

The Fundamentals of the Faith

Living the Christian Life

Preface: You have been saved and you may wonder, *okay, what's next?* Surprisingly enough, very few believers ever understand their lives and purpose on earth after salvation.

I. **Salvation, being born again**

1. The Christian life has a starting point, and that is the moment that you believe in Jesus Christ. **For God so loved the world, that He gave His uniquely-born Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life** (John 3:16). **Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life, but anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life: God's retribution hangs over him** (John 3:36).
2. Salvation has been attained the same way throughout time. **Abraham had believed in Jehovah and He credited it to him for righteousness** (Gen. 15:6).
3. Salvation is nothing that you earn or deserve. You cannot work for it. You do not have to be really good or really bad to earn salvation. It is the free gift of God. **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). It is not by works in righteousness which we had done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).
4. The Bible refers to this as being born again. **"Truly, truly [= most assuredly; this is an undeniable truth], I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."** (John 3:3).
5. To read more verses on **salvation**: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#))
6. So that there is no misunderstanding, you may lead a wonderful Christian life and you may be the lousiest Christian to walk the face of the earth; however, your salvation is based upon what Jesus did for you on the cross, not upon your life after salvation. Therefore, we retain our salvation no matter what we do after salvation. This is known as **eternal security** ([HTML](#)) ([Word Doc](#)).

II. There are **3 phases to the Christian life**:

1. Phase I: Salvation.
2. Phase II: The believer's life in time. This is the focus of this outline.
3. Phase III: The eternal state. Sometimes this is called ultimate sanctification.

III. **God's plan is grace**; therefore, we ought to expect that every part of His plan is based upon His grace.

1. We cannot earn or work for our salvation; we simply believe in Jesus Christ and we are saved. This is grace. Rom. 3:24 Eph. 2:8–9

2. Being filled with the Holy Spirit and growing spiritually also must be a matter of grace. 1Cor. 3:10 15:10
3. Our eternal state after we die is based upon God's grace and essence (we can trust God to be honest with us).

IV. **Christian way of life, part I: being in fellowship with God, being filled with the Holy Spirit:**

1. The Bible speaks of an absolute personal status:
 - 1) Walking in the light versus walking in darkness (John 8:12 12:35 Rom. 13:12 2Cor. 6:14).
 - 2) Being in or out of fellowship (1Cor. 1:9 2Cor. 13:14 1John 1:6–9).
 - 3) Being filled with the Spirit versus grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4:30 5:18 1Thess. 5:19) or walking by the Spirit (Rom. 8:1, 4 Gal. 5:16, 25).
2. We are indwelt with the Spirit of God from salvation (Rom. 5:5 8:11, 15 1Cor. 2:12).
 - 1) As an aside, nowhere in any of the epistles does Paul or any other Apostle suggest that, the problem with the believers at this or that local church is, they don't have the Spirit of God and they need to seek that Spirit. Even with the carnal Corinthians, Paul did not indicate that they lacked the Spirit of God. Instead, he wrote to them: **We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God** (1Cor. 2:12).
 - 2) When it comes to what we should do, we go to the epistles for pertinent doctrine. We do not read a few verses out of Acts and think that we need to tarry for the Spirit or elect new Apostles or anything else. The Book of Acts is a unique history of the early church, all of which took place prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture.
 - 3) Clear examples of what happened in the Book of Acts but no longer occurs:
 - (1) Electing an Apostle. Jesus ascended into heaven and the disciples, prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, elected a 12th Apostle to replace Judas, who betrayed our Lord. This is an example of human viewpoint and works of the flesh. This so-called 12th Apostle will never be heard from again in the New Testament, which indicates God the Holy Spirit's opinion of him. Acts 1
 - (2) The Holy Spirit coming down upon the church with the sound of a forceful wind, giving the Apostles the gift of tongues. This was such a loud sound that it drew people to one place. When a new church opens its doors, this does not occur. Acts 2
 - (3) In that pre-canon era, there were a number of categories of believers who received the Holy Spirit in a similar fashion: Jewish believers who followed Jesus, Gentiles believers, and the disciples of John the baptizer.
3. One is filled with the Holy Spirit (which is not a feeling or an emotional experience) at the moment of salvation. This is equivalent to being in

fellowship with God. At salvation, we all begin by being in fellowship with God.

