

Christian Basics

Lesson One

Introduction: Even though there are a lot of Christians, in many denominations and outside of these denomination, there are very few believers who effectively live the Christian life. The most common occurrence is, a person believes in Jesus Christ and then spends most of his life out of fellowship after that. Because they are out of fellowship for most of their lives, they experience little or no spiritual growth. **For when by reason of the time you ought to be teachers, you again need to have someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God. You have come to need milk, and not solid food** (Heb. 5:12, WEB). This describes by far the majority of believers who have been saved for more than 5 or 10 years. .

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What the Christian Life Is Not

Morality. For most believers, they equate morality to the Christian life. This is particularly true of people who used to be involved in what they might consider gross immorality: drinking too much, chasing after women, going out to bars and dancing all night, hoping to pick someone up or to be picked up, taking drugs, or leading a life of dishonesty. After being saved, many people look at this life and realize that was wrong, and so they stop doing those things. Now, morality does make for a better life; and any person who goes from immorality to morality is going to have a more enjoyable, fuller life, it is simply not the Christian life.

Personality Transformation. In your own mind, from observing the Christians around you, you figure that you ought to be more humble, less obnoxious, so you alter your

personality so that the people around you don't shirk in horror every time you say something.

Going to Church on Sundays. You may go to the greatest church in the world, and if you are there 1 or 2 hours a week, then your Christian life is going nowhere.

Imitating the Actions, Behavior Patterns or Speech Patterns of Others. You've just been saved, you have no idea what's up, but it is clear at your church that Charley Brown and his wife are the leaders of the church, so you attempt to imitate what they do. I have been to churches where many of the women there spoke with the same inflection as the wife of the pastor. That's weird, but it's not Christianity. Also, finding various passages from the Bible and attempting to imitate what you find there is not the Christian way of life.

Developing a Christian Vocabulary. You begin to pepper your speech with *praise the Lord, Amen, praise God, God willing and God bless you*. The pastor says something that you like, and you yell out, "Amen."

Emotionalism; Emotional Experiences. This captures a huge number of Christians today. You go to a church and people begin to "speak in tongues" at times throughout the service. The more reserved "tongues" churches might limit this to the end of the service or for your own prayer groups and gatherings; and, in the more boisterous churches, you might have people bursting out throughout the church service speaking in tongues. This is like drug addiction for the believer. We are not called upon to get the Holy Spirit, to find the Holy Spirit, to pursue the Holy Spirit. The most carnal group Christians in all of the Bible were the Corinthians. Yet, Paul wrote to them, **For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit** (1Cor. 12:13; UPDV). Paul calls them sanctified in 1Cor. 1:2, 30. At no time does Paul tell them (or anyone else in the epistles) that their problem is, they lack the Holy Spirit and they need to go get it. Not quite as damaging as the tongues movement is just desiring to be emotionally stirred up, and some pastors are very good at stirring you up emotionally. However, that is not the Christian way of life.

Observing Ceremonies and Rituals. In some churches, there is a lot of ceremony. You may involve yourself in these various Christian Rituals which occur in every service. You may not have any idea where the ritual means, but you just go along with it because everyone seems holy during the rituals.

Prayer. People often use prayer as if this is the only tool in their toolbox. Often people who are going to *pray about it* do not even connect with God. It is as if they open up this big heavy toolbox and there is exactly one tool in the toolbox, a big hammer; and they use this hammer to fix whatever needs fixing. Now, the one good thing about prayer is, a person often accidentally gets into fellowship through prayer. He doesn't know he's back in fellowship, but, he has just done a lot of things which he knows are wrong, and he tells God about it in prayer, and, without realizing it, he's back into fellowship with God.

Reading Your Bible. The Bible is the textbook of the Christian life; but few people get much out of reading it if they have not been taught what is there. A new believer can get a limited amount of information on their own by reading the book of John or the first chapter of 1 John, but, apart from that, most believers will not get much from simply reading their Bible.

