

# Foundations

of the

# Faith 101

BEGINNING A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

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## What is a Christian?

Welcome to God's family! You have made the most important decision of your life to follow Jesus Christ. God has become your heavenly father and you are now his child. A new relationship has begun.

You may feel helpless to explain what has happened to you. A new sense of freedom is now yours, perhaps a sense of awe and wonderment. However, others may feel as if nothing has happened to them at all. Do not be dismayed either way for emotions are not always an accurate guide of reality. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

### What has happened to you

*You have acknowledged your need as a sinner.* You have acknowledged that you were wrong and that God is right. You have agreed with God that you were spiritually bankrupt and spiritually lost. The words dead and lost are biblical words that describe your past life.

Write the following verses that describe your condition before you became a Christian:

Romans 3:23

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Romans 6:23

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As a Christian, your life has now been changed from a dead to living state in Christ. God has touched your life and imparted divine life - His life - eternal life.

***You have acknowledged Jesus Christ as your Savior.*** The Lord came into this world to redeem mankind. He was born to die. The Apostle Paul said, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). This purpose was accomplished when He died on the cross.

Write down the following verses that describe what Christ has done for you:

Isaiah 53:5

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John 3:16

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2 Corinthians 5:21

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Our basic need is the forgiveness of our sin. God's provision for our need is found only in the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the sinless Son, fully and completely bore the sins of the world. He took upon himself our sin.

By recognizing Jesus Christ as God's answer, which He died in your place, you have come asking forgiveness for all of your sins. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

Now that you are a Christian, let's look at how the Bible defines what a Christian actually is. The word *Christian* is found in the Bible only three times in the New Testament and never in the Old Testament. To live as a Christian in the early centuries was a life and death challenge. The same is true for believers today in certain parts of the world.

Write down the following verses that mention the word “Christian”:

Acts 11:26

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Acts 26:28

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1 Peter 4:16

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***You were united with Christ.*** The word “Christian” is a combination of two words; Christ and man. A Christian is a combination of Christ and you. The sinner recognizes personal sin and receives Christ as Savior and Lord, and the Savior receives the sinner. A Christian is a “Christ man” or a “Christ woman.”

***You were born again.*** Jesus spoke to Nicodemus and said, “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). According to Jesus, a Christian is one who has been born again. Spiritual birth is the only way to enter God’s family.

Many today believe they are Christians based on a number of false factors. However, God's justice and holiness demands that sin be paid for and dealt with. Jesus voluntarily died for the sins of mankind. When a person receives Christ in faith, then and only then, does that person have a right to be a child of God. The Apostle John said, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

## **A word of caution**

**There are three things you should be aware of:**

### **Natural birth cannot make you a Christian.**

The blessings of Godly parents and siblings cannot make one a Christian. Parents can give a good push in the right direction but cannot make their children Christians (1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 15:3).

### **Good works cannot make you a Christian.**

Perhaps the greatest error today is the belief that salvation is the result of personal effort. Many believe themselves to be Christians because they keep the Golden Rule or because they live decent, moral lives. Some rely on the religious activities of church membership.

The Bible's message is plain on the subject and easy to understand. Paul said, "For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is not something you do, but someone you receive. Salvation is Jesus Christ.

We do not become Christians by climbing the ladder of good works, rung by rung. In fact, the very opposite is true. Jesus Christ came down the ladder by way of the cross to meet us where we are. Good works cannot make one a Christian (Romans 4:6).

**Religious ordinances cannot make you a Christian.**

No man, church ordinance or sacrament can make you a Christian. Water baptism, although commanded in scripture, cannot make you a Christian. Being a Christian is much more than believing certain doctrines or submitting to any ordinance. It is receiving Christ (Luke 23:39-43; John 3:17).

## **Questions**

Give two definitions in answer to the question “What is a Christian?”

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According to John 1:12, what happens to the person who receives Jesus Christ?

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What did Paul call all Christians to do in Romans 6:13?

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## Feeding on God's Word

Forty different people that lived in different countries and times wrote the Bible. It was written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament.