4. You lose the filling of the Holy Spirit or you break fellowship with God by sinning. At salvation, you have a very limited understanding of sin—much of which is incorrect—so you may find yourself getting out of fellowship a lot. **If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us** (1John 1:9).
5. Fellowship with God is reinstated when you name your sins to God. **If we confess [= name, admit] our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1John 1:9).
 - 1) **Faithful** means that God does this every time. There is no sin that you can commit that is so bad that God says, “Hmm, not this time; I won’t forgive Charlie Brown for that sin, no matter how many times he admits to Me he did it.”
 - 2) In case you wonder about this, committing a sin and then confessing it to God does not make things as if you never committed that sin. You are in fellowship at a point in time after you committed and then confessed that sin. However, if you committed a crime, you may end up facing the consequences for this; if you were unfaithful to your spouse or boyfriend or girlfriend, that sin—forgiven in total by God—may dissolve your relationship.
 - 3) **Just** means that God is justified in forgiving you your sin, even if this is the 77th time that you have committed this sin. This means that God can forgive you and still retain His perfect righteousness. God can forgive you in time because Jesus Christ died for your sin on the cross; Jesus Christ took upon Himself the penalty for your sin; and therefore, God the Father can forgive you for committing that sin.
 - 4) **To cleanse us from all unrighteousness** means, we are forgiven and cleansed of all sins that we have committed, even if there are things that we did that we did not realize were sins. Temporally, we are back in fellowship with God and, therefore, filled with the Spirit.

V. **The Christian way of life, part II: knowing Bible doctrine or truth.**

1. Spiritual growth is achieved by hearing or reading accurate spiritual information and then believing that information.
2. We are mandated by God to grow spiritually. **Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** (2Peter 3:18).
 - 1) **Knowledge** is Bible doctrine. This is learning the fundamentals of the faith and believing them.
 - 2) **Grace** means that God does all of the work; God does the providing. Therefore, just as God provided the gospel for you, God will also provide the ability and means of spiritual growth.
3. Jesus, in His humanity, grew spiritually just as we do. **And the Child grew, and became strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom. And the grace of God was upon Him** (Luke 2:40).
4. Doctrine in our souls changes us from the inside out. **Do not be conformed to this age [time and place], but be transformed by the renovation of your**

thinking, so that you may recognize what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2). See also 2Cor. 1:12

5. We have an analogy to our secular lives—most of us have jobs and we did not walk into that job knowing everything that we needed to know. We usually had some training prior to taking a job, and we usually learned more about our work while on the job. So it is in the Christian life; we learn a few things before we actually produce anything in the Christian life; and we continue to learn on-the-job about what it means to be a Christian.

VI. **The importance of Bible doctrine** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)). So that you do not think that this is some kind of a gimmick, the Bible has a lot to say about how important knowledge of the Word is.

1. Moses told his people: “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as bands between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deut. 6:6–9). Jews were to saturate the lives of their children with the Word of God.
2. David wrote about the intake of doctrine; to God, he wrote: Listen, You [God] desire [and You take pleasure in] truth in the inner being; and You make me know wisdom in [my] hidden [being]. (Psalm 51:6).
3. The teaching of the Word of God took place in a number of areas—in the high places or at the gates, the entrance into the cities (Prov. 8:1–3, where Bible doctrine is called *wisdom*). Here are a few verses taken out of Prov. 8: “I [wisdom] call out to all of you, and my appeal is to all people. You gullible people, **learn** how to be sensible. You fools, cause your heart to **understand**. Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.” (Prov. 8:4–5, 10–11).
4. Believers were to seek the Word of God in the Old Testament, and to recognize that God’s way of thinking was not their way of thinking. “Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa. 55:6–9).
5. The key is not how you feel or how *zealous* you are for the Lord; the key is knowledge of Bible doctrine. **Brothers, my deep desire and my prayer to God is for Israel, that they may be saved. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes** (Rom. 10:1–4). The example given is, Jews who are industrious and

emotionally committed to some form of religion, but they do not understand imputed righteousness, so they, therefore, attempt to establish their own righteousness. They come up short because of a lack of knowledge.