Christian Works. The believers begins to run around and do things which they see as Christian works. They may attempt to witness to so many people a day, hand out tracts or booklets, they may work around the church. They just do stuff that they specifically associate with Christianity or with the church.

Taboo Observance. You learn that there are about a dozen things that you ought not to do, and so you don't do them. This used to be the Christian way of life for churches all over this country, but not so much any more.

So that there are no misunderstandings, there is nothing wrong with being moral; there is nothing wrong with volunteering to do something around your church, there is nothing wrong with prayer, and there is nothing wrong with hearing something in a sermon and being emotionally moved by it. It should be clear that there is nothing wrong with prayer. However, none of these things have anything to do with spiritual growth.

To go anywhere in the Christian life, you must learn a few mechanics and procedures.

Salvation

People are saved in one way only: by exercising faith in Jesus Christ. This takes but a few seconds of your life, although God may spend hours, days, weeks or even years preparing you for this moment. The mechanics are simple: **believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved** (John 3:16, 18). **Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no one comes to the Father, but by Me."** (John 14:6). Believers in the Old Testament were saved in the same way: **Abraham believed in the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness** (Gen. 15:6). We bring nothing to the table when it comes to salvation, apart from non-meritorious faith. **Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit** (Eph. 2:8–9; NJB). **He saved us because of His mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done** (Titus 3:5a; CEV).

You may have heard this message in church, a friend of yours or a family member guided you in this way with words like these, or you may have even read it in the Bible or in some Bible tract. What led you to this point is unimportant; that you believed in Jesus Christ is what is important.

Now, so there is no misunderstanding, once you have believed in Jesus Christ, there is no turning back. You have been saved and that cannot be changed. You may return to your old life and ways; you may go on a program to break all of the Ten Commandments each

and every day; or whatever; but you do not lose your salvation. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give to them eternal life; and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given to me is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch out of the Father's hand.” (John 10:27–29). For I have been convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38–39).

You may choose, after salvation, to do a number of things—get involved in several of those patterns and activities above which are not the Christian way of life, or you may double-down on the sins in your life, but you remain saved. For many new believers, they want more from their life than that. So, what follows your exercising faith in Christ is the Christian life; and that requires a set of principles and mechanics to learn and do (which principles and mechanics, we sum up with the umbrella expression, *Bible doctrine*). When asked *Who says there is a “right” way of doing things, and a “wrong”?* Miss Manners replied, *Miss Manners does. You want to make something of it?*¹

One of the first principles to understand is this: if you are alive right now (and, quite obviously, you are), then God has a plan for the remainder of your life. You might be 12 years old or you might be laying on your deathbed and you just heard the gospel (the good news) and you believed in Jesus Christ. As long as you draw breath, God has a purpose for your life here on earth, no matter who you are or what you do.

Fellowship with God

Salvation is an absolute state. You are either saved or you are lost. No one is halfway saved or almost saved. There is a clear, unambiguous divide between the saved and the lost; the saved have exercised faith in Jesus Christ; the lost have not.

Similarly, *being in fellowship* is an absolute state. You are either, right at this moment, in fellowship with God or you are not. This has many parallel expressions in the New Testament: being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18b), walking according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4), being carnal versus being spiritual (1Cor. 2:14–15), etc.

The mechanics that put the believer back into fellowship are given in 1John 1:9 **If we confess** [acknowledge, name, cite] **our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** Sin is incompatible with God’s character and being, so that when we sin, we separate ourselves from him, temporally speaking. **When we acknowledge these sins to Him, He is faithful** (He does this every time) **and just** (this does not violate God’s righteousness and justice) **to forgive us our sins** (the ones we name) **and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (sins which we did not know were sins or had forgotten that we committed). Jesus Christ died for all the sins that we have ever committed or will commit in the future. Therefore, when we name our sins to God, He

¹ Judith Martin, *Miss Manners’ Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior*; Warner Books, ©1982, p. 12.

notes that Jesus Christ died for that sin, and therefore it has been forgiven; the price has been paid for that sin.

