

THE CONVERSION PROCESS

Coming out the world and becoming a fruitful Christian is a process in which there are many steps. Occasionally, a method of evangelism is developed that centers on the steps of salvation and does not give proper consideration to the changes that must take place in the heart and mind of a person before he is ready to believe, repent and obey. Nor do some methods of salvation consider the things that must happen in order for a person to become a functioning part of the body of Christ so that he may produce fruit. This section will discuss the pre-conversion changes and the post-conversion changes of a new disciple of Christ.

Discipleship is an unending process whereby a believer submits to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and lives in such a way that this profession permeates every aspect of his life. One begins the process of discipleship at the time he decides to follow the Lord's way. Salvation comes at the point of obedience to the gospel by submitting to baptism in water for the remission of sins. But God expects the disciple to be taught "to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19). The work of the evangelist is not done at the waters of baptism. The one completely safe and dependable manual on personal evangelism is the New Testament; yet the more one studies the New Testament, the less one can deduce from it a system of personal evangelistic methods. Jesus employed a different approach with different persons. He assessed their needs and spoke to them on the basis of their understanding. One might take for example Jesus' approach to Nicodemus as being very different from his approach to the woman at the well. Paul made a much different appeal at Mars Hill than he did at Agrippa's court or at Ephesus. Circumstances differ, and the evangelist must be prepared to approach his listeners in such a way as to speak to their understanding of God. It is hoped that this section will serve as a measuring stick for the evangelist to evaluate his students and to know where to begin to speak to their spiritual needs. The task of the evangelist is not merely to inform his students of the gospel story; it is also to persuade them to accept and obey the gospel. "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men," Paul says (2 Cor. 5:11). The evangelist must not only know the story, he must also know how to make the story pierce the hearts of those who are listening in the hope that they will respond. Knowing why one must respond is surely as important as knowing what one must do to be saved. With this in mind, let's consider these steps or tasks that are part of the conversion process. Each step has a crucial place in the process. Soil must be prepared before one may plant the seed and expect a fruitful harvest. The planted seed must be watered and protected if it is to grow. The harvested fruit must be cared for and stored before it is ready to eat.

PRE-CONVERSION TASKS

Conversion is the change of the whole person: the intellect, the emotions and the will. These three inter-related aspects of the heart are important in knowing how one changes. It takes true change in all three areas for conversion to take place. Conversion is a change in what one believes; it is repentance; and it is a change in one's love.

I. In Relation to God

1. The student must realize the existence of God. (Intellect)

God made His "eternal nature and divine power" known through the world that He has created (Rom. 1:18-21). Yet there are many hearts that have been darkened by not acknowledging or giving thanks to God. Evangelists need to know enough about Christian evidences to demonstrate that God exists beyond a reasonable doubt. The Christian evidences section of this book will be

helpful. Further, the student must realize that the one true and living God is the God of the Bible. The apostle Paul at Mars Hill spoke to men who believed there were gods and worshiped idols but did not know the true God. It is not enough to believe there is a God if that God is some other than the God of the Bible. Evangelists may need to address the fact that God is a Person, that He is Spirit, that He is Infinite in power, or that He is unique. The evangelist must respond to the modern tendency in our world toward a pluralistic theology (believing in any god, for one god is as good as another). He must be able to give a reason why Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven, and Mohammed or Confucius is not.

2. The student must have a favorable attitude toward God. (Emotions or Heart)

The problem of human suffering is a difficult hurdle for many people. One may believe that the God of the Bible is the one, true God; yet one might be angry at God or hold a low view of God because of the suffering one has experienced or observed. It is necessary for the evangelist to be able to help the student overcome this hurdle in order for the student to embrace God in submission and love. Furthermore, the student must come to understand how much God has loved and blessed him throughout his life. We love, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). There is no greater love than that of God nor more powerful motivation than the message of the cross. The love of God must motivate the student to want to change. God's kindness should lead one to repent (Rom. 2:4).

3. The Student must Submit to the Authority of God and the Lordship of Christ. (Will) The call of Jesus for obedience abounds in the New Testament. Among them are Matt. 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven." John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" Heb. 5:8,9 "although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal life."

Jesus taught that a personal commitment must be made to Him as Lord. On the last day all men will bow the knee and confess Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father (Phil. 2:5-11). The Lordship of Christ means that we belong to Him and that He has a right to make decisions affecting our lives. We are to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses daily, and to follow Him (Luke 9:23).

In Relation to Sin and Self:

1. The student must have an understanding of what sin is and the consequences of his own personal sin. (Intellect)

The message of the cross must not only show the love of God for mankind but also the Lord's utter abomination for sin. The wages of sin has always been death (Rom. 6:23), an eternal damnation. Sin is the enemy of every man. Each student must understand that sin is the violation of God's law (1 John 3:4), and that God takes that violation seriously. It is a momentous occasion in the life of any person when he comes to acknowledge that he has sinned against God and that God will hold him responsible. People will not change until they want to change, until that change is seen as beneficial in terms of their basic needs and desires. They need to understand that their sins have consequences in this life, and that no one escapes the consequences of his sin (Gal. 6:7,8). The life of the transgressor is indeed hard (Prov. 13:15). He must clearly see that by his own sin he has hurt God, hurt others and hurt himself. He must become sorry for his sins, that the sorrow might lead him to repentance (2 Con 7:8-10).

In a relativistic society, many people have no concept of an objective standard of sin. They too often consider themselves as 'good people because they have not committed some horrible crime

(murder, rape, adultery, treason, etc.). They tend to justify their small sins (white lies, petty thefts, etc.) as human mistakes but not worthy of eternal damnation. It should not surprise the evangelist to hear someone say, "I haven't ever sinned," since many people have such a limited view of what sin is. Some have dismissed the concept of sin altogether. There are those who cannot see any moral wrong in the Nazis' killing of six million Jews. In some societies people do not see the wrong of sin. They believe that if they have not hurt anyone with their behavior, then they have not sinned. The concept of sin has been removed from some vocabularies. We hear of "victimless crime" and one's right to do whatever one wishes as long as one doesn't harm anyone else. This permissiveness is in reality lawlessness. There can be no sin where there is no breaking of the law (Rom. 4:15). If one does not like the law or agree that it should be a law, then one must take away its force as a law. This, some imagine, will justify one's behavior. The deceitfulness of sin is in its effort to justify itself. The evangelist must be aware of this scheme of the devil to deceive men and so rob them of the truth. The gospel will make little sense if a person has no understanding of morality. The evangelist cannot assume that his student feels guilt for his sins.

2. The student must have a change of heart toward sin and have hope in God to overcome the sin problem. (Heart or Emotions)

Embracing Jesus Christ means that I must deal with my desire or love for sin. One cannot love God and Mammon. One cannot hold to sin and still love God. James asked, "do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (4:5). John said, "Do not love the world, nor the things of the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). The person who loves the Lord learns to love the things of God and to despise sin. Sin is an enemy to all mankind. Rom. 12:9 admonishes us to "Abhor what is evil; cleave to what is good." Changing our attitudes toward sin may lead to a change in friends. A person who repents to follow Christ may find that impenitent and rebellious friends are no longer willing to associate with him. Peter observed, "For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carded out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you" (1 Pet. 4:3,4). Changing my moral life by admitting and repenting of my sins is not an easy thing to do. Many people would rather do anything than admit their guilt. The dynamic of guilt is a serious one for a person considering becoming a Christian. An individual's realization that he is guilty of sin and lost disturbs, alarms and frightens. He knows that he has sinned and that he is weak to sin. He may wonder if he can overcome sin. There are some sins a person can forsake in a day and others that take years. The student has been told he must forsake his old way of life. He may have tried before on his own and failed. He may not think he can overcome the temptations to continue in sin. With some students the evangelist will have a hard time convincing them that sin exists, and with others he will struggle to convince them that God can help them overcome their sin traps. The evangelist must help the student realize that he does not act alone in repentance, but that God will be his helper. Passages such as I Cor. 6:9-11; 10:13 and 1 Tim. 1:12-16 are beneficial in giving hope. God is faithful and will help us overcome whatever temptations we face. One can do all things through Christ who strengthens him (Phil. 4:13).

