



NEW LIFE STUDY

Exploring Our New Life in Christ

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Cover photograph by Georgie Latremouille.

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INTRO

Everyone Is Searching

If you evaluate anyone's lifestyle, you will quickly see that they are on a search. In the heart of every person is a desire to find the key that unlocks a rich and satisfying life. On the college campus, whether you are an athlete seeking a scholarship, or a serious student hoping to land the right job, or someone looking for the perfect relationship, we are all looking for life.

Our Design

God created us to find life in a personal relationship with Him. All of our internal drives are ultimately designed to guide us to this life-finding purpose, security, and fulfillment.

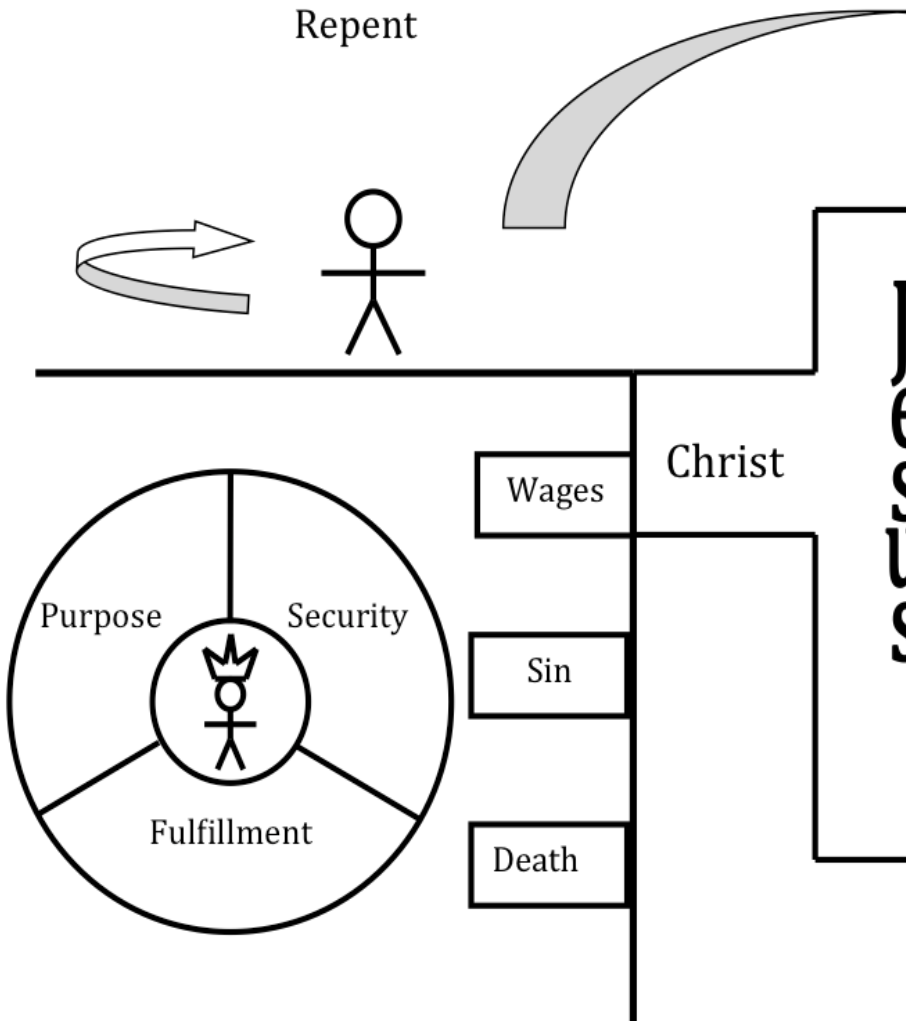
Jesus said in John 10:10, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." That is what being a Christian is all about—life eternal with God and life here and now living out the very purpose for which you were created. God alone can give life because He created life, and He can give it abundantly beyond your wildest imagination.

To experience all that God has for you as a Christian, you need to be growing in your relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus also said in John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

The Bible calls a follower of Christ a disciple. You will be learning the basic steps that get you started as a disciple of Christ. This material is meant to be discussed with others. Each week addresses a different factor of growth in your relationship with Christ.

