



Sorting out what is really  
important in the Christian Faith  
using the Bible text.

A lot of people get scared off thinking about the Christian faith because it all seems so complicated. Many people who go to church don't have a clear view of the essentials because they've picked up snippets about the faith from sermons but have never been able to really put it all together.

In this six-week series we will try to cover the basics of what you need to know and do to become a Christian and then something of what is involved in growing in the Christian Faith.

We will make no assumptions about how much you do or don't know already and there will also be opportunities to have some of your own questions answered.

The weeks are as follows:-

1. God and his plans.
2. What Jesus does.
3. What God Wants
4. What the Holy Spirit Does.
5. How to grow.
6. Answering your questions.

In the main we will allow the text of the Bible to speak for itself.

As you progress through these weeks, jot down any questions you have and we'll do our best to answer them.

John West

# 1. God and His Plans



It is important in thinking about the Christian Faith to find out why we are here and what life is about. That might sound like an enormous task, but in fact the first book in the Bible gives us some pretty clear guidance as to what God's plans were for the world. We believe, with good reason, that the Bible is God's revelation to all humankind through people who wrote down the accounts.

Here are some extracts from GENESIS...

## **GENESIS CHAPTER 1**

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,...*

<sup>26</sup> *Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."*

<sup>27</sup> *So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

<sup>28</sup> *God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."* <sup>29</sup> *God said, "See, I have given*

*you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.<sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.<sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.*

## **GENESIS CHAPTER 2**

<sup>15</sup> *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.*

As you read these passages what do they tell you about God?

What do they tell you about human beings?

God created a perfect world where everything was in harmony. The first people related perfectly to God and to each other in a paradise. This was how it was meant to be!

But now read on...



# 6. Questions

Here are some current common questions that people ask....

What others do you have?

Aren't all religions the same?

Why does God allow suffering?

How can you know the Bible is reliable?

How can a loving God send people to hell?

Isn't faith unscientific?

## GENESIS CHAPTER 3

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?"<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden;<sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'<sup>4</sup> " But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die;<sup>5</sup> for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.*

*<sup>8</sup> They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.<sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"<sup>10</sup> He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."<sup>11</sup> He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"<sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate."<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate."<sup>14</sup> The LORD God said to the serpent,*

*"Because you have done this,  
cursed are you among all animals  
and among all wild creatures;  
upon your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.*

What would you say now to someone who asked you, “What do I have to do to be a Christian? What should I do to know I am going to heaven?”

- <sup>15</sup> *I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
he will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”*
- <sup>16</sup> *To the woman he said,  
“I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children,  
yet your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you.”*
- <sup>17</sup> *And to the man he said,  
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,  
and have eaten of the tree  
about which I commanded you,  
‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.*
- <sup>18</sup> *By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread  
until you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.”*
- <sup>19</sup> *The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of  
all living. <sup>20</sup> And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man  
and for his wife, and clothed them.*



- <sup>21</sup> Then the LORD God said, “See, the  
man has become like one of us, know-  
ing good and evil; and now, he might  
reach out his hand and take also from  
the tree of life, and eat, and live forev-  
er”— <sup>22</sup> therefore the LORD God sent  
him forth from the garden of Eden, to*

### **The third is attend a church regularly to WORSHIP GOD.**



Worship reminds us of who God is. It helps us to observe our proper place in relationship to him, and is an expression of thankfulness for all that he is and all that he does for us.

Worship does not only take place in church gatherings, but when we gather with other Christians we share our expe-

riences and understanding and are able to encourage and build each other up. FELLOWSHIP is very important to staying spiritually alive and purposeful. Joining a small group to share in Bible study is of huge help and importance.

Romans 12:1-2 implies that worship is the way we express our relationship to God. Whenever we obey him or try to please him it is a part of worship. Our service to God is worship and it should arise from thankfulness to him.

### **The fourth way to grow is to TELL OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS**

When we share good news with others, they benefit. Also benefit because it helps to reinforce and clarify our own understanding of the Gospel.

In Matthew 28 Jesus gave his disciples (and indirectly he gave us) what we call The Great Commission...

<sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

What does Jesus want his disciples to do?

*till the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.*

God had told the first people that there was something they should not do. The question is, had they remembered it?

What were some of the immediate results of ignoring God?

What were some of the long-term results?

What do you think the Tree of Life might be? (v22-24)

The end result of the disobedience of the first human beings was alienation from God, trouble between people, and disharmony with nature. Life became a struggle. Sin had entered the scene and has tainted all of humankind since.

Genesis 4. Cain killed Abel  
 Genesis 6:5 *The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.* The Flood followed.

