
NEXT STEPS

Growing Rapidly as a Follower of Jesus



Staples Mill Road

BAPTIST CHURCH

Rooted in Truth • Reaching in Love

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www.smrbc.org



First Steps

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

Born again! That’s what Jesus called it. **A New Creation!** That’s what Paul called it. You have turned from sin and self and have put your trust in Jesus! The One who gave His life for you on the cross and was raised from the dead has given you **the gift of eternal life**. Simultaneously, God has begun a wonderful process of completely transforming your life from the inside out.

To help you with these first weeks of growing in your relationship with Christ, we’ve prepared the following information for you. This isn’t all you will need to know, but we have pulled together some important things to help you in these exciting first days.

Adversary

We wish we could tell you that everything will be easy from this point onward. However, that would not be true. We are promised peace and perfection in Heaven, but we are not there yet. We should expect much trouble here. We even have an adversary. Jesus told us:

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8–9)

Like a hostage that was just set free, you will want to quickly put as much distance as possible between you and your old life of bondage. You might say it this way: **“Run before you walk.”** The following sections will help you with some of the common struggles that may arise in your early days of following Jesus. These verses will be important in your victory in these ongoing battles. For example, you may be tempted to doubt that you have been saved. You may be tempted to believe you are not forgiven, or that you cannot overcome certain sins in your life. **You should memorize the following verses** so that you can use them to *“preach the truth to yourself”* in times of doubt and discouragement.

Assurance

- **Assurance of Salvation**

¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.
1 John 5:11–13 (ESV)

If you have placed your faith in Jesus, then you belong to Him and you have been saved. If you have the Son, you have life. Rest in what Jesus has accomplished for you! The gift of eternal life will never be taken from you. Meditate on 1 John 5:11-12 and rest in the assurance of your salvation.

- **Assurance of Power over Temptations**

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

You will be tempted constantly from many directions (greed, jealousy, lust, anger, impatience, self-centeredness, pride, and so many more). Some temptations may be especially strong in your life. God promises that He will never allow you to face a temptation that is stronger than your ability to resist in His strength. You need to know this, because the enemy will lie to you, telling you that you must sin, and that you cannot resist. Don't believe him. Believe what God has said instead. If you need help breaking free from a particular sin, don't be ashamed to ask a fellow Christian for help. You are not alone.

- **Assurance of Ongoing Forgiveness from God**

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (ESV)

Though God has given you everything you need to resist every temptation, you will have times of failure as a Christian. You will feel ashamed that you chose sin over Christ in a time of weakness. Your response to sin is to confess (“agree with God”) the sin. When you come to Him, sorry for your sins, He promises to forgive and cleanse you. You do not have to become a Christian all over again. You are already His child and always will be. However, you do need to talk to Him, confessing the wrong, asking for forgiveness (which He has promised), and asking for strength to resist this temptation the next time you face it.

- **Assurance of God’s Guidance**

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3:5–6 (ESV)

The moment you believed, the Holy Spirit (God Himself) took up residence in your life. He already **resides** in you, but you must constantly yield to Him so that He **presides** in you. As someone has said: “He is already **resident**, but you must constantly choose to make Him **President**”. Choose each day to follow His wisdom and His plan. You will be tempted to believe you know better. You will be tempted to believe that you cannot trust His plan. Choose to trust in Him. Refuse to take control of your life back into your hands. He is Savior. He is Lord (leader).

Galatians 5 tells us the contrast between living a life with ourselves in charge and a life with the Holy Spirit in charge. Remember that you are “Under New Management”, and look at what He promises to produce in you as you intentionally yield all of yourself to Him each day:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:22–26 (ESV)

A Disciple's Four Key Moves

The following “E”- words describe **four vital actions for your Christian growth**. You will want to follow Jesus in these four ways as an individual believer and member of the church.



We were made for worship – to actually enjoy the Living God! Through faith in Jesus we have entered into a personal relationship with Him. In daily personal worship and regular corporate worship, we find ongoing joy, strength, and direction in His presence. Make encountering God the daily priority of your life. You will not only **encounter** Him, but also **enjoy** Him and His transforming presence.

Action steps:

- ➡ Schedule, guard, and enjoy a daily “Quiet Time” alone with God in the Bible and prayer. Tips for how to meet with God are included on **pages 9-10** of this booklet.
- ➡ Commit to gather for worship with your church family each week. Come rested and ready to sing, listen, and respond to God’s message from the Bible.



We were made for each other. The Christian life is a “team sport”. We may need to stand alone for Christ at home, at school, or at work, but we need to be vitally connected to other growing believers for encouragement as much as possible. **Join a Life Group** right away to be a giver and receiver of love, support, and encouragement.