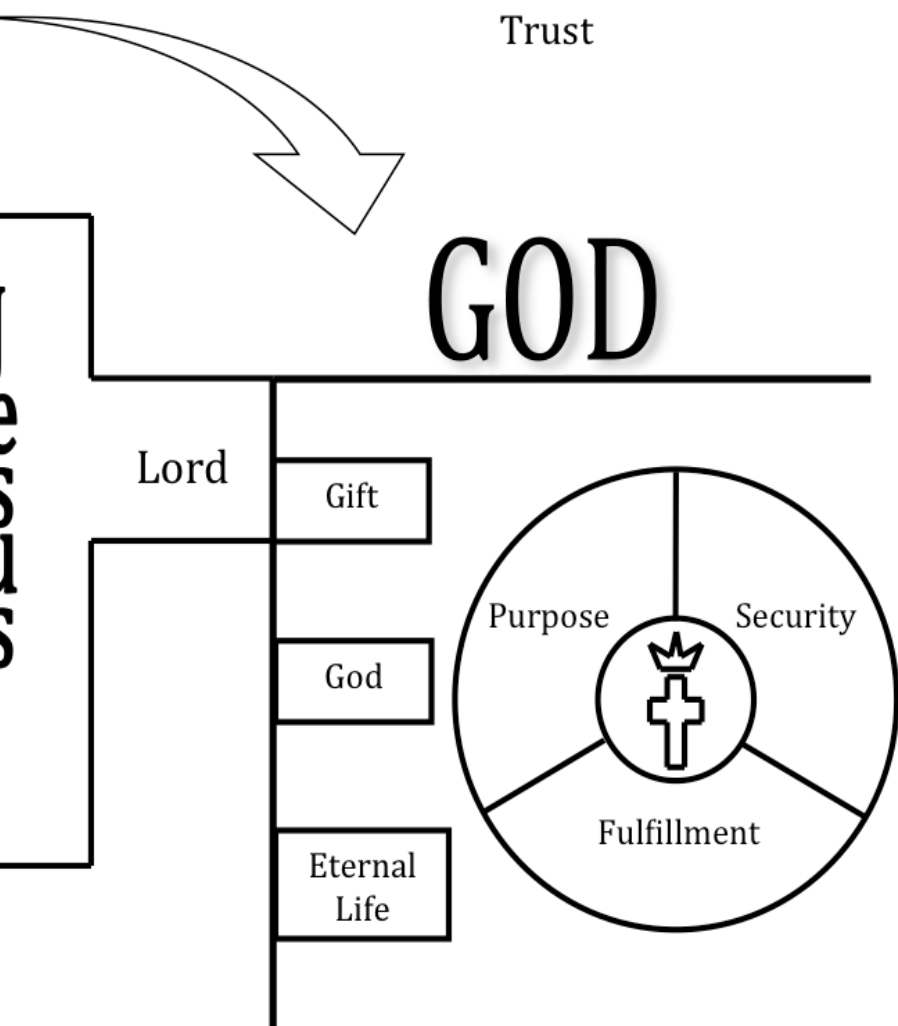
The Bridge

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the



Diagram

gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



OUR SALVATION

Week One

INTRODUCTION

What comes to your mind when you think of the word “saved” or “salvation”? What do you think the Bible means when it uses the term saved? Let’s look at it from three different perspectives.

Delivered from Danger

In the *Indiana Jones* series, Harrison Ford was constantly in trouble. Often, when he was on the brink of being in a plane crash, being captured, being swept over a waterfall, or being shot, he somehow was saved.

Rescued for a Purpose

What are places like the Salvation Army or Goodwill known for? Among other things, they take discarded clothes, sell them at reasonable prices to people who find useful purposes for them, and take the proceeds to help others in need.

Placed in a New Family

Can you imagine what it might feel like to be adopted and welcomed into a family if you had only known what it was like to be orphaned? While adoption can be scary for children, it’s a picture of how God rescues us and brings us into his family.

DELIVERED FROM DANGER

1. Matthew 1:21 and Luke 1:77 speak of the reason Jesus came to earth. What does "saved" mean according to these verses?

2. Why do you think forgiveness of sin was the number one reason Jesus came to live and die on this earth?

3. What does the Bible mean by "sin" and every person (except Jesus) being a sinner?

4. Read Romans 10:9-10

How does someone receive the salvation offered through Jesus?

Saved is the past tense form of the verb. Can someone know for sure that they have been saved or can they only hope to be saved in the future?

RESCUED FOR A PURPOSE

1. What are the typical things college students live for?

2. If you were to describe your purpose before you received Christ, what would you say it was?

3. Jesus taught that man's ultimate purpose was fulfilled when he found eternal life. According to John 17:3, what did Jesus say was the essence of eternal life, and thus our purpose?

4. Paul was known for hating Jesus. When God changed his life, he found new purpose. What does Philippians 3:7-11 tell you about Paul's new purpose?

PLACED IN A NEW FAMILY

1. Matthew 7:9-11 describes what kind of father God is.

What do these verses tell you about God's character?

What seems to be God's attitude towards his children?

2. Read Ephesians 2:1-7. Make note of how the Bible compares your former life with your new life.

Former Life

New Life

3. Ephesians 2:6-7 sums up what God plans for us. What does God have planned for us now and for all eternity?

SUMMARY

1. What aspects of the study did you find helpful and why?

2. What questions about salvation do you still want answered?

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Week Two

ARE YOU SUCCESSFUL?

