

Love for God/Seeking God

Objective

To help the student see God's heart towards them, get excited about a relationship with Him and make foundational decisions that will guide them through the rest of the study series.

The Nature of God

- ✓ Psalm 103:8, 11, 17
 - God's love is unlimited, inexhaustible and infinite.
- ✓ Ephesians 3:20
 - God's power is immeasurable. Scientists can gauge the power of a nuclear explosion, but no one can measure God's strength and ability.
- ✓ Isaiah 40:28
 - God's understanding is so profound that no one can comprehend its depths.
- ✓ If God were limited in one or more of these qualities – love, power or understanding – there would be reason for worry and insecurity. However, His love is abounding, His power is immeasurable and His understanding is unfathomable, so we can be confident and secure.

The Greatest Commandment

- ✓ Matthew 22:37-39
 - How can we love God with all our Heart? Soul? Mind? (Mark 12:30) Strength?
 - Why does God want you to love Him this way?
 - According to this Scripture, is love for God an emotion or a decision?
 - Do you feel that you love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength?
 - Do you want to?
 - What do you think it will take to love God the way He wants you to love Him?

A Personal Relationship with God

- ✓ Jeremiah 3:19-21
 - What type of relationship does God want to have with you, according to this passage?
 - God uses two analogies here to describe our relationship with Him: That between a father and a son and that between a husband and wife. How does your relationship with God resemble that between a father and son? How does it resemble the relationship between a husband and wife?

- How does it make you feel to know God desires this type of relationship with you?
- We can see from this passage that we have the free will to accept or reject His love. Why would anyone reject God's love?

God's Plan for You

- ✓ Acts 17:24-27
 - God has arranged all times, places and events in your life so that you will see your need for Him, meet people that can help you and reach out for Him. How does that make you feel?
- ✓ Jeremiah 29:11-13
 - What does this passage tell you about God's vision for you?
 - How does this passage make you feel towards God?
 - When does it say God's vision for you will come to fulfillment?
 - What does it mean to seek God with all our heart?
 - How can you, as an individual, seek God with all of your heart?

Challenges

- ✓ Pray and read the Bible daily. The book of John is a good place to start.
- ✓ Come to a church service or devotional.
- ✓ Get together again soon for the next study.

The Word

Objective

To ensure that the student will make the Bible the standard for their life and beliefs and to prepare their heart for God's Word to change it.

Preparatory Questions

- ✓ How has reading the Bible and praying daily helped you?
- ✓ Do you believe that the whole Bible is the inspired Word of God?
 - If they answer no, do the Proof of Christianity study with them.
 - If the answer is yes, continue with The Word study.

A Message from God

- ✓ 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - What does it mean when it says that all Scripture is “God breathed?”
 - What do the words teach, correct, rebuke and train mean in this context?
 - What type of attitude should you have toward being taught, rebuked, corrected and trained by the Bible?
 - Are you ready for the Bible to have this kind of affect on you?
 - What does it mean to be thoroughly equipped?

Teachings and the Truth

- ✓ John 8:31-34
 - Did the Jews in this passage have faith in Jesus?
 - Was that faith alone enough for Jesus to consider them freed from their sin?
 - According to Jesus, what else did they need?
 - It is not enough for us to know and believe the Bible. We must do what it says.
 - Give an example of the difference between knowing the Bible and following it.

Traditions

- ✓ Mark 7:6-13
 - What is a religious tradition?

- How can a religious tradition nullify the Word of God?
- Are you willing to believe God’s Word over anything that you may currently believe?

Quality Time in the Word

- ✓ Acts 17:10-11 and Psalm 19:7-11
 - Why is it important to read your Bible every day?
 - If you don’t read the Bible, where will your convictions come from?
 - Why is it so important to pray every day?
- ✓ Offer to have a quiet time with them.

Life and Doctrine

- ✓ 1 Timothy 4:16
 - What is doctrine?
 - What would happen if you watched your life carefully, but not your doctrine?
 - What would happen if you watched your doctrine carefully, but not your life?
 - Where is correct doctrine found?

There Will Be a Judge

- ✓ John 12:47-50
 - What will judge us on the Day of Judgment, according to this passage?
Where can you find the words of Jesus?
 - What do people commonly think will judge us?
Being a good person.
Doing more good than bad.
Being involved in a church.
Believing in Jesus.
Not doing any really bad things.
Feeling very emotionally close to Jesus or God.
 - How does it make you feel knowing that you will be judged by Jesus’ words?
What does that knowledge motivate you to do?

The Heart of the Matter

- ✓ Psalm 119:11

– How can you hide God’s Word in your heart?

Challenges

- ✓ Continue to read the Bible and pray daily.
- ✓ Start to keep a spiritual journal with Scriptures that are significant to you. Write down your thoughts and feelings about those verses.