3. The student must determine to leave sin and to embrace righteous living. (Will)

The call to repentance is twofold: (1) it is a determination to leave sin behind; and (2) it is a determination to embrace righteous, Christian living. His heart and will turns away from sin and toward Christ. He now loves the Lord and everything associated with the Lord, and sinful things have become disgusting and repugnant. He applies these feelings and determinations to the world and to himself. He seeks to become a new man "who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the One who created him" (Col. 3:10).

Repentance begins with a sorrow for sin against God (2 Cor. 7:10), for his sins against others (Matt. 18:6-9), for his sin which hurts himself (Psalm 32:1-5; 51:3-7), and for the false teachings he believed or taught (2 Tim. 2:17; 2 John 9-11). Repentance is not only a turning away from sin; it is also a turning toward God. The changed sinner wants a clean heart (Psalm 51:10). He leaves the far country and comes home to the Father (Lk. 15:11-24). A change of life and behavior complete repentance. Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to “go and sin no more” (John 8:11). Paul told Agrippa that he taught the Gentiles that “they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance” (Acts 26:20). The penitent son of the vineyard owner changed his mind and went to work in the vineyard (Mt. 21:28-30). Christians do not merely talk the talk, they walk the walk. James urged Christians, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22). No one is blessed who sees that there is a need to change but fails to make that change (James 1:25; 4:17).

III. In Relation to Christian Living and the Church

1. The student must form and change his beliefs and attitudes concerning Christ and the church. (Intellect)

Beliefs are the ideas that an individual holds to be true. Every person has basic beliefs, which influence the way in which he looks at life and how he behaves and relates to others. Secular values are different from sacred ones. One who embraces God will find that when God is added to the picture, every aspect of his life will change (2 Cor. 5:16,17). All things have indeed become new. Some examples of the attitudes within a secular belief system include these ideas:

God, if He exists at all, is just an impersonal, moral force.

There are no absolute moral values.

Man basically has the capacity within himself to improve morally and make the right choices.

Happiness consists of unlimited material acquisition.

There really is no objective basis for right and wrong.

The supernatural is just a figment of someone’s imagination.

If a person lives a “good life,” then eternal destiny is assured.

The Bible is nothing other than a book written by man.

The church is filled with weak people who need a crutch.

Modern, secular man is self-centered. He considers fulfilling his own needs and desires as his prime motive in life. He has little room for that which he considers as a limit to his personal freedoms or desires. He may or may not recognize this mindset. The devil has told these lies for so long that many people now regard them as the truth. The message of the gospel may make little sense to a student until such beliefs are challenged, changed and brought into accord with reality. The task of the evangelist is to help his student to come to a Christian mindset, to have the mind of Christ. He must awaken from the darkness (Eph. 4:17-24). We must insist that the student “no longer live as the Gentiles do.”

God is a personal, holy, loving Father who created and sustains the world.

Sin is transgression of God’s eternal law and brings about death.

Man, though a free moral agent can do nothing without Christ.

True joy consists in a faithful, loving relationship with Jesus Christ.

The supernatural is real and actively working in the world today.

Each one will be judged according to his deeds by the word of God. The blood of Jesus is necessary for salvation.

The Bible is inspired of God and is an authority for our lives.

The church is filled with struggling people who love the Lord and want to do right. Beliefs influence attitudes, and both matter because ideas have consequences. One becomes what

he believes. A change in beliefs will see a change in attitude, which will cause a change in behavior. A student who sees the difference between his own actual life and the ideal life described in Scripture will desire change.

2. The student must have a positive attitude toward becoming a Christian and the church. (Emotions or Heart)

The evangelist must be a sensitive listener to his students. The devil, our enemy, has sowed an incredible number of deceitful seeds about Christianity and the church. One such lie is that a person can be a 'good Christian and never be a member of the church (most people in America now believe this). Another is that the church is filled with hypocrites. It may be that some students have been mistreated by Christians or had a bad experience at church. One new convert saw a fistfight between two officers of a church the first time she ever attended. Some congregations are spiritually cold and others are apathetic. Some congregations are cold toward outsiders and newcomers. Such attitudes throw ice water on the person whose heart is beaming with the love of Christ. A Christian who sets an ungodly example through the week can hardly make a positive impact on the new convert who knows him for what he is.

The evangelist today must realize that he must not only convert a sinner from the error of his ways but also prepare him for life in the church. While the church is divine in origin, it is filled with humans who do not live up to the ideal. Nearly all churches have a variety of people who live at different spiritual levels. Encourage the student to follow Jesus and to be patient with human weaknesses found in the church. Everyone deserves time to grow. Love for others means having to put up with their faults (1 Cor. 13:4-8; Eph. 4:1-6; 4:25-32; Phil. 2:1-8; Col. 3: 12-17; 1 Pet. 1:22,23; 4:8,9). The evangelist needs to be a friend to those whom he seeks to bring to Jesus. He must comfort, support and love them. Like a shepherd he needs to bind the wounds of, care for, protect, and feed struggling new lambs.

3. The student must recognize and submit to the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. (Will)

The evangelist must show God's Word to be true and entirely trustworthy (Psa. 19:7-11). He must have absolute confidence that God's Word is wiser than men and that He means what He says. The gospel is a personal message and is indeed good news. It is good news because of the terrible condition man is in because of his sin. When men do not want to deal with their sins, they often challenge the credibility of the Scriptures. It is here that the inspiration and authority of the Word of God comes into focus. Some presume to sit in judgment of the laws of God rather than to allow God to judge them through His word (John 12:48). Jesus wishes his disciples to obey "everything" he has commanded (Matt. 28:19), which means that disciples cannot pick and choose which commandments they will follow and ignore the rest. The student must recognize his amenability to God's Word. Unless he is willing to recognize God's authority and submit to Him, he can never be truly converted to the will of God. Like Jesus one must be willing to say, "Thy will be done." Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount with the parable of the wise man and the foolish man. The distinction between foolishness and wisdom is not one of hearing but in how one responds to what he hears (Matt. 7:24-27). This passage is an excellent one to help the student realize that his response matters.

At the appropriate time the student needs to be called to commit himself to Jesus Christ. When the student is ready, the evangelist should ask him to obey the gospel. When the people at Pentecost realized their sin and need for atonement, they asked, "what shall we do?" Peter replied, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you!' (Acts 2:37,38). Peter with many other words warned them and pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" (2:40). There is urgency to the gospel message; those who accepted the message responded that day in baptism (2:41). The Eunuch sought an opportunity to be baptized when he passed some water

(Acts 8:36-39). The Philippian jailer and his household were baptized in the middle of night after Paul preached to them (16:30-33). There is a time to confront a student with his need to obey the Lord.