Action steps:

- ➡ Join and commit to a weekly small group (Life Group or Grow Group) gathering of Christians for supportive fellowship. These groups meet on Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights, and on other nights of the week.
- ➡ Share the joys and trials of life together, by praying for and supporting each other during the week.

Contact the church office if you have any trouble finding your Life Group. email@smrbc.org

²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)



We were made to grow. We are not fully developed when we are born physically or when we are born again. God is at work in us to make us stronger, wiser, and more effective in His service. Be proactive in your quest to know Jesus better, to understand His Word more fully, and to sharpen your gifts and skills for powerful use in the spread of His kingdom.

Action steps:

- ➡ You will learn to study the Bible personally to grow stronger in your walk with Christ.
- ➡ Enjoy learning the Bible in your Life Group and in other studies that are offered.
- ➡ Our Student, Women's, Men's, and Young Adult ministries provide additional opportunities to equip believers to live as disciples of Jesus in every area of life.



We were made for action. Much of the joy of following Jesus comes when we share Him with others. Quickly begin serving, by finding places of service in the church and in the world. God has given you one or more spiritual gifts for the good of His church and for advancing His Kingdom in a needy world. Check out our website and listen to the announcements each week to learn of upcoming opportunities for service.

- ➡ Volunteer to serve in the church family (greeter, children's/youth ministry, AV tech, etc.)
 - Use this link to see many of the ways you can serve Jesus at SMRBC:
<https://www.smrbc.org/collections/ways-to-serve>
- ➡ Share your new faith with people in your network of family and friends.
- ➡ Join a team that is sharing the Gospel in the city or across the world.
- ➡ Join a team that is helping immigrants or the poor in Jesus' name.

Jesus said: ⁵ *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:5 (ESV)

The Wheel Illustration by *Navigators* presents the “4E” information in another memorable way:



The Wheel diagram, created by Navigator founder Dawson Trotman in the 1930s, is a simple and effective way to visually explain the structure of a God-glorifying life. Sharing it can be as simple as drawing it on a napkin or notepad. The diagram challenges us to think deeply about how to be an obedient follower of Christ and each part represents a crucial component of a vibrant Christian life.

How You Relate to Yourself

THE CENTER HUB AND OUTER RIM

Christ:

Total surrender to Christ’s authority and lordship is not always a decision made right at conversion, but is a necessary act of will. For the believer, the “old life” has gone and the new has come ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)), and Christ has begun to dwell in us ([Galatians 2:20](#)). God creates within us the desire to do what He wants us to do in order to express His Lordship in our lives.

The Obedient Christian in Action:

Some acts of obedience to God are internal, such as attitudes, habits, motives, values and day-to-day thoughts. But even these eventually surface outwardly in our relationships with other people. Keeping His commands in obedience is our outward indication of inward health and love for Christ ([John 14:21](#), [Romans 12:1](#)).

How You Relate to God

THE VERTICAL SPOKES

The Word:

God uses His word to speak directly to us, revealing not only who He is, but how He calls us to live and interact with everyone around us ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)). This means an earnest personal intake of God's Word is essential for our spiritual health and growth ([Joshua 1:8](#)). As God speaks to us through the Scriptures, we learn how to obey Him and apply the gospel to every part of our lives. We also come to know Jesus personally and find He is worthy of our steadfast allegiance.

Prayer:

Prayer is the natural response to God as we hear Him speak through His Word. It is sharing our heart with the One who longs for our companionship and who cares about our concerns. Prayer not only trains our hearts and minds to know the power and glory of God, but also turns His ear towards action in our lives ([John 15:7](#), [Philippians 4:6-7](#)).

How You Relate to Others

THE HORIZONTAL SPOKES

Fellowship:

God has directed Christians to build each other up through interdependence and loving relationships with each other ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#)). Gathering together as the Body of Christ draws God close around us as we praise Him and encourage one another ([Matthew 18:20](#)).

Witnessing:

God has given believers the joy and responsibility of telling the world about the good news of Christ's work on Earth ([Matthew 4:19](#)). In fact, sharing about His amazing grace is the natural overflow of a rich, vibrant life in Christ ([Romans 1:16](#)).

Source: <https://www.navigators.org/resource/the-wheel-illustration/>

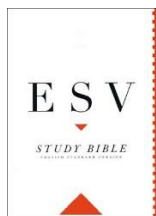
Dealing with Your Questions

You are going to have questions. Thankfully, you aren't the first and you can benefit from those who have come before you. Here are some great resources to help you tackle questions with solid truth. These tools will also help you answer questions from those around you.

Your Life Group

Joining a Life Group is a vital step for your spiritual growth. You need other growing Christians in your life. They will be great help to you as you face a lot of questions about your new life in Christ. You will also be able to observe how they handle the struggles of life that we all face.

