



KNOW HOW

Part 1

Simple Bible studies
for living the Christian life

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1: Know how the Bible is God's Word

Christian faith is based upon the Bible (*Luke 24:44,45; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4*). How do we know that the Bible is true and that it is God's word?

Ultimate certainty about the Bible is given by the Holy Spirit's witness in our hearts. But here are ten reasons (out of many more) for believing the Bible to be the Word of God.

1. It is the claim of Scripture itself (*2 Peter 1:20,21*). While this does not prove the claim, it is a fact to be accounted for. How can a book so right in other respects be wrong on the crucial point of the way it sees itself? (*2 Timothy 3:16*).

2. It was the belief of Jesus. His testimony is the greatest reason of all for Christians to accept the Bible as God's Word. If we are followers of Jesus at all, we should follow him in his regard for the Bible as the word of God. (*Matthew 5:18; Mark 7:9,10; Luke 24:25-27; John 10:34,35*). His view of Scripture was not something he held simply in order to be accepted within the Jewish culture, he used the Scripture in conflict with Satan, (*Matthew 4:4, 7, 10*), so his view of Scripture was supra-cultural.

3. Another reason for believing the Bible to be the word of God is its fulfilled prophecy. The Old Testament was completed at least three hundred years before Christ. Yet many passages in the Old Testament foretell the coming of Jesus, his birth (*Micah 5:2*), his ministry (*Isaiah 35:5,6*), his death and resurrection. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 are particularly to be noted in their predictions and descriptions of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Not only so but the Bible predicts the turning of people from all nations to follow the Lord, just as is happening in our day. (*Isaiah 2:2-5, 49:6; John 12:32; Rev.7:9,10*).

4. The Bible has a doctrinal and ethical superiority to all other books or religious systems (*Matthew 5:43,44*). It confronts us with the most awesome description of God. The high ideals, especially of the Sermon on the Mount, have often been acknowledged as right even by unbelievers and are denied by few who have actually read and studied the Bible.

5. The Bible has an extraordinary power of insight into human nature and an ability to expose our sins (*Hebrews 4:12*). It is not just that we read this book, rather this book is able to read us and we feel it in our souls. What produces such results if the Bible is not the word of our Maker and our Judge who understands us better than we understand ourselves?

6. There is a natural logic to belief in the Bible as God's word. Thomas Watson, one of the great English Puritans, wrote, 'I wonder whence the Scriptures should come, if not from God. Bad men could not be the authors of it. Would their minds be employed in indicting such holy lines? Would they declare so fiercely against sin? Good men could not be the authors of it. Could they write in such a strain or it stand their grace to counterfeit God's name, and put, 'Thus saith the Lord', to a book of their own devising?'

7. The Scriptures have a wonderful unity. The Bible is composed of 66 books, written over a period of about 1500 years, by over 40 different people. These people come from different levels of society, times and backgrounds. Yet they produced a book that is a marvellous unity of doctrine, historical viewpoint, ethics and hopes. It is, in short, a single unfolding story of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. What can account for this unity but that behind the human authors is the one perfect, sovereign, guiding hand of God.

8. The uncommon accuracy of the Bible supports the idea that it is the word of God. On many occasions when (for example in archaeology) scholars have thought they had proved the Bible wrong on some point of fact, further research has only shown the Bible to be right and its accusers to be mistaken.

9. One more reason for believing the Bible to be the word of God is its extraordinary preservation down the centuries. Throughout much of history the Bible has been the object of extreme hatred by those in authority in different countries. They have tried to stamp it out. Yet the text survived. If the Bible had been only a human book it would probably have been eliminated years ago in the face of such opposition as other books have been. But it has endured, fulfilling the words of Jesus, who said, 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.' (*Matthew 24:35*).

10. A final reason for believing the Bible to be the word of God is its demonstrated ability to transform human lives. Its message of the love of God in Jesus Christ speaks to the deepest human needs. It changes the lives of individuals. God has used this book in preaching to bring revivals which have transformed the spiritual and moral tone of nations. God has used this book to civilize the world.

The Bible has something to say about all the important issues of life and brings untold benefit to our lives because it leads us to Jesus.

2: Know how someone becomes a Christian

Going to church does not make someone a Christian. Neither does being born in a 'Christian' country nor being a nice or kind person.

