

ESSENTIALS

FUNDAMENTALS FOR YOUR WALK WITH GOD

ESSENTIALS

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FOREWORD

Congratulations for choosing to follow Jesus, your discipleship journey has begun! This resource is designed to help you mature into the disciple Jesus has called you to be. Think of this like a crash course in following Jesus!

A disciple is a follower of Jesus that is pursuing a relationship with God, the church and the lost. At Freedom Centre we believe every follower of Jesus can be a disciple and can disciple others. Our prayer for everyone who goes through this course is that they will encounter God and they will be established in their faith.

The “Essentials” is a wonderful resource that will not only strengthen your walk with Jesus but also help you to have practical conversations with a new believer as you help them on their journey with Christ.

INTRODUCTION

“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.” Hebrews 6:1-3 (NIV)

The importance of a solid foundation can’t be overstated – it is essential. The writer of Hebrews identifies six basic truths which we are to build our life upon. Understanding and applying these truths sets us up to Lead in Life.

ESSENTIALS will unpack these basic truths as well as other important Christian practices. It is a nine lesson course, designed to be completed over nine weeks. We encourage you, even if you can move through the lessons quicker, that you take your time so that you can consider and apply the principles you are learning.

#FINDFREEDOM - Freedom Centre Groups

ESSENTIALS will help you build a solid foundation in your life. If you are not already part of one of our Groups we encourage you to join one by the end of this lesson. Freedom Centre Groups are so important because they are where we can build relationships, be real and do life with other followers of Jesus – and that is where we find freedom, in relationships. We are confident that there is a Group for you!

Go to **freedomcentre.net** and click “Join a Group” or speak to someone about joining a Group.

REPENTANCE

*“From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”
Matthew 4:17 (NIV)*

“But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and “sinners’?” Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Luke 5:30-32 (NIV)

“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10 (NIV)

He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:46-47 (NIV)

Who is God and how can we live in relationship with Him?

God is our Father and He wants His children to know Him. Not through a set of rules to follow, but through a genuine, real relationship. God loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sin and set us free. The cost of our freedom from sin was heavy and it was a price that only God Himself could pay. Then He sent His Holy Spirit to come and live within us, empower us and guide us in this life.

Jesus

Jesus is God. Yet He became a man to show us who God is and to teach us how to have a relationship with the Father (God) through Him (Jesus). The first thing Jesus preached was repentance which is what we will look at in this study. Jesus told people that if they turned to God in repentance and got baptised in water that their sins are forgiven. After their baptism the Father would give them the Holy Spirit so that they could know Him and experience true life (a life lived in a relationship with God). Jesus called this being Born Again.

Q. What do you think the word ‘repent’ means?

Metanoia

The Bible was originally written in three languages; Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. It can be helpful to look at these languages when we study certain biblical concepts; because translating words from one language to another can sometimes cause slight changes. The English language doesn't contain the "exact" same words as other languages, so looking at the original words can give us a greater understanding of what the writers were saying.

The Greek word for repent used in the Bible is metanoia or metanoēō. Vine's Greek Dictionary says that metanoēō means "to change one's mind or purpose."

Metanoēō comes from the two Greek words meta meaning change and noeō referring to the mind. Metanoēō therefore literally means to change our mind and refers to a change in purpose. **It is a change in the direction your life is going.**

Imagine someone walking in one direction and then turning around 180 degrees and going the completely opposite way. This is what repentance looks like.

Repentance = Change in purpose



Metanoēō is used 34 times in the Bible. Sin is all that is opposed to God's plan for us. **Repentance therefore is a turning away from those things opposed to God's way and turning toward God, to commit to trusting and obeying Him.**

While repentance may involve saying sorry and confessing our sins, it is much more than this. When a person repents they make a decision to change. They turn away from a self-centred life to please and obey Jesus.

When a person repents their heart is changed. They no longer want to live to please themselves. They want to live to worship and serve Jesus.

Q. Do you feel like you have had a "repentance" experience?

Q. What has changed in your life since you repented?

Repentance is a choice

“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:30-31 (NIV)

Repentance is not a one time event. We should live in a lifestyle of repentance. God commands everyone to repent, because we are all humans, trying to live in our own way and we all need saving.

If God commands everyone to repent, then it must be something that everyone is capable of doing. Right? We may feel like we can't repent but the truth is that **repentance is a choice that we are capable of making.**

We choose to turn to God (repentance) and He gives us the power to live for Him (baptism and Holy Spirit) and leave dead works behind.

Q. What do you think would keep someone from repenting?

Repentance is an inward change

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.” Matthew 23:25-26 (NIV)

God looks at our hearts. He is interested in our inward and our outward life. If all we do is change our outward behaviour then we will become hypocrites. We will look the part but lack genuine faith and love for God. Repentance is not about cleaning up our behaviour and stopping the “bad” things we are doing - it is a heart change from following the world and our own ideas to **following Jesus.**

People who change outwardly but don't change inwardly end up obeying Jesus because they have to and not because they want to. If we feel like we have to and are obeying out of obligation, it is a sign that our hearts are not willing and that we need to repent. This is a religious experience that cannot last and leads to people who are stuck in a set of rules they think they need to follow. God doesn't want you to obey a whole bunch of laws, He wants to encounter you and have a relationship with you.

Repentance is a complete change

“Seek the Lord while He may be found, call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on them, and to our God, for He will freely pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:6-9 (NIV)

Repentance is a decision to turn away from living life our own way or the world’s way and turn to living a life of faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. If a person is unwilling to give something up, then it shows that they have not fully committed themselves to Jesus Christ and that their heart is not right with God. **When we have truly repented and turned to Jesus there is nothing that we will not let go of for Him.**

Repentance makes Jesus first in our lives

“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.” Matthew 10:37-39 (NIV)

Jesus is Lord and God and as such He deserves to be first in our lives.

What’s amazing about this passage is that Jesus doesn’t say “Anyone who has had a past is not worthy of me” or “Anyone who has done this or that is not worthy of me!” Jesus simply says that if we are unwilling to put Him first then we are not worthy of Him.

If a person refuses to put Jesus first, then they are in rebellion to His Lordship and Rule. God calls people who are in rebellion to Him “sinners”. When a person repents they deal with the rebellion in their hearts and humble themselves before God.

When we repent and deal with the rebellion and self-will in our hearts, then we immediately have peace with God. We receive God’s forgiveness and our past sins are washed away and we have confidence before God because we are not resisting His will.

We are in His will – how amazing!

Repent and be baptised

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:37-39 (NIV)

Repentance and baptism go together.

When a person makes the decision to repent and follow Jesus then the next step they must take is to get baptised. When we read the Bible this was often done immediately.

We will look at what water baptism is in depth in the third session. At this stage it is important to know that water baptism is a physical and spiritual act involving being submerged under water for the removal of sin from our lives as we share in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. When a person repents and is water baptised their sins are washed away and they become a new person.

The power we need to follow Jesus comes to us through faith in our baptism.

Action: Repent and be baptised!

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord “ Acts 3:19 (NIV)

God is waiting to forgive all your sins and welcome you as a son or daughter into His everlasting Kingdom. All you have to do is make the choice to turn to Him in repentance and be baptised. God promises to give you the Holy Spirit, to reveal Himself to you and to be with you forever once you commit yourself to Him.

Action: Pray

If you want to repent then tell God in prayer. Use your own words to let God know that you want to put Him first in your life.

If you are not there yet then ask God to help you come to that point of putting Him first.