Personal Time in God's Word



Buying a good **Study Bible**, like the *ESV Study Bible*, can be very helpful. You will find notes at the bottom of the page that may answer questions you have about a word, phrase, person, or unfamiliar custom used in the passage you are reading. The Bible is the only infallible and authoritative source of truth. Dig in and grow!

You can even purchase an ESV Study Bible app for your smartphone or tablet.

Other trusted Study Bibles are: the *NIV Study Bible* and the *CSB Study Bible*

Other Trusted Resources



www.gotquestions.org Type in a question and this website will give you an answer from a solidly biblical perspective.



www.family.org Sometimes our questions come in the realm of family life. How do I live for Jesus in my home? What does it look like to parent like God intended? How do I live as a Christian single?

Focus on the Family is a trusted source for this kind of information.

How to Spend Time with God

What if you guarded 15 minutes per day to meet alone with God to enjoy His presence and receive His Word? That doesn't sound like much, but it can be life changing. You can certainly spend more time with God, but just 15 minutes of focused attention on hearing from your Savior and Lord can be powerful! Here's how that time could be used:

➡ **Read for relationship.** Take the Bible and choose a book within it to read. The books of the Bible are arranged in chapters and verses. Start with chapter one and read one or two chapters per day until you finish that book. Then pick another book to start and finish. Highlight verses that are particularly powerful to you that day. We suggest you begin reading in New Testament books like: *The Gospel of John, Ephesians, Philippians, James, 1&2 Peter*, etc. Old Testament books like *Proverbs and Psalms* are also good. Eventually, you will read all of the Bible, but we recommend these books to start.



You can read and highlight a **paper copy of the Bible** or on the free **YouVersion Bible App** that you can **download** on your device.

Some of our favorite English translations are: ESV, NASB, CSB, NIV, and NLT. We especially like the ESV for teaching and deeper study of the Bible, but translations like the NLT and NIV can be very helpful for new readers of the Bible. Feel free to read from any of these.

➡ **Read to Respond.** Pray about what you have just read. Ask God to help you put it into practice.

- Sometimes you will see a **sin to avoid**
- Sometimes you will see an **action you need to take.**
- Sometimes you will see an **attribute of God** that adds to your knowledge and amazement of Him.

- Sometimes you may read a **passage that you don't yet understand**. You can talk to God about that too.

➡ **Plan to Share.** Consider who would benefit from hearing what you experienced in your time with God today. You can start with: *"I read the coolest thing in the Bible this morning..."*

➡ **How to Pray.** Talk to God. You approach Him as your loving Father, with both awe and confidence. He has invited you to pray at all times for all things. You can be certain that He is listening and is glad to meet with you.

Many have recommended this acrostic to help new believers learn to pray: **ACTS**

A –Adoration – spend time praising God for His great attributes

C—Confess – Spend time confessing and turning from sin in your life.

T – Thanksgiving – Give thanks to God for His love and blessings.

S – Supplication – That simply means, bring your needs and requests to Him. He knows you need His help and He wants you to ask. You are not bothering Him! He loves you and offers to help!

Another helpful acrostic is: **PRAY**

P – Praise (Praise and thank Him – for His love, grace, power, blessings, etc.)

R – Repent (Acknowledge your sin and ask for strength to overcome it)

A – Ask (Bring your needs and the needs of the world to God, seeking help)

Y – Yield (Give Him full control, letting Him lead every aspect of your life)

Jesus said: ⁵ "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶ "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you. ⁷ "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. ⁹ "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ 'Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.' ¹⁴ "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. Matthew 6:5–15 (NASB95)

Sharing Your Faith

Share your story with others. It is as simple as telling about your life before and after coming to Christ. It is very much like telling someone about why you like OBX or your favorite restaurant. It is a thrill and honor to serve as an *ambassador for Christ* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Here are the elements of a good testimony as you tell your story to others:

Before – *Before I became a follower of Jesus, my life was* (lacking peace, self-centered, etc.)

How - *Things began to change when someone shared with me how I could experience a brand new start to life in Jesus. I asked Jesus to save me and take over my life ...*

After – *Since I gave my life to Jesus, I have found new hope, new purpose, new* (peace, joy, direction, etc.)

Ask: *Would you like to experience a new life through a relationship with Jesus?*

The following verses will help you explain the good news to your friends:

John 3:16 ““For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 10:10 “for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

Romans 10:13 “for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.””

Wear a wristband!



Check out our website at smrbc.org to learn how to use our SMRBC wristbands to share the good news and invite friends to church.

You can wear a wristband each day, ready to give it to a person, saying something like: “*Can I invite you to our church?*” When time allows you can offer to explain what the five symbols mean.

Baptism

Baptism is a key early step of obedience for a new believer in Jesus. In the New Testament we see that it always follows believing in Jesus and never comes first.