Prior to the teaching of the Word of God, a church ought to give all believers in the church time to silently name their unconfessed sins to God. This is not done out loud in front of the congregation for several very practical reasons: (1) If there are more than 10 members in your church, then this would take up a lot of time; (2) we are forgiven by God and restored to fellowship by God, not by members of the church that we go to; (3) some sins are personal or embarrassing, so we may not be willing to confess them out loud; and (4) sometimes, someone can hear about a sin that we committed and thinking about it gets him out of fellowship as well.

This is a fundamental mechanic of the spiritual life; it is something that you will do several times a day, or, at bare minimum, once a day. You can do it with your eyes wide open while driving; you can do it first thing in the morning, and you can do it right before being taught the Word of God from the pulpit.

Furthermore, being in fellowship unleashes the power of the Holy Spirit within you. All believers are given the Holy Spirit at salvation (1Cor. 12:13 Eph. 4:5 Heb. 6:4 1Peter 3:18 1John 4:2, 13). It would be illogical for you to be in fellowship, and simultaneously, grieving the Spirit; or out of fellowship, and yet filled with the Spirit.

Spiritual Growth

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide [remain, continue] in My Word, then you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31–32). We are only able to remain, abide or continue in the Word of God when we actually know what the Word of God is.

Just as we begin to grow from birth, we also face spiritual growth after we are born again (John 3:3). The Bible speaks of Jesus Christ, in His humanity, growing spiritually in Luke 2:40 *And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. And the grace of God was on Him* (MKJV). We are also mandated to grow spiritually: *Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (2Peter 3:18a, WEB).

We grow spiritually by being exposed to the teaching of the Word of God while we are in fellowship. When I was a new believer, it was surprising to me that finding a "good" church was nearly impossible. I went to a dozen churches, maybe, in my hometown and not a single one of them regularly taught from the Word of God and not one of them emphasized the need to be in fellowship for the teaching of the Word of God.

What is fascinating is, many believers make these basic choices on their own—at least, at first. They sin and they tell God about that sin, putting them back into fellowship, and they try to feed their souls daily, whether it is by reading some books, listening to a Christian radio station or J. Vernon McGee's *Thru the Bible Radio* series; or by borrowing

or downloading some sermons. So we seem to have some innate understanding of the steps that we ought to take as new believers.

The Local Church, the Authority of a Pastor-Teacher

You cannot open your Bible and dig out the information for yourself. You need to have an understanding of dispensations, soteriology, Christology, etc.; and new believers do not come automatically equipped with this sort of knowledge. This knowledge is developed over a period of time. God has designed for pastors to receive intensive training and then for them to teach from the Word of God in an academic setting. That means, your privacy is preserved and there is academic discipline.

In [the List](#), I recommend, with some caveats, a number of churches spread throughout the United States. Some of these churches provide lessons online that can be downloaded and listened to; some of them have outreach ministries, where a small group of believers might gather to listen to that pastor teach by means of the internet; but, hopefully, one of them is near to you. I do not recommend simply listening to the teaching of this or that pastor at your home for a long period of time. Now, that is a valid way to grow, but very few people have the self-discipline to adhere to a regular schedule of Bible teaching in this way. I began that way, and, not too long after I was saved, a group of like-minded believers began a small church that I attended, where we literally sat around a tape recorder and listened to the pastor teach on a recorded tape message (this is back in the 1970's, and many who are reading this do not even know what a tape recorder is).

As believers in the devil's world, we are exposed daily with human viewpoint and cosmic thinking. Whereas, God wants us to develop a new set of norms and standards, Satan wants us to be conformed to a set of norms and standards for his way of thinking. However, we are told in Rom. 12:2 **Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renovation of your thinking, so that you may determine accurately what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.** Our thinking is transformed by being exposed to the teaching of the Word of God. Since we are bombarded with cosmic thinking nearly every moment of our lives, Bible teaching is best absorbed daily (Acts 2:46–47 5:42 16:5 17:11, 17 2Cor. 11:28 Heb. 3:13).