Ask your Essentials leader to pray with you and organise a time for you to be baptised if you are ready to take that next step.

FAITH

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:14-15 (NIV)

“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” John 3:13-18 (NIV)

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

“Now faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

Jesus told people to repent from sin and have faith in God.

Jesus told people that if they had faith in Him that they would never die. **This truth that “salvation by faith and not by works” is a crucial part of the Gospel.**

Jesus didn’t just teach us about faith, He modelled a life of faith. Jesus is fully God but He also became fully human, so when we look at His human life we can see how life is designed to be lived. **He is our perfect example.** Jesus showed us how we can live in supernatural purity and power through faith. He showed us how we can overcome temptation and sin through faith. He also showed us how we can see God’s miraculous power flow through our lives through faith.

Pistis

The Greek words for faith are the noun *pistis* and the corresponding verb *pisteuō*.

Vine’s Dictionary defines faith as “firm persuasion”. When we study how the words “faith” and “believe” are used throughout the Bible we can see that they are more than just believing the facts of the Gospel or believing that Jesus is real. We can believe these things and still not actually have faith. **Faith refers to a wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ and His will.**

Repentance and faith go together. Repentance emphasises turning away from sin while faith emphasises our commitment to Jesus and His will. Repentance and faith both imply each other and are necessary for salvation.

Salvation is by faith and not by works

“Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” Romans 4:4-5 (NIV)

The Bible talks about two ways of trying to be righteous or right with God.

The first way is through works. Works are the things we do in life, and righteousness by works is an attempt at doing good things to make ourselves right. The Bible says that no one can be right with God this way. All of us have been born in sin and separated from God and because of that have sinned against God.

How have we been born in sin?

Adam and Eve (the first people on earth) disobeyed God. When they disobeyed God they brought sin into this world. Every person born since then has been born into sin. So even if someone was born, was a perfect baby who grew up without ever doing any wrong and lived a PERFECT life (impossible but lets pretend!) – even that perfect person would need salvation through Jesus; because every human being is born into sin. There isn't a single person on earth who doesn't need to be made right with God and there is nothing we can do to make ourselves right with God. We all need Jesus!

When people try and be right with God, (the bible calls it righteous), through works, they become more and more proud. When people start to think that they are right with God because of their good works they become self-righteous. Self-righteous people think that their salvation depends on their performance and are always trying to measure up and prove themselves. Self-righteous people see themselves as good people and tend to look down on other people who aren't living as they are. This attitude is very different to true Christianity and the Love of God.

So, in summary, there is no way to become right with God through works.

The way we actually become right with God is called righteousness through faith. **It is the only way that anyone can be right with God.**

God is holy and just and he cannot leave sin unpunished. God saw that we had all sinned and had mercy on us by sending his Son Jesus to pay the price of our sin. Jesus lived a perfect life and then died on the cross to pay for our sin – your sin, my sin, the sin of every human, ever! God accepts Jesus' life as payment for our sin and we can know the freedom of that payment when we wholeheartedly commit ourselves to Jesus Christ.

Jesus' death was the cost that was paid so we could be free from our sin.

The way of faith humbles us before God. Faith recognises that we can't do anything to make ourselves right and acknowledges our need for a Saviour. By faith we know we are accepted because of what Jesus has done.

WORKS

- Human Effort
- I never feel good enough
- I am driven by fear and guilt
- I am focused on my performance
- I tend to reduce the Gospel to rules
- I get tired
- I feel proud
- I look down on others who aren't as I am

FAITH

- God's grace
- I know God's love and acceptance
- I am motivated by love
- I am focused on Christ
- I have a relationship with God
- I have rest
- I am humbled and grateful
- I pray for others to know Christ and his salvation

**Jesus answered,
“I am the way
and the truth
and the life.
No one comes
to the Father
except through me.”**

– John 14:6

the same boat” is a lie. **This idea goes directly against what Jesus taught.** There are many religions but the only way people can be saved from sin is through Jesus Christ. We have all sinned and Mohammad, Buddha, Joseph Smith, the Watchtower, Hinduism, New Age philosophy or Spirituality in any form can't make us right with a Holy God. **Only Jesus Christ and His work on the cross can see justice done and free us from the power and the penalty of sin.**

When we understand that only Jesus can save people it makes us want to go and reach out to others with the Good News. We have to let others know that we have found the answer and we desperately want to share it with them!

Jesus is the only way

“You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21 (NIV)

“It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed... Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:10-12 (NIV)

It is popular today for people to think that there are many ways to God. The idea that “everyone who believes in some kind of higher power is pretty much in

Salvation is a gift

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Grace is one of the central teachings of the Bible.

Grace simply means “an undeserved gift” and refers to anything and everything that God gives us as a gift. When the Bible says that we are saved by grace it is saying that it is something that God freely gives us when we believe as opposed to being something that we have to work for or earn.

Grace is God loving us when we were his enemies and God forgiving us the moment we fully committed ourselves to Christ. Grace is God giving us the Holy Spirit to be with us forever and God blessing us when we don't deserve it. Grace is God giving us another chance every time we make a mistake. Grace is God helping us with the power and authority to overcome.

Q. Do you think faith and obedience go together?

Q. If so, how do you think they are related?

Faith produces obedience

John 3:36 (NLT) And anyone who believes [pisteuō] in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey [apeitho] the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment.

Hebrews 3:18-19 (NIV) And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed [apeitho]? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief [apistis].

What is the opposite of belief?

According to the Bible, the opposite of believing is disobeying. We see this in both John and Hebrews. In both of these passages, the Holy Spirit talks about believing and disobedience as opposites.

One of the things this emphasises is that faith is more than just believing the facts of the Gospel. **Faith is a wholehearted commitment to Jesus and to his will.** Faith is obedience.

In English the words for believe and obey are very different but in Greek these words are very similar. The Greek word for believe is *pisteuō* while the Greek word for obey is **peitho**.

Vine's Greek Dictionary of New Testament Words says that the words "faith" and "obey" are closely related. It says that **faith produces obedience**. Faith is of the heart and is invisible to men while obedience is of the actions and may be observed. When a person obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that he believes God in his heart.

So faith is the heart change and obedience is the outward change. In other words, faith always results in a change in lifestyle. When we follow Jesus, we have both.

“We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone” - Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

Faith and obedience are inseparable

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” James 2:14-26 (NIV)

James tells us that faith and obedience are inseparable. Some people think they believe in Jesus just because they believe Jesus is real or because they believe that Jesus died on a cross. James addresses this by saying that **faith without action is dead and useless.**

Believing in Jesus is not acknowledging He existed, it is following and obeying Him.

James refers to the first time the word faith is used, in Genesis 15:6, where it is said that Abraham “believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” He says that Abraham’s faith was seen by what he did. He didn’t just believe in a passive sense he believed and obeyed what God said and God blessed him for his faith. Let’s be like Abraham!

Action: Receive God's gift!

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:15-16 (NIV)

God has already sent Jesus to die for your sins. He has shown you how much He loves you and how much He wants you to be part of His eternal kingdom. **It's your move now.**

All you have to do to receive God's forgiveness is make the decision to wholeheartedly commit yourself to Jesus Christ and his will. When you do this you will want to get baptised as soon as you can.

Ask your Essentials leader to pray with you and organise a time for you to be baptised if you are ready to take that next step.