Becoming a Christian is an all-out commitment, and an evangelist who fails to stress this point has made a mistake. Christianity is for a lifetime; Christ demands one's all (Matt. 22:37; Luke 9:23; 14:25-34; Rom. 12:1,2; etc.). Any evangelist who thinks his work is done at the waters of baptism needs to be taught himself. New converts are babes in Christ who need further training as long as they live.

POST-CONVERSION TASKS

1. Post-conversion Evaluation

It is a common experience for new converts to wonder just what has happened to them since they became Christians. They may experience doubts and confusion. They may be disillusioned, finding the church and their own Christian experience different from what they expected. They want desperately to be loved and accepted by their new brothers and sisters in Christ. This is why follow-up with the new Christian is so important. Evangelists cannot assume that their work is done at baptism. Repeating, reminding, and reassuring are essential for the new convert to grow. A red flag needs to go up the first time a new convert misses church or appears to be dropping out. An evangelist needs to find out why and encourage the new convert to remain faithful. Babes in Christ like babies at home need the attention of those who are mature. Usually a kind word of encouragement, the answering of a question or an act of love can help a new convert work through his doubts and confusion. Nearly half of all new converts fall away within the first year of their Christian life. Church leaders and workers need to be aware that this group needs special attention for their first year.

The new convert may test those who have taught him to see if the church really does care. If he has sensed that the church has forgotten him, he may drop out of attendance and wait to see if anyone has noticed. If no one cares enough to check on him, his suspicions will be confirmed in his mind. Most people give the church a window of opportunity to check on them. The longer the time goes by that the new convert remains unattended, the more difficult it will be to restore him.

2. Facing Moral Failure as a Christian

Every Christian will sin at some time, but a crucial time for a new convert is the first time he sins after he is baptized. At baptism he has had all his sins forgiven and was freed from slavery to sin. Now he finds himself doing the same old sins he did before he became a Christian. Consequently, he is asking himself if his conversion was real. He may wonder why he isn't immediately able to handle every temptation. The evangelist has the challenge to teach the young Christian about growing in Christ, dealing with his sins as a Christian, and God's second law of pardon. The new convert must come to understand that all Christians sin and must struggle continually to keep their lives pure. He needs reassurance that he really has been saved. The feeling of embarrassment that comes from moral failure may cause the new convert to shy away from his Christian brethren and the church, because he feels as if he cannot measure up. This is the time that spiritual brethren need to humbly go and restore such a person (Gal. 6:1).

3. Incorporation in the Congregation

New converts want to feel that they belong in the church. They want to be accepted and feel that they have a function in the church. Wise leaders find ways to fellowship and to use new converts in the work of the church. It is important to assign some task to a new convert; this task will help him feel that he is needed and wanted.

4. Spiritual Growth

New converts need to know how they can develop their spiritual lives. They need to be taught not only the doctrines of the Bible but also how to study the Bible for themselves (1 Pet. 2:1,2; 2 Tim. 2:15). They need to be taught how to pray, to meditate, and to worship in private. They need to know the importance of giving their time and money in the service of the Lord. They need to understand their stewardship of what God has given to them. They need training in teaching others, in ministering to the sick, in developing their personal abilities for the Lord's work. They need to know how to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Pet. 1:5-11). As they develop, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23) should be evident in their lives. New Christians must learn the importance of worshiping with the saints. They must be taught to "consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another (Heb. 10:24). They need to know that they have an obligation to their fellow brothers and sisters in the congregation to help each one remain strong. They also have an obligation to respect and follow those men who have been charged with the leadership of the congregation (Heb. 13:17). Every Christian has the responsibility to 'speak' to his fellow Christians in songs and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in his heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). This means of worship not only praises God; it also edifies the brethren. Every Christian has the obligation to commune with his brethren in remembering the death of Christ in the Lord's Supper, also called communion (1 Cor. 10:16,17). These matters of worship and fellowship help keep a new convert strong.

5. Christian Service

The Lord expects those who follow him to be more than mere hearers; they are to be doers of the word (James 1:22-25). Christians have been saved by the grace of God and created in Christ Jesus for good deeds (Eph. 2:8-10; cf. Tit. 2:11-14). Christians are to "always give themselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58). This service is to demonstrate the love of God for both those who are within the church and those who are without as well (Gal. 6:10). Every Christian has the responsibility of caring for his brother in Christ when there is a need (James 2:14-26). One who withholds kindness from a needy brother does not have the love of God (1 John 3:16). Older Christians have the responsibility of leading the way and of training new Christians in the work of love. Christians also have an obligation to those who are without. They are to do good when they have the opportunity (Gal. 6:10). But Christians also have an obligation to evangelize those who are lost. New converts may be short on experience and knowledge, but they often have many friends who are still in the world. New converts can be trained to teach others. The church grows when individuals teach others who teach others who teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). Those who evangelize have the responsibility to teach the new Christian everything that Jesus commanded, including the commission to take the gospel to the whole world (Matt. 28:18-20).

The work of evangelism is not done until every new convert is able to stand on his own and reproduce in the lives of others the things which he has been taught. May the Lord help us to see clearly the great work that needs to be done over the lifetime of a new convert and never cease our growth in His cause.

The Conversion Process

**Heart Changes in the Intellect, Emotions and Will
in regard to God, Sin and Christianity.**

| | God | Sin | Christianity |
|-----------|---|---|---|
| Intellect | Realize the Existence of the God found in the Bible | Understand Sin and its Consequences | Form and Change Beliefs and Attitudes toward Christianity |
| Emotions | Have a Favorable Attitude toward God | Change of Heart toward Sin and Have Hope in God to Overcome Problems of Sin | Have a Positive Attitude toward Christianity and the Church |
| Will | Submit to the Authority of God and the Lordship of Christ | Determination to Leave Sin and to Embrace Righteous Living | Submit to the Inspiration and Authority of the Scriptures |
| | Believe | Repent | Love |

Call to Confess Christ and Be Baptized

Upon the Rock Bible Study Series
Prelesson
"GETTING TO KNOW THE GOD OF THE BIBLE"

**Upon the Rock Bible Study Series
Getting to Know the God of the Bible**

What do you think?

The greatest questions of life:

- Where did we come from?
- Why are we here?
- What happens when we die?
- What is the purpose of life?

If there is a God,

- Then there is a Supreme Being to whom we must give an account.
- Then we need to learn whatever we can about the nature of God.
- Then we need to know what He requires of us and how to please Him.
- Then we have a reason for existence and a purpose in life.

If there is no God,

- Then there is no Supreme Being to whom we must give an account, i.e., no Judgment Day, no heaven, and no hell.
- Then this life is all there is.
- Then right and wrong, good and evil hardly matter.
- Then no one has any reason for existence or purpose in life.

Is there any evidence for the existence of God?

Hebrews 3:4

Can a house build itself?

T F

Does a house show intelligent design?

Y N

Psalms 19:1

Do the heavens declare the glory and intelligent handiwork of a Supreme Being?

Y N

Genesis 8:22

Do the seasons indicate order and intelligent design?

Y N

Isaiah 40:26

Does the universe display order and design?

Y N

Does the order in the universe point to an intelligent Being for that order and design?

Y N

Romans 1:20

Could ordinary matter without intelligence bring about the order and design seen in the universe?

Y N

Psalms 139:14

Does the human body show order and intelligent design?

Y N

If there is intelligent order and design in the universe and in a human body, does it make sense to believe that there is a designer.

