

Discovering the good news of Jesus Christ



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1. MY PURPOSE - RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD



Why are we here? Why did God create us? How do the following passages answer these questions?

- Genesis 1:26-28

- Ecclesiastes 12:13

- Matthew 22:36-40

- Acts 17:26-27

- 1 Corinthians 8:6

Our purpose in life is to know, love and serve God – to have a relationship with him. This is also known as glorifying God (*1 Corinthians 10:31*). God created us so we could love him more than anything else in all of creation – we live for him.

God created us as personal beings made in his own image (*Genesis 1:26-27*). He made us to be a reflection of himself. To be made in God's image has several meanings, including:

- We have a spiritual nature.
- We can distinguish between right and wrong.
- We have the ability to reason, think and have freewill.
- We can love and have relationships with others and God.

The fact that God made us in his image shows that he highly values us and there is a loving relationship with him that is not experienced by anything else he has created on Earth (none of God's other creatures were created in his image). The Bible makes it clear that God loves us (*John 3:16; 1 John 4:19*).

*Our purpose in life is to know, love and serve God –
to have a relationship with him.*



What thoughts or feelings come to mind knowing that God created you to have a loving relationship with him?



All people are made in God's image. Are there any areas of your life that may not be a reflection of God?

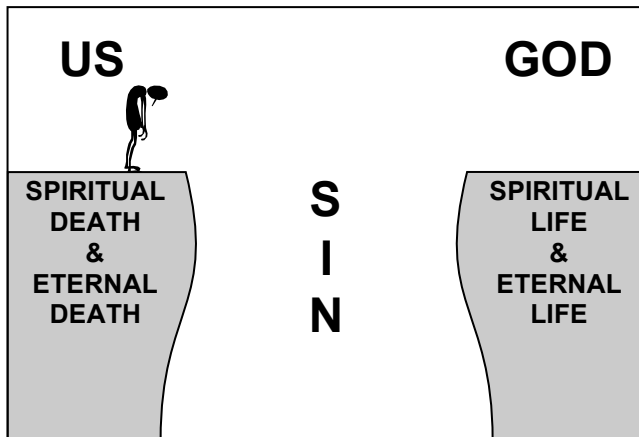


God viewed everything he created as being *very good* (*Genesis 1:31*). Do you think that everything and everyone is *very good*? Why or why not?

SUMMARY

- God loves us.
- Our purpose in life is to know, love and serve God – to have a relationship with him.
- When God created everything it was *very good*. He created us to live with him forever.

2. MY PROBLEM – SIN



WHAT IS SIN?

Write down what sin is according to the following passages.

- James 4:17
-

- 1 John 3:4
-

Sin is disobedience to God – it is breaking God's commands. When we sin, we do our own thing rather than follow God. Disobeying God leads to separation from God – a breaking of the relationship and friendship with him as shown in the picture above (*Genesis 2:16-17*).

Some sins are listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21. According to these passages what will happen to people who sin?

Below are some of the sins listed in the above two passages. Sin shows up in our actions, thoughts and attitudes. Place a mark next to any sin you have committed and write down any other sins you know of in the spaces provided.

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual immorality | <input type="checkbox"/> Greed | <input type="checkbox"/> Enmity (hatred) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sorcery (witchcraft) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adultery | <input type="checkbox"/> Envy | <input type="checkbox"/> Fits of anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Idolatry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexuality | <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> Slander (abusive talk) | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drunkenness | <input type="checkbox"/> Theft | <input type="checkbox"/> Strife (conflict) | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

WHO SINS?

What do the following passages say about who sins?

- Romans 3:10-12,23
-

- Romans 5:12
-

The Bible clearly teaches that all of us sin. How did this happen? Why do we all break God's commands?

HOW SIN CAME INTO THE WORLD

From the very beginning, God gave the humans he created an opportunity to choose whether or not to love and obey him. Adam and Eve were the first humans he created and he placed them in a beautiful garden called Eden (*Genesis 2:8-10*).

Read Genesis 2:15-17. What did God tell Adam he could, and could not eat, from the garden?