The Bible is literally God speaking to you. It is God's instrument in salvation and God's instrument for growing mature Christians. It is the blueprint for Christian Living. The first step in understanding the Bible is through conversion (being born again). An unsaved person can read the bible and perhaps receive some insights from it, but Christians receive abundantly more.

*Write down the following verses regarding God's word:*

Romans 10:17

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1 Peter 1:25

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1 Peter 2:2

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1 Corinthians 2:14-15

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The Bible must be read with an attitude of receptivity and submission. Be sure to cultivate a daily quiet time between you and the Lord. This is how you can begin:

**Read the Bible prayerfully**

Always begin your reading with prayer for divine guidance. James said, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5). God really wants to give all of us wisdom and understanding. King David understood this truth when he asked God, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law” (Psalm 119:18).

It is wonderful to ask the Lord to show us “wondrous things” each day from His word. After God does this for us, think about the truth in His Word and apply it by putting it to use.

Men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible. The very same Holy Spirit, who inspired these men to write, longs to lead you to understand His word. As Christians we must submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit when reading the Bible. Permit Him to guide you in truth. Without the illumination of the Holy Spirit we read in vain.

Write down the following verses that describe how God utilizes the Holy Spirit with scripture:

2 Peter 1:21

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2 Timothy 3:16

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John 16:13

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## **Read the Bible carefully**

Of the Christians living in Berea it was said, “These were more fair minded than those living in Thessalonica. In that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things we so” (Acts 17:11). The Bereans read the scriptures carefully! Today the Bible is often read but rarely studied. To read with care requires concentration, so our minds must be alert.

God’s word is loaded with great truths that are not discovered by the casual reader. Diamonds are not found on sidewalks. We must linger upon the Bible’s chapters, verses, phrases, and words, eagerly seeking to understand its message. In a sense, we must search like a miner searching for gold.

*Write down the following verses regarding God’s word:*

Psalm 119:127

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Job 23:12

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Psalm 119:103

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John 5:39

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### **Read the Bible in context**

Today there are many different religions and belief systems that obtain their theology from the Bible. Some say that water Baptism saves a person while others believes that obeying a particular day of the week makes them holy. Please do not let this confuse you. God gave you a mind to understand and his spirit to guide you.

A very important truth to remember is that when you read God's word be sure to read it in context. The word "con" means "with." The word "text" refers to what you are reading. When you read a particular book of the Bible make sure you read it as a complete book. To avoid error in interpreting it, do not take one particular verse "out of context" and believe that the verse means something that is not what God meant at all.

Scripture always has one meaning, but may have different applications. When studying scripture, be sure to determine what God meant rather than what the passage means to you personally. If Christians accept the view that the meaning of a text is what it means to them personally, then the Bible can have as many meanings as it does readers.

**Questions**

Why is conversion the first step in understanding the Bible?

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In what way were the Christians in Berea examples for us today? (Acts 17:11)

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Why should Christians read the Bible in Context?

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## **Lord, Teach Us to Pray**

The disciples came to Jesus one day and asked, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). They had noticed that no one had ever prayed like Jesus. His prayers were like nothing they had ever heard before.

Initially, prayer may be awkward. The words may come slowly, but continue to pray, for through prayer we can enter into the very presence of God. We can make our needs known to Him, but greater still we can worship and commune with Him.

Prayer is simply talking (and listening) to God. As a new believer, you have the privilege of coming to God with all your prayers and requests. You should speak to God about anything and everything. He will listen and answer. Prayer is an essential ingredient in growing your new relationship with Jesus Christ. Consider this wonderful truth: The God of the Bible actually eagerly waits for you to spend time with Him in prayer. Isn't that comforting?

Write down the following verses regarding prayer:

1 Timothy 2:5

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Psalms 100:4

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Psalms 51:2

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**Why should we pray?**

Christians should pray because the Bible tells us to pray. Jesus is our perfect example in prayer. His entire life on earth was grounded in prayer. Since Jesus Christ – the sinless one – found prayer important, sinful man should consider it indispensable. Jesus prayed at the beginning of His public ministry, before He chose the twelve disciples, before He fed the 5,000 people, at the grave of Lazarus, at the last supper, and at Gethsemane.