Y N

Would this designer have to possess great intelligence?

Y N

Would this designer have to possess great power?

Y N

Is man intelligent enough to create the universe and the human body?

Y N

Is man powerful enough to create the universe and the human body?

Y N

How could inanimate matter so design and arrange itself to bring about the intricate workings of the human body?

Romans 2:14-15

How do you feel when someone does something to hurt you?

How do you feel when you do something to hurt or sin against someone else?

It is reasonable to believe that inanimate matter gave rise to the moral nature of rational man.

T F

The fact of God's existence gives the best reason why man has a moral nature.

T F

Man has a spiritual side, which cannot be explained by matter.

T F

Can We Trust the Bible?

2 Peter 1:16-21

Is it reasonable to believe that an intelligent God would communicate to all?

Y N

The Scriptures claim that men spoke from God being moved by the Holy Spirit.

T F

Isaiah 46:9,10

Can God reveal the end from the beginning and tell what will happen in the future?

Y N

Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34

Did what Joshua predict in 1400 BC come to pass in 870 BC?

Y N

How could Joshua have known the future?

Some Messianic Prophecies

Micah 5:2

Was Jesus born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-10)?

Y N

How can a person decide where he is going to be born?

Isaiah 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25 (cf. Gen. 3:15)

Was Jesus to be born of a virgin?

T F

How could Isaiah know this 750 years before the birth of Jesus?

How could they know these things about Jesus?

tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10)

seed of David (Psalm 132:11)

would teach in parables (Psalm 78:2)

Jewish rulers would reject him (Psalm 118:22)

Flesh would not decay (Psalm 16:8-10)

would enlist Gentiles (Isaiah 42:10)

would be scourged (Psalm 35:15)

casting lots for his garments (Psalm 22:18)

bones not broken (Ex. 12:46; Psalm 34:20)

given gall and vinegar (Psalm 69:21)

buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9)

Many prophecies Jesus fulfilled were totally beyond the power of human control, such as: (1) place of birth, (2) time of birth, (3) manner of birth of a virgin woman, (4) betrayal, (5) manner of death in crucifixion, (6) people's reactions at his death, (7) piercing, and (8) his burial.

Concerning these eight prophecies, Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks* estimated the probability of anyone fulfilling all of them is 1 in 10^{17} . That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.

If Jesus were not from God and the Scriptures were not true, how could these prophecies have been fulfilled?

Upon The Rock Bible Study Series

Lesson 1

"THE SON OF GOD"

1. Matthew 7:24-27

The _____ man built his house upon the rock. He showed wisdom by _____ "these words of Mine" and _____. The foolish man hears but does not _____. Which foundation will you choose? _____

WHO IS JESUS?

2. Matthew 1:18-25

Jesus was to _____ his people from their sins. Immanuel means _____.

3. John 1:29-34

Jesus is the _____ of God who takes away the sins of the world.

4. Hebrews 1:1-4

God in these last days has spoken to us by _____ whom He has appointed _____ of all things, and through whom He made the _____. Jesus, the Son, is the _____ of God's glory and the _____ of His nature or person.

When Jesus made purification of our sins, He sat down at the _____ of God.

WHY DID HE COME?

5. John 3:16,17

6. John 10:10

7. John 18:37

WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE HIM?

8. John 20:30,31

John's gospel was written so that _____

9. John 3:1-3

How did Nicodemus describe Jesus _____

Why did He believe this? _____

10. John 11:43-53

Did the people believe Jesus could raise the dead? _____ Did the enemies of Jesus recognize that Jesus could work signs? _____. "If we let him go on like this, _____ will believe in him."

11. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

List those to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

12. John 20:19,20

Where were the disciples hiding? _____

Why were disciples hiding? _____

What did they do when they saw the Lord? _____

13. Acts 1:1-3

How long did Jesus show himself alive after his resurrection? _____ Were the disciples convinced of his resurrection? _____

14. Acts 5:26-32

Did the apostles state that they were witnesses of the resurrection? _____ What caused this group, who was at first afraid, to openly disobey the Council (Sanhedrin) and preach the gospel of Jesus?

Would you break the law, knowing you would be punished, to preach a belief that you knew was a lie? _____

15. Matthew 28:18

Jesus has been given _____ authority in heaven and on earth.

16. John 3:35-36

The Father has given all things into the hands of the _____. Can one disobey Christ and still please God? _____

17. John 12:48

By what will we be judged on the last day? _____

18. John 16:12,13

Did Jesus tell his disciples everything during his earthly ministry? _____ The Spirit of truth was to guide them into _____ truth.

19. 2 Timothy 3:16,17

All Scripture is _____ by God. The Scriptures thorough equip (or furnish) the man of God for _____ good

work. If the Scriptures furnish man for every good work, is there any need for additional revelation?

20. 2 John 9-11

Can one add to, take away from, or change the teaching of Christ and still please God? _____

21. Galatians 1:6-10

How many gospels have come from Christ? _____ What will happen to anyone preaching a different gospel? _____

We should always seek to please _____.

22. John 12:48

By what will we be judged?

creeds of men?

preachers?

the old and new covenants?

the words of Jesus in the new covenant?

What do you think of the following statement of C. S. Lewis?

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He

would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come away with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

Matthew 16:13-19

"But who do you say that I am?"

“UPON THE ROCK” BIBLE STUDY SERIES
Lesson 2
“THE GREAT SALVATION”

THE DOWNFALL OF MAN

1. Romans 3:23

Every person has _____ and _____ of the glory of God.

2. 1 John 1:8-10

If we say we have not sinned we deceive _____ and make Him a _____.

3. What is sin?

James 4:17 _____

1 John 3:4 _____

1 John 5:17 _____

4. What are the consequences of sin?

Romans 6:23 _____

Galatians 5:19-21 _____

5. Matthew 26:41

The spirit is _____, but the flesh is _____.

SALVATION IS IN CHRIST

6. Romans 5:6-10

While we were still _____, Christ died for the _____.

7. 1 Peter 2:21-25

Jesus bore our _____ in his body on the tree (cross) that we might _____ to sin. By his _____ we are healed.

8. John 3:16

God so loved the _____ that He gave His only begotten Son that _____ believes in Him should not perish.

9. Matthew 7:13,14

_____ will go the broad way to destruction. _____ will find the way to life.

SURVEY OF YOUR LIFE:

Are you saved? _____

When were you saved? _____

When were you baptized? _____

Why were you baptized? _____

Were you saved before or after baptism? _____

10. Matthew 7:24-27

What distinguishes the wise from the foolish man? _____

11. John 14:15

If you love Me, you will _____ My _____.

12. Romans 6:17,18

Is obedience to God inward only, outward only, or both inward and outward?

_____ The Romans obeyed from the heart a _____ of doctrine. What is a form? _____

Were they freed from sin before or after they obeyed the form of teaching? _____

13. Hebrews 11:6

We cannot _____ God without faith in Him and His promises.