There are five essential ingredients which together go to make a true Christian.

1. A Christian is someone who acknowledges the God of the Bible as the living and true God.

- The Christian life is not simply a life of kind behaviour, but a life which takes God as real. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (*Hebrews 11:6; Acts 16:34*).
- Further the Christian acknowledges the God of Jesus Christ, the God of the Bible as the only true God. (*Exodus 20:3; John 17:3*). There is according to the Bible, one God in three Persons, these are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, (*Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14*).
- But although acknowledgement of God is essential to being a Christian, this on its own, does not make a person a Christian. (*James 2:19*).

2. A Christian is someone who has recognized that their biggest problem is their own sin in the sight of God.

- Sin is the breaking of God's law, (*1 John 3:4; Exodus 20:3-17*). Christian faith begins when people realize that they are sinners and sin is a terrible offence to God (*Matthew 1:21; 1 Timothy 1:15; Luke 5:31,32*).
- As sinners we are guilty before God, we are guilty because we are part of a guilty human race (*Romans 5:12*) and because of our personal wrongdoing (*Romans 3:19,23*).
- As sinners we are innately selfish and rebellious against God. What we do arises out of what we are. (*Mark 7:21; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 8:7*).
- As sinners we are cut off from God and exposed to his wrath. It is not our smallness as human beings, or our ignorance or our lack of spiritual development, but our sinfulness which separates us from God (*Isaiah 59:2; Ephesians 2:1,2; Romans 1:18; Romans 2:5*). The ways in which people become aware of their sinfulness may differ but they all come to see sin as their greatest problem.

- 3. A Christian is someone who has come to see Jesus Christ as God's remedy for human sin.**
- Our plight is such that we cannot save ourselves, but God, in his love took the initiative (*John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4*).
 - God's way of salvation is not a philosophy or a technique but a Person - Jesus Christ (*Mark 1:1; John 14:6; Galatians 4:4,5*).
 - God's way of salvation is centred on Christ's death as our substitute on the cross (*Mark 10:45; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 6:14*).
 - God's way of salvation is adequate for all and offered to all people without discrimination (*Isaiah 55:1,2; Colossians 1:23; 1 John 2:2*). By Christ's death we can be forgiven (*Luke 24:46,47*).
- 4. A Christian is someone who has wholeheartedly complied with God's terms for personally appropriating forgiveness through Christ.**
- God's terms on which our sins are taken away through Christ's atonement are two - we must repent and believe (*Mark 1:15,16; Acts 20:21*).
 - REPENTANCE is not mere acknowledgment of sin or temporary feelings of remorse. It is being sorry for our sin and, with God's help, turning from sin to God (*Proverbs 28:13; Acts 3:19; Luke 15:18,19*).
 - FAITH begins with knowing certain facts about Christ (*1 Corinthians 15:1-5*) but expresses itself in personal trust in Jesus to save us. (*John 20:28,29; Acts 16:31*).
 - All other supposed ways of salvation are abandoned, the Christian trusts in THE LORD JESUS CHRIST alone. (*John 14:6; Acts 4:12*).
 - Genuine repentance and faith always go together.
- 5. A Christian is someone who shows by their way of life that their claims to repentance and faith in Christ are real.**

A true Christian is not perfect, he or she makes many mistakes (*1 John 1:8*). But the Christian confesses their sin to God and honestly endeavours, God helping them, to live out a life consistent with turning to God. (*Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:10*).

Their life has changed.

- An intellectual change.
The Christian has come to believe in Christ (*1 John 5:1*).
- A moral change.
A Christian seeks to obey Christ (*1 John 3:9; John 14:15*).
- A social change.
The Christian comes to love others, especially other Christians (*1 John 3:14; Galatians 5:6; John 13:34*).
- A spiritual change.
The Holy Spirit has come into the Christian's life (*1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:13; John 3:3*).
- A change of allegiance.
A Christian is prepared to be known as a follower of Christ. (*Mark 8:38; 1 Peter 4:16; Acts 2:38*).

Here we have seen what makes someone a Christian according to the Bible. The Bible's answer to the question of what makes a Christian is the only true answer.

If the Christian or the church is not clear as to the Biblical answer to this question they have lost their identity, nor can they give clear directions to a lost world as to the way of salvation.