Discipleship

Objective:

To help the student understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and for them to make the decision to become one.

What is a Disciple?

- ✓ Matthew 28:18-20
 - What is Jesus' vision and purpose for everyone in the world?
 - What is the definition of a disciple?
 - What should a person do after he or she becomes a disciple, according to this passage?
 - What should the church do for a person after he or she becomes a disciple?
 - What is the difference between teaching *knowledge* and teaching *obedience*?
 - Illustrate the difference between knowing the truth and living the truth.
 - Share with them about your own discipling relationship in the church.
 - What is the last thing Jesus taught before he went back to heaven?
 - God wants everyone to become a disciple of Jesus Christ and then to help others become His disciples.

They Were Called Christians

- ✓ Acts 11:25-26
 - In this passage, is there a difference between the terms “disciple” and “Christian?”
 - Here, shortly after Jesus' life on earth, people used the terms interchangeably. Why do you think these terms eventually developed different meanings in people's minds?
 - We will study what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. In doing so, we will also study what it means to be a Christian.

Making the Decision to Crucify Your Old Self

- ✓ Galatians 2:20-21
 - What does Paul mean when he says that he has been crucified with Christ and that he no longer lives?
 - It means he put to death his old life – giving up his sin, plans and self-will – and started living in full devotion and obedience to Jesus. He was willing to go anywhere, do anything and give up everything for God.

- ✓ Luke 9:23-26
 - According to this passage, is the decision that Paul made only necessary for him, or is it a decision that anyone who wants to be Jesus Christ’s disciple needs to be make?
 - What does it mean to take up your cross daily?
 - What does it mean to lose your life for Jesus in order to save it?
 - Why does God want us to crucify our old self and instead live for Christ?
 - What would happen if you tried to follow Jesus but did not stop living for yourself?
- ✓ Share with the student some personal experiences of when you have crucified your old self.
- ✓ Personally, what would you have to give up to be a follower of Jesus?
- ✓ What are the benefits of a life with Christ? Some answers: True life, life to the full, eternal life.

The Cost of Being a Disciple

- ✓ Luke 14:25-33
 - Jesus wants unrivaled love. Do you love Jesus more than you love anyone else? (Matthew. 10:37)
 - Jesus doesn’t want you to make an emotional or rash decision. He wants you to think through all of the implications that this decision will have on your life and in the lives of those around you. (2 Timothy 3:12)
 - God is the bigger army. You are the smaller army. The battle represents Judgment Day. There is no way you can win this battle, so you must ask for terms of a peace agreement long before the battle occurs. You must then fulfill every term of peace that God establishes.
 - In ancient Israel, if one nation surrendered to another they became that nation’s slaves. God’s terms of peace are total, unconditional surrender. You must give up everything you have to become Jesus’ disciple. What do you think He means by “everything?”
 - Are you willing to crucify your old self every day and give up everything to be Jesus’ disciple?

A New Mission in Life

- ✓ Mark 1:16-20
 - What new mission did Jesus give His new disciples?
 - Why do you think Jesus want His disciples to be involved in making more disciples?
 - What would you say is your mission in life right now?
 - Are you ready to take on Jesus’ mission to make other disciples? (Luke 19:10)

Producing Seeds

- ✓ John 12:23-26
 - What does this passage say will happen when your old self dies?

– What does that mean? What seeds can you produce?

Challenge

- ✓ Make the decision to die to yourself and to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

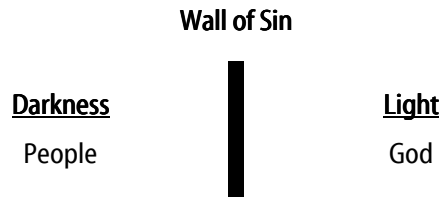
Sin Study

Objective

To teach the student the effects of sin, identify the student's specific sinful nature and bring him or her to a state of repentance through the Word and the Holy Spirit.

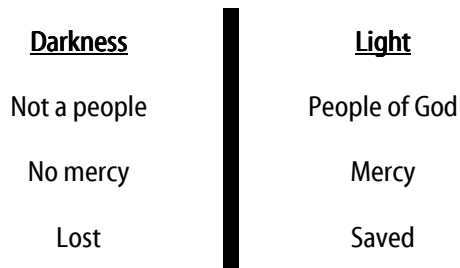
Sin and Separation

- ✓ Isaiah 59:1-2



- What does sin do to our relationship with God?
- How many sins did it take to separate Adam and Eve from God?
- The first sin you ever committed separated you from God, and ever since then you have needed a savior to reunite you with Him.

- ✓ 1 Peter 2:9-10



- Every human being is either in the darkness or in the light. There is no twilight zone.
- Where are you?

All Have Sinned

- ✓ Romans 3:23
 - How many people need to be saved from the consequences of their sins?
 - No one can save himself. God must save all of us.