What would happen if Adam disobeyed God?

Read Genesis 3:1-7. What did Adam and Eve choose to do?

As a result of disobeying God, Adam and Eve were ashamed and avoided God's presence (*Genesis 3:7-13*). The close relationship they had with God was now broken. This is *spiritual death* as God had warned Adam about previously (*Genesis 2:16-17*).

Read Romans 5:12. What effect did Adam's sin have on the whole world?

Not only were Adam and Eve affected by sin and therefore separated from God, but all of humanity became affected by sin and separated from God. Adam's disobedience caused sin to enter the whole world. This is the unfortunate tragedy of the actions of our first parents.

We sin because we have a sinful nature.

We have inherited a sinful nature because of Adam and Eve's disobedience.

THE EFFECTS OF SIN

Below is just a sample of the terrible effects of sin. Look at the verses below and write down what effects sin has on us and the world around us.

- Our attitude towards God – Romans 8:7-8

-
- Our relationship with God and the Devil – 1 John 3:8-10

-
- Our prayers – Isaiah 59:1-2

-
- Our physical health – Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 5:12

-
- The Earth and nature – Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 8:20-22



What other terrible effects of sin have you experienced or have seen happening around you?

DEATH – THE MAIN PENALTY OF SIN

As we have just seen, sin affects so many things. Death is another result of sin. Death was never part of God's original plan for us, in fact death is God's enemy (*1 Corinthians 15:26*). We tend to think of death as something being eliminated or terminated, but the idea behind death is the *separation of one thing from another*.

There are 3 types of death that occur because of sin:

1. **Spiritual Death** (*Genesis 2:16-17; Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1-5*)

Spiritual death is the separation of us from God because of our sinful nature (as shown in the diagram on page 4). God, who is perfect and holy, cannot look upon sin or tolerate its presence; he hates sin. Since we have a sinful nature, our relationship with God is broken. *We are physically alive, but spiritually dead – we are not living life to the full.*

There is emptiness in our life when we are spiritually dead. We may try and fill the hole with other things besides God, but only he truly satisfies our need because it was God who created us to share our life with him. Only when God fills that emptiness do we live life to the full (*Matthew 5:6*).



What are some things we try and fill the emptiness with in order to try and satisfy our lives?

2. **Physical Death** (*Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22,50-57; Hebrews 9:27*)

Physical death is the separation of our body from our soul and spirit (*Genesis 35:18; James 2:26*). Everybody will experience physical death. Sin has allowed disease, sickness and other problems to affect us. Inevitably these things lead to physical death.

3. **Eternal Death** (*John 3:16; Romans 6:20-23; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9; Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8*)


Eternal death is the separation of us from God forever, if we are still spiritually dead at the time of physical death. This permanent separation from God and his love occurs in Hell.


Hell is described as a terrible place of darkness and fire, where there will be crying and agony; Satan and his demons will also be there (*Matthew 13:41-42,49-50; 25:41; Mark 9:47-48; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9*). God does not want anybody to go there (*John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9*).


Some people find it hard that a loving God could send anybody to Hell. It is true that God is loving (*Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:7-12*), but it is also true that God is a fair and just judge (*Psalms 89:14; Isaiah 30:18; 1 Peter 2:23*). As a fair judge he must reward good and punish evil.

Another point to consider is that throughout life, spiritually dead people effectively tell God, "Leave me alone." Hell, which is the absence of God, is God simply giving people what they've always asked for.

Sin has corrupted and polluted God's perfect world that he created – including humans. Sin affects everything. Since we inherit a sinful nature we are separated from God. Our sinful nature causes us to sin. We break his laws and fall short of his standards. We are sinners by nature, by practice and by choice.

 Have you ever wanted to talk to God but he seemed far away? When?