3: Know how much God loves you

Christianity is the good news about the love of God for us all, which he has shown through Jesus. (*John 3:16*).

1. The FACT of God's love

Whoever we are, whatever our background, whatever we have done, God values us and loves us.

God loves those who are not Christians.

- If you are not yet a Christian, God loves you like someone who misses a lost a treasure, like a parent who has lost a child. (*Luke 15:8-10; Luke 15:20*). Although he is angry over sin he longs to be able to forgive you and receive you back. (*Luke 15:22-24; 2 Peter 3:9*).
- God even loves those who are his enemies (*Matthew 5:43,44*).
- He desires to see all people saved (*1 Timothy 2:4*).

God loves those who have become Christians

- He forgives, loves and receives us because we belong to Jesus (*Colossians 1:13,14; John 16:27*).
- He loves us even though we continue to fail and are not sinless (*1 John 1:8,9; Romans 5:10; Revelation 3:19*).
- He loves us with a love that will not let us go (*John 10:28-30*).

2. The ORIGIN of God's love

God is naturally disposed to love, because his very nature is love (*1 John 4:8,16; Ephesians 2:4*).

- He loved us before we ever loved him (*1 John 4:19*).
- He delights in showing mercy to the undeserving (*Micah 7:18*).

- His love for us stretches back into eternity past (*Ephesians 1:4,5*). As we become Christians we find that he chose us long before we ever chose him (*Romans 8:29,30*).
- People can turn their back on his love - but even as they go to hell God weeps for them (*Luke 19:41,42*).

3. **The EXPRESSION of God's love**

We only understand that God loves us, and the extent to which he loves us as we look at Calvary's cross.

- God the Father loves us so much that he gave the one he most dearly loved for us, his own Son (*John 3:16; 1 John 4:9,14*).
- God the Son, the Lord Jesus, loves us so much that he laid down his life to pay for our sins (*1 John 3:16; Galatians 2:20*).
- The extent of God's love is seen in that he did this when we had no love for him and were his enemies because of our sin (*Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18*).
- Calvary is God's great act of love. We cannot read God's love for us from our circumstances. Often those God especially loves the most face trouble. We understand God's love by looking at the cross, the most wonderful expression of his love which enables our forgiveness.

4. **The CONSEQUENCES of God's love**

Through God's act of dealing with our sins at Calvary a vast array of benefits are given to us in God's love.

- He forgives all our sins (*1 John 1:7-9*).
- He brings us from the dominion of Satan into Christ's kingdom (*Colossians 1:13*).
- He gives us his Spirit to give us new power to live. In his Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, God gives us himself as he comes to take up residence in our lives (*Acts 2:38; John 14:15-17*).

- He gives us peace with himself (*Romans 5:1*).
- He gives us a place in his family (*1 John 3:1-3*).
- He brings us into his grace. He generously provides all we need as Christians (*Romans 8:28; Matthew 6:33*).
- He gives us eternal life and the certainty after death of heaven (*1 John 5:11; Philippians 1:21-23*).
- Though Christians may know many troubles, they actually turn out for our blessing (*2 Corinthians 4:17*).

5. **The GOAL of God's love**

By his love for us which comes into our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ, God is transforming us.

- To give us characters like Jesus Christ, which is true loving holiness (*Romans 8:29; Galatians 5:22,23*).
- To bring us to heaven where we will forever enjoy and worship God and he will forever love and bless us (*Ephesians 1:5,6; Revelation 22:1-5*).
- The ups and downs of life can hurt us very deeply. We are vulnerable people. But as we understand and receive by faith the love God has for us in all its variety of dimensions he gives us strength and joy to live as whole persons.

4: Know how to get the most out of the Bible

The Bible is the Word of God and God's Word is our spiritual food, which gives us life and strength as Christians (*Matthew 4:4; John 6:63*).

The Bible gives us all the wisdom we need to live a life pleasing to God (*2 Tim. 3:16,17; Psalm 19:7-11*).

While we must use our minds in seeking to benefit from God's Word, our primary requirement is not in intellectual but spiritual (*1 Corinthians 2:14; Matthew 11:25,26*). We need to be teachable.