- ✓ Romans 3:10-12.
 - Analogy of "sweet Aunt Tilly" and a serial murderer: No one is good enough on their own to go to heaven, no matter how good they seem to us.

The Wages of Sin

- ✓ Romans 6:23
 - What will happen to us if God does not save us from the consequences of our sins?
 - What have you earned?

Confessing Sin

- ✓ James 5:16
 - Why do you think God commands you to confess your sins?
 - Why does he tell us to pray for each other's sins?

Defining Sin

- ✓ Galatians 5:19-21
 - Go through this list one sin at a time. Explain what each sin means.
 - Have the Christians confess their sins.
 - Have the student confess his or her sins.

And the like ...

- ✓ Revelations 21:8, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, James 4:17, Ephesians 4:28-5:5, 1 Corinth 6:9-11
 - Read these lists, but for the sake of time just have the student confess the sins mentioned in these Scriptures that they see in their own lives.
 - Encourage them to go home and make a detailed list of their sins. This will bring them to a deeper understanding and conviction about their sin.
 - Assure them that they can keep their sin list but that you would like to discuss it in your next study.

Godly Sorrow and Repentance

- ✓ 2 Corinthians 7:10-12
 - What are the two types of sorrow that we see a person can have towards their sin?
 - What is the result of worldly sorrow?
 - What is the result of Godly sorrow?

- ✓ **Worldly sorrow:**
 - Justify: “You don’t understand the circumstances.”
 - Minimize: “It’s not that big of a deal” or “Everyone does it.”
 - Blame shift: “They caused me to sin.”
 - Have self-pity: “I’m so bad, I’m not even going to try to change.”
 - Hide or cover up: Reveal only a partial truth or hide sin completely.

- ✓ **Godly sorrow:**
 - Earnestness: Truthful, genuine, sincere and embarrassingly open.
 - Eagerness: Urgent to repent.
 - Indignation: Disgust and hatred of all your sin.
 - Alarm: Shocked at what you have done.
 - Longing: A constant desire to change.
 - Concern: You feel remorse over the pain your sin has caused God and others.
 - Readiness to see justice done: Ready to do or suffer through anything to make right your relationship with God.
 - At every point, you have proved yourself to be innocent: You repent of every sin you have committed, even the “little” ones. You don’t feel “horrible” about one and “not that bad” about another.

- ✓ David in Psalm 51 is a great example of someone having Godly sorrow.

- ✓ What kind of sorrow do you have towards your sin?

Challenge

- ✓ Now is a great time to go and pray with the student about how they feel regarding their sin. They need to get in touch with how God feels about it, the consequences it has had in their life and in the lives of others and how desperately they want God to change their heart and life. Their prayers will give them hope that they can change as God works miracles in their heart.

The Cross

Objective:

To help the students fully understand and be overwhelmed with gratitude for what Jesus has done for them. This study should also produce an intense hatred for their sinful nature as they see what their sin has done to Christ.

The Passion of Christ

- ✓ Read all of Matthew 26:36–27:56

Vs. 26:36-46

- Jesus makes a decision to die to his own will and to follow the will of His Father because of His love for God and for you. This decision mirrors the decision that you made to stop living for yourself after the “Discipleship” study.

Vs. 26:47-56

- Jesus’ closest friends betray and desert Him, yet he is still willing to die for them and for you.

Vs. 26:57-67

- Jesus is falsely accused, hit, slapped, insulted and spit on.
- God in the flesh, who made these men and all of creation, allows them to abuse Him.

Vs. 26:69-75

- Peter, Jesus’ closest friend, three times denies knowing Him.
- Jesus’ loneliness, abandonment and emotional pain mount as nearly everyone deserts Him.

Vs. 27:1-10

- Judas, after betraying Jesus, kills himself.
- We see here two men, Peter and Judas, handling their sin against Jesus in two distinctly different ways.
- In John 21, we see Peter, after denying Jesus, run back to Him to repent. He believed that Jesus would forgive him.
- Judas is full of worldly sorrow and self-pity. He does not believe either that he can repent or that there is hope of forgiveness. In his self-pity, he commits suicide and loses any chance of forgiveness forever.
- On one hand, we must be full of remorse that our sin killed Jesus. On the other hand, we must have complete confidence that Jesus is eager to forgive our sin and change us.

- ✓ Matthew 27:11-26

- Pilate had a conscience and a heart. He had more compassion for Jesus than the religious leaders.
- Unfortunately, his convictions were too shallow for him to take a stand. When the crowd’s shouts became too loud, he caved in to the pressure of their murderous threats.

✓ Matthew 27:26-31

– Jesus is flogged, stripped and mocked. A crown of thorns is driven into His scalp.

Medical Account of the Crucifixion

In this paper, I shall discuss some of the physical aspects of the passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ. We shall follow Him from Gethsemane through His trial, scourging and walk along the Via Dolorosa to His last dying hours on the cross.

