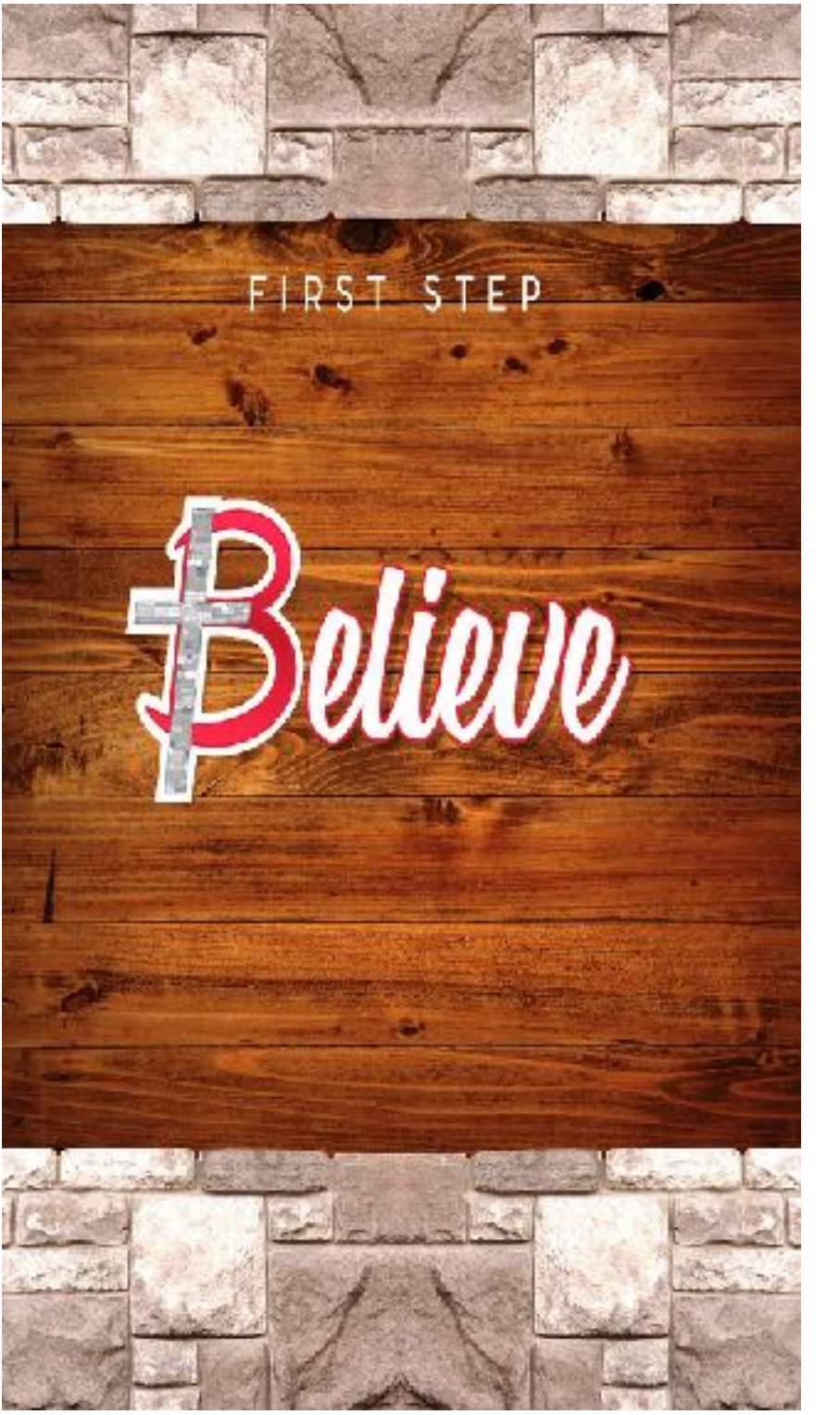
The inner quality of a fully devoted disciple of Jesus Christ is happiness. Their inner joy is not dependent upon pleasant circumstances. Because they genuinely love and trust God, their joy is sustained by a close relationship with Him. One of the rewards of being an obedient believer is joy. However, not everyone is a believer.

In the first step we will discuss this question: What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

Prayer Focus: Following Christ

"*And this I pray, that your love may overflow still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may discover the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.*"

NOTES


FIRST STEP
Believe

Step One — Believe

The word “believe” in the Greek is *pisteuo*. It means to be persuaded of, to place confidence in, to trust, or to have reliance upon.

A very similar word to “believe” is “faith.” In fact, notice their similarity in the original language. The word “faith” in the Greek is *pistis* and “believe” is *pisteuo*. The terms that describe faith are: agree, agreed, assure, confident, trust, yield or be in one accord.

Read Romans 10:17

Where does faith come from?

_____

_____

God gives faith to the unsaved through proclaiming His Word. Faith is a gift to those who hear and believe His Word. Faith is not earned from any kind of work (Eph. 2:8-9).

Inseparable from faith is repentance. Jesus began His ministry by proclaiming “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel*” (Mark 1:15). To repent is to change one's mind or purpose.

Repentance is a turning away from sin, the world, the devil, and the flesh (Eph. 2:1-3). It is rejecting the things that will result in God's wrath and judgment.

Faith is turning to Christ and trusting Him for eternal life and salvation (Acts 4:12). It is placing our full confidence in Christ for acceptance and fellowship with God (Eph. 2:4-6).

False religions attempt to replace faith in Christ for salvation with trusting in works. False religion expects you to "do" things in order to earn salvation through good works.

Therefore, most people think they are going to heaven because they think they are a good person and have done good things. They reject God's word that says "*There is no righteous person, not even one*" (Rom. 3:10).

True salvation is *done* for you by God through the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Christ has already paid for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). "*…. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scripture,*" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). His resurrection defeated death (Acts 2:24) and declared us to be right with God (Rom. 4:25).

We could never *do* this ourselves.

Those who trust in their own good works nullify the work of Christ on the cross. Christ died needlessly if it is possible for anyone to earn their own salvation.

The Galatians were tempted by Jewish tradition to keep the law as a supplementary means of earning salvation alongside of believing in Jesus. Paul said that was foolish and it negated the purpose of the cross (Gal. 2:21-3:1).

We must never add anything to the gospel!

New Testament believers were tempted to add Judaism to the gospel. Throughout history, the church has allowed cultural ideologies to creep in and alter the gospel. For example, today, many believers are tempted to add "Social Justice" to the gospel. This is an old trick. Satan uses secular philosophy (Col. 2:8) to deceive even believers if possible (Matt. 24:24). Believers should see through this old trick because it sets aside Christ's work on the cross and replaces the gospel with worldly philosophy and empty deceit. We are expected by God to properly discern these lies as a "*spirit of error*" (1 John 4:4-6).

It is equally important to fully understand the gospel. Many today make a quick profession of faith but have not been truly saved. This is a false conversion. If there has not been a change of heart resulting in a transformed life, then regeneration has most likely not happened. It is better to err on the side of caution and not affirm someone's salvation prematurely.

To grasp the gospel, we must start in the beginning. John 1:1 says "*In the beginning….*" That is a reference to Genesis 1:1 which says "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*." The Genesis account explains how God spoke and created everything from His Word in six literal days.

Read John 1:1-2, 14

Who is verse 14 talking about? _____

Who was with God in the beginning? _____

Read John 1:3

Who created everything? _____

Read John 1:4

Where did life come from? _____

Evolutionary theory is refuted in verses three and four. Life did not come from non-life. Life came from Jesus and He created everything that exists.

Read Romans 1:18-20

Who is made known to all people? _____

Is God clearly perceived and understood? _____

Who is without excuse? _____

How do people suppress the truth? _____

Every human being knows that God exists and that He created everything. If one knows (mind) and does not believe (heart), it simply means they are suppressing the truth.

Romans 1:21 says "*For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their reasonings, and their senseless hearts were darkened.*"

This is a willful rejection of God by every unbeliever.

Psalm 14:1 says "*The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God.*"" Everyone will stand before God and no excuse for rejecting Jesus will be justifiable (Rom. 1: 20).