Write down the following verses regarding Jesus and prayer:

Matthew 9:38

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Luke 3:21

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Luke 6:12

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John 6:11

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## How should we pray?

*We should pray humbly.* The Apostle James tells us “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

*We should pray specifically.* You may find yourself in a particular situation where you may have to pray specifically for God to Intervene. Your prayers don’t have to be long. Sometimes Jesus’ prayers were short and concise.

*We should pray believably.* When you pray, expect God to answer. In Hebrews 11:6 we are told “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.” James said, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For not let that man suppose he will receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:6-7).

*We should pray diligently.* Ideally, our prayers should carry the four areas of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (ACTS). As we review God’s attributes, we see our human weakness, which leads us to earnest confession. Thanksgiving naturally follows, leading us to supplication.

*We should pray obediently.* There is no way we can be successful in our prayer lives if we are living with unconfessed sin. King David said in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear.” Sin – unconfessed sin – is disobedience to God and blocks our communication with Him.

## **When should we pray?**

The Bible says to pray without ceasing. You can literally pray short prayers all day long. You can do this at home, work, school, and just about anywhere at any time. However, it is definitely wise to set aside time and a location for daily prayer. Remember, God eagerly waits for you to talk to Him. His door is always open!

Write down the following verses on prayer:



## What should we pray for?

We are to pray for all things needed for our physical, mental and spiritual welfare. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for their daily bread. He was referring to their needs in life: food, clothing and shelter. Nothing is too small for God. He invites us to take everything to Him in prayer.

### Questions

Give two biblical definitions of prayer as found in Romans 8:15 and Jeremiah 33:3.

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According to James 1:6-7, what is a key element in prayer?

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What are some general areas of our lives we can pray for?

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Why do you pray?

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## Don't Forget Fellowship

You need the church and the church needs you. The Bible says that we are living stones, joined to one another in God's building. For real success in the Christian life every believer needs the fellowship of the church, a divine permanent institution of which Jesus said, "The gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

### What is the church?

When some hear the word church they may believe it to be a large building with a steeple. However, the Bible never describes the church in this manner. The New Testament speaks of the church as a local gathering of Christian believers or it refers to it as the universal family of Christ made up of Christians all over the world that have received Jesus as Savior.

Write down the following verses regarding the church:

Colossians 1:18

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Ephesians 5:23

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Acts 20:28

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**Why is the church important?**

The church is important because it is the organization of God, built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, and it will never pass away. It can never be destroyed! In Ephesians 1:22-23, we are told that God the Father has exalted Jesus Christ: “And [God] put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, emphasized the importance of this fact: “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). Paul instructed the believers in Ephesus that the proper love relationship between husband and wife should compare to the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-23).

One of the problems with the church is that it is made up of people like you and me. The church is a divine institution founded by Jesus, but it is also a human institution. It is an organization of imperfect people, all of whom have faults and weaknesses.

We freely admit our faults and want to correct our weaknesses. There is nothing God has given us, either on earth or in heaven, that is more important than the church.

### **Why be involved in the church?**

Often you may hear people say that they do not attend church because it is filled with hypocrites and people with problems. I'm sure these things are often true. There has never been a perfect church. Even the early church had their problems. However, people with problems need the church like sick people need a hospital.

As a new Christian you need to be built up in the faith. You need to receive spiritual instruction and have the freedom to share with other believers; to have the opportunity for Christian fellowship. The church, through a variety of ministries, is an instrument of training and provides an atmosphere for spiritual growth.

Every Christian needs the church and its people during the dark hours of life. The fellowship of believers forms a vital unity in which there is strength and comfort. Paul himself expressed his deep affection for the fellowship of other believers (Philippians 1:3-5).

It is not enough for us to merely attend and contribute. You are needed – your Godly example, your presence, your prayers, your influence, all that you are – these are needed. The ungodly do not hide their darkness. And we must not hide our light. The church urgently needs you.