This led me first to a study of the practice of crucifixion itself – that is, the torture and execution of a person by fixation to a cross. Apparently, the first known practice of crucifixion was by the Persians. Alexander and his generals brought it back to the Mediterranean world - Egypt and Carthage. The Romans apparently learned the practice from the Carthaginians and, as with almost everything the Romans did, rapidly developed a very high degree of efficiency and skill in carrying it out. Roman authors Livy, Cicero and Tacitus comment on the practice. Several innovations and modifications are described in the ancient literature. I'll mention only a few, which may have some bearing here. The upright portion of the cross (the stipe) could have the cross-arm (patibulum) attached two or three feet below its top. This is what we commonly think of today as the classical form of the cross – the one later named the Latin cross. However, the common form used in our Lord's time was the Tau cross, which is shaped like the Greek letter Tau or like our "T." In this cross, the cross-arm was placed in a notch at the top of the upright post. There is overwhelming archeological evidence that it was on this type of cross that Jesus was crucified.

The upright post was usually fixed permanently in the ground at the site of execution and the condemned man was forced to carry the cross-arm, apparently weighing about 110 pounds, from the prison to the place of execution. Without any historical or biblical proof, medieval and Renaissance painters have given us our picture of Christ carrying the entire cross. In addition, many of these painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixes today show the nails through the palms. Roman historical accounts and experimental work have shown that the nails were driven between the small bones of the wrists and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when they support the weight of a human body. The misconception may have come about through a misunderstanding of Jesus' words to Thomas in John 20:27: "Put your finger here; see my hands." Anatomists, both modern and ancient, have always considered the wrists as part of the hand.

A small sign, stating the victim's crime, was usually carried at the front of the processions and later nailed to the cross above the head. This sign, with its staff nailed to the top of the cross, would have given the cross somewhat the characteristic form of the Latin cross.

The physical passion of the Christ begins in Gethsemane. Luke 22:24 says of Jesus, "and being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." His sweat was unusually intense because his emotional state was unusually intense. Dehydration coupled with exhaustion further weakened him.

We shall move rapidly through the betrayal and arrest. I must stress that important portions of the passion story are missing from this account. This may be frustrating to you, but it is necessary in order to adhere to our purpose of discussing only the purely physical aspects of the Passion.

After His arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the High Priest. It is here that the first physical trauma is inflicted. A soldier strikes Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfold Him and mockingly challenge Him to identify them as each passes by, spits on Him, and strikes Him on the face.

In the morning, Jesus – battered, bruised, dehydrated and exhausted from a sleepless night – is taken across Jerusalem to a fortress that served as headquarters for Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea.

You are, of course, familiar with Pilate's attempt to pass responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Rome-approved ruler of Galilee and Perea. Jesus apparently did not suffer any physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod, who returned Him to Pilate. It was then, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate released Barabbas and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion.

There is much disagreement among authorities on scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate the two. Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus scourged as his full punishment, and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the governor was not properly defending Caesar against a pretender who claimed to be the King of the Jews.

Preparations for the scourging are carried out. The prisoner is stripped of His clothing and His hands are tied to a post above His head. The Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes. The Pharisees, always making sure that the law was strictly kept, insisted that only thirty-nine lashes be given. This was so that in case of a miscount, they were sure of remaining within the law. It is doubtful that the Romans attempted to follow the Jewish law in this matter of scourging.

The Roman legionnaire steps forward with a short whip consisting of two small balls of lead attached near each end of several heavy, leather thongs. The heavy whip is brought down with full force repeatedly across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs. At first, the heavy thongs cut only through His skin. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into subcutaneous tissues, producing an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins in His skin and then spurts of blood from the arteries in His muscles. The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises, which are then broken open by subsequent blows.

Finally, the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons, and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When the centurion in charge determines that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

Jesus, nearly fainting, is untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete, so they plait a small bundle of flexible branches covered with long thorns into the shape of a crown and press it into His scalp. Again, there is a lot of bleeding, because the scalp is one of the most vascular areas of the body. After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and tear the robe from His back. By this time, the robe has become stuck to the clots of blood and serum in His wounds. Its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, causes excruciating pain – almost as though He were again being whipped - and the wounds again begin to bleed.

In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments. The heavy cross-arm of the cross is tied across Jesus' shoulders, and the procession – Christ, two thieves, a Roman centurion and his execution detail – begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa. In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden cross and the shock produced by severe blood loss is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into His lacerated skin and the muscles of His shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their stamina.

The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock. The 650-yard journey from Pontius Pilate's headquarters to Golgotha is finally complete. The prisoner is again stripped of His clothes - except for a loincloth, which is allowed the Jews.

The crucifixion begins. Jesus is offered wine mixed with Myrrh, a mild painkiller. He refuses to drink.