Since the beginning, Satan has been sinning and deceiving. Believers, known as the children of God, are not to be deceived into sinful beliefs and practices (1 John 3:7-8).

Children of God believe Jesus is God, Creator, and the true Light. Jesus said that His witnesses will testify about Him and be a light to the unbelieving (Matt. 5:14).

Read John 1:6-9

John the Baptist was witnessing and testifying about Jesus.

"*He* (John the Baptist) *came as a witness, to testify about the Light* (Jesus), *so that all might believe through Him*." Light is a metaphor for revealing truth.

Those who believe and receive Christ become children of God. Does this verse make it clear that the Light of Christ is available to all men?

Indeed, there is no partiality with God (Rom. 2:11). All who repent and trust in Christ will be saved (Rom. 12:13).

Read John 1:11-12

Do all people believe and receive? _____ Y/N

Universalism is a common belief. However, all roads do not lead to heaven. There are many false gods that lead people astray. Believing in Jesus is the only way to Heaven. Jesus alone is the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life* (John 14:6).

In Acts 4:12, Peter declared "*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved.*"

Repentance is necessary for salvation. One cannot turn to Christ until he has turned away from everything else. Luke 13:3 says "*…unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*."

God's standard for Heaven is His perfect righteousness. In Leviticus 20:26, God commands "*So you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have singled you out from the peoples to be Mine*."

Jesus instructed us in Matt. 5:48, "*Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*."

Jesus Christ is God's perfect Son who shares His perfect righteousness with God the Father. Scripture says that Christ is the "*exact representation*" of the Father (Heb.1:3).

Jesus said "*…whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in the same way*" (John 5:19).

Only Christ has lived a perfect life. He perfectly obeyed the Father and fulfilled all righteousness.

Therefore, the Father says of the Son:

"Your throne, God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of His kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your companions" (Heb. 1:8-9).

The ten commandments reveal that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:20, 23).

Read Exodus 20:1-20

Have you broken God's law? _____ Y/N

Do you have a healthy fear of God? _____ Y/N

The ten commandments are written on our hearts. Our conscience bears witness and brings us under conviction when we reflect upon our sin (Rom. 2:15). This conviction and sorrowfulness of heart is good. Godly sorrow differs from worldly sorrow in that we are more sorry for offending God than we are for suffering the inevitable repercussions of our actions. This genuine sorrow over sin is the will of God and produces repentance that leads to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10).

Repent of your sin. Turn away from it and turn to Jesus for salvation.

2 Cor. 5:21 says that God "*…made Him* (Christ) *who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*."

God made His perfect Son to be sin only in the sense that Christ was crucified on a cross as our substitute to bear God's righteous wrath for our sins. Christ was punished as if He had personally committed every sin committed by every sinner who would ever believe, though He was personally innocent.

Jesus fulfilled the law that you have repeatedly broken and suffered the punishment that you deserve. He did this so that so that you could be treated as if you lived His perfect life and therefore be perfectly righteous before the thrice Holy God.

The wrath of God that we deserve for our sins was poured on Jesus. Christ completely bore the just punishment of God's law for those united to Him through faith.

In this way, Jesus was made to be sin on our behalf so that we might become righteous through Him.

Christ is therefore the spotless "*…Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Trust Him as your righteous sin-bearing substitute and be saved!

Salvation is a gift from God that you receive by faith. Faith comes from hearing, which means "perceiving." Some hear the Word of God and do not "understand" (Matt. 13:14). God's word is like a "seed" that is to be planted in soil. Not all seeds germinate and become fruitful. Jesus told a parable to His disciples to explain how salvation works like a seed. A person will respond to the gospel in one of four ways. They will either reject it, react too quickly to it, be distracted from it, or truly receive it. Those who truly believe are ones who continue in the Word and prove to be Christ's disciples (John 8:31). They live by faith in Christ and bear good fruit.

Read Matthew 13:18-23

Only one out of four examples in this parable are saved. The road to salvation is narrow and few find it (Matt. 7:14). Only seeds that are planted in the good soil of a believing heart, sprout, take root, and continue to grow.

Many have hardened their hearts. They refuse Christ by rejecting His word. The gospel seed never penetrates their heart of stone. Others make superficial commitments and seem to sprout quickly. However, when hardships come, they shrink like a flower in the desert. Likewise, those who are consumed in all the attractions and allurements of this fleeting and temporal world are literally choked out by those distractions. They love the world and its passing things but reject the eternal Father (1 John 2:15).

Notice the responsibility is on the person to believe. The parable of the sower and seeds illustrates that those with hard hearts will not respond to God's free gift of salvation. Shallow hearts will have a quick, emotional, and fake reply. The distracted hearts that are not really interested will have a worldly and false embrace. But the receptive hearts will have a genuine, deep, and transformative reception.

What kind of heart do you have?

Hard?	**Rejects the word of God**
Shallow?	**Reacted, but was not real**
Distracted?	**Really loves the world**
Receptive?	**Hears and understands**

There are three examples of those who reject Jesus. Only one example is of those who receive Jesus. Jesus said "*For the*

gate is narrow and the way is constricted that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt. 7:14).

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So how does a person come to genuine saving belief?

Read John 6:35-47

Remember that creation started with God and so does salvation. God will not cast out any who come to Him (v.37). Yet He must draw people to Him for salvation (v.44).

Jesus reminds us "*they shall be taught of God*" (John 6:45). Even in the Old Testament, God said all will be taught (Is. 43:13). However, the responsibility to listen and learn is on every individual. A person can hear but not learn.

Verse 45 says those who come to the Father and are saved are those who hear and learn. Jesus said "*But the one sown with seed on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it…*" (Matt. 13:23).

Jesus was speaking of salvation's seed being planted in the hearts of believers when He said "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear*" (Mark 4:9).

Here is the gospel.

All have sinned and are guilty before God. The penalty for sin is death. However, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Jesus died for those who would believe so that they might live. His substitutionary death was for sinners like you and me. If you repent of your sin, and confess that Jesus died on the cross for your sin, and believe that God raised him from the grave, you will be saved.

Christ's death and resurrection are linked together in our redemption. As His death is ours and so too is His life. Christ

"*…was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification*" (Romans 4:25).

31

By His finished work on the cross, Christ fulfilled all righteousness. Once the law's demands were satisfied, He could not be held under its curse. The resurrection of Christ proved that God's justice was satisfied.

Scripture says that God "*…raised us up with Him…*" (Eph. 2:6). United to Christ through faith, we are counted as having not only died with Christ, but as being raised with Him as well. Raised together, we are justified and given favor with God. Raised with Him, "*…He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach"* (Col. 1:22).

Read Romans 10:9-10

You have heard the Good News. What questions do you have? Is there anything you do not understand?

Questions?

_____

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

God pleads with people to turn from sin and trust in Him. Paul saw himself as an ambassador for Christ. He pleads "*as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God*" (2 Cor. 5:20).

Having heard and understood the Good News of Jesus Christ, do you believe in Christ and confess Him as your Lord and Savior?

Yes _____ Not Yet _____

Do not put off being reconciled to God. Delaying is not wise. Tomorrow may be too late.

32

God says "*...Behold, now is a favorable time, behold, now is a day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2). Likewise, "*Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...*" (Heb. 3:7-8).

Not everyone will be saved. Their rejection of Jesus is disobedience. Scripture says "*...those who previously had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience*" (Heb. 4:6).