### **What is the ministry of the church?**

The church is to assist the believer to grow in every way possible. The church is a nursery to the newborn and a place to worship, educate, and train the believer. Read Acts 2:41-47 and observe the characteristics of the first church.

The church is also responsible for spearheading worldwide evangelism (sharing the good news of Christ). Christ established the church to reach a lost world. The mission of the church is summed up in Christ's command: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

As Christians we are called to serve, forgive, and love one another. Jesus set the perfect example when He washed His disciples feet. He was showing them that He loved them and that they were important to Him.

## Questions

What is the church?

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Explain the difference between the local church and the church universal, according to 1 Corinthians 1:2

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Give a few reasons why believers should attend a local church

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Though the church exists to help believers grow, what is the responsibility of the church regarding the world?

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## **Here I am Lord, Use Me**

As a new Christian it may seem a little intimidating to share your faith with others. Pray that God will give you the opportunities to share your faith and the words to speak when the opportunity comes. Remember, all of your family, friends, neighbors, students, and coworkers are now watching your life. They have seen us in good times and bad. Do not be afraid to share your faith with them. All of these people Jesus had in mind when He said, “Preach the good news to everyone, everywhere” (Mark 16:15). So how does this happen?

### **The call of evangelism**

The word evangelism brings many thoughts to mind. Some think of tents and famous speakers, while others think about the terror of witnessing (sharing you faith). Some people approach witnessing as though they were selling a product. Their efforts come across like a sales pitch. If the person doesn't respond they feel like a failure. In reality, we are responsible for sharing the message of Christ and it is up to the recipient to respond. We may lead people to Christ but only Christ can save them. Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him (John 6:44).

Read Matthew 28:19-20 and describe three aspects of making disciples:

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Write down the following two verses as well:

Luke 24:46-47

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Acts 22:15

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## **The good news of evangelism**

According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 what is the good news that Paul preached?

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Why?

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## **The essentials of evangelism**

What must someone believe about Jesus Christ for salvation?  
Write down the following verses:

John 1:1

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John 14:6

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Acts 4:12

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Write down the following verses. They will assist you when you share the gospel:

Romans 3:23

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Romans 6:23

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Romans 5:8

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1 Peter 2:24

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Romans 10:9

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John 1:2

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### **Strategy for evangelism**

As state above, the manner in which we live our lives is crucial. Some have coined a term called “lifestyle evangelism.” You can actually win people to Christ by the way you live your life. Philippians 2:14-15 says, “Do all things without grumbling and disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights of the world.” The Apostle Paul relied on prayer when speaking the word of God to others.

Write down the following verses that describe how Paul did this:

Romans 10:1

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Colossians 4:3-4

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Acts 4:29

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Be sure to utilize God's word when sharing your faith. Write down the following verses:

Hebrews 4:12

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Acts 17:23

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2 Timothy 3:15

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## **Trials and Temptations**

Because you are growing in your new faith, your old way of living no longer fits. You need to replace natural impulses and old patterns of behavior with new attitudes and desires. The Bible describes this as a new nature God created in you. The Apostle Paul said in his letter to the Colossians, “You have been stripped of your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature in you” (Colossians 3:9-10).

Once you became a Christian, God gave you His Holy Spirit to help you live and grow in your new spiritual nature. As you begin to live what you learn, change will come. If we try to live a Godly life in our own strength, we will fail. God wants us to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome our old sinful nature.

If you thought that becoming a Christian means you leave all your problems behind – that from now on life will be filled with blue skies and green lights. That is not the case. As a follower of Jesus Christ you will still encounter trials and temptations. However, God uses painful or unpleasant experiences to help our faith grow.

## **The difference between trials and temptations**

There is a difference between being tempted and being tested (trials). The purpose of a temptation is to entice you and draw you into sin. The purpose of a trail, or test, is to develop Godly character or strengthen your faith.

Every trail you face is an opportunity to trust God. Sometimes, however, you may feel angry or think God has deserted you. That's when you are being tempted to turn your back on God and miss out on what He wants to develop in you. The devil wants to hold you back from growing in Christ. As Jesus said in John 10:10, the devil is a thief who wants to steal, kill and destroy.