Simon is ordered to place the cross on the ground. Jesus is quickly thrown backward, with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through Jesus' wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but rather to allow some flexibility and movement. The soldiers

then lift the cross-arm into its place at the top of the stipe, and a sign reading, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," is nailed to the top.

Jesus' left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along His fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain - the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this wrenching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again, there is the searing agony of the tearing through the nerves between the bones of His feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by His arms, His chest and rib muscles are paralyzed. He can draw air into His lungs, but he cannot exhale. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in His lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen.

It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences recorded in Scripture:

The first, looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The second, to the penitent thief:

"Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

The third, looking down at the terrified, grief stricken, adolescent John:

"He said, Behold thy mother, and looking to Mary, His mother, Woman behold thy son."

The fourth cry is from the beginning of Psalm 22:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

For hours, he experiences cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial suffocation, and searing pain. The tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber.

Then another agony begins: a deep, crushing pain deep in His chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

Let us remember Psalm 22:14:

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me."

It is now almost over - the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level - Jesus' compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue. His tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to draw in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps His fifth cry: "I thirst."

Let us remember another verse from the prophetic 22nd Psalm:

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death."

A sponge soaked in Posca, a cheap, sour wine that is the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, is lifted to His lips. He apparently does not take any of the liquid.

Jesus' body of near its end and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth cry - possibly little more than a tortured whisper: "It is finished."

He has completed His mission of atonement. Finally, He can allow his body to die. With one last surge of strength, he once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath and utters His seventh and final cry:

“Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that the condemned men be removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by cruci-fracture, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevents the victim from pushing himself up. The tension cannot be relieved from the muscles of the chest, and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when they came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary, thus fulfilling the Scripture, “Not one bone shall be broken.”

Apparently, to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through Jesus’ ribs, upward through His pericardium, and into His heart. John 19:34 says:

“Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.”

There was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart and blood from its interior. We therefore have post-mortem evidence that our Lord died not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation but of heart failure – due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

Thus, we have seen a glimpse of the epitome of evil which man can exhibit toward man - and toward God. This is not a pretty sight and is apt to leave us despondent and depressed. How grateful we can be that we have a sequel: A glimpse of the infinite mercy of God toward man - the miracle of the atonement and the expectation of Easter morning!

The Man of Sorrows

- ✓ Isaiah 53:4-6
 - Put the student’s name in place of “our” in these verses to make it personal.

A New Creation

- ✓ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
 - What does God expect our response to be when we see all that Jesus has done for us through the cross?
 - How do you feel about what we have just read?

Baptism

Objective:

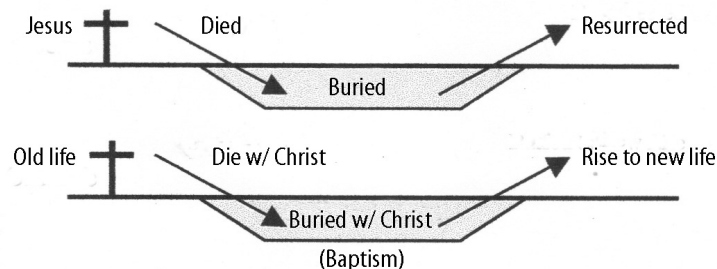
To teach the student what baptism is and how it fits into the biblical plan of salvation, and to help the student discern where they stand before God in light of that plan.

Pentecost

- ✓ Acts 2:36-41
 - After Peter preached about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, did the Jews listening believe in Jesus? How did they feel about what Peter was saying?
 - Did their faith and being “cut to the heart” alone save them? Is belief in Jesus enough for salvation, according to the Scriptures? How do we know?
 - What did Peter tell the people who believed to do? For what purpose?
 - If they had not repented, would they have been forgiven?
 - If they had not been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, would they have been forgiven?
- ✓ The Greek word used for baptism in the New Testament is “baptidzo,” which literally means dip, immerse, plunge, sink or even drown. Classical Greek authors used this word to describe ships sinking in naval warfare. The clear implication is total immersion. – Douglas Jacoby
- ✓ Have you ever been baptized in water, after repenting, for the forgiveness of your sins and to receive the Holy Spirit?

Dying With Christ

- ✓ Romans 6:1-7
 - How does the decision to die to yourself, which you made during the Discipleship study, play a role in baptism? What is the relationship between spiritual death and baptism?
 - At what point do you spiritually die with Christ? At what point are you buried with Christ? At what point are you raised with Him?
 - According to this passage, is it necessary to be baptized in order to become one with Christ?