The Greek word for baptism literally means to “*immerse*” in water. This is why we do not sprinkle your head when we baptize you, but will put you under the water. In fact, this is the biblical symbolism of baptism – death, burial, and resurrection (of Jesus, and of you).

Look at the following Scriptures on baptism:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 (ESV)

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. Romans 6:4–6 (ESV)

Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is another important symbol that we celebrate together as a church family. Jesus gave his first disciples instructions to do this until He comes again, as a way of remembering Him and what He did for us on the cross. The bread represents the body of Jesus, which He gave in payment for our sins. The juice represents the blood of Jesus, given in payment for our sins. We typically celebrate the Lord's Supper every month, remembering that we have been reconciled to God by this great sacrifice that Jesus made for

us. We remember together His love for us, and the extreme price He paid that we might be cleansed and forgiven. We are reminded that we are His by His grace, and not by our doing.

The Scripture exhorts us to examine our hearts before taking the Lord's Supper, ensuring that there are no stubborn areas of sin remaining in us. Always be sure to repent of any sin you are aware of in your life. Of course, we should confess and repent of sin daily (whenever we sin), but also before taking the bread and cup.

1 Corinthians 11 is a great passage to read related to how we should observe this ordinance.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1 Corinthians 11:23–28 (ESV)

So, the Lord's Supper is a beautiful time of **celebration** and personal **examination**. We celebrate what Jesus has done for us to reconcile us to the Father. Simultaneously, we ask Him to search our hearts to reveal any areas that need to be turned over to Him. In other words, we do not come to this important act of worship hiding and pretending. Instead, as always, we come humbly, confessing to the Lord areas of struggle and failure, celebrating His forgiveness because of the cross, and seeking Him for fresh strength to walk in victory.

Fasting and Prayer

There will be times when you should add fasting to your praying. Fasting is when you give up food (and perhaps other things as well) for a period of time in order to more intently focus on prayer. It could be skipping a meal or two for the purpose of intense prayer or multiple days. Of course, you will fast when you sense that the Holy Spirit is leading you to do so. Be sure to fast wisely, taking into consideration any medical conditions you have. Talk to your doctor first if you have concerns.

Many believers fast and pray when they are distressed by a struggle with sin that seems to have them in bondage. They fast as a way of crying out to God for help, while taking dominion over their appetites. Others fast and pray when facing a major decision as a way of breaking their normal routine to seek God's will intently. Fasting can also be used when going through a particularly challenging time in life, or when in an intense time of intercession. Fasting does not force God to do what you ask, but it puts you in a posture to draw very close to Him; especially attentive and ready to understand what He may want to say to you.

² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. Acts 13:2–5 (ESV)

¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:16–18 (ESV)

The Spirit-filled Life

It is **impossible** to live the Christian life in your own power. Therefore, God never intends for you to live on your own power and wisdom. By design you need the Holy Spirit living His life through you, producing His “fruit” through you. In order for Him to live through you, you must remain fully yielded to Him. As you allow Him to lead, the Holy Spirit will fill you with fresh power to win spiritual battles. The Holy Spirit will work in you, making you more and more like Jesus.

Read and meditate on the following portion of **Galatians chapter 5**. See the benefits of “walking by the Spirit” rather than by your “flesh” (sinful nature).

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:16–26 (ESV)

So, if we follow our flesh (sin nature) we will reap much dysfunction and pain, and so will those around us. If we yield to the Spirit, He will produce great things in our life that will benefit us and everyone around us.

Again, the Christian life does not work well at all when we are only partially committed or when we walk in our own power. When we surrender leadership to Him, inviting Him to live His life through us, we find more consistent victory, peace, and courage. Live every day in joyful surrender to Christ!



Cru has a wonderful study on the Spirit-filled life available free at:

<http://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/classics/the-spirit-filled-life.html#>. The following is a portion of that study.

What Does It Mean To Be Spirit-filled?

Take a look at the following diagrams developed by Cru (a campus ministry also known as Campus Crusade for Christ). This is an excerpt (used with their permission) from their excellent material on the Spirit-filled life. As you read this information, determine which person you are, and which person you desire to be.

1. Natural Person

(Someone who has not received Christ.)



Natural Person (Self-Directed Life)

Self is on the throne, directing decisions and actions (represented by the dots), often resulting in frustration. Jesus is outside the life.

"A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

2. Spiritual Person

(One who is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.)



Spiritual Person (Christ-Directed Life)

Jesus is in the life and on the throne. Self is yielding to Jesus. The person sees Jesus' influence and direction in their life.

"He who is spiritual appraises all things...We have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:15).

3. Carnal Person

(One who has received Christ, but who lives in defeat because he is trying to live the Christian life in his own strength.)



Carnal Person (Self-Directed Life)

Jesus is in the life but not on the throne. Self is on the throne, directing decisions and actions (represented by the dots), often resulting in frustration.