Our approach to the Word of God must be wholly without pride or self-confidence. We need to humbly pray that the Holy Spirit will open our eyes and gives us spiritual discernment and understanding (*Psalm 119:18; John 5:39*).

There are three main ways in which people are blessed by the Word of God.

1. Listening to the Word of God in public

- The public declaration of his Word has always been God's chosen way of promoting his truth in the world (*Jude 14; 2 Peter 2:5; Mark 1:14*).
- This occurs both through the public reading of Scripture (*Nehemiah 8:2,3; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13*) and through the preaching of the Bible by God-gifted preachers and teachers (*Ephesians 4:11; Titus 1:3*).
- The public declaration of God's Word is central in evangelism (*Romans 10:14; Acts 8:4*), and central in the church (*Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 4:2*).

If the public declaration of God's Word is given such high priority it is essential that we LISTEN well.

Before listening to God's Word

- prepare your heart (*Psalm 119:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 2:1,2*),
- pray for the preacher (*Ephesians 6:18,19; Colossians 4:2,3*),
- pray for yourself (*1 Samuel 3:9,10*).

During listening to God's Word

- give full attention with your mind (take notes if this helps concentration) (*Mark 4:13-15; Nehemiah 8:3; Luke 10:16*).
- listen with an open, glad, humble heart, with faith (*James 1:21; Revelation 3:20; Hebrews 4:2*).
- listen with a determination to obey God (*Joshua 24:15; Acts 22:10; Romans 1:5*).

After listening to God's Word

- take time to remember what you have heard (*Mark 4:13-15; 2 Timothy 2:14; Titus 3:1*).
- take time to check what you have heard (*Acts 17.11*).
- Seek God's help and put what you have learned into practice (*James 1:22-25; Galatians 5:6; Matthew 7:21; John 14: 21, 23*).

2. **Meditating on the Word of God in private**

We are also to study and meditate on the Scriptures as individuals. (*Psalm 1:1,2; Psalm 119:15,23,148; Ezra 7:10; 2 Timothy 2:7,15*)

Meditation is more than simply reading the Scriptures.

Biblical meditation is the devotional practice of quietly pondering the words of a verse or passage of Scripture, with a receptive heart, and allowing the Holy Spirit to give insight into its meaning and to apply the Word to our inner being. This requires time and quietness. We will only find this if we make it a priority over other things in our lives. Luke 10. 38 – 42.

In practice this means setting aside time when you are not too tired and can give attention to God in quietness. It also means laying aside other activities, (switch off the phone, the internet and/or TV).

Pray before you start. Be prayerful and let God search your heart while you read his word.

Ask yourself how the passage you are reading applies to your life. Don't be in a rush. Ask the Holy Spirit to feed your soul from God's word.

Think about the passage you have read. What are the verses about ? What do they teach you about God ? What do they teach you about what people are like ? What promises or warnings does God give in the passage ? Is there an example of behaviour to follow or to be avoided? Ask yourself these things and apply them to yourself

Then turn what you have learned into prayer. These may be prayers of worship for what you have learned about God. They may be prayers of thanksgiving for what God has done or has promised to do. They can be prayers of petition, asking God to change you and bless you in accordance with what you have read. They could be prayers of dedication to God in promising God to seek to follow the example you have read about..

The Bible promises such meditation will make your life fruitful (*Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2,3*).

3. Sharing the Word of God in groups

Scripture encourages us to share God's Word with one another in different gatherings.

The Word of God is to be shared in the family (*Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:6,7; 2 Timothy 3:15*).

The Word of God is to be shared in the church or home group (*Acts 18:24 - 26; Colossians 3:16; Malachi 3:16*).

Often we can learn a great deal from one another as people share their experiences of how the Word of God has worked out practically in their lives. But this will only come as the group is prayerful, honest with one another, and free from pride, and we focus on practical Christian living.

God and his Word

Note the connection between being filled with the Holy Spirit and letting the Word dwell in you richly (*Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18f*).

The promise is that through the Word we meet with the LORD himself (*John 14:23; 1 Peter 2:1-3*).

5: Know how to enjoy church

We need to be committed to the fellowship and work of the local church. This is to be publicly displayed through baptism (see further study).

Being part of a church can be a wonderful enrichment of our lives. How can church be enjoyable ?