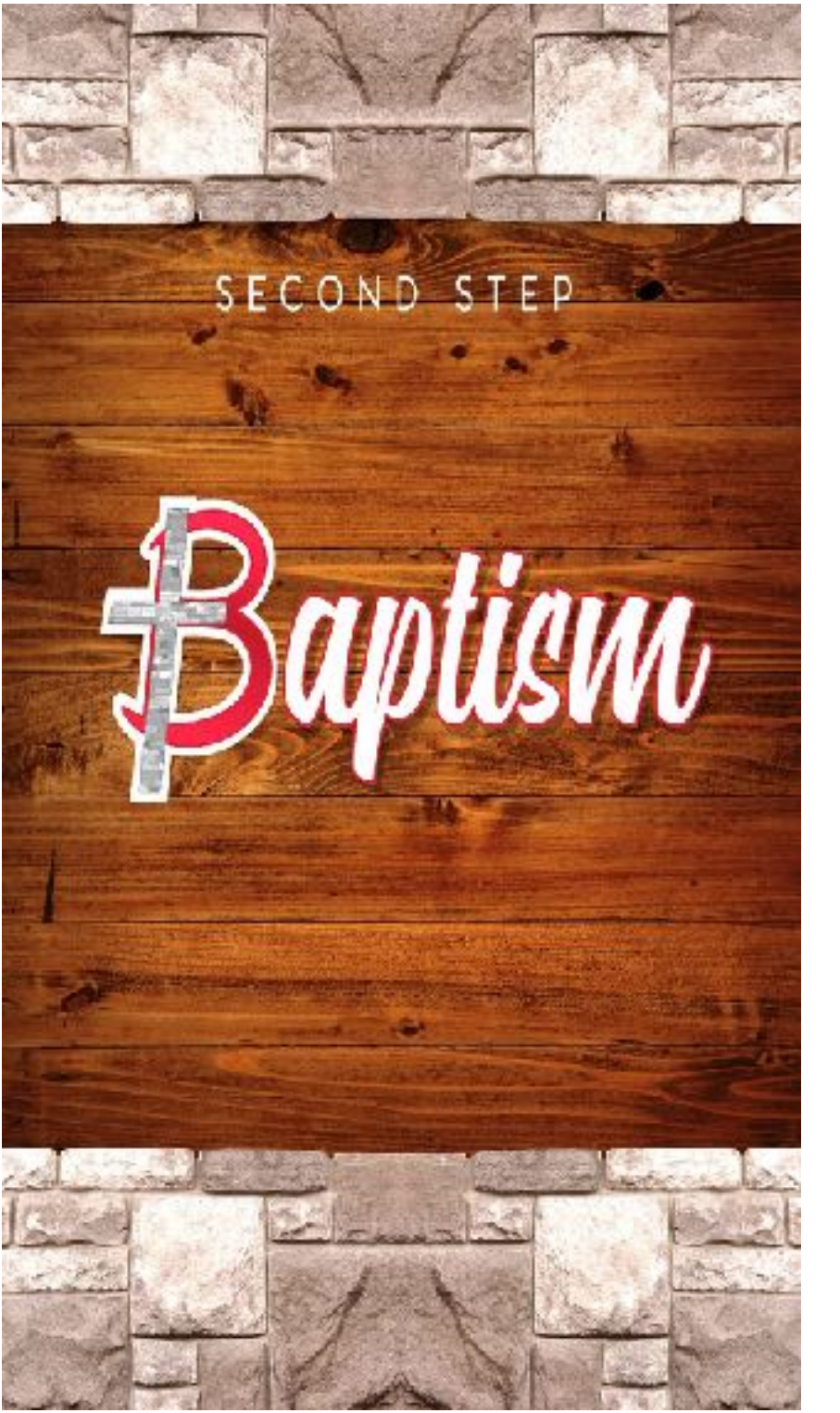
If you are not sure that you have been saved, or if you have some more questions, continue in this *Next Steps* booklet, and learn about true salvation. But also, read the Gospel of John. The evidence that Jesus is Lord and Savior is proven over and over. In fact, the whole Gospel of John was written "*so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name*" (John 20:31).

Prayer Focus: Believe

"*I do believe; help my unbelief*!" **—Mark 9:24**

NOTES

NOTES


SECOND STEP
Baptism

Step Two — Baptism

Baptism is the **Next Step**.

Baptism is a witness of the believer's life in Christ. It testifies that a believer is fully in Christ. It declares that Christ's death and resurrection has become ours. It symbolizes that Christ paid the penalty of our sins and we were raised with Him to share His life and righteousness.

Baptism was instituted by Christ and practiced by the apostles (Matt. 28:19). It is an indispensable witness to our glorious union with Christ the Savior (Rom. 6:3-6).

But some are not ready to be baptized. The book of Acts records Phillip preaching the Gospel and Simon responding incorrectly. Simon is an example of one who was baptized too soon. Peter was discerning enough to correct him.

Read Acts 8:9-13

What were Simon's motives?

_____

Simon's motives were wrong and most importantly, he had not truly repented, He had not changed his mind or motives. Simon's crowd heard Philip preaching the good news. They believed and were baptized. Simon went with the crowd.

Simon claimed to believe in Christ and was baptized. However, his heart was still unregenerate. He coveted after power and even tried to buy it.

Read Acts 8:18-21

Can God's favor be bought? _____ Y/N

Peter discerned that Simon was a false convert. Peter did the right thing and called for his repentance.

Jesus called for people to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). Throughout the New Testament, when people heard the Word of God and understood the gospel, they would ask "What should we do?".

Job demonstrated what true repentance is. Job said "*I repent, sitting on dust and ashes*" (Job 42:6). This was a sign of mourning. Dust is symbolic of nothingness. Job changed his mind when he recognized his lowly state before God.

Repenting is acknowledging that your sin is against God (Ps. 51:4) and resolving to turn away from wicked behavior. God confronts and uncovers sin in us to prompt repentance. In response, we cry out "*Create in me a clean heart, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me*" (Ps. 51:10).

True repentance is from the heart toward Christ. Do not be fooled into acts of penance, taking sacraments, paying money and/or confessing your sin to a priest. Any outward effort at earning God's favor—such as those Roman Catholic Church doctrines—is an unbiblical affront to the grace of God resulting in eternal condemnation (Gal. 1:8). Religious rituals do not mean that one has been convicted of sin, repented from the heart, and turned to Christ for salvation.

False conversions are the plague of our present-day churchgoing culture, as evidenced by the carnal behavior of professing believers. If one is not continuing in the Word of God, then they have not proven themselves a true disciple of Christ (John 8:31). True disciples are continuing in God's Word and are being sanctified by it (John 17:17).

Read John 8:31 and John 17:17

Why are there so many false converts?

_____

Repentance replaces our desire for sin with God's disdain for it. Repentance is the realization that our sin caused Jesus immeasurable grief, agony, pain, rejection, suffering, and even death. Repentance recognizes our responsibility in nailing Jesus Christ to the cross (Acts 2:23).

Read Isaiah 53:3-6 and underline the words that describe what Jesus endured because of your sin.

We should plead with God to forgive us for humiliating His Son, for causing His one and only Son to be despised, stricken, afflicted, pierced, crushed, scourged, and crucified.

True repentance is turning away from sin. It is abandonment of sin rather than just sorrow for it. If one has genuinely changed their mind and believed in Christ the Savior, their behavior will match their belief.

Believers have become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). They seek Christ, set their mind on Him, and live their new lives as hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:1-3). Their hearts and minds have been made new and they long and thirst for God.

Read Psalm 42:1-2

Does your soul thirst for God? _____ Y/N

If the heart of a person is not right with God, they should not be baptized. Simon tried to buy his way into the faith and was corrected by Peter. No amount of money or religious rituals or good works can make us right with God. We are only made right with God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture teaches "*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast*" (Eph. 2:8-9).

Therefore, only those who have turned to Christ and trust Him as their Lord and Savior are to be baptized. Baptism does not give you a new heart, but recognizes it (Acts 10:47). It is an obedient act that testifies that you are already united to Christ the Savior through faith and thus belong to Him (Gal. 3:27-29).

The proper mode of baptism is immersion. The Greek word for baptize is *baptizo* which means "to bring under or immerse." Christ demonstrated the proper mode of baptism when He was immersed and "*came up*" out of the water (Matt. 3:16). Submersion and emergence are the very sense of the symbol. Sprinkling is not baptism. To be immersed by sprinkling is a contradiction.

Some have been baptized as an infant. That is out of order. Salvation comes before baptism (Acts 8:12). There is only one baptism (Eph. 4:5). If you were sprinkled before salvation, then you should be biblically baptized.