Jacob cheats his brother and deceives his father.  
 Jacob's sons sell their brother Joseph into slavery.  
 The Children of Israel turn away from God to idolatry in the wilderness.  
 During the time of the Kings Israel resorted to idolatry, injustice, and many other terrible practices.

In the New Testament Paul writes...



<sup>18</sup> *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth.*  
<sup>19</sup> *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.* <sup>20</sup> *Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse;* <sup>21</sup> *for though they knew God, they did not honor him as*

*God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened.* <sup>22</sup> *Claiming to be wise, they became fools;* (Romans 1)

*For there is no distinction,* <sup>23</sup> *since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;* (Romans 3)

As you read these passages what do you learn about the fate of humankind? How responsible are we for our condition?

wants you to be, full of the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Read the Galatians 5 passage again).

Asking for help and strength in the circumstances of life  
 Thanking him for who he is and what he does  
 Praying for others.  
 AND just being quiet and listening to him.

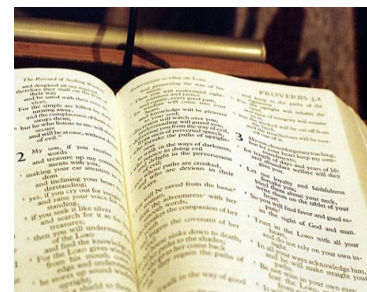
In Matthew 6, when Jesus' Disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray he gave them a guide we know as the Lord's Prayer...

<sup>9</sup> *"Pray then in this way:*

*Our Father in heaven,*  
*hallowed be your name.*  
<sup>10</sup> *Your kingdom come.*  
*Your will be done,*  
*on earth as it is in heaven.*  
<sup>11</sup> *Give us this day our daily bread.*  
<sup>12</sup> *And forgive us our debts,*  
*as we also have forgiven our debtors.*  
<sup>13</sup> *And do not bring us to the time of trial,*  
*but rescue us from the evil one.*

What do you see as the sort of things you should pray for?

## The second is READING THE BIBLE



The listening part of prayer is informed by reading the Bible. Before reading it is a good idea to ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and give you understanding of what you read.

Mark's Gospel is a good place to start. Then read one of Paul's shorter letters, such as Ephesians.

Romans 12 has a lot of valuable instruction on how we should live as children of God, reflecting his nature.

# 5. How to Grow



When two people marry it isn't the end of the marriage. It's just the beginning of what we hope will be a growing and deepening relationship.

When a child is born, we don't think, "Well that's it. No more to be done now!" We realize that a child has to learn and grow and develop to reach his or her potential

Just so, when we ask God to forgive us our sin, on the strength of Jesus' death on the cross, we invite him to be in charge of our lives, and we receive his Spirit, it's not the end. It's the start of a whole new way of life. "The renewal of our minds" mentioned in Romans 12:1-2 means a shift on what we see as important. A new dimension of life opens up. An opportunity to learn, grow and experience the new things that God has prepared for us.

Generally speaking there are four ways in which a Christian grows in his or her relationship with God...

## The first is PRAYER

This is simply talking to God.  
Committing each day into his hands  
Asking the Holy Spirit to fill you  
Praying for guidance  
Asking him to help you to be the person he



Often people today do not think of themselves as "sinners". That is reserved for thieves, murderers and the like. But what does verse 23 of Romans 3 tell us?

Sin is more than just doing wrong things, or neglecting to do what is right. Sin is our underlying neglect of God. It is a condition that we find ourselves in as we live out our lives without reference to what God might want for us. The wrong things that we do are an expression of that break in relationship with God.

The great problem is that sin is not something we can deal with ourselves. It would be like trying to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps or washing ourselves in dirty water. The prophet Isaiah put it this way, when he spoke about God's people Israel:

- <sup>6</sup> *All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;  
we all shrivel up like a leaf,  
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*
- <sup>7</sup> *No one calls on your name  
or strives to lay hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us  
and made us waste away because of our sins. (Isaiah 64)*

In short, we don't have to be criminals to be sinners, we just have to be human. We are sinful by nature. No one can claim that he or she has never sinned.

But we know that God loves people so from the very beginning God's intention has been to gather people back to himself.

It began most clearly with promises to Abraham about 4000 years ago...

*The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.*



<sup>2</sup> *"I will make you into a great nation  
and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you."*

The promises included Land and eventually God brought a people out of Egypt, under Moses, to possess that Land. He also gave his Chosen People laws and a sacrificial system whereby they could express their repentance for their sins.