1. Realise what the church is

Repeatedly through the Bible God promises 'I will be your God and you will be my people' (*Genesis 17:7,8; Exodus 29:45; Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 30:22; Ezekiel 11:20; Hebrews 8:10; Revelation 21:2,3*). The church is God's people.

You are not the only one the Lord has saved. In all centuries, the world over, there are saved people - the church universal. In this town and neighbourhood, the Lord has his people - the local church. The local church is a dwelling place of God (*1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:15*).

Because we all belong to the Lord, we also belong to each other

- like the parts of a human's body (*1 Corinthians 12:14-27*),
- like the bricks of a building (*1 Peter 2:4-8*),
- like members of a family (*Galatians 6:10*).

2. Realise why the church has a membership

Everyone is welcome to attend the services of the church whether they are Christians or not. But it is good for a church to have a membership for a number of reasons.

- Truth In order that the witness of the local church is clear it is essential that those forming the local church together pledge their agreement in the essential truths of the Christian faith (*Ephesians 4:5; 1 Timothy 3:15*).
- Organisation A church should be run efficiently and in an orderly way (*1 Corinthians 14:40*). A membership of the church is necessary in order to know who is committed to the work and future direction of the church. (*Ephesians 4:16*).

- Pastoral care By membership a Christian submits to the leadership and pastoral care of the church (*1 Peter 5:1-5*).
- Help In cases of need the primary responsibility of the church is to its own members (*Galatians 6:10*). A church needs to know who those members are.
- Evangelism By church membership we follow the New Testament pattern in that all our evangelism and missionary outreach will be under the guidance and with the support of the local church, with the purpose not only to see people saved, but committed to the work of the local church (*Acts 2:47; Acts 13:2,3*).

3. **Realise what the church should do**

Seeking the lost. The church must witness.

The church has been left on earth to bring the gospel to the world. The church is God's vehicle of witness for Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, that people might be saved (*Acts 1:8; John 20:21; Matthew 28:15; 1 Timothy 3:15*).

As such the church must work together for the proclamation of the good news and to see sinners saved (*Acts 4:23-31; Philippians 1:27,28; 1 Thessalonians 1:8*).

In this great work each person in the church has a part to play (*Colossians 4:2-6; 1 Peter 3:15,16*).

Meeting together. The church must meet together

(*Matthew 18:20; Acts 2:1,44; 1 Corinthians 11:18; Hebrews 10:25*).

- to worship God together regularly (*Acts 2:46,47; 1 Corinthians 11:33; Acts 20:7*).
- to build each other up with God's word (*Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 4:13*).
- to serve God in serving one another with whatever gift God has given us (*Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10,11*).
- to pray for God's blessing (*Romans 15:30; Acts 12:5; Acts 1:14*).

4. Realise what is required in meeting together

Our meeting together must be more than a mere social get together. It must be in the Spirit of Christ and with sincerity (*John 4:24*).

Therefore, we need to

- Prepare our hearts. God looks at our hearts (*1 Samuel 16:7*). Make sure there are no barriers between you and God or grudges between you and other people (*Matthew 5:23,24; 1 John 4:20,21*).

Come with thankfulness for the privilege of having access to God, and with faith in the Lord and his goodness (*Hebrews 10:22; Philippians 4:4*).

- Actively seek God. Ask for God's blessing by praying. Be expectant of meeting with him and hearing from him. Pay attention to Scripture which is God's word (*1 Peter 4:11*). Give your heart to the Lord in praise (*Psalms 103:1*).

5. Realise what the church needs

Fellowship is not automatic - it must be worked at (*Phil. 2:1-4; Eph. 4:3*).

The key words are LOVE and FORGIVENESS (*Ephesians 4:32*).

What does that mean practically? Here are some `do s` and `don'ts`

Don't

gossip
condemn
be touchy
make mountains out of molehills
ignore anybody
be a passenger
look for the limelight
be stingy

Do

seek God's will not your own
be slow to be angry
pray for those you find difficult.
work for harmony
help those who fall
look for people you can help
pull your weight
be generous

Sadly, there are lukewarm Christians who merely attend church. But there are also HOT Christians for whom Christ is all in all. Don't be lukewarm, be HOT and you will find that the church will begin to come alive and we will know great joy together.

Realise, that it is up to you!