The Human Spirit

We are all born physically alive, but spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1). That is a part of the curse of Adam. We are born with a fully active sin nature, but with a human spirit that is either dormant or nonoperational.

The way that we relate to other human beings and to the world around us is through our human souls (our human soul is made up of intellect, memory, volition, norms and standards, a conscience, and self-consciousness). All people are born with a human body and a human soul (Matt. 10:28). When we are born again, our human spirit is activated. Therefore, all believers have a human spirit (1Thess. 5:23).

It is the human spirit which allows us to relate to God. The human spirit is the target for the Bible doctrine that we learn, and we build up our human spirit much the way that we build up information about people and the world in our souls.

Having been a math teacher at one time, I know that there are people out there who say, "I can't understand math." Similarly, without the Holy Spirit teaching the human spirit, you can't understand God. To continue that parallel, I found that most people who *could not understand math* were lacking some of the building blocks of mathematics. Once these were filled in, mathematics began to make a lot more sense. The same thing is true of spiritual information. As unbelievers, we hear spiritual information, and it seems silly to us. **The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned** (1Cor. 2:14). *Natural man* is more accurately translated *the soulish man*, as this is the adjective built upon the Greek word for *soul*.

Now, although your human spirit is activated at salvation (or, more accurately, it is regenerated), there is a very small amount of information in there. You believed in Jesus Christ, you are saved, so that basic salvation information is in your human spirit. And, quite frankly, what you understand about salvation is quite limited when you are saved.

Once we are given the Holy Spirit and once our human spirit has been made alive, we then have the ability to understand spiritual information. **The spiritual person discerns all things, but he is discerned by no one** (1Cor. 2:15). Just as *soulish* is built upon the word for *soul*; *spiritual* is the adjective built upon the Greek word for *spirit*.

So, what God has done is, He has made it possible for you to understand spiritual things; and believers experience spiritual growth by naming their sins to God and then learning Bible doctrine. Naming your sins put you into fellowship, which causes you to be filled with the Spirit (which is not an experience); and it sets up your human spirit to receive the teaching of the Word of God. This is what the spiritual life is all about. Being filled with the Spirit and then growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Peter 3:18).

The way that spiritual information becomes a part of our human spirit is, we hear it and then we believe it. Just as faith is fundamental to salvation, so faith continues to be fundamental to the Christian life. Heb. 4:1–3a **Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear so that none of you fail to reach it. For the gospel [or, good news] came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, not having been mixed with faith in those who heard [this gospel]. For we who have believed [now] enter into that rest.** So, when we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, that He died for our sins and we are forgiven by God, when we believe this, we have entered *into His rest* (also see Matt. 11:28). Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Therefore, we hear the words of God, we believe these words, and they are printed on our human spirit.

Therefore, you will note that there are several things which act in concert which cause us to grow spiritually. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit; we must hear the Word of God

being taught; and we must believe that which we are being taught. The information which is accurate will be written into the human spirit, and by this, we grow and come to know God and His plan for our lives.

Just like positive volition was required for you to believe in Jesus Christ; so positive volition is involved in hearing and retaining the Word of God (Luke 8:15). I am reminded this morning of when I was first saved. Early on, I heard excellent Bible teaching by R. B. Thieme, Jr. So, I simply assumed that when other Christians heard good Bible teaching, they would respond enthusiastically as I had. So, I invited several people from my church over from the young couples class or the college class, and, I played them a tape of Thieme teaching. They were polite. I am pretty certain that we listened to an entire lesson. And then, the people filed out, and one of the guys, who seemed to be a leader of sorts, said, as he was leaving, "We're not going to do this again" (or words to that effect). No one from that group ever approached me later and said, "Wow, that was some incredible teaching; do you have some tapes that you can lend me?" At the time, I was quite surprised; however, I have learned that, believers in Jesus Christ may or may not have an interest in the teaching of the Word of God after they have been saved. Many of them enter into those various activities that I listed at the beginning, which they incorrectly perceive as being the Christian way of life.