14. James 2:24

One is justified by faith (Romans 5:1) but not by faith _____

15. Luke 13:1-5

Along with faith and love, one must repent or he will _____

16. Matthew 21:28,29

Which son repented? _____

Is repentance good intentions only? _____

17. Luke 15:11-24

When the lost son came to himself or came to his senses, he decided to go to his _____ and said, " _____ against heaven and in your sight." *What sins in your life cause you sorrow?*

18. Matthew 10:32,33

Christ wants us to confess _____ before other men. Could I do all these (love, believe, repent, and confess) except one and still please God? _____

19. Matthew 28:20 (Matthew 23:23)

Will God be pleased if we do only part of what He commands? _____

20. Mark 16:15,16

He that _____ and has been _____ shall be saved. In this sentence which comes first "baptized" or "saved?" _____

21. Acts 2:36-41

Why were the Jews pierced to the heart? _____

Peter told them to _____ and be _____ for the forgiveness of their sins. Is this promise for them alone? _____

What did these who gladly received his word do? _____

Did the 3,000 understand Peter's message alike? _____

22. Acts 8:35-39

Was baptism included in Philip's preaching of Christ? _____ The Eunuch saw _____ and wanted to be baptized. In baptism the Eunuch went _____ the water and came up _____ the water.

23. Acts 22:16

Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your _____, calling on the name of the Lord.

24. Romans 6:3-7

We are baptized into the _____ of Christ. We are _____ with Him by baptism into death. Christ walked in newness of life when he was _____ from the dead. We walk in newness of life before or after we are buried and raised with Christ? _____ Our old self is crucified with him that our body of _____ might be done away. If baptism is a burial, could one please God without being buried in water? _____

25. Titus 3:3-7

He saved _____, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of His _____. He saved us through (by) the _____ of regeneration (rebirth) and the _____ of the Holy Spirit.

26. Ephesians 4:5

There is _____ baptism. If we obeyed the form of teaching that Paul, the Eunuch, and the Romans obeyed, could we too be set free from sin? _____

The one baptism is burial in _____ for the _____ of sins.

Would you like to have your sins forgiven today? _____

"UPON THE ROCK" BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Lesson 3

"THE BODY OF CHRIST"

1. Matthew 7:24-27

To have a solid foundation we must _____ and _____.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

2. Christ is:

_____ of the church. (Matthew 16:18) _____ of the church. (Acts 20:28)
_____ of the church. (Ephesians 1:22,23)

3. Colossians 1:18

The body (of Christ) is the _____.

4. How many bodies does Christ have?

Romans 12:4,5 _____

1 Corinthians 12:12,13 _____

Ephesians 4:4 _____

5. 1 Corinthians 12:13

We are all _____ into one body.

6. 1 Corinthians 12:27

If the body is the church, then the body of Christ is also the _____ of Christ.

RELIGIOUS UNITY

7. John 17:20-23

Jesus prayed that all his people might be _____. Is religious division a stumbling block to the faith of many people? _____ Does God approve of religious division? _____

8. 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Christians should be perfectly united or made complete in the same _____ and the same _____.

9. 1 Corinthians 14:33

God is not a God of _____ but of peace.

THE CAUSE OF RELIGIOUS DIVISION

10. Matthew 7:15-23

Beware of _____ who come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Will all who say, "Lord, Lord," be saved? _____ He who _____ the will of my Father will enter heaven. Some were rejected because they practiced _____.

11. Matthew 15:1-14

The disciple transgressed the tradition of the elders but the Pharisees transgressed the _____ for the sake of tradition. Isaiah said that these people honor Me with their _____ but their _____ are far from me. Their worship is _____ because they teach the _____ of men. Every plant not planted by the Father shall be _____. Can a person be blind to the truth? _____

12. Galatians 1:6-9

How many gospels are there? _____ If one teaches a different gospel, he will be _____.

13. 2 John 9-11

To have both the Father and the Son, one must _____ in the teaching of Christ. Does it please God to assist, bless, or support some who does not teach the doctrine of Christ? _____

14. John 8:31,32

If you _____ in My word, then you are _____ my disciples, and you will know the _____, and the truth will make you _____.

THE PROPHECY OF THE FALLING AWAY

15. Acts 20:28-30

Savage wolves will destroy the flock by _____ to draw away the disciples after them.

16. 1 Timothy 4:1-3

Some will fall away by paying attention to (or following) _____ and _____.

17. 2 Tim. 4:1-5

The time will come when men will not put up with sound _____. People will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to _____.

18. 2 Peter 2:1-3

False teachers will secretly introduce _____.

THE FALLING AWAY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH A BRIEF HISTORICAL STUDY

I. THE CHURCH AS IT WAS ESTABLISHED

Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 1:20-23; 4:1-6.

II. THE FALLING AWAY

Unscriptural doctrines and practices began to be introduced after the death of the apostles: Holy water (113 A.D.); Lent (140 A.D.); Penance (157 A.D.); Infant baptism (185 A.D.); Intercession of the saints (240 A.D.); Sprinkling for baptism (250 A.D.); sacrifice of Mass (370 A.D.); celibacy of priests (425 A.D.); purgatory (450 A.D.); confession to priests (500 A.D.); Pope (Boniface III, 606 A.D.); instrumental music used in worship (670 A.D.).

The church continued to depart from the faith until it did not even resemble the church that Christ built. It was different in doctrine, worship, organization and in mission.

The Reformation was a step in the right direction. The reformers rebelled against many of the corruptions of Rome. They rejected many of the unscriptural practices of the apostate church; but they were inconsistent in holding on to other things which were just as unscriptural, e.g. infant baptism, sprinkling, and instrumental music.

Some reformers: Martin Luther (1530 A.D.) Lutheran Church; Luther's catechism; John Calvin (1536 A.D.) Presbyterian Church; Westminster Confession; Henry VIII (1552 A.D.) Episcopal Church; Book of Common Prayer; John Smyth (1607 A.D.) Baptist Church; Standard Manual; John Wesley (1629 A.D.) Methodist Church; Methodist Discipline.

Today there are more than 1000 denominations that create division and confusion in the minds of men. More denominations are not needed. We have enough!

III. THE RESTORATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

If the church of Christ today is simply another denomination, it has no reason or right to exist. These men wanted to restore the church of Christ in its simplicity and purity as it was in the first century. This is still our plea today: James O'Kelly (1793 A.D.) a Methodist preacher; Elias Smith (1800 A.D.) a Baptist preacher; Barton W. Stone (1804 A.D.), a Presbyterian preacher; Thomas and Alexander Campbell (1830 A.D.), Presbyterian preachers.

These men said, "Let us cast aside all denominational names, creeds, doctrines and practices which divide the Christian world and just wear the name 'Christian' and be only members of the

New Testament church." Their plea was, "Where the Scriptures speak we speak; where they are silent we are silent." They began to sow the seed of the Kingdom (Luke 8:11) which produced only Christians, members of the church of Christ, as it had done more than 1900 years earlier.

Upon the Rock Bible Study Series
Lesson 4
"BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD"

**"Upon the Rock" Bible Study Series
Building a Relationship with God**

Covenants

Through the ages God has established relationships with men through covenants. Covenants are permanent, formal agreements between two parties, wherein God pledges to keep promises and men pledge to obey His commandments. God has made many covenant promises to man but made only two major covenants with men. The first covenant was with Israel as a nation; and the second through the blood of Jesus with all men.

The First Covenant

Exodus 19:1-8

The first covenant was made at _____.

God promised to make Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. T F

God would bless Israel whether they obeyed His voice and kept His commandments.

Y N

The sons of Israel said, "All that the LORD has spoken we _____!"

Deuteronomy 5:1-22

God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai.

T F

The Sinai covenant also included their fathers. T F

Israel remembered the Sabbath because God delivered them from Egyptian slavery.

T F

Exodus 34:27-28 (Deut. 4:13)

Moses wrote on the tablets the words of the _____, the _____ commandments.