Paul's Conversion

- ✓ Acts 9:9-11 and Acts 22:6-16
 - This is the account of Paul's conversion to Christianity. In these verses, we see that Paul had a number of very powerful spiritual experiences. He:
 - Miraculously saw Jesus.
 - Was knocked off his horse by Jesus.
 - Talked to Jesus personally after He had ascended to Heaven.
 - Was blinded by Jesus.
 - Recognized Jesus as Lord and confessed Him as Lord.
 - Prayed and fasted for three days after realizing he had been sinning grievously against Jesus by killing and imprisoning His followers.
 - According to Acts 22:16, did any of these powerful experiences save Paul from his sins?
 - At what point did God wash away Paul's sins?
- ✓ This is consistent with Acts 2:38, Mark 16:15-16, 1 Peter 3:18-21, Acts 8:26-39, Galatians 3:26-27, Colossians 2:11-12 and John 3:3-5.

Common Questions Concerning Baptism

- ✓ Doesn't Romans 10:9-10 say that we only need to believe in Jesus and confess Jesus as Lord in order to be saved?
 - Romans 10 is not dealing with people in need of salvation. If you read Romans 10:1-5, you will see that Paul is writing to people who are being falsely taught that unless they obey the Jewish law they will not be right with God. They have already been baptized.
 - Paul is convincing people who have already been baptized and saved (Romans 6:1-7) that they are still saved because they continue to believe and confess Jesus as Lord. He is not teaching them how to go from a state of being lost to a state of being saved.
 - If the only condition for salvation were heartfelt belief, then Paul would have been saved when he was knocked off his horse and the Jews in Acts 2 would have been saved when they were cut to the heart by Peter's speech. However, when we read those passages we see that in both cases their faith had to be coupled with repentance and baptism in order for them to be forgiven.
- ✓ How does God's grace play a role in our salvation? (Ephesians 2:4-5)
 - Grace is unmerited favor. When we are saved by repenting and being baptized, we have not earned our salvation; it is a gift of God. All we have done is fulfilled the conditions of God's forgiveness. God's grace is conditional. If grace was unconditional, then everyone who was ever born would automatically be saved and there would be no need for faith, repentance or baptism. God's love for us is unconditional, but His saving grace is conditional on our faith, repentance and baptism.
 - According to John 3:3-5, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. A condition of God's grace is to be baptized into Christ.
 - We are not earning our salvation by being baptized. We are simply following God's instructions.

Forgiveness

- ✓ 1 John 1:7
 - According to this passage, how does God’s grace play a role after you become a Christian?
 - How many sins will God’s grace cover?

With And Without Grace

- ✓ Hebrews 10:26-27
 - According to this passage, can a person lose their salvation once they are baptized?
 - What would a person have to do to lose his or her salvation? Answer: Deliberate and continual sin.
 - If you were a baptized disciple and you died right after you committed a sin, but before you had a chance to repent of that sin, would you be lost or saved? Answer: Saved.
 - God’s grace is a wonderful gift. After we are baptized into Christ, we are continually purified of our sins and have the promise of salvation. The only way that we can lose our salvation is if we deliberately continue to sin. Therefore, we must always have a striving spirit to repent as soon as we become aware of our sin.

The Church

Objective:

To describe the church to the student and define their commitment to the church.

- ✓ Colossians 1:15-18
 - Who is the head of the church? Jesus has the supremacy in all things and holds the church together.
 - What do you think this means, practically?
- ✓ Acts 2:42-47
 - This is the first time the Bible shows us the Christian church. How would you describe it?
 - It was a big, loving, spiritual family. The disciples helped each other whenever there was a need. They prayed together, ate together and worked in the Lord together.
 - How often did they meet together? Why? We need fellowship with Christians daily for encouragement. Hebrews 3:12-13
 - We need to make every effort to be at all of the services of the church or our family group so that we remain strong and so that we can help others be strong. Hebrew 10:23-25. We need to open our homes to each other regularly in hospitality. Why do you think that is important?
- ✓ 1 Corinthians 12:12-26
 - According to this passage, at what point do we become part of the one body?
 - What do we learn about the church from this analogy of the human body? What would happen if we separate ourselves from the body?
 - Everyone brings in a different set of strengths, which we all benefit from. What do you think are the strengths you will bring to the church?
 - How do you feel your need for the body right now?
- ✓ 1 Corinthians 1:10-13
 - Divisions and denominations are not God's will or plan for the church. Why do you think God is against divisions in the church?
- ✓ Ephesians 4:4-6
 - How many churches does the Bible say there are? Answer: One
 - Who is a part of that one church? Answer: Whoever has obeyed what the Bible has told them to do to be saved and is continuing to be faithful.
 - If someone is trusting in their infant baptism to save them, are they a part of the one church? If someone is trusting in praying Jesus into their heart to save them, are they a part of the one church?
- ✓ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
 - What do you think being yoked means?