"And I brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to carnal men, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still carnal. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

God has provided for us an abundant and fruitful Christian life

Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The Spiritual Person

Some spiritual traits which result from trusting God:

Spiritual Person

Christ-centered
Empowered by the Holy Spirit
Introduces others to Christ
Effective prayer life

Understands God's Word
Trusts & obeys God
Experiences love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, faithfulness,
gentleness, goodness & self-control



The degree to which these traits are manifested in the life depends upon the extent to which the Christian trusts the Lord with every detail of his life, and upon his maturity in Christ. One who is only beginning to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be discouraged if he is not as fruitful as more mature Christians who have known and experienced this truth for a longer period.

-----Used with permission from Cru-----

** You can walk through this study in full online at the Cru website: <http://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/classics/the-spirit-filled-life.html#>.

Using your Spiritual Gifts in Service

The Holy Spirit not only empowers your daily life but He also gifts you for service. Read Romans 12:3-10 and consider how God may have gifted you for service. He has given every believer at least one spiritual gift. This is in addition to any talents you may have developed through the years.

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;” (Romans 12:3–10)

Over time you will discover more specifically how God has gifted you. The best way to find out is to begin serving where you see needs. For now, it is simply good to know that God desires to use you for His glory in the church and in the world. Much of your spiritual growth will take place as you fulfill God’s purpose for you in service. Your faith will grow as you step out of familiar comfort zones in complete dependence upon Him. When you see God use you to lead someone else to Him you will experience a new level of joy! Or when you teach a room full of kids about Jesus, or take a mission trip to Asia your confidence in God will grow.

It can be helpful to think in terms of serving in two ministries:

1. **A ministry in the church body**, encouraging and equipping God’s people.
2. **A ministry in the community**, shining the light of Jesus to those who do not yet know Him.

Meditate on the following verses:

Jesus said: *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:14–16)

Jesus said: *“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5)

Check out our website to learn ways to begin serving Jesus!



Essential Doctrines

As a believer in Jesus Christ, you must grow in your knowledge of biblical truth. Knowing what the Bible teaches on key issues will keep you from falling into error and deception. The following statements are from **the Baptist Faith and Message (2000)** and give a good basic explanation of central doctrines. Supporting biblical texts are provided to show you the basis for these statements and allow you to dig deeper in further study. You can use the online version to quickly look up the Bible references at:

<http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

The Baptist Faith & Message 2000

The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into

the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing

the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Relationships

Just as we were made for a mission, we were also designed for connections with others. Our lives are made up of many relationships. Therefore, God has a lot to say about these. The first and primary relationship we have is with God Himself. We often say, ***“This is not a religion, but a relationship!”*** God is not way off in space while we are down here serving for Him. Instead, we are walking in a daily relationship with Him. We talk to Him, depend on Him, listen to the Spirit’s promptings, and read His Word in order to respond to His will. God is alive and is always at work accomplishing His work. We wake up eager to join Him in His work for His glory.

We then bring God into all our other relationships. He is Lord of these as well. All of our interactions are to be marked by grace, righteousness, and love. Let’s consider a few of these relationships and what God has to say about them:

- **Marriage & Family**

Marriage is God’s idea and His handiwork. There is great joy in a marriage between two Spirit-filled Christians. Think of it! As both husband and wife are yielded fully to Christ, the Holy Spirit produces His fruit in them and they both benefit from it. **Galatians 5:22-23** names this fruit: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”* Every marriage needs this fruit, and it comes from the Holy Spirit into those who are yielded fully (emptied of self and sin, and full of the Spirit instead).

A marriage is to be a picture of the relationship of Christ and His church. The husband is to love his wife as Jesus loves the church. The wife is to follow her husband’s leadership as the church submits to Christ’s loving leadership. Take a moment to read Ephesians 5:22-33. While a husband and wife are absolutely equal in worth and dignity, God has designed differing roles for each to play in the relationship. When both are fully committed to love and respect each other in these ways, both are wonderfully fulfilled.

Ephesians 5:22–33 (ESV) ²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the

church.³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

God has much to say about how a marriage should function

1. Male and Female was God's idea – Genesis 1:27
2. Marriage was planned and decreed to bring happiness. Genesis 2:23
3. Marriage must begin with a leaving of all other relationships in order to establish a permanent relationship between one man and one woman. – Genesis 2:24
4. Marriage requires a permanent joining of husband and wife throughout their lifetime. – Genesis 2:24
5. Marriage means oneness in the fullest possible sense, including intimate physical union without shame. – Genesis 2:24-25, Song of Solomon, Proverbs, 1 Corinthians 7
(See *Love Life for Every Married Couple* by Ed Wheat, MD)

There are Christian resources available to strengthen your marriage and the family.