The Promise of a New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34

God promised to make a _____ covenant.

Israel broke the first covenant.

T F

In the new covenant, everyone will know the Lord.

T F

God said, "I will forgive their _____, and their sin I will remember no more."

Hebrews 8:6-13

He [Jesus] is the mediator of a _____
covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

T F

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first _____.

Romans 7:4-7

We were made to _____ to the Law by the body of Christ, that we might be joined to another.

We have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound.

T F

We serve in _____ of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

Which law said, "You shall not covet"?

Galatians 3:19-25

The law was added because of _____.

The law was our _____ to lead us to Christ. Now that _____ has come,
we are no longer under the _____.

Matthew 5:17,18

Jesus came to _____ the Law and the Prophets.

Romans 15:4

Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our _____, that through the
encouragement of the Scriptures we might have _____.

The New Covenant in Jesus

Ephesians 2:11-19

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were _____ have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Jesus broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the _____ of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man.

Matthew 28:18-20

_____ authority has been given to Jesus.

Christians are to observe _____ that Jesus commanded.

Matthew 7:24-27

The wise man hears the _____ of Jesus and _____ upon them. The foolish man hears but does not act upon _____.

John 12:48

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My _____, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

John 8:31-32

If you _____ in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the _____, and the truth shall make you free.

How would you describe someone who added to, subtracted from, or changed the teachings of Jesus?

John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you _____ one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

How has Jesus loved us?

John 14:15, 23

If you love me, you will _____ my commandments.

John 15:8

By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so _____ to be My disciples.

How do Christians bear fruit?

2 John 9-11

If anyone goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, he does not have God.

T F

One who supports a false teacher participates in his _____ deeds.

Why would a follower of Jesus want to change any teaching that comes from Christ?

Colossians 3:1-17

*Christians should seek the things _____
where Christ is.*

Christians should consider the members of their body as _____ to immoral things.

Christians have laid aside the old self and has put on the new self, who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.

T F

What characteristics should a Christian display in his life?

"UPON THE ROCK" BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Lesson 5

"UPON THE ROCK"

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

1. Matthew 7:24-27 (1 Corinthians 3:11)

The safe foundation is the _____. Can one be sure of any other foundation? _____

2. Acts 14:21-23

Paul and Barnabas appointed _____ for them in every church. Is the word "elders" singular or plural? _____

3. Acts 20:17-28

Paul called the _____ of the church at Ephesus. Paul said the Holy Spirit made them _____ to shepherd the church of God. Elders are _____.

4. Philippians 1:1

T F There was only one bishop (overseer) and one deacon of the church at Philippi.

5. Titus 1:5-9

Elders and _____ are terms used to refer to the same office. Titus was to appoint _____ in every city.

6. 1 Timothy 3:1-13

T F Overseers and deacons must meet certain qualifications to hold these offices.

7. 1 Timothy 2:10-15

Women are not allowed to teach or to _____
over a man.

NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP

8. John 4:23,24

God seeks those who will worship Him in _____ and in _____.

9. John 8:31,32

The true disciples of Christ abide in His _____.

10. 1 Timothy 2:8

God wills that men should _____.

11. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray _____

12. Acts 17:10,11

The Bereans were noble because they _____ the Scriptures _____ to see whether these things were so.

13. 2 Peter 3:18

Grow in the grace and the _____ of our Lord.

14. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Christians eat the bread and drink the cup in _____ of the death of Christ.

15. Acts 20:6,7

Why did the church at Troas gather together? _____

When did the gathering take place? _____

Would it be a safe guide for us to break the bread each first day of the week? _____

16. 1 Corinthians 16:1,2

The church was to put aside and save on the _____ day of the week. Does this passage mention the word "tithe?" _____

17. 2 Corinthians 9:6,7

Each should give as he has _____ in his heart. God loves the _____ giver.

Does this passage mention tithes? _____

18. Ephesians 5:19

God desires that we _____ to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We should make melody _____ our hearts. Is an instrument mentioned here other than the heart?

19. Colossians 3:16

We should _____ and _____ one another with songs, hymns and spiritual songs.

Would God be pleased if we sang without using any instruments (such as a piano)? _____ Are musical instruments able to speak, teach or admonish? _____

20. John 8:31

If we speak, teach and admonish by singing a cappello, are we abiding in God's word? _____ Can one be sure he is abiding in God's Word if he adds musical instruments to his worship? _____

21. Hebrews 10:23-26

A Christian should stimulate others to _____ and _____ . Forsaking our own _____ does not please God. There no longer remains a sacrifice for sin for the one who _____ goes on sinning.

22. Romans 12:1,2

Our bodies should be a living _____. We should _____ what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

SUMMARY

T F The wise man builds his house upon the rock by hearing and acting upon the word of God.

T F Jesus is the Son of the living God.

T F Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and arose the third day.

T F You and I will be judged by the words of Christ.

T F God will hold us responsible for sin.

T F I have always done the will of God.

T F The wages of sin is death.

T F We should obey from the heart the teachings of Christ.

- T F One must do all the will of God to please Him.
- T F To be saved one must love, believe, repent, and be baptized.
- T F True baptism is burial in water for the forgiveness of sins.
- T F God wants all who believe to be one.
- T F God wants each church to have elders and deacons.
- T F God wants churches to pray, study, give, sing, and partake of the Lord's supper.
- T F I want to build my house on the rock.
- T F I know I have a loving and right relationship with God.
- T F I want to be right with God today.

Acts 2:41

They that gladly received his word were _____. Did they wait for another day?

James 4:13-17

Do you have assurance of tomorrow? _____ It is _____ to fail to do what you know is right.

MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO OBEY THE GOSPEL

Our purpose is to bring the lost to an obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:25,26). The apostles did more than merely teach the basics of the gospel; they also attempted to convince those they taught to obey. There is never any good reason for manipulation or coercion in teaching the gospel, but there is a need for persuasion which is Biblical:

1. 2 Cor. 5:11 Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men
2. Acts 2:40 with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."
3. Acts 18:4 he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks (cf. 19:8)
4. Acts 28:23 he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus

Bobby Bates: "If we know that people are lost in sin, doomed to eternal condemnation in a Devil's Hell forever and forever, and then we do not try to persuade them to obey the gospel, are we really fulfilling our obligation to God and to the lost? No! A thousand times, no!"

In order to reach people we must help them through their spiritual decision process to make a life-long commitment to deny themselves and take up their crosses daily and follow Jesus. We must help them count the cost of discipleship and count the cost of rejecting Jesus.

SOME WAYS TO APPEAL FOR OBEDIENCE:

I. Ten Reasons Why You Should Become a Christian

1. The Bible teaches it
2. Happiness (Acts 8:40)
3. God's help (Heb. 4:16)
4. Influence on loved ones
5. Time is short.

6. Death is certain
7. Heaven is too good to miss
8. Hell is real
9. Jesus wants you to obey
10. You'll never regret it.

Psalm 116:12 "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

Question: "Can you think of any good reason why you shouldn't become a Christian? Why don't you write down your reason for not being a Christian? Would you be willing to give this to Jesus on Judgment Day?"

II. Some choice questions:

1. Will you choose going to bed tonight having done right or wishing you had obeyed?
2. Would you rather be a member of a church that follows the New Testament or a church that has good people but practices things not taught in the Bible?
3. Would you rather follow the Bible plan of salvation or following some plan not like any New Testament teaching?
4. Did you ever find a time in life when you regretted doing the right thing?
5. If Jesus could come here to you now, extend His hand to you, and ask you to be a Christian, what would you do?
6. Suppose you had a friend who was asking you what to do to become a Christian, what would you advise him to do? (Let him answer.) Can you take your own advice? If it is right for him to do that, it is also the right thing for you to do. Can you see this is what YOU ought to do?