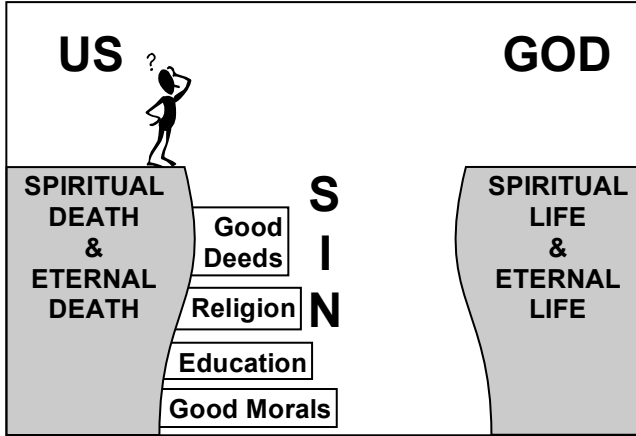
 If you were to meet up with God right now, what would he say to you about how you are living your life?

 When you think of death, what do you think of?

SUMMARY

- Adam and Eve's sin in the beginning caused sin to enter the whole world and it affects everything, including humans.
- Adam and Eve's sin caused God to curse all of creation. What God created as very good is now corrupt and dying.
- Humans have a sinful nature because of what Adam and Eve did. This is why all people sin.
- Since God is completely perfect and holy, sin is repulsive to him and he turns away from it. God hates sin.
- Therefore sin separates all of us from God (this is known as spiritual death). Our relationship with him is broken.
- Sin has many terrible effects, particularly death – spiritual death, physical death and eternal death (Hell).

3. HUMAN ATTEMPTS FOR A SOLUTION



People have always tried to get rid of sin in their lives and to bridge the gap between God and themselves without success. Read the following passages and write down what the Bible says won't restore our relationship with God.

- Ephesians 2:8-9
-

- Titus 3:4-5
-

- Romans 3:20
-

- 1 Corinthians 1:20-21
-

So being a good person, doing good works, going to church every week, reading the Bible everyday or having a high level of intelligence will not restore our relationship with God. These activities or "good works" won't get rid of sin. They can't give us spiritual life and get us to Heaven.

The Bible is very clear about this point and discusses it in great detail in many other areas (e.g. *Romans 4; 5; Galatians 2:15-21; 3*). This is one of the great truths that separates Christianity from most, if not all, other religions and philosophies. Other religions and philosophies teach that humans can work their way to peace with God or a better eternal future.



What do other religions or philosophies teach about how to restore our relationship with God or how to have a better after-life?



Why do you think good works can't get rid of sin and restore your relationship with God?

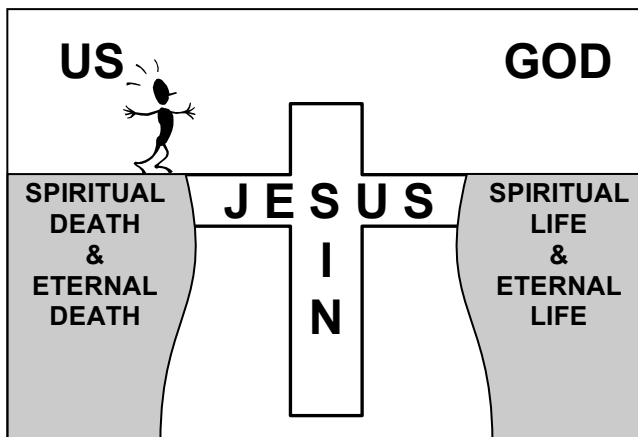


Why is it a good thing that good works don't forgive sin and save you?

SUMMARY

- Since we are sinners by nature, we will keep sinning and never live up to God's perfect standard.
- We can't do anything by our own strength to get rid of our sin and restore our relationship with God.

4. GOD'S SOLUTION – JESUS CHRIST



Even though humans couldn't solve this huge problem of sin, God could. The Bible teaches that God loves all people and wants all to be saved (*Acts 17:26-28; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9*). God doesn't want us to be spiritually dead and be condemned to Hell. He wants our sins to be forgiven so we can come to him and receive eternal life.

God had a solution to forgive our sins and restore the relationship. God's solution was Jesus Christ (*John 3:16*).