Our pastors are eager to help you with additional resources and counseling. We also recommend these trusted ministries for additional help:



www.family.org

FAMILYLIFE
Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.
| A Cru Ministry |

www.familylife.com

• **Singleness**

Singles are a vital part of God's family. In fact, in our part of Virginia, half of the adults are single. If you are a single adult we respect you. After all, our Savior was single! Paul was single! We understand that you have particular advantages as a single (1 Corinthians 7), while you likely face some challenges as well. We encourage you to dive into the church family where you can build supportive friendships. These relationships build faster the more you are committed to a Life Group and involved in areas of service. Serve in our English Club ministry. Join our prayer ministry. Volunteer in children's or student ministry. Go on mission trips. The entire church is wide open to you! We are family as brothers and sisters in Christ.

What about divorce? God is merciful to those who have experienced the pain of a broken home. Even those who later discover they should not have left their spouse can find forgiveness through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Your friends at SMRBC want to help you with the pain you are experiencing. Talk with one of the pastors or your Life Group leader. Check out the resources at family.org for additional encouragement. Many of us at Staples Mill grew up in broken homes or had divorce thrust upon us when it wasn't our choice. We are not just a church for people with ideal families. Jesus brings forgiveness, healing, and restoration.

- **Raising children to know and follow God**



Our church wants to equip you to guide your children through all of the significant stages of their lives. As a parent, **we recognize you as the primary faith trainer** of your children, but we will help you with resources and encouragement. Look for our ***Building Blocks*** resources in our church library and at upcoming seminars. Of course, our pastors are happy to recommend resources to you at anytime! Family.org and Familylife.com offer a wealth of resources.

- **God's Family (The Church)**

God has much to say about how we should relate to each other as Christians. Notice the phrase “one another” in the following verses:

Hebrews 10:25 “***not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.***” [Resist the temptation of sporadic attendance. Settle in and bless others]

James 5:16 “***Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.***”

Galatians 6:2 “***Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.***”

Romans 14:19 “***So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.***”

John 13:34–35 “***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”***”

These and many other passages in the Bible remind us that we are not independent followers of Christ. We live out our faith in fellowship with other believers in our local church. Notice that we are called to assemble together regularly. Notice that we are to love, pray for, and encourage each other. We cannot do these things if we are not committed to each other. Each of us should join and plug into a healthy local church for rich fellowship, worship, and ministry. At Staples Mill, we encourage every member to be a part of an ongoing Life Group, where you can give and receive encouragement as you live out life and ministry together.

Purity

God not only made us spiritual beings, but also sexual beings. This was His design and it is very good. At the same time, some of our strongest temptations take place in the realm of our sexuality. How we handle these powerful desires is an important part of our walk with Christ.

It is important to understand that sex is a gift from God. Satan would have you believe that he created sex and that it is best enjoyed in the party life of bar hopping singles. Of course, Satan is a liar. It was God who created male and female. He created marriage. His design has always been for the gift of sex to be reserved for a husband and wife inside their loving marriage relationship.

This means that there is one legitimate expression of sex -- a biblical marriage between a man and a woman. A husband and wife are to be committed to each other. They are to be absolutely faithful to each other, preserving and giving their bodies to each other alone. Those who are not married are to channel their energy and desires in ways that honor God, avoiding sexual immorality. Read the following Scriptures that deal with this important part of our lives:

“Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” (1 Corinthians 7:1–5)

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)

So, sexual expression within marriage is God’s design and God’s gift to be enjoyed. To be sexually active outside of marriage is sin and brings devastation. God is very clear that this is a sin to avoid at all costs. Listen to these warning against immorality (sexual sin):

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with

her? For He says, “The two shall become one flesh.” But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:15–20)

*“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. **Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11)*

The good news is that we can be **forgiven** for sexual sin, just like our other sins. We can be washed and made right with God when we come to Jesus in repentance, sorry and ready to be led in His path. We do not have to wallow in regrets over sins of our past. God makes us new! This is amazing grace! Run to Him for forgiveness!

Practical strategies to overcome strong temptations:

To resist sexual temptation in a culture like ours, you will need a good “**Offense and Defense**”.

By Offense, we mean you should be actively pursuing a close, intimate walk with Jesus. Hold Him as your highest treasure and delight. Ensure that He is your “*first love*” (Revelation 2). Spend time with Him daily through prayer, Bible reading, encouraging music, fellowship with other believers, spreading the gospel, and a desire for obedience. As you do your heart will be full and therefore less vulnerable to the many temptations that will be coming your way.

Galatians 5:16 says: “*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*”

By Defense, we mean that you will need to place some boundaries and safeguards in place. Since we know we will face powerful temptations at key areas of our lives, we should plan ahead to achieve victory over these desires. Our enemy, the devil, knows the weak spots in our lives and directs specific temptations in those areas. The good news is that our God never allows us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist. There is always a way to escape. We can never truthfully say that we *had to* sin. We should also know that temptations come to all of

us. Look at 1 Corinthians 10:13. This would be a great verse to memorize!