VII. **What the Christian life is not:** If your life consists *only* of the things listed below, then you are not living the Christian life.

1. Going to a church.
2. Adhering to some system of do's and don't's.
3. Reading your Bible.
4. Joining a Christian organization of any sort.
5. Going out and doing good works (working in a mission or a soup kitchen or passing out tracts). Many new believers (not all) begin the Christian life with a great deal of enthusiasm, and they want to go out and do great things for God. However, you need to direct this enthusiasm toward learning the Word of God.
6. Living a good, moral life. Just as we live in a world of scientific laws, we also live in a world of moral laws. God has determined what is fundamental to every society, which is revealed in the last 6 commandments. This, along with certain other principles, are known as the laws of divine establishment. Many people live raucous lives, believe in Jesus Christ, and then reform themselves, and live according to the **laws of divine establishment** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)). This is a good thing for society; the more conformed society is to the laws of divine establishment, the better that society is. However, this is not the Christian way of life. So that there is no misunderstanding, if you go from being a self-centered reprobate to the laws of divine establishment, then you will become a better person and those around you will begin to appreciate you more. You may even be tempted to quote the verse which reads, **If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation** (2Cor. 5:21). However, what has happened is, you have become a better person in society and a better citizen of your country; but you have not grown one iota in the Christian life.
7. The Christian life requires the filling of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of Bible doctrine. These are foundational principles; apart from them, you are not *living the Christian life*.

VIII. **Church attendance.**

1. Most believers achieve most of their spiritual growth within the local church.
2. This means that you must find a pastor who teaches, as often as possible, the Word of God. This is much more difficult to find than you might think it is.
3. I have made a list of doctrinal churches ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)). Unfortunately, I cannot guarantee each and every church on that list. If you live in the geographical area of one of these churches, that would be the first place to go to.
4. Many of these ministries will send you CD's of MP3 files of their teaching, as well as booklets; and most of these ministries allow you to download these things from their websites. Nearly all of these pastors have a basic series and these basic series are highly recommended. I had been a Christian for a year or more before I listened to R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s 1969 Basic Series,

which is still, in retrospect, one of the most phenomenal series I have listened to.

5. Personally, after being saved, I began reading everything that I could, which included some cult literature (at the time, I had no idea). After awhile, I began to narrow my reading material, as it became clear that some of these organizations were cults.
6. Also, I found myself becoming quite interested in apologetics, which is the branch of theology where faith in Christ and Christianity are explained from a rational point of view. I was concerned whether or not Christianity was reasonable or logical.
7. Do not be surprised if you cannot find a good church which carefully teaches the Bible 3–5 hours/week. Such churches are the exception, not the rule. I originally lived in a city where there were hundreds of churches, if not thousands. After I had learned a little doctrine, I began to make the rounds, trying this and that church. I must admit to being surprised that finding a good church was not as easy as driving around the corner to the first place with a cross. If your pastor gives 20–30 minutes sermons, you are in the wrong place. If your pastor does not teach the mechanics of being restored to fellowship through naming your sins to God, then you are in the wrong place. If your pastor does not emphasize the importance of learning and knowing the Word of God, then you are in the wrong place. If the pastor or prominent members of the church appear as if they personally want to run your life, then you are in the wrong place (what I mean is, they have some sort of a system of checking up on you, or a system where you are socially bullied into doing certain things).
8. Do not be surprised if God moves you from one city to another. For me, it was a matter of finding a job. I had a list of 3 possible choices, with Houston, TX as being way at the bottom of that list. I knew that Berachah Church was in Houston, so I considered moving here for that reason. When it came to my top 2 choices of places to move to, the doors were closed; I had no luck. When it came to moving to Houston, I set up 4 interviews, got on a plane for the first time in my life, and was offered 2 jobs. Every door opened to me. There are times that God will separate you from other things and other people and certain influences, so do not be shocked if this is your experience early on in your Christian life.
9. What if you cannot find a good local church? You continue to read and study, whether it is from information from this website or the sites suggested by the List ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)). Some of these churches have satellite groups who either get DVD lessons or even an immediate streaming broadcast from the church itself. Berachah Church has several of these outreaches. The number of people where you go to learn the Word of God is never an issue. There might be 5, 50 or 5000 people at that gathering or at that church. Numbers mean nothing. They are not the mark of a good church or a bad church.
10. There are ministries, like mine, which provide Bible doctrine online; and there are online churches. For most people—say 99%—you should move from