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

"Jesus Christ" is a combination of a *name* (Jesus) and a *title* (Christ). "Jesus" means "saviour" – he saves us from our sins (*Matthew 1:21*). "Christ" means "anointed one" or "one who is set apart for service" – he was chosen and sent by God to carry out a special mission. Many prophecies were made about Jesus Christ hundreds, and even thousands, of years before he came to Earth (*Genesis 3:14-15; Isaiah 53 etc.*). God's people were waiting for the arrival of the Christ.

The Bible teaches that there is one God (*Isaiah 43:10; 45:5-6; Mark 12:29*), and that God eternally exists as 3 persons:

- God the Father (*Isaiah 64:8; John 6:27*).
- God the Son (Jesus Christ) (*Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-14*).
- God the Holy Spirit (*Acts 5:1-4; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18*).

God is commonly described in this plural form (*Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19*). The Bible shows us that Jesus Christ is God who came to us in the form of a man. **Jesus Christ is the God-man.** He is God who came to us in human form (*Matthew 16:13-17; John 1:1-14; Philippians 2:4-11; Hebrews 1; 2*). It may be

difficult to understand how God could come to us in the form of a man, but nothing is impossible for God (*Job 42:1-2; Matthew 19:26*).

But why did God the Father send his Son, Jesus Christ, to restore our relationship with him?

In the previous chapter we saw that in our own strength we are unable to do anything to destroy sin and get right with God. Think of all the sins that have been committed by yourself and others throughout human history. How could all of these sins be forgiven? It is a huge problem that requires a huge solution. The only solution was to have a perfect, sinless human being who could offer something to God of infinite value that would cover for the sins of all people for all time! Who could do such a thing?

That perfect, sinless human being of infinite value was Jesus Christ – the God-man.

WHAT DID JESUS CHRIST DO FOR US?

You can read about Jesus Christ's arrest, crucifixion and resurrection in Matthew chapters 26, 27 & 28. Read the following verses and write down what Jesus Christ has done for you by dying on the cross.

▪ 1 Peter 2:24

▪ 1 Peter 3:18

▪ 1 John 4:9-10

▪ Matthew 20:28

▪ 1 Timothy 2:5-6

▪ 2 Corinthians 5:18-19,21

▪ John 10:10-11

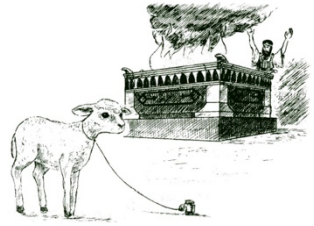
God has solved our sin problem! He loves us so much that he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to take the punishment for our sin! Jesus Christ paid the penalty for us! This allowed our relationship with God to be restored.

By getting rid of sin, Jesus Christ allows us to cross over from eternal death to eternal life.

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

In Old Testament times (thousands of years ago), God commanded his people to sacrifice various animals, like bulls and lambs, to cover for the sins they had committed (e.g. *Leviticus 4 – 7*). But this was only temporary since it is impossible for the blood and sacrifice of animals to take away our sins – they are not of great value (*Hebrews 10:1-4*).

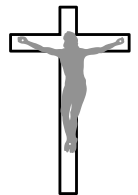
This temporary sacrificial system that God set up was pointing people to the coming of his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the final sacrifice that is of infinite value and could cover for the sins of all people for all time (*Galatians 3:24-25; Hebrews 8; 9; 10:1-17*). This is why Jesus is called the **Lamb of God** (*John 1:29*). In fact, the sacrifice of Jesus' body was so complete and perfect that he only had to be sacrificed once, not everyday as was required in the Old Testament system (*Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:1-18*).



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Since Jesus was God, he was perfect and sinless – he could offer the only acceptable sacrifice that was of infinite value (*Hebrews 7:26-28; 9:13-14; 1 Peter 2:21-22*). **Since Jesus was human**, he became the sacrifice for the sin of all people (*Romans 8:3-4; Hebrews 2:14-18*).