The Exegesis of 1Corinthians 2:9–16

This system of perception which allows you to grow spiritually, is described in 1Cor. 2:9–16 (some of which has already been quoted).

1Cor. 2:1a, 4 **When I [first] came to you, my speech and my message were not in persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,...**

Many of those in Corinth were steeped in Greek philosophy and human wisdom, but when Paul originally came there, he did not use human wisdom to teach them, but he taught the Word of God by means of the power of the Holy Spirit. He allowed the power of God's words to convince them.

1Cor. 2:5 **...that your faith might not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

All people are born with 3 systems of perception: faith, empiricism and rationalism. Faith is the system that we use most of the time. We hear something and we simply believe that it is true. Empiricism means that we see something and we believe that it is true; rationalism means that we logically deduce a set of truths. Although I am not sure how this would be gauged, somewhere between 70 and 99% of all that we know is based upon faith. Even when we reason our way from point A to point B, that system of logic generally has to rest upon things that we have taken by faith.

So, Paul taught Bible doctrine; because he did not want the people of Corinth to put their faith in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (which is the Word of God; Heb. 4:12 Rom. 1:16–17).

1Cor. 2:6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who will [someday] relinquish their power.

The wisdom that Paul taught was not the Greek philosophy of the day or the things taught by men who would soon pass from the scene, their wisdom going with them.

1Cor. 2:7 But we teach the wisdom of God by means of a mystery, that which has been hidden, which God decreed before this age towards our [future] glory.

Anytime that you see the word *mystery* in the New Testament, this is a reference to Church Age doctrine (doctrine for believers after the time of Christ on earth). This word originally referred to the hidden doctrines or secrets of exclusive Greek groups. It came to mean, by Paul's usage, for information peculiar to our day and age. As Paul points out, this information stood hidden at the decree of God prior to this age (or dispensation).

Without getting too technical at this point, God has slightly different plans for different times. Prior to our Lord's incarnation, there was the Jewish Age of the Age of Israel, at which time, God worked principally through the nation Israel. However, since the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, God works through individual believers. One of the big differences is, in the Age of Israel, many believers had a corporate relationship with God through Israel—they were still saved by faith in Jehovah (Gen. 15:6)—but the spiritual life for many of them was a corporate spiritual life, as part of a group. In the Church Age, every believer has a specific purpose in the plan of God. Now, we are still a part of various groups (our city, our state, our nation, our church), through which we have a corporate relationship with God. However, we also have a personal and individual relationship with God, which is just as much a part of His plan. We understand our relationship to God through the mystery doctrines of the Church Age.

1Cor. 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Paul explains here that, one reason we know that the wisdom of this age is insufficient is, those who had this "wisdom" crucified our Lord. If they understood divine viewpoint, they would have never crucified Jesus Christ.

1Cor. 2:9 But, it stands written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"--

Paul quotes Isa. 64:4 from the Old Testament. There are things which God has done on our behalf that we have not seen or heard; things which we cannot even imagine. Logically, what Paul is moving his audience toward is, it is not illogical that there is teaching which specifically pertains to this day and age, which is the mystery doctrine that Paul taught (Paul was the Apostle of the mystery doctrine—Rom. 16:25 Eph. 3:3–4 Col. 1:24–26).

1Cor. 2:10 ...these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit examines everything, even the depths of God.

God reveals this mystery doctrine through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is able to examine all things, even the depths of God.

1Cor. 2:11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

You may look at Charley Brown and not have a clue as to what Charley is thinking. His thoughts are known to his spirit (*spirit* here, is used in a less technical sense). Charley Brown knows what he is thinking; we do not. Similarly, no one is able to comprehend the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Therefore, in order to understand God's thinking, we need His Spirit.

1Cor. 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

We have all been given God's Spirit so that we can understand all the things of God.

As an aside, nowhere in the epistles does Paul ever mandate any believer to go out looking for God the Holy Spirit. Whether Paul speaks to the carnal Corinthians or Jesus to the lukewarm church of Laodicia (Rev. 3:14–22), neither of them suggests that their problem might be that they lack the Spirit of God and that they need a "spirit-experience" to get that Spirit.