Write down the following verse regarding trials and temptations:

James 1:2-4

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## Ways to persevere in trials

Usually our first response to difficulty is to ask, “why me?” We don’t always understand what God is doing. Life’s lessons often come with thorny circumstances. Some crises, loss, or drastic change may occur. You may not feel God’s presence. Your prayers seem to go unanswered. You may wonder if God has punished or abandoned you.

Unlike temptation (where running away is the best option) God wants us to persevere through times of testing. We may never get an answer to all of our questions, but we can take comfort knowing that God only allows difficulties in our life to cause our faith to grow. He wants us to live by faith and not by feelings.

Write down the following verses regarding trials:

1 Peter 1:7

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2 Corinthians 1:3-4

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John 16:33

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Luke 6:47-48

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2 Corinthians 4:7-18 (summarize only)

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Psalm 55:22

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## Ways to resist temptation

Where does temptation come from? The Bible teaches that Satan is the tempter with demonic forces who do his bidding. The devil's strategy includes using the "world" and the "flesh." What does this mean? The "world" refers to a way of thinking that is hostile to God. The "flesh" refers to our own nature, which is influenced by the world.

Temptation refers to our own evil natures that lead us to sin. When given any temptation we simply cannot blame the devil. He (or ourselves) may play a role in getting us to think about these things, but we are the ones who listen and give into evil desires. The Bible calls Satan the god of this world who blinds the eyes of those who don't believe. Never put a welcome mat out for an evil thought.

Write down the following verses:

Ephesians 6:11-12

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2 Corinthians 4:4

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1 John 2:16

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James 1:14-15

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1 Corinthians 10:13

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James 4:7-8

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## **Doctrinal Statement**

### **Calvary Chapel San Bernardino**

**I. THE SCRIPTURES:** We believe the Old and New Testaments to be plenary, verbally inspired by God, inerrant in the original writings, and the supreme and final authority in faith and life. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21)

**II. THE GODHEAD:** We believe the Godhead eternally exists in the three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three Persons are one God having precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections. (Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14)

**III. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:** We believe in:

- (a) His eternal existence as God. (John 1:1)
- (b) His incarnation by means of the Virgin Birth. (Matthew 1:23)
- (c) His death on the cross as the substitutionary atonement for sin. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- (d) His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead. (John 20:20)
- (e) His present ministry of intercession in heaven. (Hebrews 7:25)
- (f) His personal return to earth. (Matthew 24:30, Rev. 19:11-13)

**IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT:** We believe the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, convicts men of sin, regenerates, baptizes, indwells, seals, and sets apart believers unto a holy life; that He keeps and empowers believers day by day; that He is the Teacher of the Word of God and the Guide of our daily life. (Acts 5:3-4, 1 Corinthians 6:11, John 16:8-11)

**V. MAN:** We believe:

- (a) Man was created innocent and pure. (Gen. 2:7, 3:19)
- (b) Adam fell through the sin of disobedience. (Gen. 3:6-13)
- (c) Therefore, all men are corrupted in body, mind, and spirit. (Romans 3:23)
- (d) Therefore, all are in need of redemption. (Romans 3:10)

**VI. SALVATION:** We believe:

- (a) It is by grace, a free gift of God apart from works. (Eph. 2:8)
- (b) It requires repentance--turning from your way to God's way. (Mark 2:17)
- (c) It is through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Gal. 2:16)
- (d) All who receive Him are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and become the children of God. (John 1:12)
- (e) True salvation will be manifested by a changed life. (2 Cor. 5:17)

**VII. THE FUTURE:** We believe:

- (a) In a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church. (1 Thes. 1:10, 5:9)
- (b) In the personal, visible, bodily, premillennial return of Jesus Christ to earth. (Rev. 1:7, Matthew 24:30)
- (c) In the bodily resurrection of the just to eternal abode in the glory of His presence. (Luke 14:14, John 5:28-29)
- (d) In the bodily resurrection of the unjust to judgement and everlasting conscious punishment in the Lake of Fire. (Rev. 20:11-15)

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