Some were led to pray a prayer as a young child, and then prematurely baptized without being truly converted. If you recognize that you came to genuine saving faith after your baptism, then you should be biblically baptized.

Baptism is your public identification with Jesus Christ. It shows that you are "*…buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith…*" (Col. 2:12).

Christ gave Christians the authority to baptize and commanded believers to be baptized (Matt. 28:19-20). The local church is the best place to be baptized. The pastor or an elder should hear your conversion testimony. Groups of believers can also choose to have baptisms in rivers, lakes or even the ocean. Public baptisms are great and afford the opportunity to witness to others. Wherever you obey Christ in baptism is fine, just choose to go all the way under the water!

Have you been biblically baptized? _____ Y/N

If not, perhaps you are ready to take the **Next Step** of Baptism like the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip preached Jesus to him from the Scriptures and he believed.

Read Acts 8:35-38

After hearing the gospel, what was his request?

_____

Do you want to be baptized? _____ Y/N/Done

If so, inform your pastor and schedule a baptism day. Invite your family and friends to witness your step of obedience.

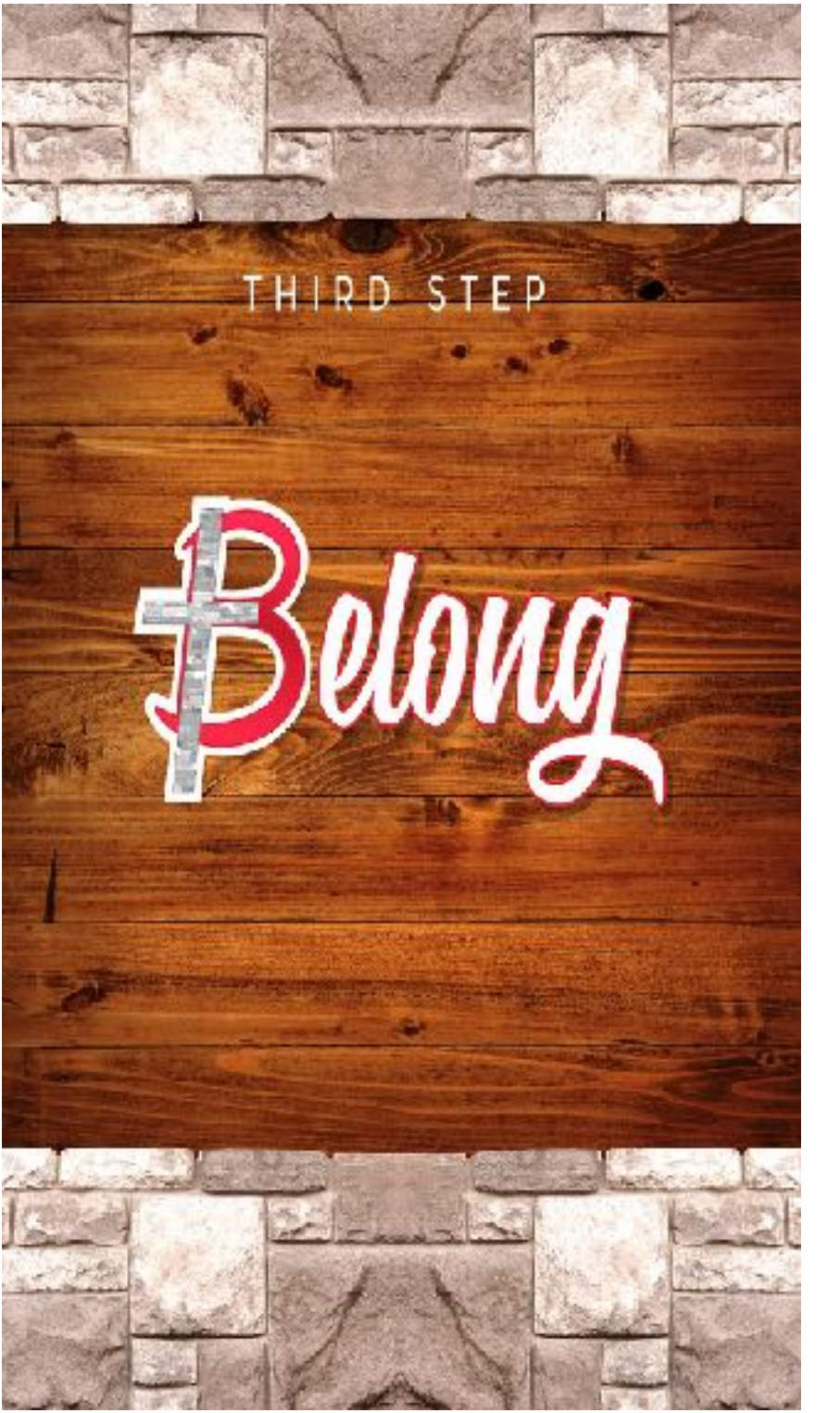
Date/age when baptized _____

Prayer Focus: Baptism

"*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*." **—Eph. 1:3**

NOTES

Notes


THIRD STEP
Belong

Step Three — Belong

The English word “Church” is derived from a Greek adjective *kyriakos* that means “belonging to the Lord.” It is often used to describe a place dedicated to worshiping God.

In the New Testament, the Greek word, *ekklesia*, renders the meaning of a local congregation. It means the “called-out assembly.” This is also translated as “church” in English because the local congregation has been called out by God to be His special people.

Therefore, it is biblical to refer to the church as both a place (Acts 13:1) and a body of believers (Col. 1:18).

Most frequently in the New Testament, a church is referred to as a local group of professing Christians. Every believer is to belong to a local church. Peter, James, and John belonged to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:1-3).

Which church do you belong to?

_____

Scripture uses the metaphor of marriage to describe God’s special love and care for His people (Is. 54:5). God promises to take His people as a bride forever in a relationship marked by righteousness, justice, favor, compassion, faithfulness, and knowledge (Hosea 2:19-20).

In the New Testament, this figure of marriage is expanded and more precisely applied to the special relationship that is established between Christ and His beloved Bride, the Church.

Christ loved the Church so much that He "*gave Himself up for her*" (Eph. 5:25). Christ left heaven, took on a human nature like ours with all of its vulnerabilities and limitations, perfectly fulfilled all righteousness, and even humbled Himself to death on a cross. He did this because He loves His Church.

Christ gave Himself on the cross for the Church "*so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless*" (Eph. 5:26-27). Christ desires that His Church should be pure and faithful to Him, reflecting His own perfect purity.

We as the Bride are to be faithful and pure (1 Peter 1:16). Holiness is not optional. We learn and observe how to be holy from God's Word and by observing others who are faithfully imitating Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). Sunday worship and Wednesday Bible Study provide many opportunities for this.

Christ uses His Word and the Spirit to nourish and cherish the Church (Eph. 5:29). This promise gives us assurance that He is caring for us as we are His very own.

The Church is so near and dear to Christ that we are said to be "*parts of His body*" (Eph. 5:30). Belonging to a local church conveys that you forever belong to Christ and that He forever belongs to you (Eph. 5:31-32).

Sporadic attendance to a local Church is the popular trend in our day. That is the equivalent to running around on your spouse.

Dedicated service is the Biblical idea of belonging to Christ and living for Him. How must Christ feel about those who run around and forsake the assembling of themselves together for worship (Heb. 10:25)? We belong to Christ as His Bride. Therefore, faithfulness is a necessity.

The steadfast love of God is pictured by Hosea. Hosea's wife was unfaithful, but Hosea remained faithful and they eventually reunited (Hosea 2:7). God knows the heartache of unfaithfulness, rebukes the sin, but never abandons His own.

How important is faithfulness to God?

_____

How can you be more faithful to your church?

_____

Like Hosea (Hosea 3:2), Jesus paid a price for His Bride. Did Jesus pay for half of your heart and life? Are there areas of your life that you have not surrendered to Him?

Read Galatians 2:20

A fifth grader who was being discipled by his father was asked, "How do you think Christ feels about Christians who half-heartedly serve Him and skip out on church a lot?" The fifth-grade boy responded, "Well nobody likes a rip-off." That is an unforgettable reply!