III. Giving the Best You Have to Offer

"John, I believe that if it were in your power, you would give Mary and your little ones the very best life could offer."

(Wait for an answer.)

"But, John, you cannot give them the best life has to offer until you give them a Christian husband and father, and that IS within your power tonight."

"I don't doubt you are a good husband and father, but we are talking about giving them the BEST. Your family thinks you are great and wonderful, the best that ever lived. But your little ones will very likely turn out like your example. To be the best example you need to give them a devoted Christian father."

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| PSYCHOLOGICAL APPEALS BETWEEN SALVATION AND CONDEMNATION: |
|--|

1. Appeal to Self Preservation:
 - a. Acts 2:40 "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."
 - b. It is nonsense not to teach people the dangers of spiritual procrastination or indifference.
2. Appeal to the Highest Quality of Life
 - a. John 10:10; Matt. 11:28-30
 - b. Jesus is the answer to the problems of anxiety, guilt, fear, meaninglessness, and death. He gives grace, peace, purpose and life.
3. Appeal for Recognition and Acceptance
 - a. God loves us (Rom. 5:6-11; John 3:16; Rom. 8:32)
 - b. God accepts us (Luke 15:11-24)
4. Appeal to the Yearning for Freedom
 - a. freedom from sin (John 8:31-36)
 - b. freedom from the consequences of sin (in God's eyes)

5. Appeal to Fulfillment
 - a. John 10:10; Eccl. 12:13
 - b. Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 2:11-14
6. Appeal to Influence
 - a. Matt. 18:6-10 stumbling block to a little one
 - b. opportunity to make our world a better place
7. Appeal to Gratitude
 - a. Have you thanked Jesus for dying on the cross for you?
 - b. In turning down Jesus, one is turning down God's greatest gift.

| |
|---|
| SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS IN MOTIVATING OTHERS: |
|---|

1. Use words and questions that produce a positive reaction from your friend's mind.
 - a. "Why?" is often a good question to ask
 - b. "Let's. . ." is unselfish and cooperative
 - c. "When?" is a good word to use in response to a person who is "someday" oriented.
 - d. "Which?" is a good word to use in comparisons:
 - Which one is according to the Bible?
 - Which one pleases God?
 - Which foundation do you want to build your life on?
2. Use vivid and clear illustrations that help a sinner see the need for obedience. He must see himself as God sees him. You may want to use his name in the illustration. It is not enough merely to know the truth. He must apply it to his life and to his soul.
3. Reassure the person you are teaching by quoting from God's word. "If God said it, it has to be true." "Can you go wrong if you do what God says to do?"
4. Do not be afraid to be gently persistent. Salesmen often have several ways they ask people to buy their products. If an approach is unsuccessful, try a different approach. Customers often say "no" early, when they are not yet fully convinced. What they need is a little more gentle persuasion.
5. Sometimes silence can be very effective in persuasion. Ask the sinner to respond and then remain silent until he breaks the silence. Don't be afraid to wait. Let him think and act.
6. Persuasion will be much easier if you have done these things to lay a foundation:
 - a. believe with all your heart that people are interested.
 - b. be convinced of the things you are asking him to accept
 - c. pay attention to the person you are teaching
 - *listen to them when they are speaking
 - *focus on what they are saying
 - *encourage them to talk
 - *ask questions and pay attention to their answers
 - *look them in the eye
 - *don't try to out-do their jokes or stories
 - d. be generous with honest praise
 - e. be courteous and polite
 - f. let them know that they are important to you
 - g. dress neatly and be well-groomed (watch out for mouth odor)
7. Be enthusiastic and positive about your message.
8. Be thorough in your teaching.
9. Be clear about what you want them to do.

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|--------------------------|
| Crucial Questions |
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Converts Ask

1. Will my commitment to Christ do for me what you say?

It is not always easy to make up your heart and mind whether or not you are willing to commit yourself wholly to Christ Jesus. There is one thing you can be sure about: God keeps His promises. From the time of Abraham, those who are devoted to God could be certain that whatever God had promised, He was also able to perform (Rom. 4:20,21). Paul knew the God whom He believed and was convinced that God was able to guard His soul until the day of judgment (2 Tim. 1:12). God does not stutter, does not tease, and does not forget His promises. Whatever God has promised you, He is able to perform. Jesus Christ challenges us in John 7:17, "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself." God is asking you to commit yourself to Him. He will honor His promises to you.

2. Is this the best solution for my life?

The Christian life is truly the best life to live. Many Christians wonder how anyone could live without Jesus Christ as an active, everyday part of their lives. Life with prayer to a Lord who loves you is certainly superior to life with no help from above. Life with the truth is certainly better than living with a lie. Life with hope in Christ is certainly more happy and fulfilling than life without God (Eph. 2:12). Life with a moral foundation is certainly more peaceful and stable than life without rules. Someone has well said that there is no problem that is bigger than God and you together can handle. When one puts his trust in God, he need not worry about being put to shame or disappointed (Rom. 5:1-5).

3. Will this decision help me for the rest of my life?

Christianity is a life-long faith built upon a life-long love. God loves you and has provided for your spiritual needs in this life and in the life to come. Paul said that in Christ we have all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3). Christ Jesus is One who understands the temptations and struggles you face, and can help you face whatever trial that lies ahead (Heb. 4:14-16). The firm promise of God in the Scriptures is, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). As long as you hold to God, you can be sure of His blessing and presence in your life.

4. Will I be able to hold out?

Jesus Christ has asked us to remain faithful until death (Rev. 2:10); there is no turning back for the person who commits himself to Jesus (Luke 9:57-62). Should we decide to forsake the Lord, we can lose what we have gained in Christ (2 Pet 2:20-22). We should not think, however, that the Christian life is one that we live alone and without the help of God and others. God has provided the church as a family for us to grow spiritually strong. He has provided prayer and His grace to sustain us through difficult times (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Worship services, Bible classes, fellowship with our church families, daily prayers, and faithful Christian service will be sources of spiritual nourishment and refreshment for as long as you live. When you need God, He will be there for you. The Word of God can strengthen you (Rom. 16:25,26).

5. If I should fail, what would happen to me then?

Although you may become a Christian, you will still have to deal with sin in your life from time to time. The Scriptures teach that when a Christian sins, he is to confess his sins (1 John 1:9; James 5:16) and to repeat of his sins, asking God for forgiveness (Acts 8:18-24). You can feel certain that when you are penitently asking God's forgiveness, that you are continuing to walk in His light and can enjoy His fellowship (1 John 1:6-10). But should you forsake the Lord and walk

in darkness, you will lose the blessing of His cleansing blood (Heb. 10:26,35-39). Each Christian needs to keep guard on his heart and life to see that he is continuing to follow the Lord.

6. Do I have to change my whole life? Will I have to give up my friends?

A person who begins loving the Lord will find his desires change. He wants to draw close to God and learns to love the things of God. At the same time, sinful things that separate one from God tend to lose their appeal. As a Christian one doesn't see sin as an attractive thing anymore. The young Christian who wants to please God may find that his old friends may not want to have much to do with him (1 Pet. 4:1-4). The young Christian should seek for people who will help him build his faith rather than destroy it. The great challenge for the new Christian is to share the gospel with his old friends, so that they may experience a change of heart and life. You may want to share this program or another Bible study with a friend.