- God makes it clear that He does not want his people to be yoked together with someone who is not a true disciple. Dating and marriage are both yoked relationships. In other words, God wants true disciples to date and marry only other true disciples. This ensures that no one will be led away from the faith.
- What do you think could happen if you dated or married someone who was not a disciple?
- ✓ Hebrews 13:17
 - What does this passage teach that your attitude needs to be towards the leadership of the church?
 - We need to follow the direction of our leaders, except if that direction goes against the Bible or our consciences. Having this submissive spirit enables the church to be unified and to advance God’s kingdom powerfully.
- ✓ 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
 - What does this passage teach about giving financially to the church financially?
 - In the Old Testament, it was commanded that we give a tithe, or a tenth, of our income. In the New Testament, Jesus teaches us to give sacrificially (Luke 21:1-4). We use a tenth as a guide knowing that in the Old Testament, this was what God thought was reasonable. However, each man must wrestle in his own heart to give to God joyfully and sacrificially.
 - Once a year in early June, we give a special missions contribution to support our missionaries in Mexico and Central America.

Counting the Cost

1. Why do you want to become a disciple of Jesus Christ?
2. How would you describe your relationship with God before starting the Foundations of Faith study series?
3. How would you describe your relationship with God now?
4. What is the most significant thing you've learned from God's Word?
5. What caused you to get more serious about your spiritual life?
6. Have you been praying to God and reading the Bible daily?
7. What have been the three most dominant sins in your life and how have you shown repentance?
 - How does it feel to know that God is going to forgive you?
8. Why is baptism in water so significant?
 - If you died right now, do you believe you would be lost or saved? Why?
9. What does "crucify your old self" mean? Are you willing to do that? How will you crucify your old self and live for Christ on a daily basis?
10. Why does God give us His Holy Spirit?
 - Do you believe you can become more and more like Jesus Christ for the rest of your life?
 - What are three weaknesses in your character that the Holy Spirit can help you overcome?
11. What are the practical commitments you've learned from the Bible that you need to make regarding:
 - Your relationship with God?
 - Praying to Him.
 - Reading His Word.
 - Obeying His Word.
 - Your relationship with the church?
 - Attending services, devotionals, etc.
 - Engaging in discipling relationships.
 - Tithing.
 - Your relationships with those who are not Christians?
 - Sharing your faith.
 - Giving your time to help people become disciples.

8. What do you see as your new mission in life? How do you feel about that?
9. According to the Bible, who is saved and who is not?
10. What do you think Satan will use to get you to quit on your new life? What will be your response?
11. Are you willing to love God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength for the rest of your life?
 - What if it gets hard?
 - What if everyone you know leaves God?
 - What if things don't go your way?
12. What are you waiting for?

Proof of Christianity

- ✓ Thousands of pages of material have been written the proof of Christianity. This study by no means is exhaustive. However, these proofs will help solidify faith in Jesus Christ, as well as the Bible.

Prophecy

- ✓ Isaiah 53 (The entire chapter)

The prophet Isaiah wrote the book of Isaiah around 750 B.C. It is one of the richest books in the Old Testament in terms of prophecies about Jesus the Messiah. The book of Isaiah is one of the Old Testament books that were found in its entirety when the “Dead Sea Scrolls” were excavated in 1947. The Dead Sea Scrolls were a group of writings found in clay jars in caves near the Dead Sea. The writings were copies of many Old Testament books, as well as other literature copied by a group of people called the Essenes. They made these copies and stored them in the caves between 100 and 200 B.C.

When these writings were found, they were in excellent condition. When scholars translated the book of Isaiah, and more specifically Isaiah 53, they found that what we have in our modern Bible is virtually identical to the Isaiah 53 found in the Dead Sea scrolls – which were copied 100 to 200 years before Jesus was born. In fact, in the whole chapter of Isaiah 53, there were only 13 letters that differed – not words, but letters!

This is critical, because when we see the following prophecies about Jesus in Isaiah 53, it proves beyond any doubt that they were indeed written well before Jesus was born.

Isaiah 53:5 – He was pierced for our transgressions.

Matthew 27:35 – They crucified Him.

Isaiah 53:6 – The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

2 Corinthians 5:21 – God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us.

Isaiah 53:7 – He did not open His mouth.

Matthew 27:14 – But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge.

Isaiah 53:8 – And who can speak of his descendants?

Gospels – Jesus had no children.

Isaiah 53:9 – Assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death.

Matthew 27:38 – Two robbers were crucified with him, one on His right and one on his left.

Matthew 27:57-60 – Joseph, a wealthy man, placed Him in his own tomb.

Isaiah 53:10 – Jesus will see His offspring and prolong His days.

Matthew 28:18-20 – Through the multiplying of disciples, Jesus will see His offspring.

Isaiah 53:11 – After the suffering of His soul, he will see the light and be satisfied.

Matthew 28:2-6 – He is not here; He has risen, just as He said.

Isaiah 53:12 – Poured out His life unto death.

Matthew 27:50 – He gave up His spirit.