If Christ paid for you, then you are His. Are you giving Him what He bought? Our life is not our own (1 Cor. 6:20).

The Bride of Christ is the Church. The Church is made up of many members. When a member is not participating, they portray a low view of God and the Church is weakened.

As Christ gave Himself for the Church, so too believers should devote themselves entirely to Christ. Dedicated disciples of Christ do not amputate themselves from the rest of their Christian body (Eph. 4:11-16).

A biblical Church will teach sound doctrine, worship Christ, have fellowship, observe ordinances, do missions, charitably give, be accountable, serve, and pray together. This is what Christian contributors do in their local church.

The opposite of contributing is consuming. Consumerism is the mindset of carnal Christians. Their flesh drives their desires. They are consumed by their wants but think little of other's needs. A consumer thinks selfishly and treats the house of God like a flea market. They have a marketplace mindset rather than a ministry philosophy.

A Christian should not have the mindset of a consumer, but a contributor. Christ is the life inside Christians and His Spirit will flow out of their hearts like rivers of living water (John 7:38). They are extremely grateful for all that Christ has done and look for ways to serve and bless others.

Believers do not take for granted the saving grace that was freely offered to them while they were still dead in their sins. They feel eternally indebted to Christ and the church is where their faith is expressed and developed. They do not expect to be served, but look to serve. They are humble, loving, kind, pleasant, patient, peaceable, gentle, and joyful (Gal. 5:22-23). They have an eternal perspective and can overlook temporal things. They are not easily offended, nor do they take up offenses. They put Jesus first, others second, and themselves last. It is harmonious when true saints come together and worship. The true Church has a desire to meet together regularly.

The Church family is often closer than blood relatives. Our friendships are deep and often last a lifetime. This is because just as the Church belongs to Christ, we also belong to one another. Just as we are individually united to Christ through faith by His Spirit, so too are we corporately united to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ—sharing the same Holy Spirit and calling on the same heavenly Father.

Read John 17:21-23

What is our unity to be like?

_____

What does our unity show the world?

_____

One of Satan's favorite pastimes is stirring disunity in the Church. He loves stirring gossip, causing jealousy, making believers covet one another's stuff and spouses. He plants seeds of discontentment. He causes divisions among the brethren and God hates that (Pr. 6:19). Any one of these sins can disturb a unified church like throwing a stone into a peaceful pond. The ripple effects can keep a pastor awake for many nights, on the phone for weeks, and constantly distracted from studying and preaching. Discord and gossip spreads like a forest fire and cancer (Ja. 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:17). When gossip flares up, the pastors and deacons become fire fighters.

Read James 3:5-6

What is the source of a defiling tongue?

_____

Read Proverbs 6:16-19

What is the seventh thing that God hates?

_____

Complainers are flat out sinful. God dealt severely with Israel's fault finders who were grumbling and complaining and caused Moses to nearly quit.

Read Numbers 16:41-50

Read Numbers 21:5-8

Write Philippians 2:14

_____

Israel was an example of how not to act (1 Cor. 10:1-11). God's people are not to speak negatively about each other or their leaders. Controlling one's character in a Christlike manner is essential to Church unity. Jesus prayed that we "*…may be perfected in unity…*" (John 17:23).

Pastors must stop gossip as they are held responsible for it by God (Num. 18:1). Church members are to "*Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they may do this with joy, not groaning; for this would be unhelpful for you*" (Heb. 13:17).

Belonging to Christ means that church members belong to one another. That is why it is crucial for us to have unity. Jesus summarized the entire Old Testament law into loving God and others (Matt. 22:37-40). Evidence of true salvation is the love of God placed inside of you for others.

Read 1 John 4:7-8

Furthermore, God gave you a gift at salvation and that gift is to be used for serving God and others (1 Cor. 12:7,11). Everyone has at least one spiritual gift.

God wants you to be aware of that gift and use it in service to His Church. There are varieties of gifts and they are all valuable. 1 Corinthians 12 describes the body of Christ as being made up of many gifted members.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12

The members of a church are like the members of the human body. Every member has a special place and purpose within the local church because "*…God has arranged the parts, each one of them in the body, just as He desired*" (1 Cor. 12:18). Everyone's gift matters. Everyone matters to someone.

Our gift from God is "*for the building up of the body of Christ*" (Eph. 4:12). We are to build one another up "*until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:13).

The local church is God's ordained method of discipling those who belong to Christ. Christians are to grow spiritually and become strong in the faith. Believers have a congregational responsibility to see that no false teachings enter the church and that no members fall prey to it (2 Tim. 4:3).

What are the expectations? Nothing less than a complete commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior. Acts 2:36 says "… *God has made Him both Lord and Christ…*", where Lord means "Master" and Christ means "Savior".

If Christ is your Savior, then He is also Lord and Master of your life. This means your life is centered around Christ and His Church. The local church is the Master's plan. There is no back up plan. How you participate and engage in the church is exactly how you treat Christ. We are to love what He loves.

No longer should sports, hobbies, shopping, laziness, television, traveling distance, lockdowns, or any other inconveniences impede our regular church attendance. Anything put before God is an idol.

To become a member and belong to a church is to participate wholeheartedly in the biblically driven services and ministries. We are to obligate ourselves to serving Christ through His Church. This total commitment to the Lord's work is pictured by many figures in the New Testament such as being a slave (Rom. 1:1), a worker (Phil. 1:25), a partner (Phm 1:17), a soldier (2 Tim. 2:3), a ploughman (1 Cor. 9:11), and an athlete (2 Tim. 4:7). These speak of the hard work, dedication, commitment, and loyalty expected of believers.

Paul instructed Titus to "*set in order*" the remaining churches and "*appoint elders*" (Titus 1:5). The Scriptural obligation of the church is to be orderly—the leadership, the worship services, the members are all to be well ordered.

How dishonoring to Christ would it be for the Church to be disorderly in any of her ways? Let us not forget that Christ "*… gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, eager for good deeds*" (Titus 2:14).

The high calling to be a member is based on a high view of Christ and His Church. If you have believed in Jesus Christ and are baptized, then you are a candidate for church membership. Having been saved, you already belong to Christ. Belonging to His Church is the **Next Step**.

One of the ways a local church is responsible to God for their members is to know who they are. The members in turn have accountability and are under the authority of a local church.

Pastors need to know their members so that they can pray, protect, feed, love and watch over the flock of God.

Do you belong to a church as a member? ____Y/N

If not, see the pastor of a Bible believing Church and join. There are certain Biblical criteria that should be agreed on in order to call a Church your home. Every Church has differences of beliefs and practices. Look for a Church with a high view of God and His Word. The following website explains this in greater detail: https://www.gty.org/library/blogseries/BS121

How do we know what a biblically sound church looks like? How do we know where to find a high view of God? How do we know that the word of God is being faithfully preached?