BAPTISMS

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:15-16 (NIV)

“But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Act 8:12 (NIV)

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.” Act 8:35 (NIV)

“And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.” Act 16:31-33 (NIV)

“On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.” Act 19:5-6 (NIV)

“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” Act 22:16 (NIV)

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.” Romans 6:3-4 (NIV)

Q. What do you think Baptism is all about?

Q. When do you think a person is ready to be water baptised?

Baptism

The word baptism is the Greek work **baptizo** which means to immerse, to dip or to submerge. The Bible talks about different baptisms. It talks about baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Repentance and Water Baptism

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. Act 2:37-41 (NIV)

All throughout the Gospels we see that repentance, faith and baptism all go together. We see that people responded to God's invitation by turning away from sin and being baptised in water.

Many people see repentance and baptism as separate things but when we study the Bible we see that we need repentance with baptism. When the people asked Peter what they needed to do to be saved in the passage we just read he told them to repent and be baptised for the forgiveness of their sin. Those people who received the message were baptised immediately! When we read through the Book of Acts (which records the history of the first Christians) we see that whenever people repented **they showed their repentance by getting baptised in water immediately.**

Water baptism is a powerful physical and spiritual act

Romans 6:3-4 (NIV) Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

Water baptism is a powerful physical and spiritual act.

Water baptism is obviously a physical act because it involves physically being immersed in water. Water baptism is also a spiritual act. When a person repents and is baptised in water something spiritual happens. When a person repents they die to their old self-centred life and when they are baptised they are buried and united with Christ.

If you have ever buried someone close to you then you will know that the moment when you lower the body into the grave is a powerful moment. It's often at that moment that people are hit with the reality that they will never see their loved one again in this life. Baptism is burial.

When a person gets baptised they are burying their old life with Jesus and making a statement that we will never see that old life again.

When they come up out of the water they come up a new person empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a new life. Baptism is dying and burying with Jesus and then coming up out of the water is rising with Jesus. Sharing in Jesus resurrection.

This means that when you make a mistake, God chooses to see your Spirit man, which is brand new, Holy and righteous. We are now eternally loved!

Colossians 2:12 *“For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.”*

After you are baptised God only sees you through His son Jesus. This means that when He looks at you He sees you holy, blameless and completely right in His sight.

Jesus took the blame and the punishment for all of your sin. For every wrong thing you have ever done, big or small, past, present and future. You are as perfect as Jesus Himself and that is how God sees you! How amazing!

Church traditions

Some people encourage people to baptise infants and very young children. When we understand that baptism is about repentance then it doesn't make sense to baptise infants and children who do not understand right from wrong or repentance.

Some people also teach that we are baptised into a certain church or denomination. This is also unbiblical. The Bible teaches us that we are baptised into Christ Jesus and that when we are baptised we are added to the church in the sense that we become part of God's people throughout the earth. Baptism is not to join a church but join to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Importance of Communion

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

John 6:49 - 58 NKJV

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.” Matthew 26:26-29 NKJV

Communion is a powerful spiritual practice, it is simply taking time to remember Christ and what He did on the cross and what His sacrifice now means for you. That you are now forgiven, cleansed, set free, filled with the Spirit and love of God and can now live a life of victory. This is why we take communion regularly when we gather together, to remember Him and be strengthened in this truth.

Communion can be taken at any time, whether alone, with friends or family. Simply prepare any solid and any liquid of your choosing, say a prayer of remembrance - remembering what Christ did on the cross for you. Take the moment to remember His body broken and blood poured out, so you could experience freedom and victory in your life - eat the solid (eg. bread, cracker, biscuit) and drink the liquid (eg. water, juice, coffee) and remember Him.

It is ESSENTIAL that you take communion regularly with others in fellowship, claiming the power of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Receiving of the Spirit

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. Acts 19:1-6 (NIV)

When we read the Gospels and the Book of Acts we see that after people were baptised in water they received the Holy Spirit. Often when this happened these people began to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They often began prophesying and speaking in a spiritual language that the Bible calls tongues.

In Acts 19:1-6 we see that when Paul placed his hands on the new Christians they received the Holy Spirit. One of the things the Bible teaches us is that the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts can be imparted by physical touch. When believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit lay hands on people they can release the Spirit into their lives.

"For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- Acts 1:5-8

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Jesus told his followers to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit. He told them the Holy Spirit would come upon them and that they would be empowered to live a life of supernatural purity and power.

When people are baptised in the Holy Spirit they are literally clothed with spiritual power. They are immersed in the life and the power of the Holy Spirit. This power changes them and gives them the ability to do more than they can in their own strength including wonders and miracles. It is important to note that receiving the Holy Spirit is an event that will also require ongoing baptisms/fillings by his Spirit. **We can receive more and more of God's Spirit as we seek to know and obey him.**

Following Jesus without the Holy Spirit is not God's design; therefore baptism in the Holy Spirit is a critical part of your walk with Jesus, and should happen continually throughout your life.

A simple way of distinguishing between the two baptisms is that the Holy Spirit lives in you for you, and upon you for others. The Holy Spirit comes in us through water baptism and upon us through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Q. What do you think the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a person's life?

Q. Do you think that you have received the Holy Spirit?

Regardless, of whether you have or haven't had this experience, we believe as stated in the scriptures that baptism of the Holy Spirit happens multiple times throughout our life. It is something we should seek, pray for and desire.

As the apostles went out to preach after the Day of Pentecost it is reported in the books of Acts that they became filled with the Spirit again and again (see Acts 4:8; 4:31; 13:9).

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:11-13 (NIV)

Jesus reassured us of the Father's eagerness to give us the Holy Spirit. He reminds us that God is a good Father who wants to give us the Holy Spirit.

Following Jesus without the power of the Holy Spirit is not God's design; therefore baptism in the Holy Spirit is a critical part of your walk with Jesus, and should happen continually throughout your life.

Action: Be baptised and receive the Holy Spirit

Have you been baptised? Did you have hands laid on you to receive the Holy Spirit?

Your Essentials leader can lead you in these steps of baptism in water and of the Holy Spirit.

HEALING

Physical Healing

Did you know that God wants to heal?

Not only is His desire for healing but he DOES heal. He CAN heal and He WILL heal!

The bible is filled with stories of healing and miracles and God has not changed.

When Jesus was crucified He suffered greatly in his body. He was beaten, whipped and tortured and the Bible is clear about what that means for us as His children.

Isaiah 53:5 says, “But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”

The covenant (agreement) that was made between man and God when Jesus died grants us two things:

1. Forgiveness of our sins
2. Healing in our bodies

It is both the blood and the body of Jesus that impacts us in this amazing way!

Are you experiencing an ailment or illness? Let's pray right now and believe for your healing.

The crazy thing about this is that not only did Jesus heal, but commands His followers to do the same. So next time God puts someone in your path that is sick or in pain, lay your hands on them and bring them the miracle they need!

Emotional Healing

“The spirit of the lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV)

Often when people come to Christ they come with brokenness and pain from the past caused by all kinds of things.

We can look happy but inside have painful wounds caused by things like abuse, broken relationships, broken promises, failures, death and loss, disappointments, divorce, injustices, etc. Unless these mental and emotional wounds are healed, they will build up, leaving us feeling extremely weary and burdened. They will also hinder us from trusting God and building healthy relationships with people around us.

It is important that we identify these areas of brokenness and allow God to heal us so that we are free to move forward in faith.

It is ok to be carrying brokenness, but God wants to encounter you and heal you from those hurts because He loves you. Don't let the hurts and pain of the past stop you from becoming everything God wants you to be now.