However, ultimately an animal could not atone for (pay for) the sins of a human being. Something more was required to reconcile people to God. And this is where Jesus came in.

**Jot down any questions you have so far...**

*ness, generosity, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.<sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.<sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Galatians 5*

<sup>7</sup>*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

<sup>8</sup>*To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,<sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,<sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.<sup>11</sup> All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses....*

<sup>27</sup>*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.<sup>28</sup> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.<sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?<sup>30</sup> Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?<sup>31</sup> But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.*  
*1 Corinthians 12*

hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.<sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.<sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. John 17

Jesus was talking to his Disciples the night before his crucifixion. What does Jesus say that the Holy Spirit will do?

What do the following tell you about the function of the Holy Spirit?

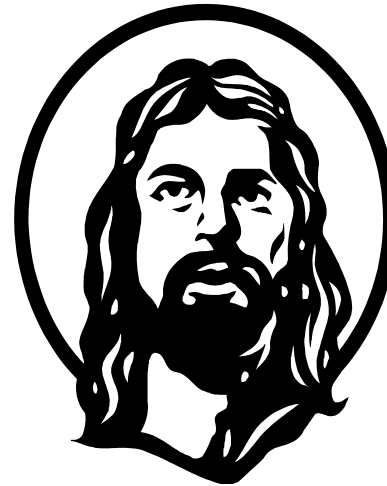
For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Romans 8:5

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your minds**, so that you may discern what is the will of God-what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Romans 8:15-16

<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kind-

## 2. What Jesus Does.



In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,<sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by **his Son**, whom he appointed **heir of all things**, and **through whom he made the universe**.<sup>3</sup> The Son is the **radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being**, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had **provided purification for sins**, he **sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven**.

Hebrews 1

What does the above passage tell you about Jesus?

<sup>14</sup> Since the children have flesh and blood, he **too shared in their humanity** so that **by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-that is, the devil**-<sup>15</sup> and **free those** who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.<sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.<sup>17</sup> For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might **make atonement for the sins of the people**.<sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when **he was tempted**, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2

What does this passage tell you about Jesus?

Jesus himself stated the purpose for which he had come to earth...  
*"For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."* Mark 10:45

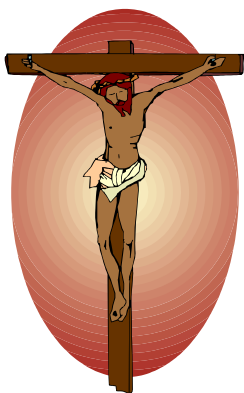
A disciple of Jesus, John, wrote in his Gospel...  
*Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup> What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3*

<sup>15</sup> *that whoever believes in him [The Son of Man] may have eternal life.*

<sup>16</sup> *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

<sup>17</sup> *"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

<sup>18</sup> *Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. John 3*



When Jesus died on the cross he presented himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He alone could do this because he lived the perfect life that God had intended. Although he was human he was not tainted by the sin of humanity.

Here is an account of Jesus' death on the cross...

## 4. What the Holy Spirit Does.



We read earlier from John 3:5-6...  
*Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup> What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

*In Romans 8:9 we read...*

<sup>9</sup> *But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

Because God is Spirit, to belong to God's family requires a spiritual rebirth just as belonging to a human family required a physical birth.

The Spirit achieves many things in and through us if we will open our lives to him.

Consider these texts...

<sup>7</sup> *Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> about sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.*

<sup>12</sup> *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he*

**Read now some of those assurances...**

*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13*

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”<sup>18</sup> Those who believe in him are not condemned. John 3:16-17*

*Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. John 5:24*

*Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. Romans 5:1-2*

Of course, as God’s children, having received God’s Spirit, the evidence of that new relationship will express itself in a desire to live as God wants us to. Not only does that reflect God’s character within us, but it is also really good for us!! And that’s where God’s Spirit comes in again.

At this point it is worth asking.

Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ and received God’s Spirit?

Are you ready to do so now?

If not, what is it that is stopping you?

What is the alternative to living life as God’s child?

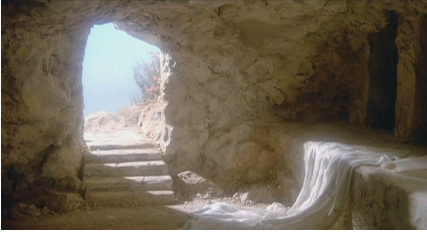
What are the benefits of living life as God’s child?