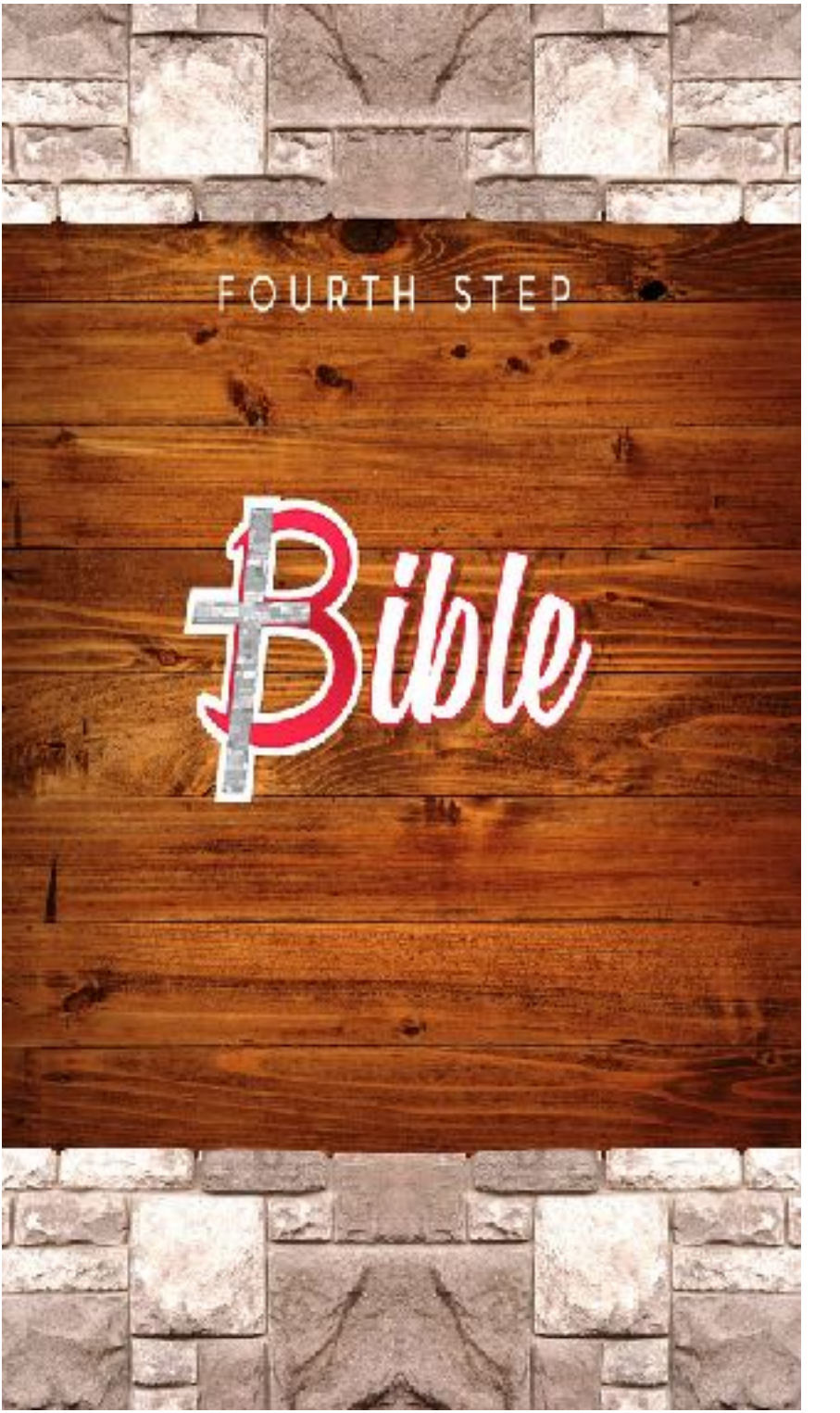
We know these things through the prayerful and careful study of Scripture. And we will consider how to rightly divide God's Word in our **Next Step**.

Prayer Focus: Belong

"*Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that with one purpose and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*." **—Rom. 15:5-6**

NOTES

NOTES


FOURTH STEP
Bible

Step Four — Bible

The Bible is the Word of God. God has always existed and so too has His Word. The Word of God existed from eternity past. As far back as you can imagine, God's Word has been settled. Psalm 119:89 says "*Forever, LORD, Your word stands in heaven."*

The Word of God exists in the future. Beyond what you can think, the word of God is in perfect existence. Isaiah observed "*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever*" (Is. 40:8).

Peter quoted this very passage from Isaiah some seven hundred years later recognizing that the Word of God that he preached was the same as Isaiah's. Peter wrote "*...and this is the word which was preached to you*" (1 Peter 1:25).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "forever" as a limitless time or at all times. The Greek word for "forever", *aion,* means unbroken continuance. This concept is nearly beyond the English language and human thinking.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures claim to be the Word of God. This claim is made over 2500 times in the Old Testament alone. In the New Testament, we find that the Church readily accepted the gospel the apostles preached for what it really is, the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13).

Christ is the great subject of God's Word. 2 Cor. 1:20 says "*For as many as the promises of God are, in Him they are yes; therefore through Him also is our Amen to the glory of God through us.*"

As the "Yes", Christ is the realization and reality of all of Scripture. He is indeed the Word made flesh (John 1:14).

As the "Amen", Christ is the faithful and true witness. He is the perfect and concluding Word of God (Heb. 1:1-3).

This is why Paul wrote to Timothy saying,

"You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are all glorified when we cherish God's Word. The Bible is of incalculable worth.

For the soul, the Word of God is a blessing, a law, a testimony, a guide to purity, a treasure, riches, an ordinance, a delight, a longing, a counselor, strength, a teacher, enlightening, a reviver, establisher, confronter, a producer of reverence, righteousness, salvation, liberty, a love, a meditation, hope, comfort, a song, a portion, a promise, graciousness, a companion, insight, knowledge, security, wisdom, understanding, a restrainer from evil, sweetness, joy of the heart, a light, an inheritance, a freshness, a gift worth more than endless gold, a wonder, direction for uprightness, faithfulness, a rescuer, a redeemer, the sum total of truth, a cause of awe, a deliverer, a revelation, and a source of praise!

"*Let my soul live that it may praise You…*" (Ps. 119:175).

God's word is inerrant	(Prov. 30:5)
God's word is sufficient	(2 Pet. 1:3-4)
God's word is infallible	(2 Tim. 3:16-17)
God's word is active	(Heb. 4:12)
God's word is cleansing	(Eph. 5:26)
God's word is sanctifying	(John 17:17)
God's word is revealing	(Heb. 1:1)
God's word is authoritative	(Jude 25)
God's word is preserved	(Is. 59:21)
God's word is forever	(Ps. 119:89)
God's word is eternal	(Is. 40:8)
God's word is sound	(Titus 2:1)

God's Word carries an awful responsibility for those who teach in the church. James warns that teachers will have to give an account to God for what they have taught (James 3:1).

The explanation of God's word demands preparation for fear of misrepresenting God. Paul charged Timothy "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Teachers must work very hard with great diligence in studying the Bible so that they can explain it accurately. Pastors are even instructed in seminary to study at least one hour for every minute that they preach.

The Word of God names those who misrepresent the Holy Scriptures. Hymenaeus and Philetus lied to the church and subverted the faith of members, saying they had missed out on their future resurrection (2 Tim. 2:17-18).

Those who preach God's Word are required to "*…exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it*" (Titus 1:9).

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The rebellious ones who mishandle the Scriptures "*…must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of dishonest gain*" (Titus 2:11). In fact, the church must "*…reprimand them severely so that they may be sound in the faith*" (Titus 2:13).

The Word of God is not to be altered. "*You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I am commanding you*" (Deut. 4:2).

A lack of reverence for God's Word is common today with God's people. This comes with consequences. John warns us:

"*I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book*" (Rev. 22:18-19).

We simply cannot comprehend the future implications for those who alter the meaning of Scripture. But we can clearly see how God punishes nations who disobey His Word.

Read Deuteronomy 28:58-59

God gave specific instructions so that His Word would be heard and understood. God's Word must also be shared.

Read Deuteronomy 31:11-13

Who should hear God's Word? _____

Who should learn from God's Word? _____

When God's people are in His Word and are taking it seriously, there is a healthy reverence and fear of God.

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The wisest man who ever lived knew Israel's history of disobedience toward God. Solomon said, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction*" (Prov. 1:7). If we desire to be wise, we must be willing to both hear and study God's Word.

First, make certain that you are under the faithful preaching of Scripture. Follow along with the preacher and make certain that he is preaching God's Word. Listen for yourself and not for others. Listen for what the text means. What is the text saying? That should be the message. Where Scripture places the emphasis, the preacher also must. Verse by verse teaching through entire books of the Bible is the best, and most logical, way. That is how God gave it to us. Why would anyone read a letter by randomly selecting a line and then guessing its application? That is out of order. It is random and regularly wrong. Many preachers today are well spoken but miss the point of the biblical text.

Second, be like the Bereans and study God's Word for yourself. See if the teaching lines up with the Scriptures.

Read Acts 17:11

Everyone needs to learn how to study the Bible. Many read, but few study. It does not take a scholar to rightly divide God's

Word. The Bible was written by common men to common people, yet it contains a vast wealth of knowledge.