God wants to heal us

The three passages we read at the start show us that God is good and that he wants to heal us from the trauma and pain of the past.

Psalms 23 describes God as a loving shepherd who cares for us and restores our souls. Our soul is the part of us that feels, thinks and chooses. God doesn't just want to heal our spirits, He wants to heal our souls and also our physical bodies.

In Luke 4 Jesus walked into the Synagogue (Jewish 'church building'), and read from the prophet Isaiah. This passage is about the year of Jubilee - a year where God would restore his people from their misfortune and cancel their debts. Jesus explained that he had come to proclaim a never ending year of jubilee and that this involved **healing broken hearted people and setting people free from all kinds of mental and emotional captivity**. This passage tells us that God cares about our souls and wants to heal us and set us free.

In Matthew 11:28-29 Jesus invited those who were feeling tired and burdened to come to Him and receive rest for their weary souls. What a kind, caring and comforting statement.

Have you felt at times you have been carrying a heavy burden? Jesus wants to lift that off you!

In John 3 Jesus spoke of being Born Again. It's a new start, with a fully cleansed or new heart. Jesus is able to remove the hurts of the past and give us the new heart and brand new start. **God wants to bring healing and restoration to your heart, and He has the power to do it.**

Identifying soul wounds

The first step for us to receive God's healing and become whole is to identify any soul wounds that we might have from the past. The following are some signs that you have a wounded soul.

Sign #1 – You feel hurt about something that happened in the past

One of the best indicators that you have a soul wound is that you still feel hurt by something that has happened to you in the past. If you can think of something that has happened to you and you don't feel pain then it is healed but if you still feel pain, sadness or some other negative emotion then it is a sign you have a soul wound.

Sign #2 – You often feel emotionally tired and drained

Soul wounds are like dead weight in our lives. If you have been to the gym you will know you can lift a certain amount of weight. Let's say you can bench press 70kgs easily. When people get a soul wound it is like adding another 10kg to the bar. Soul wounds can build up in our lives and leave us feeling weary, tired and burdened unless we know how to deal with them.

Sign #3 – You tend to overreact to small things and get irritated by people’s innocent mistakes

Soul wounds are like natural wounds. If someone brushed up against your arm you probably wouldn’t think anything of it. However, if you had a cut on your arm and someone brushed up against it then you would experience severe pain and probably react strongly. This is what soul wounds are like. When people brush up against them we can feel severe pain and tend to overreact.

Sign # 4 – You are haunted by bad experiences and memories of the past

People who experience soul wounds are often tormented by bad memories in their past and can even experience recurring nightmares. Sometimes people try and block out these painful memories but they are awakened through things like hearing an old love song or smelling a certain perfume.

We have to deal with the root of the problem

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)

Imagine you had a tree in your garden that was producing poisonous fruit and you wanted to get rid of it before it did some serious damage. You could go and pick the fruit off and throw it out but then you would have to do that all over again after a few months. The best way to permanently deal with the bad fruit is to kill the root.

Many people struggle with poisonous fruit in their lives. Things like anger, hate, shame, insecurity, fear, lust, depression, addictions and unresolved grief are all bad fruit. When we try not to deal with these things we are often only picking the fruit. This may work for a while but eventually the fruit grows back. After doing this for a while we can get frustrated and discouraged and lose hope that we will ever change and be free. **If we want to deal with bad fruit in our lives then we need to deal with the root of the problem.**

Hebrews 12 identifies bitterness as a root that can begin to grow in our lives to trouble us and poison others. If we have a poisonous root of bitterness in our lives then **we must deal with this through forgiveness.**

Exercise

Take a moment and write down any bitter roots in your life on a scrap piece of paper. Be specific about who did what and how you felt as a result. It is important that you’re totally honest as you complete this part of the exercise. Remember, your Heavenly Father sees everything and his heart towards you is to set you free.

Forgive

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV)

Our Father loves us and wants to heal us but we have to choose to forgive people for their wrongs against us so He can heal us. **God always requires us to forgive because it’s what loosens the bondage of the hurt.** There are no exceptions. We must always forgive.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a choice to release people from our judgment. When we forgive someone we make a decision to release them and not to hold their wrong against them anymore.

The following are some truths about forgiveness:

- Ø Forgiveness is not denying the facts of what happened
- Ø Forgiveness is not saying that what the person who hurt you did was okay
- Ø Forgiveness is a decision that we are capable of making no matter how we feel
- Ø Forgiveness releases us not them – they will still have to answer to God for their actions

Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the person who hurt you to suffer; it only hurts us. When we forgive we free ourselves from the pain and bondage of unforgiveness in our lives.

A Warning

Offence is one of the most common ways that the devil takes believers out and away from a relationship with God.

The word offence is the Greek word **skandalon**. A skandalon is a baitstick that a hunter would use to trap small animals. When the Bible uses the word offence it is drawing on a powerful picture. It is telling us that offence is the devil’s bait to bring us into captivity.

We must get good at discerning when we are offended and make a decision to quickly forgive. We will all have many opportunities to take offence in our marriages, families, church family, workplace and our friendships. We must be alert and careful that we do not let the root of bitterness grow in our lives and defile us and others through our lives.

Offense = bitterness and unforgiveness.

Don’t let the devil sneak in. Forgive and experience the freedom God has for you.

Action: Receiving God's healing

Here is a guideline process that will help you to forgive those people who have hurt you:

1. Imagine the person is in front of you
2. Tell that person how you felt about what they did – be honest
3. **Choose to release them from your judgment**
4. Bless them and pray for them

Ask your Essentials leader to pray with you, remembering that Jesus' blood covers your sin, it pardons you. His blood also covers the sin of the person who hurt you, "I am forgiven, therefore I too can forgive."

ETERNITY

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.” Ecclesiastes 7:2 (NIV)

“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” James 4:14 (NIV)

“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” Hebrews 9:27 (NIV)

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:11-15 (NIV)

Life is short

God reminds us over and over again that life is both fragile and short and encourages us to take this to heart.

Any number divided by infinity is zero. It doesn’t matter whether you live 25 years or 70 years, it is all zero in light of eternity.

Where and how you spend your forever will be determined by this zero time that you have on earth. It is therefore extremely important that we learn to live with an eternal perspective where we are more concerned with the things that are eternal rather than the things that will only last a few moments.

It’s easy to get caught up thinking and worrying about all the things that matter in our lives here, but this life will quickly be over and what have we invested into our eternity?

Q. How do you think living with an eternal perspective changes the way we see life?

Q. How does having an eternal perspective change the way we see suffering, money and the mission to reach out to others?

Life immediately after death

We don't need to guess what will happen to us after we die. God clearly explains in the Bible, what happens to us when we leave this world so that we can face the future without fear. Let's talk about what actually happens when this life ends.

Your body

*"...and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."
Ecclesiastes 12:7 (NIV)*

Your body can't live without your spirit. The moment your spirit leaves your body it will start to decompose. The Bible calls this place where your body goes after death the grave (the Hebrew word ebooraw and Greek word mnaymion).

Your soul

After death, your soul will go to one of two places—hades or heaven.