While the specifics vary for every individual, the obvious measures of success are ultimately, at the root, usually connected to achievement, pleasure, or acceptance. But can anyone be sure they are actually successful? How do you measure success? Success is ultimately measured by the end goal and what is done to attain it.

In the first study, you saw how God measured success. His end goal is that you find new life (salvation from empty pursuits that will only leave you hopeless and salvation in a relationship with Him). He secured this gift for you by sending His son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for your sin.

A relationship with God is the reason you were created. What does it matter what else you accomplish? If you fail to discover and fulfill your God-given purpose, you fail in this life.

What was your success measurement before you received Christ? What were your end goals and how did you seek to attain them?

NOT A RELIGION

Most people would say that Christianity is one of many religions. But the essence of Christianity is totally the opposite of the

essence of all religions.

Religion by definition, includes these descriptions:

- Man's search for God and eternal life
- A set of moral beliefs and laws to follow
- Man's works or efforts that constitute a moral lifestyle

Look up these verses to see how Christianity differs from religion.

1. Read Colossians 1:19-22 to see how Christianity is unique.

Who is the seeker in your salvation experience?

What does "reconciled" mean?

2. How did God seek you out and point out your need for Christ?

3. How do we obtain eternal life according to John 10:27-28?

4. Christianity has moral beliefs as well. What is the purpose of God's laws?

John 5:39-40

Galatians 3:21-24

5. Where do works fit in to our pursuit of God?

Read Ephesians 2:8-10. If works of faith do not save us, what is the place of works?

Are works an overflow of your relationship with God or efforts to gain a relationship with God? Explain what you think.

NOT A RELIGION

You were brought to God to find the satisfying life that your heart longs for. Though you never found eternal purpose, ultimate security, or lasting fulfillment apart from God, your relationship with God is where you will find full joy and hope. That is God's definition of success. John 15:9-15 summarizes our experience in Christ.

1. What motivation should compel us to seek a deeper relationship with God (v. 9)?

2. How does Jesus describe growing in this relationship (v. 10)?

3. What result should we experience from this relationship (v. 11)?

ESTABLISHING TIME WITH GOD

Time alone with God is having fellowship with God and developing your personal relationship with Jesus. This practice is also called a quiet time or devotional time. Set aside a time and place to meet God each day.

Daily Guide

1. Write out the passage at the top of the page.
2. Circle 5 words or phrases that you think are the most important to the passage. Define those words.
3. In 1-2 sentences, summarize what you think the passage is saying.
4. Write 1-2 sentences that explain what truth you need to believe and what application you need to make.
5. Confess your complete inadequacy and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the power to obey God with your life.

Passages

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Isaiah 40:28-31

Joshua 1:8-9

Romans 12:1-2

Psalms 119:9-11

Matthew 7:24-27

Ephesians 5:3-5

Hebrews 11:24-26

Psalms 63:6-8

Nehemiah 9:5-6

Colossians 1:9-13

Psalms 37:3-5

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

James 1:2-8

Philippians 4:6-7

2 Timothy 2:1-4

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 14:12-15

Jeremiah 1:4-8

Acts 4:24-31

Philippians 3:7-11

Matthew 6:31-33

Proverbs 3:5-7

2 Peter 1:4-8

2 Corinthians 12:8-10

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Romans 12:9-14

Titus 2:11-14

Ephesians 6:13-20

1 Samuel 15:22-23

1 John 2:11-17

Sample Day

Date: March 5

Verse: Galatians 2:20

1. Write out the verse and circle the 5 key words or phrases.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2. Define the key words or phrases.

Crucified: death, dying

Christ: Son of God, Savior

Life: my new purpose, reason for living

Faith: trusting Him

3. In your own words, summarize the passage.

The way I live with Christ, dying to my old life, is to live by faith. He loves me so much, I can trust Him to give me the new life He promises me.

4. Write out how this truth applies to your life.

I need to take time daily to study his Word and pray so that I will live connected with Him. Remember it takes faith to obey him, believing he loves me. Ask him to show me what he wants me to do with my life.

Practice Day

Date:

Verse:

1. Write out the verse and circle the 5 key words or phrases.

2. Define the key words or phrases.

3. In your own words, summarize the passage.

4. Write out how this truth applies to your life.

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Week Three

TEMPTATION

Even though we wish we didn't, all Christians still struggle with temptation. We try to avoid it, separate from it, forsake it! But how do you actually fight sin? This is a difficult issue to tackle.

Before you address your specific temptations, you must first understand *why* you sin. You must know what bait is luring you to the hook of sin and why the bait is so inviting to you. You must fight sin at the heart level and not simply at the behavioral level. What areas of temptation that you have been battling since you received Christ?