1 Corinthians 10:13 *"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is **common to man**; and God is faithful, who will **not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation will provide the **way of escape** also, so that you will be **able to endure it**."*

In the realm of sexual temptations, you will want to be especially careful. The best approach is to avoid situations where you know you will face strong temptation in this area. The following are some practical ideas to help you battle and win in this important area of your life:

1. **Be proactive in your walk with Jesus**, worshipping and enjoying Him above all else.
2. **Avoid being alone with a person to whom you could be attracted.** This is especially true in dating. Date in public places, but do not go back to each other's houses without others present. Your "willpower" should not be your last line of defense.
3. **Use care even at work.** A common first step toward adultery is sharing too personally with a coworker of the opposite sex. As you share common struggles and dissatisfactions at home, you are heading down a predictable, dangerous path that ends with heartache for many and the statement: *"I didn't intend for this to happen."*
4. **Avoid media that stirs up your sexual desires.** Some lyrics are very sexual and are not helpful in keeping your mind pure and on Christ. Many TV shows and movies include strong sexual themes and nudity. You should determine to avoid these movies. A good question to ask could be: Would I watch this show with Jesus sitting on the couch next to me? A resource like www.pluggedin.com is a free source for movie reviews, alerting you in advance to content that could be harmful to your walk with Christ. Another potential tool is **VidAngel**. With a paid subscription to www.vidangel.com you and your family can view many popular movies with the objectionable material removed, editing out bad language and scenes.



Pornography is to be avoided at all costs. Many of us have pornography in our past. A generation of young men and many young women have grown up viewing it. Many are enslaved and need help breaking free. You will need to go to war against this in your life, refusing to leave yourself access to this in any form. **Great news! Christ can set you free!** We have experienced this freedom! You will need to take aggressive steps to get away and stay away from it. Here are some tools to help:

- a. **Internet filters/reporting software.** Several good internet filters are on the market. Better than a filter alone is one that emails a friend a report of where you have gone online. Knowing a friend will see what you are surfing, helps take the power out of the temptation when you are alone. One option is: www.covenanteyes.com.

- b. **Smartphones and tablets** are great tools, but they can be a major avenue for pornography. If needed, your spouse or a close friend can set a parental control password, so that you cannot override it during a weak moment.
- c. **Netflix, Prime Video, HBO, and other premium channels** contain programming designed to stir up lust. If you find yourself being tempted to watch these shows, you can have someone use the “parental controls” to block your access to spiritually harmful programming.
- d. **Novels and magazines** that promote immorality should also be avoided.

Listen to Jesus: ““You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that **everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. “If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.” (Matthew 5:27–30)

Of course, Jesus is not intending for us to mutilate our bodies, but He is saying we should be aggressive in defeating all sin in our lives. He also knows we will need His help. This is not a battle you fight on your own. Like all of the Christian life, it is impossible without daily reliance upon the Holy Spirit. You need Him ... and you will need God’s people supporting you.

Don’t be ashamed to ask a pastor or other friend in the church for help in overcoming any area of struggle in your life. You are loved. We want to help you find true freedom! Call the church office to set up a conversation with one of our pastors for help: **804-672-6811.**

Missions – Our Great Purpose

Who, Me? A missionary?

The context of the New Testament is Missions and Prisons. In other words, when you read the words of writers like Paul, he wrote from locations where he was planting a church or from a prison cell, suffering because of his mission work. That helps us understand that the Christian life is by nature part of the grand mission of God. Look at the following verses that give us what we call our “**Great Commission**” from our Lord:

*“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**”* (Matthew 28:18–20)

*“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**”*” (Acts 1:8)

Jesus has given this command to us as a church and as the individual members of the church. It is not a calling for a select group of “special forces” Christians. We all have a part. We all fit into this mission. God calls some to go and live in a foreign land to share the Good News where few have access to it. The rest of God’s people are equally committed to this mission through faithfully praying, giving encouragement, and financial support. Are you willing to go if God calls you? It is always important to be in a posture of full surrender to do whatever He may ask of you. That is basic discipleship.

At Staples Mill you will have many opportunities to serve in missions, through various short-term mission trips and ongoing missions support (giving financially, praying faithfully, and encouraging those who are called out to go). The following websites contain great information that will be useful in expanding your understanding of your role in international and North American mission efforts.



INTERNATIONAL
MISSION BOARD

The International Mission Board, SBC

www.imb.org



The North American Mission Board, SBC

www.namb.net

These websites are full of **videos, photos, and appeals for prayer** from around the world. Spend some time now looking into the great Kingdom work that your life fits into.