Hades

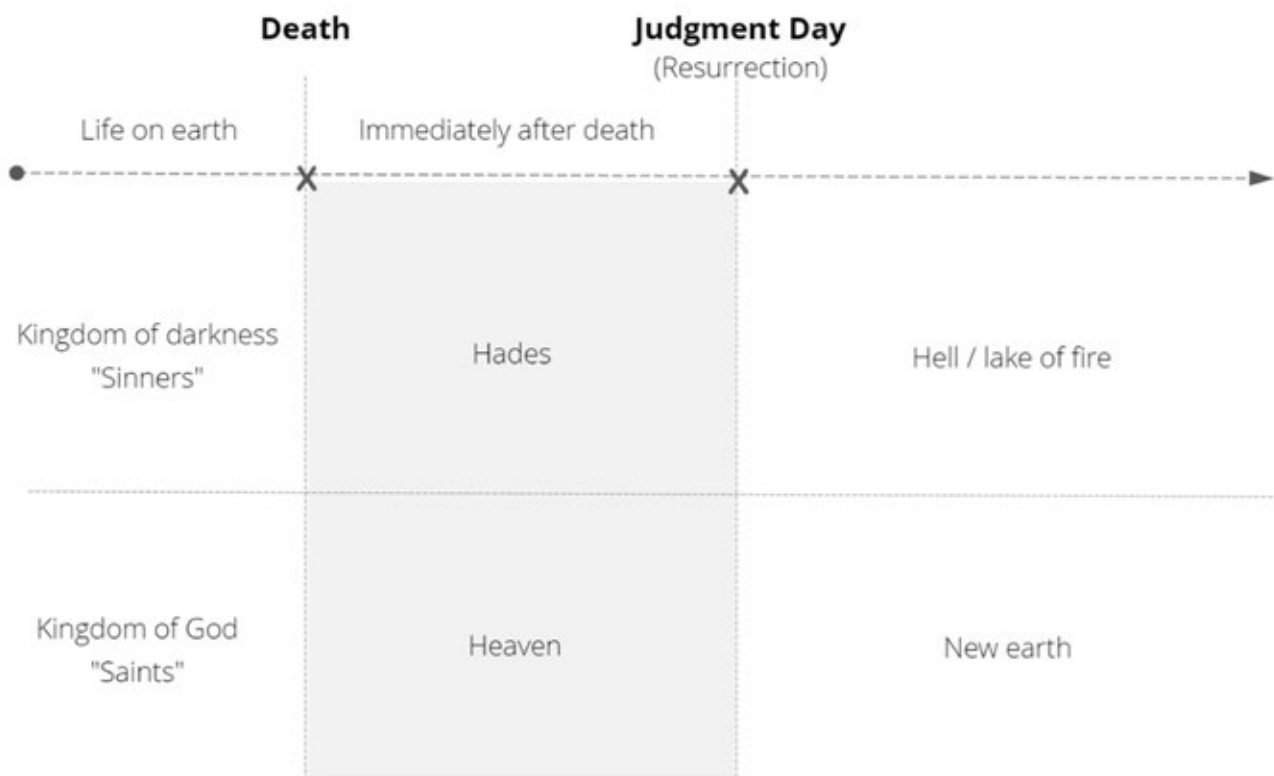
Hades (Hebrew word sheol and Greek word hades) is the temporary home for dead sinners that are waiting for Judgment Day. Sinners (people without Jesus) are kept in hades to wait for judgment in the same way that criminals are kept in remand. Hades is an actual place of torment and suffering. It is a place of torment because God is not there, His presence is not there! Jesus referred to this place often and described it most fully in Luke 16.

"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell [hades], where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' Luke 16:22-26 (NIV)

From this account we can see that hades is a real place, that it is a place of torment, that the people who go there are fully conscious and have all their senses and that there is no escape.

Heaven

Heaven (Hebrew shamayim and Greek ouranou) is the temporary resting place of dead saints. Heaven is a paradise of perfect righteousness, peace and joy. If you have a real relationship with Jesus this is where you are going!



Judgment Day

"You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat." Romans 14:10 (NIV)

"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" Hebrews 9:27 (NIV)

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:11-15 (NIV)

On Judgment Day, God will call every person to give an account for what they did with the life that He gave them on earth. While there is no one who has always done what is good, the Bible tells us that some will be shown mercy. **It tells us that those that did wrong but then repented and lived a life of faith in obedience to Jesus Christ will be shown mercy. Those who rejected Christ will be shown no mercy.**

"If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NIV)

Jesus will open the book of life on Judgment Day and whoever's name is not found written in the book of life will be sentenced to hell. Those who have washed themselves in the blood and made themselves clean will then give an account for their lives. **Jesus will examine what we have done for Him in this world. Jesus will then give us eternal rewards based on the quality of our works.** If what people do is done out of a pure heart of love and obedience to God, then they will be rewarded but if it is done out of compromise and mixed motives then it will be destroyed.

This means that it isn't a race to see who can do the most "good stuff"; it is about living with a heart that truly desires God and His ways. This person lives out of a place of love and relationship with God.. Anything we do to look good in the eyes of men will be burned up!

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Matthew 25:41-46 (NIV)

Jesus taught us that people will be sentenced to one of two places on Judgment Day. He called one place eternal punishment and the other place eternal life. When we put this together with John's vision of Judgment Day in revelation we learn that eternal punishment is the lake of fire and that eternal life is the new heavens and new earth.

The lake of fire

Keep in mind, God doesn't send people to the lake of fire (eternal judgement/hell), He honours their choice of not wanting Him and His Son Jesus. God gives us the dignity to choose our own fate.

Sobering facts about the lake of fire:

- 1.** It is punishment - The purpose is not correction or discipline but punishment (Matthew 25:46; 1 John 4:18)
- 2.** It is final - The sentence given on Judgment Day is final. There are no second chances. People's fate is determined while they are on earth, once they die that's it (Philippians, 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; Revelation 22:11)
- 3.** It is everlasting - The word used for eternal punishment is the same word use for life (Matthew 25:46). It is the end in the sense that it is final but it will go on forever.

4. It will be beyond people's ability to endure - Jesus said that there will be weeping or wailing and gnashing of teeth there (Matthew 13:42-50; Luke 13:28), indicating that it will be a place of unbearable agony and torment. Some people say that if they go to hell then they will bear it as well as they can, but the fury of God Almighty will be far beyond any human ability to endure (Matthew 21:44; Ezekiel 22:14, etc.)

5. It will be eternal separation from God - The reason hell will be so bad is that it will be separation from God. The absence of light is darkness. The absence of heat is cold. The absence of God is hell. God doesn't need to create hell; it is simply the place where he is not present (2 Thessalonians 1:9, "from" can be translated as "away from"; Matthew 25:41, "Depart from me..."; Matthew 8:12, i.e., "outer darkness"; Jude 1:13)

Q. Before knowing Jesus, what did you think hell would be like?

Q. Did you fear it at all?

New heavens and new earth

"...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness." 2 Peter 3:12-13 (NIV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." Revelation 21:1-5 (NIV)

The new earth is the final destination of all those who follow Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that this new earth will be a world that is uncorrupted by sin. It will be a world without death, pain or suffering. It is a paradise of perfect righteousness, peace and joy that God has prepared for those who love him.

"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" – Jesus

Action: Receive an awareness of eternity!

How can you stay aware of eternity?

Who do you know that is not a follower of Jesus? How can you introduce them to the gospel or invite them to a Service? Let's make a plan to do that!

Ask your Essentials leader to help you make a practical plan for how you can reach those in your world who don't know Jesus.

CHURCH

“I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22 (NIV)

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

Church is made up of living stones not dead bricks

When some people think of the word church they think about a building or holy place. The Bible never uses the word church to refer to a building but to God’s people and the event of gathering together as an assembly.