<sup>45</sup> From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>46</sup> And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” <sup>47</sup> When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” <sup>48</sup> At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup> But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” <sup>50</sup> Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. <sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. <sup>53</sup> After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup> Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

<sup>55</sup> Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. <sup>56</sup> Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

<sup>57</sup> When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup> He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. <sup>59</sup> So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth <sup>60</sup> and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. <sup>61</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. Matthew 27

Jesus had already told his disciples on several occasions that he would die, but he had also indicated that he would rise from the dead. This would be the definitive sign that he really is who he says he is — The Son of God.



Sure enough on the Sunday following Good Friday, Jesus' tomb was found to be empty. John saw it for himself and records...

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." <sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned to their homes.*

*<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <sup>12</sup> and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew,*

can see the truth in it, but then we have to apply that truth by committing our lives to Jesus Christ.

What does this mean in practice. Is it just living a good life? Well no. Initially we need to state our intentions.

Its rather like getting married,

You have come to know your future bride or groom  
You believe they will make a good husband or wife  
You then seal the relationship with vows of commitment.

And to be a all meaningful it has to be a commitment that comes from the heart!

What will you say to God?

Anglicans have formalized the commitment in a public Confirmation Service which says, "I turn to Christ, I repent of my sins, I renounce evil". But you can turn to Christ at any time—the sooner the better of course—by praying something along these lines...



**Lord God, thank you for sending Jesus to die for my sins. I ask you to forgive me on the strength of what he has done for me. I turn away from running my own life and ask you to guide and direct my future. Please give me your Holy Spirit and receive me into your kingdom as a member of your family. Amen**

It is of course important that you really mean what you say. But if you do, then God is true to his word and will give you his Spirit, receive you as his child, forgive you your sins and assure you of resurrection to eternal life.

ship with God. That sort of grace is unique to Christianity. The Ephesians passage also talks about faith. So our next questions are, “What does faith mean?” and “How do we put our faith in Jesus Christ so that we can receive God’s grace?”

### **FAITH...**

Has three parts to it...

Knowledge

Belief

and Trust



### **KNOWLEDGE**

Christianity is not a blind faith. It is founded upon God’s revelation to us through history, and particularly in the accounts about Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection. History that is consistent beyond all reasonable doubt! It is never wise to put your faith in something or someone you know nothing about, and that is why God has given us the Bible. He has revealed himself and his plans to us.

### **BELIEF**

Knowing about something or someone is not enough. We have to acknowledge that it is true. In particular we have to believe that Jesus is God’s Son who died on the cross for our sins, and who rose again to prove that there is a resurrection for all who believe in him.

### **TRUST**

This implies a commitment. There is an old story told of the famous tightrope walker, Blondin, who took a wheelbarrow full of potatoes across a wire over Niagara Falls. On return he asked the crowd, “Do you think I could take a person in the barrow?” They all agreed that he could. “Well then, who would like to volunteer?”

It’s one thing to believe, its another thing to commit your life in to someone’s hands. That’s where trust comes in.

God invites people to read his revelation to them. When we do so we

*“Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ” <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her. John 20*

*As you read on in both John’s and Luke’s accounts you see that Jesus appeared to his disciples on other occasions...*

The Apostle Paul writes...

*<sup>3</sup> For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 1 Corinthians 15*

Paul also explains the significance of Jesus’ death:-

*<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person- though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Romans 5*

Paul contrasts Jesus with Adam:-

*<sup>18</sup> Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. <sup>19</sup> For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. Romans 5*

We also get an insight into why Jesus' resurrection was so important as we read Jesus' words of assurance to his Disciples on the night before he died:-

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.*

*<sup>2</sup> In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. John 14*

Paul emphasizes the importance of the Resurrection:-

*<sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. <sup>17</sup> If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

*<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. 1 Corinthians 15*

*<sup>50</sup> What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:*

*"Death has been swallowed up in victory."*

*<sup>55</sup> "Where, O death, is your victory?*

*Where, O death, is your sting?"*

*<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15*

**What questions do you have about what Jesus does?**

## 3. What God Wants

So, if we acknowledge that we are sinful in the sight of a perfect God, but that God has sent Jesus into the world to die for our sins and to rise again, what does God want us to do now? How are we supposed to respond to God?

Most people would probably tell you that if you want to be right with God. If you want to go to heaven you now have to do the very best you can to live a good life and attempt to uphold the ideals of Jesus. Doing something to save yourself or get to "heaven" is at the root of every religion except Christianity!

Consider what Paul writes to the Ephesian Church...

*<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God- <sup>9</sup> not the result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2*

He writes a similar thing in Titus 3...

*<sup>4</sup> But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. <sup>6</sup> This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

What do these passages tell you about being saved by human effort?

What does save us then?

Grace is a free, unearned gift. It is the state of entering into a relation-