Be sure to find your place in God's grand mission on the earth. The Christian life is so much more than attending church services on Sunday. Like a rugged Jeep, God has built you for action. You were designed by God for more that you may realize. Embrace this mission of taking the gospel across the street and across the world. Go in confidence, trusting in God's call and God's power. Remember, we even have great opportunities to serve with internationals right here in Richmond through our ministries.

We also participate in Compassion Ministries nearby and around the world. Here are some of our key partners:



www.sendrelief.org



www.globalhungerrelief.org



www.lambsbasket.org



www.Bloomrichmond.org



www.Eastendpreg.org

Stewardship (Handling Money)

Wouldn't you agree that there is a strong connection between your heart and your wallet?

Money is a very big part of life. If Jesus is not Lord of your finances then there is a huge area of your heart and life not under His leadership and blessing. Since this is such an important area of life, the Bible has much to say about money and how we view it.

Ultimately, we want to view and use money faithfully. Here are some important principles to consider as you seek to honor God in this huge part of your life.

- 1. All of our money and possessions are His. We are only stewards (managers) of His money.**

The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.
(Psalm 24:1 NASB)

- 2. We can only have one master – Jesus. We cannot love and serve both God and money.**

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” (Matthew 6:19–21, 24 NASB95)

- 3. We must fight the temptation toward greed, materialism, stinginess, and worry.**

“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31–33, NASB95)

“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.” (1 Timothy 6:10–11, NASB95)

4. We desire to be faithful employees, working honorably for our incomes.

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,”
(Colossians 3:23, NASB95)

5. We desire to be faithful and generous in giving offerings in worship to God. We are called to sacrificial and cheerful giving to advance the Lord’s work near and far.

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6–8 (ESV)

Action:

- Pray and ask God how much you should begin giving as an act of worship to Him.
- Create a personal budget with the first item being your giving. The example is Scripture is to give to God our “first fruits” rather than from what is left over.
- Learn ways to make giving a regular part of your life at our website: www.smrbc.org/give

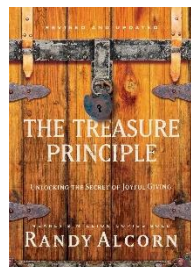
The following resources may be helpful in learning to manage your money as a believer:



christianmoneysolutions.com



www.ramseysolutions.com



Rany Alcorn’s book *The Treasure Principle* is a good study in Christian generosity and giving.

Whether you have a lot of money or feel like every day is a struggle, listen to these powerful words from Paul:

¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:11–13 (ESV)

This is just the beginning ...

Because of your faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in you and will be renewing you daily from the inside out as you yield to Him. Let God lead you. Remain in a daily posture of surrender to His perfect leadership. As you walk with Him, following His leadership, you will grow stronger in your faith. You will stumble and fall at times. Satan will lie to you, seeking to keep you down. Resist him and run to Jesus for forgiveness and renewal. Jesus will never cast you aside. You belong to Him. Trust Him. Follow Him. Treasure Him above all else. And point others to Him. That is discipleship.

Call on your pastors, Life Group leaders, deacons, or other friends in the church when you feel discouraged, defeated, or just need guidance or help. And be there for others when they need your help.

Grow with others in a “Grow Group”

Finally, don't take this journey alone. Not only can we connect you to an ongoing **Life Group** where you will study the Bible in an atmosphere of fellowship, we can also connect you to a “**Grow Group**”. A Grow Group is a smaller group of men or women that meets to grow in key areas of discipleship. These groups are characterized by openness and accountability where you can take significant strides forward in your walk with Christ. Grow Groups start at various times throughout the year, so contact the church office if you would like to be matched to one that is about to launch. Church email: email@smrbc.org.

How to use this *Next Steps* Guide:

Consider going through one section each day as you learn to follow Jesus as a disciple. You can work these sessions alone or with a mentor from the church.

Session 1: Assurance and Awareness of our Adversary (Pages 1-3)

Session 2: The Key Moves of a Disciple (Pages 4-7)

Session 3: Dealing with Questions (Page 8)

Session 4: How to Spend Time with God (Pages 9-10)

Session 5: Sharing Your Faith (Page 11 and smrbc.org)

Session 6: Ordinances and the Practice of Fasting (Pages 12-14)

Session 7: How to Live Filled with the Spirit (Pages 15-17)

Session 8: Using Your Spiritual Gifts in Service to Christ (Pages 18-19 and smrbc.org)

Session 9: Essential Doctrines (Pages 20-25 and sbc.net BF&M 2000)

Session 10: Relationships (Pages 26-28)

Session 11: Purity (Pages 29-32)

Session 12: Missions and Compassion Ministries (Pages 33-35)

Session 13: Stewardship – Handling Money, Giving, and Generosity (Pages 36-38)