Coming to church isn’t supposed to be a series of activities in a special building. It is a gathering of people to encounter God together, to experience Him and obey what He has instructed us to do.

Q. What do you think of when you hear the word church?

Jesus is building His Church

“I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” Matthew 16:18 (NIV)

Jesus is building His church and this church is victorious over the forces of evil. The word church in this passage is the Greek word *ekklesia*. When Jesus used this word to describe what he is building he was drawing on a concept that would have been familiar to his listeners who were living under Roman rule.

When the Romans conquered another nation one of the first things that they did was send a small group of Romans to live within the cities conquered, known as the *Ekklesia*. **The term *Ekklesia*, literally means “called out ones.” These people were sent out from Rome to establish the Roman way of life in that foreign place, this process is called *collanization*.**

The *Ekklesia* taught the locals how to be Roman citizens. They taught them Roman beliefs, values, laws, customs and culture. Once these locals had been taught Roman ways they were then also established as the *Ekklesia* or the governing body in that territory. One of the reasons this strategy was so effective is because it used local people to enforce Roman rule over other local people in a conquered area.

When Jesus said “I will build my *Ekklesia*” He made a powerful statement. Jesus has conquered the spirit of the world and He has chosen a group of people to be His *Ekklesia*. **He calls us out of the world, teaches us about His kingdom, and then sends us into the world to establish His Kingdom rule.**

Ekklesia is a powerful concept that gives us insight into the nature and purpose of the church and our lives as members of the church. It helps us see that the church is more than a social group or place where we learn God’s will.

The church is a people movement, belonging to Jesus, called out on God’s mission.

What an amazing thing to be part of! The *Ekklesia* is God’s instrument to change the world and we are so glad you are a vital part of His plan.

Different names for Church

The Bible uses many different names to describe the church. Each of these names illustrates a different aspect of our nature and purpose.

Name	Aspect being emphasised
Church	We are called out and then sent in Our purpose is to extend God’s kingdom on earth We are a missional community

Name	Aspect being emphasised
The Body	Jesus Christ is the Head Connectedness Interdependence Unity in diversity We belong to each other We act on Christ's behalf in the world
Family of faith	We have one Father We are made up of different spiritual generations We love each other as brothers and sisters
The Bride	We are loved We are holy or devoted to Christ We have a privileged relationship with God We are preparing ourselves for our ultimate union
The House	We carry the literal Presence of Jesus God is shaping us and fitting us together
The Vineyard	Christ is the source that sustains us God expects us to bear fruit

It is important to stay connected

The Bible says that being planted in the church is a key to our growth and progress in life.

Q. What do you think being planted means?

***“Those who are planted in the house of the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall still bear fruit in old age;
they shall be fresh and flourishing...”***
- Psalm 92:13-14 (NKJV)

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

Some people say that you don't need to go to church to be a Christian. While this is technically true it subtly undermines the value of the local church. God wants us to be a connected and active part of a church family where we can Encounter God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose and Lead in Life through serving together.

Getting involved in a local church is extremely important for our spiritual growth and success as a believer. We were not designed to do life alone; we are better together!

We are family

“God sets the lonely in families” Psalms 68:6 (NIV)

What would happen to a baby that was born and left out in the cold?

Christianity isn't just about believing—it is also about belonging. Our Father doesn't want us left out in the cold like an orphan. He has prepared a spiritual family for us so that we have a place to belong that will help us grow strong and healthy. God's design for us is that we do life together!

Iron sharpens iron

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

What would happen to a hot ember that shot out of a fire?

There is life in connection. We can lose our edge and grow cold if we isolate ourselves just as an ember can grow cold outside the fire. God doesn't want us growing cold. **He wants us to stay on fire for Him through fellowship with other passionate believers.**

We are stronger together

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIV)

What would happen to a finger that was dislocated or cut off completely from the body?

We can do more together than we could ever do by ourselves. God doesn't want us to dislocate ourselves or cut ourselves off from the rest of the body. **He wants us to stay connected and learn to cooperate with His team so that we can reach this world with His amazing Good News!**

There is protection in connection

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Hebrews 13:17 (NIV)

What would happen to an animal that wandered from the pack?

Coming under godly leadership that can watch out for our souls and planting ourselves in a church doesn't mean that we will never fall away, but there is protection in belonging to a church community. **We have mature leaders and believers around us who can watch out for us and people who know us that can encourage us, help us and correct us when we need it.** Staying connected to a church where God's word is preached also protects us from the many false and unbalanced doctrines out there that can undermine our faith.

God wants us to stay connected and protected.

Making a long-term commitment

If we are going to help build a strong church, then we need to make a long-term commitment to the vision.

The churches that are making the biggest impact for Christ in the world are those who have a team of people who have been around for a while. The reality is that it takes time for people to catch God's vision, to become family and to form a strong team.

Staff turnover is a problem in any organisation. Churches where people are only weakly committed to the vision struggle to do anything significant for their city because they continually have to build a kingdom culture and retrain people for ministry.

It is not a sin to leave one church and go to another church and God does send people from one church to another to fulfil His purposes. If we do move churches it is important to make sure that we are following God and not leaving to try and run away from our problems, because we got offended with someone and are too childish to work it out or because we can't handle correction. It is also important that we leave with honour.

Ultimately a strong church is one where people - together - carry the vision, love the community and build God's Kingdom. A church isn't a group of people following a leader. It is a group of believers following Jesus together and saving people from hell along the way.

This is the Ekklesia. That is our prayer for you in this church.

Action: Plant yourself in this church!

Do you know that God has put gifts and abilities within you that He wants you to use within your church? What do you feel called to within your church home? How can you plant yourself in your local church?

Ask your Essentials leader to help you connect with our church, if you haven't sat through our Freedom Centre Track - this is a great starting point. Freedom Centre Track is a short course that helps you discover your gifts and find where you are called to serve within our church family.

PRAYER

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35 (NIV)

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” Acts 4:31 (NIV)

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” Hebrews 5:7 (NIV)

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

Prayer is not a boring ritual or a dead religious activity. Prayer is conversation with the indescribable living God. How amazing is it that we are able to speak directly to God Himself - the Creator of the Universe!

Jesus’ example

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35 (NIV)

“After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone” Matthew 14:23 (NIV)

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.” Luke 6:12 (NIV)

Q. What can you learn about the way Jesus prayed from these three passages?

Jesus is our example in all things. He showed us the kind of life that we were created to live. When we study Jesus’ life in the Gospels we see that Jesus modelled a life of prayer.

When we look at Jesus’ life we see that Jesus prayed without ceasing in the sense that **His life was a constant conversation with the Father**. We also see that Jesus regularly turned aside to spend time alone with the Father in prayer. We see that Jesus spent long periods of time in prayer and that his powerful ministry came directly out of the close relationship that He had developed with the Father in prayer. We also see that **Jesus always made time for prayer, even when he was extremely busy**.

Jesus dismissed the people to make time to pray. Our lives are busy and **we have to make time for the things that are important to us**. If we don't make time to be alone with God and pray other things will creep in and we will find we have no time for prayer.

Do you know that God LOVES prayer because He loves having conversations with you!

Q. How is your prayer life? What can you do to follow Jesus in how He modelled prayer?

Prayer as listening

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)

Martha was busy running around doing things while Mary was still and sat at Jesus' feet to listen to Him. When Martha asked Jesus to tell her sister to help her, Jesus told her that Mary had chosen the most important and better thing. One of the things that we can learn from this story is that **our first priority is to be still and listen to Jesus**.