✓ Other Prophecies from the Old Testament

Isaiah 9:6-7

– A human son would be called Mighty God – Romans 9:5, 2 Peter 1:3

– His government will have no end. - Rev 11:5

– He will reign on David's throne – Acts 2:29-30

Zechariah 11:12-14 (Written ~ 450 B.C.)

– Buying God for 30 pieces of silver. (Matthew 27:4)

– Throwing the money into the temple. (Matthew 27:5)

– The money ending up with the potter. (Matthew 27:7)

Psalms 22 (written by King David around 1000 B.C.)

– This Psalm is written from the perspective of a man who is being crucified to death.

– David died of old age, not crucifixion. Additionally, in 1000 B.C. crucifixion was not a popular method of execution.

– They have pierced my hands and my feet. (Matthew 27:35)

– They divide my garments and cast lots for my clothing. (Matthew 27:35)

Micah 5:3

– He will be born in Bethlehem.

Isaiah 7:14-15

– He will be born of a virgin.

Amos 8:8-9

– At Jesus' death, there will be an earthquake and an eclipse at noon.

Science

God expressed many scientific facts in the Old Testament that humankind did not know until thousands of years later.

✓ Isaiah 40:22

– Mankind did not know that the earth is round until Christopher Columbus sailed across the ocean. Before 1492, the common thought was that the earth was flat. God knew it was round because he made it.

✓ Job 26:7

– Humans did not know that the earth is surrounded by space until thousands of years later.

✓ Job 36:27-29 and Jeremiah 10:13

– Humans did not understand the water cycle – rain falling to the ground, evaporating back into the atmosphere and then falling again as rain – until much later.

Non-Christian Historians

There is much history of Jesus and the early church written by Christians. Probably the most popular Christian historian was Tertullian, although his writings cannot be used as proof because he had an ulterior motive – to prove Christianity. So in order to get “real” proof, we must go to the non-Christian historians of the day. One of the most prominent historians of that time was a man named Flavius Josephus. He was a Jewish military commander, a historian paid by the Roman government and a Roman citizen. You can look up the complete works of Flavius Josephus on the Internet. He was born 37 A.D. His complete works cover 1,200 pages, however he only writes 4-5 pages about Jesus and His followers. This makes it obvious that his motive was in no way to promote Christianity. Since Jesus and His followers were part of history, he felt obligated to report on them. In Book 18, Chapter 3, Verse 3 of his complete works volume, Josephus writes:

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”

Obviously, in Josephus’ mind, Jesus was the Messiah. Some critics have said that if he states so clearly that Jesus was the Messiah, why didn’t he become a Christian. You only have to go to the many people alive today who would claim as fact that Jesus is God in the flesh but will not make the commitment to become Christians because the cost is too high. Being a Jewish general, paid by the Romans, Josephus’ cost to become a Christian was very high.

The Lives and Deaths of the Apostles

Many people have died for their faith. Some for Islam, some for David Koresh and even the Kamikaze pilots of WWII died for their faith. So, what makes the deaths of the Apostles so unique? The 12 Apostles lived with Jesus for three years. If they would have seen Jesus sin just one time, that would have discredited him and Christianity would have ended right then.

We can barely live with someone for 24 hours without seeing multiple sins, much less 24 hours a day for three years. Peter says in 2 Peter 2:16 that he was an eyewitness to Jesus’ majesty. Peter, as well as the other Apostles, saw Jesus die and then raise from the dead. He was an eyewitness to Jesus ascending into heaven, as well as many of His miracles. Because of what they had seen with their own eyes over a three-year period, they were willing to be poor, have their families targeted for death and preach fervently the message of Jesus’ resurrection and deity. Eventually, 10 of the 12 Apostles were martyred for their faith. Why would they all live like this and die like this if they really didn’t see Jesus do all of these things, or if they had seen Jesus sin?

If you ask the Muslim suicide bomber or the Kamikaze pilots why they were willing to die, they would claim that they just believe, without any eyewitness proof. Jesus didn’t write one word of the New Testament. Eyewitnesses who watched Jesus wrote the vast majority of the New Testament. Most of them died for what they wrote and believed. We know that these men were killed for their faith because historians tell us.

Josephus mentions the martyrdom of James and of John the Baptist in his historical records. Let’s compare this to the Muslim faith. Around 600 A.D., Mohammed claimed to have a vision from God. He spoke of this vision to his wife and she wrote it down for him. He claims that in his vision, God set him up as the main prophet. This vision later came to be known as the Koran. Mohammed wrote the whole volume and set himself up as the main prophet. There are no miracles and no eyewitness proof.

Let’s look at Buddhism. Buddha never claimed to be God or a great prophet. He was just a ruler that came up with some moral principles for his people to live by. If Buddha were to come back and see people praying to and worshipping his statue, he would probably be shocked.