Use the 3D Study Sheet to dig deeper into the biblical text. This structure will guide you to finding the truth of God's Word. Those who work at Bible study soon discover for themselves all the benefits listed earlier in this chapter. Their heart, soul, and mind will be flooded with unspeakable blessings.

3D Study Details

The "**Text**" is the small paragraph or passage that is next as you systematically and chronologically study through books of the Bible. It is best to read the whole book first. Then read the chapter of the text again, thoroughly. Finally, read the paragraph or passage itself a few times. This will keep the content you discover within its right biblical context.

A "**Genre**" is a classification of literature. In the Bible, the classifications are Historical Narrative, Law, Poetry, Wisdom, Prophecy, Apocalyptic, Gospel, and Epistle. Each genre merits careful study. It is important to know the genre so that the interpretation and application is correct. These simple steps are vital. God said "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge…*" (Hosea 4:6).

Finally, read the text out loud with a respectful weightiness as you emphasize the right words (1 Tim. 4:13). This will help you to focus on the descriptions, explanations, phrases, and commands that are being conveyed in the text.

1st Divert

Divert to prayer first. Prayer and Bible study belong together. Humbly approach our Holy God with reverence and

repentance. Confess any known sins and be cleansed of it (1 John 1:9). Ask God to teach you His Word. The Holy Spirit's role is to teach you truth (John 14:26). The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible will teach us the things of Christ and lead us into all truth. Do not usurp Him by neglecting prayer and Bible study. Do not skip these to study notes and commentaries. Read those after your own study. It will be incredible to see this process lead you to think with the best scholars and theologians. Meaningful Bible study always starts with prayer.

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2nd Dig

Digging into the meaning of important words will reveal truth. Like mining for diamonds, it takes time to find valuable knowledge. Scripture states that "*…it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, and one who hurries his footsteps errs*" (Prov. 19:2).

Read the text carefully and slowly, identifying the nouns (people, places, things) as you read. Identify the verbs which describe the action, condition, or experience of the main subject. Next, look up these nouns and verbs in a Bible dictionary such as the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary or go to Blueletterbible.org for clarification. An English-dictionary will not give you the biblical meaning or context. Knowing the biblical meaning rather than the American meaning of words will guard against misinterpretation and applying our modern cultural context to words found in Scripture. For example, the modern definition of "love" tragically differs from God's Word. Take your time and enjoy digging!

3rd Document

Document the truths you find. Writing out your own discoveries moves the truths from your head to your heart. We must press beyond studying-to practicing. Consider how to apply the text to your life and state its implications. This is always convicting!

Furthermore, we are commanded to make disciples and teach God's commands (Matt. 28:18-20). If we only obtain knowledge, there is a risk of becoming prideful and puffed up. Paul wrote "*…knowledge makes one conceited, but love edifies people*" (1 Cor. 8:1). We must be intentional about teaching.

Ezra is a great example to follow, "*For Ezra had firmly resolved to study the Law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel*" (Ezra 7:10). Documenting truths will equip you to be a great commission Christian who makes disciples.

Here is the 3D Bible Study Sheet to help you study God's Word for yourself:

The 3D Bible Study Sheet is included at the end of this book as a quick reference.

To download the free printable 3D Bible Study sheet, go to:

https://beulahbaptistwg.org/wp-content/uploads/3d-bible-study-sheet.pdf

3D Bible Study Sheet

Text: _____ Genre: _____
Date: _____

"*… If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples.*" (John 8:31)

"*… firmly resolved to study the Law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances …*" (Ezra 7:10)

1st Divert

Pray, then read the text slowly, thoughtfully and repeatedly.

Lord…, forgive us (1 John 1:9) and teach us (John 14:26).

2nd Dig

Study nouns (Bible dictionary)

Identify Verbs (Indicate emphasis)

Read References (Bible concordance)

Note Repetitive words (Reveals theme)

3rd Document

A. **Find the theme:** (Read the text some more and find **the** central idea.)

B. **Explain the text:** (What are the facts? Observe the text in context.)

C. **Interpret the text:** (What does this mean? What is being pointed out?)

D. **Apply the truth:** (How do I practice this?)

E. **State implications:** (What will happen if I do not practice this?)

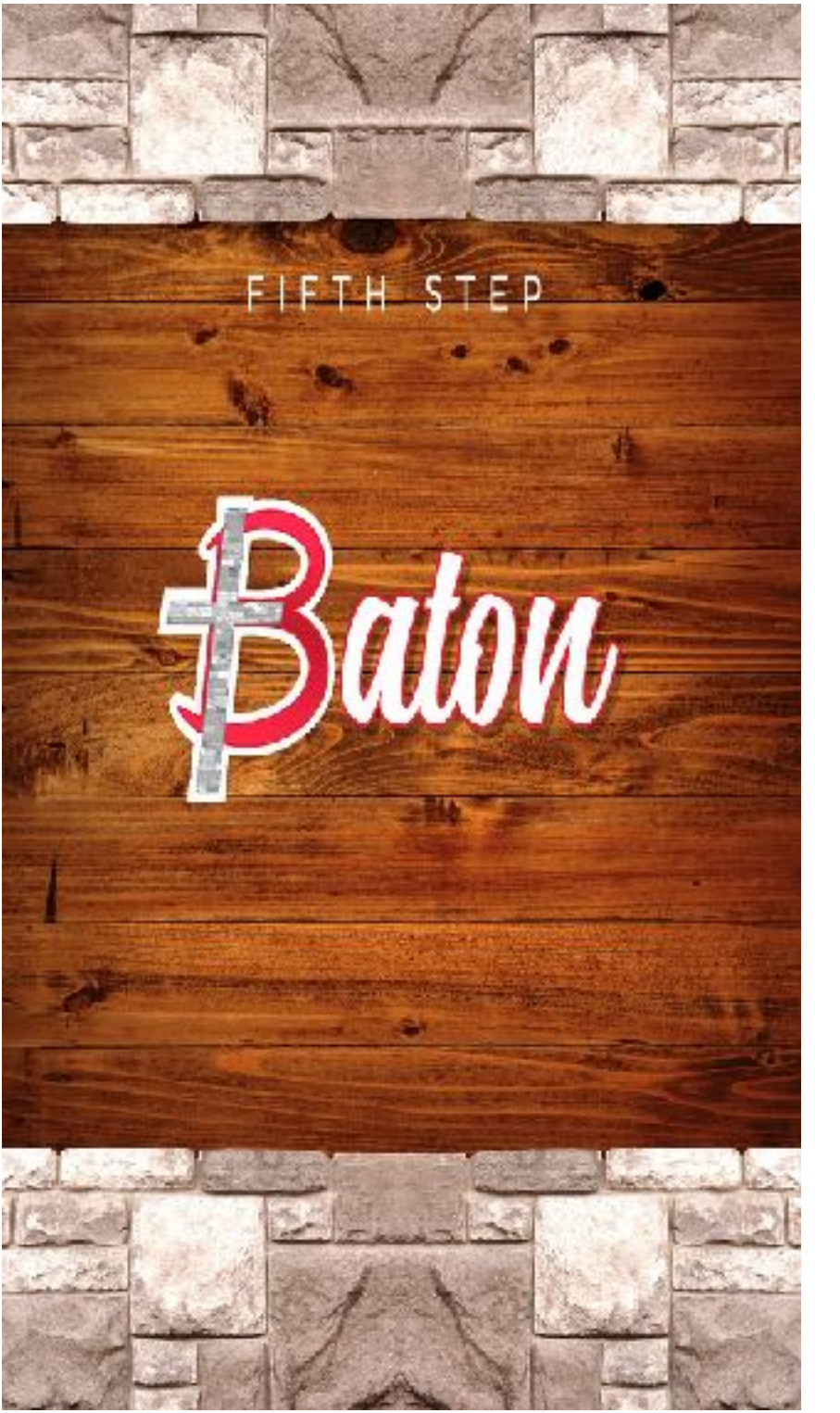
F. **Illustrate:** (What other passages teach this truth? Use references and concordances.)