Jesus knew who the Father was, who he was, what his purpose was, what he was supposed to say and do and what was going to happen in the future all because he learned to listen. **God will reveal amazing things to us as we make the time to sit at His feet and listen to Him**. As we build our relationship with the Holy Spirit we will learn to discern God's voice with greater clarity.

Take some time now and listen to what God is saying to you.

Prayer as listening

Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 (NIV)

Praise or thankfulness is a powerful thing. God and other people do many things for us and it is easy to take these things for granted. When we thank God we are honouring Him and we are taking the focus off ourselves and onto God and others. We are also **cultivating a humble and happy attitude** and keeping ourselves free from depression, negativity and complaining.

Thankfulness is a beautiful and powerful thing. Often **it is an attitude that we choose** - because there is always something to be negative about. Instead of complaining, **let's choose a constant attitude of thankfulness.**

Prayer as worship

*“Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.”
Psalms 29:2 (NIV)*

The word worship means to adore, be in awe of, bow down, honour, reverence, and surrender.

Worship can involve any action, not just singing. In fact, the first time the word worship is used in the Bible it is used to refer to how Abraham went to offer his son on the altar as an act of sacrificial obedience to what God told him to do. **When we worship God we are expressing our heart towards him for who He is and for what He has done.**

God sings over us and he loves it when we express our love for him through singing. When we read through the Bible and especially the Psalms we see that lifting our voices in praise and worship to God is one of the most repeated commands in the whole Bible.

Even if you don't have a great singing voice - God still loves your worship!

Prayer as requests

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philipians 4:6-7 (NIV)

God is our loving Father and He wants to bless us and provide for us.

Some people don't like to bother God with their needs. They think it is humble not to ask God for anything but this isn't true humility. **True humility is about recognising our dependence on God and confidently asking Him for what we need.**

God wants us to pray about everything and anything.

Nothing is too big or too small for him. God wants us to come to him and ask for whatever we need instead of getting worried and stressed out about things.

Imagine God is your very best friend. He cares for you, wants to hear from you and you can share anything with him, anytime!

Prayer as warfare

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you."
Luke 10:17-19 (NIV)

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (NIV)

When we receive Jesus as Lord we receive authority over Satan and his demons. **One of the ways that we exercise this authority is in prayer.** When we speak to demons in Jesus' name they must obey us.

As believers we need to learn to fight. We need to learn to identify what spirits are operating to hinder God's will and address them. When we use the authority that we have been given things shift in the spirit and circumstances begin to change.

There is power in the name of Jesus that we have access to as believers!

Persevering prayer

"We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." Hebrews 6:12 (NIV)

Faith is persevering by nature. Faith doesn't give up, it steps up. Faith doesn't shrink back. **Faith keeps pressing and pressing and pressing until it gets breakthrough.**

God always answers prayer but he doesn't always answer our prayers in our timeframe. We live in a microwave generation where many people expect everything straight away and get frustrated when they have to wait for things.

Praying together

Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:19-20 (NIV) "

When we come together with other believers to agree in prayer we access a whole new dimension of spiritual power. One person's faith can release a huge amount of spiritual power and when we join our faith with others in prayer **this power is multiplied.**

There is tremendous power in praying together.

Prayer and fasting

“When you fast...” Matthew 6:16 (NIV)

Jesus said “When you fast...” not “If you fast...”. One of the things that this tells us is that fasting is a normal part of the Christian lifestyle.

Aimee Semple McPherson led thousands of people to Christ and founded the Foursquare Church in Los Angeles. She used new and controversial methods to reach people and received a lot of criticism. One day a reporter spied on her to do a story. He bugged her room to listen to her before she went out to preach. He was shocked when he heard her weeping before the Lord and acknowledging that she was completely dependent on him. He was so moved by her secret life that he became a Christian.

Jesus taught us that our secret life with God is the source of our spiritual power in life. He taught us that our Father will openly reward those who breakthrough in private through prayer.

We can look at people who are successfully serving God and think that it is because of the way that they do things. While the way we do things is important we must remember that **our secret life with God is the source of our spiritual power and that it will determine our impact in this life.**

The best thing to do is to make a literal place that you meet with God daily. This could be a chair in your home, a closet, your car, a park, a room, anywhere! As long as you can shut out the voices of the world and learn to hear the voice of your Father. This would have to be one of the most important things you can do to become solid in Jesus.

Action: Receive a prayer life like Jesus

What does your prayer life look like?

Do you engage in prayer alone and with other believers?

Maybe you're not sure how to pray to God, or what to say. Here is a practical acronym to help you with how to talk with God and what to talk about.

A.C.T.S

A - Adoration (worship and behold Him, listen to Him, express your love for Him)

C - Confession (ask the Lord to create a clean heart in you, speak of your desire to live for Him and know His ways, confess/admit of any things in your life that don't match up to who Jesus is calling you to be)

T - Thanksgiving (thank God for Who He is and what He has done, express your appreciation for what He has done)

S - Supplication (bringing your needs before Him, ask God for help with things in your life that need change and pray for others)

THE BIBLE

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV)

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" 1 Peter 2:2 (NKJV)

Prayer is not a boring ritual or a dead religious activity. **Prayer is conversation** with the indescribable living God. How amazing is it that we are able to speak directly to God Himself - the Creator of the Universe!

God's word is spiritual food

God's words are food for our spirit man. **Whether we live or die spiritually depends on whether we hear from God and obey Him.** It is vital that we are constantly hearing what God is saying to us and putting it into action.

What would happen if you didn't eat for a week? What would happen if you didn't eat for a month? That same kind of starvation is what happens to our spirit when we don't read our bibles. It is as important to our spiritual lives as eating is to our physical lives!

When believers stop listening to God and obeying what He is saying to them then they grow spiritually weak. They lose their inner strength to resist temptation and live self-controlled and holy lives.

God's word is spiritual food

What would happen if you stood on an empty aluminium can?

What would happen if you stood on an aluminium can that was full of fizzy drink?

We can stand on a full can without it crushing because the pressure on the inside is greater than the pressure on the outside. Just like that aluminium can, we are all weak in our humanity.

Our strength comes from the power of the One who lives in us. **When our lives are full of God's word then we are strong and able to withstand the pressures of the outside world without being crushed.** If we stop hearing from God and His word is not in us, then we are easily buckled by life's circumstances. We need to hear and obey what God is saying to us to be spiritually strong.

The only way to have that strength within us is to read / consume His word. Hearing a weekly sermon or a study at a LifeGroup isn't enough - we need to hear God's voice for ourselves by reading our Bible and having our own, individual time of hearing God! **God will speak to you through others, but He also wants to speak directly to you.**

“the Scripture cannot be broken” – Jesus

The Bible contains God's very words. The Holy Spirit inspired holy men to write these words down and they were brought together and put into a book by the early church.

The Bible is reliable

After Jesus and the first apostles died, there were a lot of different rumours and opinions going around about who Jesus is and what He said. The early church fathers came together in about 400 AD and discerned which writings were inspired by God and which ones were not. They did this to give God's people a clear and authoritative standard of truth.