7. Why does it seem there are so many hypocrites in the church?

Someone has defined a hypocrite as a person who "does not intend to be what he pretends to be." A hypocrite is an actor or a pretender; he is not genuine in his faith or his desire to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus described the hypocrites of his time as whitewashed tombs, pretty on the outside but full of uncleanness on the inside (Matt. 23:25-28). There are some hypocrites in the church, but one should be careful not to confuse hypocrisy with weakness. All Christians have their weaknesses, in which they are especially vulnerable to temptation and sin (Heb. 4:15; Gal. 6:1). As Christians, each of us must be patient with each other and help each other to overcome the temptations we all face (Heb. 12:12,13). Further we must guard that we do not exalt ourselves as judges (James 4:11,12).

8. I've never done anything really bad; I'm not sure if I died that God would send me to hell?

Men often downplay their sins. They often do not look at sin the way God does. God does not think the way we do (Isa. 55:6-9). While we may not see the harm or the offense in sin, God is offended by all sin. Every sin is a breaking of His law (1 John 3:4). God has declared that the soul who sins must die (Ezekiel 18:4; Rom. 6:23). We usually forget how much we have sinned. If a person only sinned once a day, he would have accumulated more than 20,000 sins by age seventy. God hates sin. He sent His only begotten Son Jesus to die on a cruel cross to pay the penalty for our sins. The Bible teaches that God is both just in condemning those who reject the blood of Jesus and the justifier of those who will be obedient to Him (Rom. 3:24-26). Our God is a loving God, but He is also just and will condemn those who remain in sin.

REACHING THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN AWAY

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). To restore the fallen is to reconcile them to the Lord and to the church. Some general statistics about drop-outs:

1. Almost one of every two Americans, 46%, will drop out of active church participation sometime during their lifetime.
2. One third of all dropouts occur during the teenage years; 60% by age 24.
3. Eight in ten of those who drop out do so in the first year after they are converted.
4. Most people who drop out of church fail to receive a caring visit within the first two months.
5. Up to 80% of those who drop out will return to active participation in the church sometime during their lives.

6. Half of all dropouts can be reached again by a caring, compassionate visit from a Christian brother.

I. WHY PEOPLE DROP OUT

1. The failure to establish close, warm relationships with members of the church is the primary reason. If people have 5 or 6 close friends in the church, they will probably never drop out.

2. Another reason is the failure to have his needs met. In some cases it is the failure to have expectations met. He may be bored with church, uninvolved, or unedified. He may be tired of being put down or shamed at church. He may be disillusioned, finding that the church was not what he expected it to be.

3. He may have personal problems. In some cases an individual is caught up in sin and does not want to face it (Heb. 3:12-14). In other cases a devastating illness can create a faith problem. We should never take for granted that personal difficulties can be easily borne.

4. He may face major changes in life that make him vulnerable. A change in job and moving from one town to another often leaves people vulnerable to falling away. About half of those who move and find a new church home change from the religious group they were attending to a different fellowship. Many who move are very slow to find a church home within churches of Christ. Newcomers to town are among the most fruitful converts; but moving offers an opportunity for weak Christian to fall away.

5. False teaching can lead souls away from the truth (2 Tim. 4:2,3; Gal. 5:1-4).

6. Harsh treatment by crude brethren can drive weak Christians away from the church (3 John 9-10).

7. A loss of faith in God or in Christ can lead one to deny the Lord (Heb. 6:4-6). This is in a context of severe persecution.

8. Marital problems at home, divorce, or parental problems can destroy an entire family's commitment to the church and the Lord. Many times the embarrassment is overwhelming to a family, to the extent that they will not return. The loving acceptance of brethren is never more needed than in family failure.

9. Personality clashes with other members, preachers or elders can lead people to stop attending altogether. In some cases, people never quite "fit in" with the whole congregation. Sensitivity to this problem and efforts to incorporate the brother or sister need to be made.

10. Occasionally a brother or sister works very hard in the church and receives very little appreciation. A lack of appreciation, sometimes criticism, and exhaustion can lead to burnout. Those who lead need to be sensitive to hard-working volunteers, who need feeding and appreciation. No one can live forever with manipulation and guilt-trips. Those who feel they can not live up to expectations or can not please others will eventually cease trying.

11. Occasionally a person will drop out because he does not agree with "church doctrine."

II. HOW A PERSON WHO DROPS OUT FEELS AND ACTS

1. He often is deeply hurt and usually wishes he were not dropping out. What he wants is that someone care!

a. When someone is offended or hurt, he generally tests his brethren by dropping out to see if anyone notices. The most crucial time in this period is the first few weeks.

b. If after six weeks to two months no one has noticed that he has ceased active participation, he regards the lack of attention as a confirmation that he is not needed or wanted. This is a devastating, hard-to-overcome, blow to an offended brother. Prov. 18:19 "An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel."

2. There are generally *two reactions* to the deeply felt hurt in one who has fallen away:

a. **Anger.** In his mind, the church is the offender, filled with hypocrites, who hurt him and do not care about him. Our approach to such a one is usually critical of his behavior (dropping out is wrong). We are often surprised, then, to find hostility.

b. **Guilt.** This is the person who blames himself for failing and is eaten up with guilt. Filled with despair, doubts and hopelessness he quits. He does not see any possible way he can come back.

3. After a period of time a dropout will usually reinvest themselves, their time and effort, into some other project. It may be family, a civic organization, or a volunteer program. He will find himself useful in his newly found project and believe that his faith is better than ever before. He may portray a life of great spirituality without the need for church. His spiritual life is all vertical, not horizontal. Many people who drop out never know they have not been faithful to God. They still consider themselves "faithful" members of the church. (80% of the people of the U.S. believe you can be a good Christian and not be a member of any church.)

III. WHAT WE CAN DO TO BRING THEM BACK

Lost is a terrible condition for the fallen child of God (2 Pet. 2:20-22). The Bible gives us some instruction about the need to restore the fallen:

*Gal. 6:1 restore, considering yourself (Matt. 7:12)

*James 5:19-20 save a soul from death

*2 Tim. 2:24-26 gentleness

*Jude 22,23 have mercy on them

1. *We must go to them, gentle and compassionate.* It may take some weeks of building trust with them before we can get them to open up and talk about their hurt and problems with the church. Usually it takes one visit for every year they have stayed away from the Lord. One must use friendly visits to build rapport and trust and earn the right to talk to them about their souls. Many people can be restored if a loving, caring, compassionate visit is made.

2. *We must listen to them.* We must, after gaining their confidence, tactfully ask what prompted them to leave. We must then listen, neither condoning nor judging their answer for the time being. It is important to allow them to fully speak their hearts.

3. *Once they have finished speaking, kindly ask them what they think could or should be done to change matters.* Don't tell them; let them tell you. They usually know:

- confession of sins: James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:1-5
- repentance: Acts 8:22-23
- prayer for forgiveness
- "What can I do to help you?"
- Pray with them

4. *Suggest positive alternatives as solutions.* What most people need in life is a little hope for change. Let them know there is something they can do to make things better.

5. *Show the love of Christ to them.* Encourage them and help them to resume their lives in Christ.

6. *Ask them to commit themselves again to the Lord.*

We must be careful never to allow little problems to become big ones before we seek a solution to them.