G. **Apologetic:** (Defend the truth by refuting those who oppose it)

NOTES

Prayer Focus: Bible

"*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe.***" —Eph. 1:18-19**


FIFTH STEP
Baton

Step Five — Baton

In a relay race, a runner carefully passes a baton to another runner who then continues to run the race. This is repeated until the race is won.

Just before His ascension, our resurrected Lord spoke to His disciples saying:

"*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*" (Matt. 28:18-20).

We refer to this command as the Great Commission. In this commission, Christ is entrusting and commanding us to carry on His evangelistic enterprise. We are so closely united with Christ our Savior that He who reconciled us to God has now given us His ministry of reconciliation.

Jesus is essentially "passing the baton" to His disciples so that they can follow in His steps and make more disciples.

Paul wrote that whoever is found to be in Christ is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Part of being made new in Christ is that we have a new purpose or ministry to engage in.

Paul explained this new purpose by saying:

"*Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

In *Next Steps*, you have walked through the steps of **Believe, Baptism, Belong**, and **Bible**. To become a mature believer, a father or mother in the faith, we must reproduce. This is what this *Next Step*, **Baton,** is all about. To make disciples is to reproduce or "pass the baton".

But how do we make disciples?

Read Matthew 28:18-20 again.

First, we are to "go". Just as Christ came into the world to save sinners, the Church is charged with the mission of going into the world and making disciples. The church obeys this through missions and by the testimony of its members.

In your daily life, there are gospel and discipleship opportunities everywhere. God has providentially placed you in your circle of family, friends, workplace, and community to be an ambassador for Christ.

There are people in your life that you are uniquely situated to reach and tell them about the good news of Christ and lead them to walk in His steps.

Second, we are to "make" disciples. This may seem impossible to us as only God can take a heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26). God must bring about repentance, faith, and regeneration—He must bring about the new birth.

Yet we must be faithful to declare God's Word for "*…faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*" (Rom. 10:17). Paul rightly asked "*How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?*" (Rom. 10:14).

Remember that "*…we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us…"* (2 Cor. 5:20). Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth and is always with us (Matt. 28:18-20)! His work will never fail!

Third, we are to make disciples by "*baptizing them … and teaching them to follow"* all that Christ commanded us.

The apostle Paul discipled the Church at Ephesus. The Church loved him deeply because he taught them deeply. Paul said "*For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God*" (Acts 20:27).

Do not be in a rush when discipling people. Paul patiently taught the church at Ephesus night and day for three years (Acts 20:31). Discipleship takes time.

What if we do not disciple?

Discipleship is vital. The secular religion of Humanism is training and retaining its converts. Humanism is the placing of "man" at the center of all things. If it had its way it would attempt to hurl the Almighty God from His throne and set up its own kingdom.

Humanism is today's predominant religion. Its reach is worldwide. It drives the philosophy of government, public school systems, and the majority of higher education institutions in America. Humanists are training and raising atheists, naturalists, evolutionists, agnostics, relativists, universalists, and hedonists, just to mention a few.

Humanism tries to make mankind the measure of all things. The political and educational influence of humanism has penetrated all areas of life. There is immense pressure on the next generation to affirm and promote immorality.

Do you see how this attempts to displace Christ? We are to "*…sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you…*" (1 Pet. 3:15).

How can this be done without training in God's Word?

Secular society appeals to the flesh and wars against Christ and His Church. It is always dismissive of Christianity and paints the Church in a negative light.

How will our children not be groomed and persuaded by this secular agenda and become humanists themselves?

How will young adults not embrace the cultural trends of their secular friends?

How will parents stand against the states that presume to own their children?

How will our churches not go the way of the world?

Only by everyone discipling someone in the Word of God.

We must pass the Baton.

A word of caution. Paul corrected the Corinthian Church for quarrelling over who had the better teacher. Some were bragging over having been discipled and baptized by Peter, Apollos, or Paul. This was causing division in the Church.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:11-13

Ultimately, we are discipled by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

Christ promised His disciples that "*…the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you*" (John 14:26).

Christ's Spirit will be with us forever (John 14:16).

Jesus said "*…He, the Spirit of truth…will guide you into all the truth…He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you*" (John 16:13-14).

His promises never fail!

This *Next Steps* booklet is a way for you to pass the gospel baton and start making disciples. The Great Commission is to make disciples.

Congratulations, you have finished this disciple making booklet! Carefully and prayerfully ask others to follow Christ and obey His command to "*continue in My word*" with this booklet and enjoy spreading authentic Christianity.

Prayer Focus: Baton

"*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place.***" —2 Cor. 2:14**

NOTES

3D Bible Study Sheet

"If you continue in My Word, then you are truly My disciples." - John 8:31

The goal is to Study, Practice, and Teach God's Word. - Ezra 7:10

1 DIVERT

Pray; then read the text slowly, thoughtfully, and repeatedly.
Lord..., forgive us (1 John 1:9) and teach us (John 14:26).

2 DIG

Study nouns	(Bible Dictionary)
Identify verbs	(Indicates emphasis)
Read references	(Bible Concordance)
Note repeated words	(Reveals theme)

3 DOCUMENT

A. Find the theme:	(Read the text some more and find the Central Idea.)
B. Explain the text	(What are the facts? Observe the text in context.)
C. Interpret the text	(What does this mean? What is being pointed out?)
D. Apply the truth	(How do I practice this?)
E. State implications	(What will happen if I don't practice this?)
F. Illustrate	(What other passages teach this?)
G. Apologetic	(Defend the truth by refuting the opposition.)

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- **3D DETAILS.** The "Text" is the small paragraph or passage that is next as you systematically and chronologically study through Bible books. It's best to read the whole book first. Then read the first chapter again, thoroughly. Finally, read the paragraphs a few times. This will keep the context you discover within the right context of Scripture.

  A "Genre" is a classification of literature. In the Bible, the classifications are Historical Narrative, Law, Poetry, Wisdom, Prophecy, Apocalyptic, Gospel, and Epistle. Each merits some study. It is important to know the genre so that the interpretation and application is correct. These simple steps are vital. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6)

  Finally, read the text out loud with a respectful weightiness as you emphasize the right words. (1 Tim. 4:13)

- **1 DIVERT.** Divert to prayer first. Prayer and Bible Study belong together. Humbly approach our Holy God with reverence and repentance. Confess known sin and be cleansed of it. (1 John 1:9) Ask God to teach you His Word. The Holy Spirit's role is to teach you Truth. (John 14:26) Don't usurp Him by skipping to study notes or commentary. Read those after your own study. It will be incredible to see this process lead you to think with the best scholars and theologians. Meaningful Bible study starts with prayer.

- **2 DIG.** Digging into the meaning of important words will reveal truth. It takes time to find valuable knowledge. "It is not good for a person to be without knowledge, and he who hurries his footsteps errs" (Proverbs 19:2). Read the text carefully and slowly, identifying the nouns (people, places, things) as you read. Next, look up the nouns in a "Bible" Dictionary. An "English" Dictionary will not give you the Biblical meaning nor Scripture references. Knowing the Biblical meaning rather than the American meaning of words will protect from misinterpretations. Guard against applying our culture or context to words in the Scripture. For example, the American world view and definition of "love" is tragically different from God's Word. Reading the references is clarifying. Remember, context determines the meaning of words. The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary is recommended. Blueletterbible.org has free study tools online including Bible dictionaries, concordances, and word studies; however, a hard copy will eliminate unnecessary distractions. Take your time and enjoy your digging!

- **3 DOCUMENT.** Document the truths you find. Writing out your own document moves the truth from your head to your heart. We must press beyond "studying" to "practicing". Step "3" is always convicting! Furthermore, we are commanded to make disciples and "teach" God's commands (Mt. 28:18-20). In fact, if we only obtain knowledge there's a risk of becoming prideful and puffed up. "Knowledge makes one conceited, but love edifies people" (1 Cor. 8:1). We must be intentional about teaching. Ezra is a great example. "For Ezra had set in his heart to "study" the law of the Lord and to "practice" it, and to "teach" His statutes (Ezra 7:10). Preparing your own document will equip you to be a great commission Christian who makes disciples.