1Cor. 2:13 And we speak these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

Here we have the word *spiritual* again, referring to believers in Jesus Christ who have a body, soul and spirit. We must have the human spirit in order to understand spiritual truths. Again, we are given the human spirit at salvation (or the human spirit is renewed within us).

1Cor. 2:14 The natural [literally, *soulish*] person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

You will note that there are two kinds of wisdom spoken of here and two kinds of people. There is the wisdom of this world and there is the wisdom of God. There is the soulish man and there is the spiritual man. Paul did not teach the wisdom of the world; he taught the wisdom of God. This teaching was not for the soulish man but for the spiritual man.

You will note that all that Paul taught was for the Corinthians. Even though these Corinthians have been come to be known, over time, as *those carnal Corinthians*, Paul's

teaching of the wisdom of God was designed so that they could hear and understand what he was teaching.

Elsewhere, he tells the believers at the Ephesian church that he prays for God to strengthen them in their inner man, so that they **may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which transcends [human] knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God** (Eph. 3:18–19).

1Cor. 2:15 **The spiritual person examines [and investigates] all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.**

The spiritual man is able to investigate and understand all things, which would be all things pertaining to God. All believers have this ability to understand God and His plan for our lives. This is part of the package of regeneration. We are given His Spirit, our human spirit is made alive, and this is enough for us to comprehend with all saints the complete plan of God.

1Cor. 2:16 **"For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.**

Paul takes those who are spiritual and he teaches them spiritual things, so that they may understand the mind of Christ. He asserts here, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that **we have the mind of Christ**. Because Paul understand the mind of Christ, he is able to teach the Corinthians all spiritual truths.

To Summarize So Far...

When you believe in Jesus Christ, you become a Christian; you become saved, you become regenerated. God gives you the Holy Spirit and God makes your human spirit functional. Therefore, you have both the teacher of divine viewpoint (the Holy Spirit) and a target for divine viewpoint (the human spirit).

You will note that Paul nowhere tells any of these churches to figure it out for themselves. "You've been saved; so, just keep praying and keep advancing spiritually." These churches advanced spiritually because they had a pastor-teacher who taught them or they learned because of what Paul taught them (his letters being read or read and explained by the pastor-teacher of that particular congregation). These letters were, as time went on, circulated throughout the early churches and taught by the pastors of those churches.

A necessary ingredient in spiritual growth is faith. Now, I am not saying that you walk into any church and you simply start believing every word that you hear. However, as you hear and learn more and more, it will begin to fit together into a complete system of thinking. Therefore, you may hear Bible doctrine taught in February, but it is not until June that you fully digest that lesson, and that it makes perfect sense to you and that you believe it.

When I was first saved, I began taking in information and reading whatever I could get my hands on. This included a lot of false teaching (I had materials from both Jehovah's Witnesses and from the Worldwide Church of God), as well as some excellent teaching from R. B. Thieme, Jr. So, I began with salvation, and put that together logically in my mind, and built on that. When it became clear that the salvation of the Bible did not match the materials from these various cults, I stopped reading their theological literature.

At this same time, I attended a number of churches, and was quite surprised—at that time—to discover that most of them were not worthwhile. Whereas, I foolishly thought that most churches would concentrate greatly on the teaching of the Word of God, verse-by-verse, going back to the original languages when necessary, and correlating this information with God's Word elsewhere, I began to find out that such churches are very rare.

The End Result

In general terms, the person who believes in Jesus Christ then proceeds from that point to spiritual maturity. However, as has been noted, this does not occur all that often. Most people go off on those various tangents which I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation.

God intends for us to change our thinking; He expects for us to have our minds renovated. Again, Rom. 12:1–2 *I keep admonishing you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service [to God]. And do not be conformed to this age [i.e., to the culture of these times], but be transformed by the renovation of your mind [thinking], in order that you may examine and recognize what is that good and pleasing and perfect will of God.*

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