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 9:22 that, **“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”** Death (the shedding of blood) must occur for sin to be forgiven. So because sin is evil in God's sight, something or somebody had to pay the penalty for it. A price had to be paid. If no price was paid, then our sins would not be forgiven and we could never get right with God. This is why Jesus Christ died for us - he was sacrificed so that we could be forgiven.



WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO RISE FROM THE DEAD?

As we saw in chapter 2, sin leads to physical death. By paying for our sins, Jesus destroyed physical death and demonstrated this by raising his own body on the 3rd day (*John 2:18-22; 20*). This shows us that although our own body will die, God will raise it as a new body in the future (*John 2:18-22; 1 Corinthians 15:1-28,35-*



57; *Philippians 3:20-21; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Peter 1:3*).

Also, Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead proved that the claims he made about himself and his work were true (*Romans 1:1-4*). Jesus Christ is truly the God-man.



So Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection from the dead achieved many things:

- He took our sins on himself.
- He was punished for our sins, so our sins could be forgiven and we could be set free from sin and death. He received our punishment and died in our place.
- It turned God's wrath and anger away from us because our sins are now forgiven.
- It allows us to become friends with God – a restored relationship.
- We can experience eternal life with God now and forever in Heaven.
- It destroyed all forms of death (spiritual, physical and eternal).

*There are many things that Jesus Christ did for us,
because we could not do these things for ourselves.*

JESUS CHRIST – THE ONLY SOLUTION

According to the following passages can we be saved through anybody else other than Jesus Christ?

- John 3:16-18,36
-

- John 14:6
-

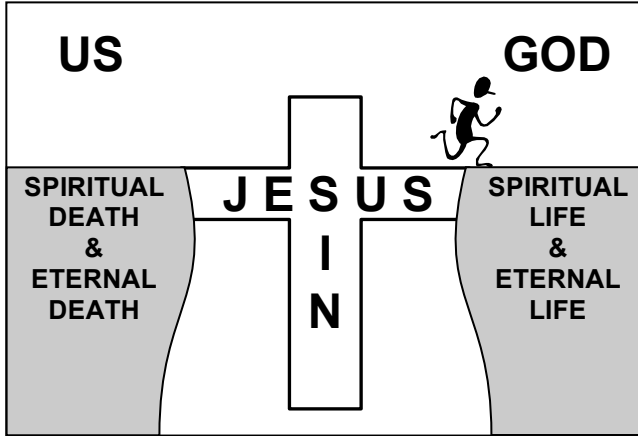
- 1 John 5:11-12
-

It is clear from the Bible that only through God the Son (Jesus Christ) can our sins be forgiven. Jesus Christ is the only answer to this problem of separation between humans and God. There is no other way to eternal life except through Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY

- God loves us so much that he made restoration possible through his Son, Jesus Christ – the God-man.
- Being God, Jesus Christ was perfect and sinless – he could offer the only acceptable sacrifice that had infinite value. Being human, Jesus Christ became the sacrifice for the sin of humanity.
- Jesus Christ took our sin on himself and paid the penalty for us, so that our sins could be forgiven. He received our punishment and died in our place.
- We can now become friends with God – our relationship can be restored. We can cross over from spiritual death to spiritual life because our sins are forgiven.
- Jesus' Christ's death and resurrection conquered spiritual death, physical death and eternal death.
- Jesus Christ is the only way to God and eternal life.

5. MY RESPONSE



The Bible says that after we die, every single person will be judged by God (*Daniel 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:11-15*).

Staying on the side of “spiritual death” means that your sins are not forgiven and you are separated from God. Your life will be controlled by sin, guilt and a lack of peace and purpose. When you physically die and God judges you, he will find you guilty and condemn you to eternal death – separation from God and his love forever in Hell (*Matthew 13:36-43,47-50*).

But if your sins are forgiven, you will cross over to the side of “spiritual life” and experience a restored relationship with God now. You will receive his Holy Spirit who will help you to live a life that is holy, fruitful, obedient and pleasing to God. You will no longer be controlled by your sinful nature (*Romans 6*). Your life will be abundant, full of God’s love, peace and purpose. When you physically die and God judges you, he will find you innocent and bless you with eternal life with him forever in Heaven (*Matthew 13:36-43,47-50; John 3:16*).