salvation to a good, Bible-teaching local church rather than to stay with an online ministry, trying to grow via that ministry. I have known a number of people who have, for instance, been under a very good teacher listening from afar (R. B. Thieme, Jr. through MP3 lessons), and, on their own, they tend to get, for lack of a better expression, wacky. Even a small congregation of 2 or 3 who meet regularly and place themselves under academic discipline is better than listening to Bible teaching alone ([For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them—Matt. 18:20](#)). One tends to experience a greater and more consistent spiritual growth when under academic discipline.

IX. Your personal ability to learn Bible doctrine.

1. First of all, God did not design us to be able to go to the Bible directly, read it, and grow spiritually. In some extreme cases, this is legitimate, yet limited. However, let me emphasize, these are extreme cases, perhaps where there is great persecution (certainly less than 1 out of a 1000 or 1 out of 10,000 believers?).
2. We all have the ability to learn the Word of God, and God will provide the correct pastor teacher via some reasonable medium. Ideally, this is a local church, but it may be, temporarily, listening to the teaching of that pastor by means of MP3 files stored at their website, or gathering with a small satellite group of some sort.
3. Every person, regardless of I.Q., can learn the Word of God. R. B. Thieme, Jr. used the term, *grace apparatus for perception*. This simply means that the ability to learn Bible doctrine is within every believer. However, this takes place according to God's plan, and not by your own approach. God's plan includes a local church and a pastor-teacher (or gathering with other believers and listening to a pastor who teaches in another city).
4. It is necessary that we place ourselves under the authority of a pastor teacher, who has trained for his teaching ministry, and we listen.
5. As we believe the things which he teaches, this information will print on our human spirits. This is spiritual growth.
6. What we are doing, in most cases, is, changing our thinking; going from human viewpoint to divine viewpoint (Rom. 12:2 calls this the renovation of our thinking). We are learning to think as Christ thinks, which is far different than you would think at the moment of salvation (or even several months into your Christian life). ["For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."](#) (Isa. 55:9).

X. Recommended basic series:

1. R. B. Thieme, Jr's 1969 Basic Series. This would be series 100 lessons 1 & 2 and series 102 #1–84 (you are allowed 36 lessons per month). This series cannot be ordered or downloaded online; it must be ordered by phone: (713) 621-3740. Although they will set up an ID number for you, they will never pester you for money or send you unwanted material in the mail. The series he has taught are located here: You will not be charged for ordering this series or any other series which Bob Thieme taught.

rbthieme.org/PDF/LessonListingForWeb.PDF (copy and paste into web browser).

2. <http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=pub> Booklets online which may be read online or downloaded and read on your computer from Robert McLaughlin Bible Ministries. His basic series may be ordered here:
<http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=cds&sf=vol&cid=8>
3. Robbie Dean's series:
<http://deanbible.org/andromeda.php?q=f&f=/Audio%20Files/2011%20-%200Spiritual%20Life%3A%20How%20Does%20A%20Christian%20Grow> (a short 6 lesson series on Christian growth which can be downloaded).
<http://deanbible.org/andromeda.php?q=f&f=/Audio%20Files/2003%20-%200Who%20is%20Jesus> (19 lessons on *Who is Jesus?*).
<http://deanbible.org/andromeda.php?q=f&f=/Audio%20Files/2004%20-%200Can%20We%20Trust%20The%20Bible> (8 lessons on *Can We Trust the Bible?*)
4. Joe Griffin's basic series:
<http://www.joegriffin.org/Pages/ClassArchive.aspx?SeriesID=BAS&ArchiveTitle=Basics> (52 lessons which can be downloaded).
5. Henry Hastings, III basic DVD series:
<http://www.archangelministries.org/lesson.asp?Group=7> (9 video lessons which can be downloaded)
6. There is a reasonable chance that, in going through these series that you may discover your right pastor teacher.