BATTLING SIN

You must fight sin at the heart level and not simply at the behavioral level. This involves four things (we've already looked at the first one):

- Identifying that our hearts long to be satisfied
- Unmasking sin's alluring and deceptive power (sin makes promises that it ultimately can't keep)
- Cultivating, by faith, a heart that is finding satisfaction in God himself
- Examining your external environment to identify sources of temptation

WHY DO WE SIN?

Ultimately, we sin because we are sinners. But when we sin, what is it that we are seeking to experience or accomplish? Why do we chose to do what God has forbidden? The following verses give insight into why and how we sin.

1. Isaiah 55:1-3

How

Why

2. Jeremiah 2:11-13

How

Why

3. After studying these verses, define sin as it is described here.

4. What were the old things you looked to for purpose, security, and fulfillment?

5. James 1:13-15 explains the source of temptation. Where must you fight to win the battle over sin?

6. Why does James say that the ultimate fruit of sin is death?

John Piper, a pastor and author, defines sin as “what you do when your heart is not satisfied with God...we sin because it holds out some promise of happiness”.¹

CULTIVATING A SATISFIED HEART

Instead of thinking that your desires are enemies that must be tamed to grow as a Christian, you must see that your desires are the means for your growth in Christ. Growing as a Christian is finding more and more of your satisfaction in your relationship with God. A good defense against sin is a powerful offense.

1. Read Hebrews 11:24-26. What motivated Moses to say no to this promise of sin and yes to a life of sacrificial love?

2. Read 2 Peter 1:2-4. How do we experience the power to live godly lives and escape corruption?

EXAMINING YOUR LIFESTYLE

The lifestyle you were living before receiving Christ was sending a deceptive message to you. You must identify the situations and people that allure you with misleading promises of sin that will never satisfy. Think through your external influences and ask God to show you what adjustments you need to make to protect you from environments that will deceive you and ultimately trap you. Share your observations with one another.

¹ John Piper, *Future Grace*, p. 1

1. Read 1 Peter 4:1-5. What is different about your new lifestyle? How may your friends respond to these new changes?

2. What things need to change in your environment to keep you from being pulled down spiritually?

A PERSONAL STORY

A student from Brazil named Larena has understood this message. Here's what she said just weeks after she began to follow Christ:

"God has completely changed my heart, my desires. God's way is the best and his plan for me brings so much more satisfaction than my old way of life. I used to think surrendering my life would make me like a slave, giving up everything I enjoyed doing and living a hard life. But I realized that I was really a slave to sin. Since I have given my life to Christ, I am free to enjoy the life God intended for me—the abundant life he spoke of in the Bible."

GROWING AS A DISCIPLE

Week Four

Real life is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Receiving Christ happens when God draws a person to Christ. This involves turning from sin and self (repentance) and trusting in Christ alone for the new life He offers (faith). This is salvation!

This salvation is the new beginning. But that's not the total picture. God has designed your new life to be a growing experience of purpose, security, and fulfillment. As God increases as the center of your life, your experience of this purpose, security, and fulfillment will increase as well.

GOD'S COMMITMENT TO YOUR GROWTH

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)

1. In light of these verses, is growth optional for a disciple of Jesus Christ?

2. How does God describe our growth experience? What is growth in its essence?

3. Read Hebrews 12:5-7. How does God respond to one of His own when they are not growing as they should?

4. What do the references to being “sons” or “the one he loves” tell you about God’s motive in disciplining us?

CHARACTERISTICS OF GROWTH

1. In the first week, we looked at Paul’s new purpose. Salvation gave him a relationship with God. Review Philippians 3:7-14.

What did Paul lose and gain (v. 7-8)?

What was his goal (v. 10)?

Now that he knows and believes Christ, how does Paul approach his relationship to Him (v. 12-14)?

2. Colossians 1:9-12 is a prayer Paul offers for these new disciples.

What does he envision their God-centered lifestyle to look like (v. 9-10)?

What results does he ask God to bring about in their experience (v. 11-12)?

DEVELOPING A CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

God is interested in your whole life reflecting His greatness and you experiencing His joy in everything you do. The Bible gives insight into the keys to developing a disciple's life.

1. Identify the key to growth and resulting benefit mentioned in the following verses:

Key

Result

Philippians 4:6-7

1 Peter 2:2

John 14:21

2. According to the following verses, what role should other disciples play in your growth as a disciple?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Hebrews 3:13

3. Can a disciple grow as God intends on his own? Why or why not?

CONCLUSION

Evaluating the Study

1. What misconceptions about living a Christian life have been broken since you began this study?
2. What aspects of this study have been most helpful to you?
3. How have you seen your joy in God begin to express itself in your life?
4. How could you connect with other believers in order to encourage each other to grow spiritually?