In the previous chapter we saw that the work of Jesus Christ paid for the penalty of our sin and bridged the gap between us and God. *But what should our response be to what Jesus did if we want our sins forgiven? How do we take hold of what Jesus did for us? What step do we have to take to cross over from death to life?* Read the passages on the following page and write down what God wants us to do so we can be forgiven.

Repent and Believe...

- Mark 1:14-15; Luke 5:31-32
-
-

- Acts 3:19
-

- 1 John 1:9
-
-

- John 3:16-18,36
-
-

- John 5:24
-
-

- John 8:24
-

- John 11:25-27
-
-

- Romans 10:9-13
-
-

How is a person forgiven and saved? Simply by **repenting** and **believing** in Jesus Christ. **Repentance** is the decision to turn away from sin and to turn to God and obey him. When we turn to God we obey his command to **believe** in Jesus Christ. To **believe** (or have faith) in Jesus Christ means to believe in who he is and in what he did for us (i.e. he is the God-man who died on the cross and rose from the dead to forgive our sins). *Repentance* and *faith* occur together.

When we make the decision to repent and have faith in Jesus Christ to forgive our sins, our sins will be forgiven and we cross the bridge to eternal life.



At this moment, where would you place yourself in the diagram on page 17? Where would you like to be?

If you would like your sins forgiven you simply need to:

1. Admit your need: I am a sinner and need my sins forgiven.
2. Be willing to turn away from your sins and turn to God (repent).
3. Believe that Jesus Christ (God the Son) died on the cross and rose from the dead to forgive your sin, and that he died in your place to pay the penalty for your sin.

If this is your desire, then confirm it in prayer to God. Below is a suggested prayer for you to pray, or you can use your own words.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your love for me. I admit that I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead to forgive my sin, and that he died in my place to pay the penalty for my sin. I turn away from my sin and ask you to forgive me of the sins I have committed. I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour and will follow Jesus faithfully.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Your decision to repent and have faith in Jesus Christ means that you now receive God's Holy Spirit who will help you live the new Christian life (*Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 1:13-14*). You have now crossed over from death to life. God promises that your eternal life with him starts now and he guarantees that you will be with him forever.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14

And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 John 5:11-13

WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

Now that your sins are forgiven and your relationship with God restored, your next step is to grow as a Christian. This is done by obeying God's commands and we show our love for him when we do this (*Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:15,21-24; 1 John 5:3*). Below are some important commandments that he wants you to obey:

- **Church** – be part of a church that obeys Jesus Christ's command to make disciples, baptise them and teaches them to obey Jesus (*Matthew 28:18-20*). At church you'll be discipled, encouraged, make friends and work together with other Christians to build God's kingdom (*1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:24-25*).
- **Bible reading** – make it a daily habit to read the Bible. The Bible is God's main way of speaking to you. It will show you how to live your life, encourage and comfort you, and build you up in the Christian faith (*Psalms 1:1-4; 119:9-16,103-105; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21*).
- **Prayer** – speak with God daily. Prayer involves **A**doration (praising God), **C**onfession of sin, **T**hanksgiving and **S**upplication (asking God). Prayer will comfort you (*Matthew 6:7-15; John 15:16; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17*).
- **Tell others** – tell someone about the wonderful thing God has done for you. Share the good news of Jesus Christ with others so that they can have the opportunity to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 5:19-20; Luke 24:46-47*).
- **Baptism** – be baptised in water. Baptism is a public declaration of your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (*Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:22; Acts 8:35-38; 10:43-48*).
- **Lord's Supper** – take the Lord's Supper. The bread and the drink that are consumed by Christians are symbols of Jesus Christ's body and blood, reminding us of his sacrificial death on the cross as our substitute, resurrection and second coming. The bread also symbolises the unity of the church (*Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:17-34*).

All these things will help develop your relationship with God. The person who is guiding you through this study will help you in this process.

*By this my Father is glorified,
that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

John 15:8