What is amazing about that is that all of these men of God chose which writings should be in the bible individually, and when they came together they all were in strong agreement about each writing - **it was truly ordained by God.**

The Dead Sea Scrolls were a group of original manuscripts that were written before Jesus was born and discovered between 1946 and 1956. When we compare these manuscripts with the scriptures that we have today we see that there is very little change to the text. This gives us great confidence that the manuscripts that we have today are very reliable copies of the original papyrus scrolls that were written thousands of years ago.

Many great minds went into the translations of the Bible and many people were killed for trying to translate it and make it accessible for people. **The Bible you have right now was brought to you at the cost of peoples lives. It is an incredible God ordained book and we believe in its words today as much as the day it was written.**

The Two Testaments

The Bible is organised into two parts called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word testament is another word for covenant, which refers to an agreement based on mutual promises.

There are two main biblical covenants, the Old and New Covenants. The Old Covenant or Law was the agreement that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses. It consists of the law, promises, punishments and priesthood that God gave the Israelites through Moses.

The New Covenant is the agreement that God made with Man through his Son Jesus Christ. The New Covenant consists of the law, promises, punishments and priesthood that God gave Man through Jesus Christ. It includes a full revelation of God, the forgiveness of sins and God's laws put in our minds and written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

When God made a New Covenant with mankind he made the first one old and obsolete. One of the things that this means is that while all scripture is inspired by God and useful to help us grow in our faith, there are some things that we read about in the Old Testament like animal sacrifices, temple worship, sacred days and other ceremonial things that God does not ask the church to keep today.

Choosing a version

Many new Christians wonder which version of the Bible they should use. This is understandable. After all, there are over 450 different translations!

There is no simple answer to this question because each version has different benefits. Some translations are more literal. These translations are more word-for-word translations of the original languages. These translations are useful for in-depth study but they can be a bit difficult to understand. Other translations are more interpretive. These translations try to capture the meaning of the text and put it in a way that is easy to understand for everyday life.

They can be easier to read but they tend to be more biased and can miss key aspects of the text.

Literal

Interpretive



KJV

NKJV

NLT

MSG

NASB

NIV

GNB

AMP

CEV

Good for study

Can miss useful information

Difficult to understand

Easy to understand

In short, it is best to choose a version that suits your reading level and purpose. This might mean that you need more than one Bible for different purposes.

There is an awesome app that you can download to your smart phone which is a great Bible resource! Its called the YouVersion Bible app.

YouVersion allows you to read the bible easily and switch between many different version. It is also filled with many awesome devotions and Bible reading plans that will help you grow in Gods word.

Download it on you app store today!

Reading the Bible

Reading the Bible can be an intimidating thought for new believers, especially those who didn't do so well at school. The following things will help you to read your Bible for all its worth.

1. Pray

The Bible is a spiritual book and we can't understand it through our natural mind. We need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to us.

2. Prepare your heart

"They do not know nor understand; for He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand" Isaiah 44:18 (NKJV)

When it comes to spiritual things, we understand with our hearts not with our heads. This means that you don't have to be a rocket scientist to get what God is saying, you just have to have a willing and hungry heart!

The first and most important thing that we can do to help us get the most out of the Bible is to prepare our hearts by **cultivating a heart that is open, hungry and willing.**

3. Meditate on it

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." Psalms 1:1-2 (NIV)

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Joshua 1:8 (NIV)

The Hebrew word for meditate used in these passages is **hawgar**, meaning murmur, ponder, imagine, mutter, speak, study, talk, or utter.

What would happen if you didn't chew your food before you ate it?
If you don't chew your food, then you will struggle to digest it properly.

Similarly, if you don't meditate on the Word then you will miss out on the understanding that you need to fully absorb the word and make it part of your life. God has promised that he will personally put his laws in our minds and write them on our hearts. When we take time to meditate on God's word and hear from Him personally then we receive both the knowledge and the grace to obey.

4. Apply it

"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does."

James 1:25 (NIV)

If we study the Bible but don't apply our understanding, we have missed the whole point! God promises us that we will be blessed as we action what we learn.

Conclusion

It takes a lot of time and effort to develop a biblical perspective.

If we want to learn to see things from God's perspective, then **we need to be committed to studying the Bible ourselves and learning off those who are further down the track than us.** God will bring questions up in your heart and if you are serious about your relationship with him then you will search these questions out in the Bible.

God spoke and the universe was created. He said "Let there be light and there was light!" God's words are creative power and they have the power to change our lives. **The Bible is full of mind-blowing promises, sobering warnings and amazing wisdom that will transform your life!**

Action: Receive a hunger for God's Word

How is your bible reading time?

What can you do to make time in God's word a priority in your life?

If you have never read the Bible or have only read a few verses, we encourage you to start at the New Testament, read from Matthew all the way through to Revelation.

Maybe you have read the Bible before but you are in rut and are not sure where to start again. We highly recommend the "Bible Project" one year reading plan, called "One Story that Leads to Jesus." You can find this reading plan on the YouVersion Bible app. It is fantastic and will stir your hunger and love for God's Word.

HOLY SPIRIT

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 14:26 ESV

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

***“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”
2 Corinthians 3:17 ESV***

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” Romans 8:9 ESV

***“And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”
Acts 4:31 ESV***

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God. God is a being that is three in one. This is why people define God as the “trinity” (meaning three). **God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the three forms of God and all are equal.** When God created the world in Genesis He did not speak as one God. He, Jesus and the Holy Spirit said “Let us make man in our own image...” (Genesis 1:26). They are three in one.

The Holy Spirit is the part of God that comes and lives inside believers. Jesus is with the Father, but the Holy Spirit has been given to us here on earth. **He is the Spirit of God.**

How can I receive Him?

We receive the Holy Spirit by faith and most times it is when we have hands laid on us after our baptism. This is not the ONLY way to receive the Holy Spirit, but it is what Peter instructed the early church to do in the book of Acts.

The Holy Spirit comes and lives inside us as children of God. He becomes a still, small voice that we hear. **We can speak to God through the Holy Spirit.** He is our guide, comforter and counsellor.

How incredible that the God who made the universe comes to dwell in us!
And He wants to dwell in YOU!

Holy Spirit wants to be both IN you and UPON you

He is in us for us. **He exists in us to draw us closer to Jesus, to speak to us and to have a relationship with us.** That is what God always longed to have with man!

Jesus' death made us right with God (by removing our sin) and now the Holy Spirit can live within us so we can be in fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

The Holy Spirit can also be upon us. This means that His power is moving in our lives in a way that allows us **to serve Him and be carriers of His spirit.** Through the Holy Spirit within us we become able to exercise power - the power of God. This means through us God can heal people, forgive people, speak, perform miracles and more!

It is nothing we can do, it is simply us being a vessel for God to use - the same way He used Jesus.

Jesus said "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." John 14:12

The Language of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit within us gives us the ability **to speak in a new heavenly language called tongues.**

We see this in the bible after Jesus is resurrected. The believers gathered in one place and prayer and the Holy Spirit came to them. **When He came they began to speak in tongues.**

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Acts 2:4 NIV

The bible is clear that tongues is the spiritual language of believers!

"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues" Mark 16:17 NIV

Speaking in tongues demonstrates to the person who has just received the Spirit, that **a supernatural happening has taken place** and is a gift that every believer is able to operate in.

How to cultivate a relationship with the Holy Spirit

We have a relationship with the Holy Spirit when He comes and dwells inside us. But like any relationship, it can be weak or strong depending on how we treat and look after it.

We grow a stronger relationship with the Holy Spirit and become more intimate with Him when we seek Him.

We do this by:

- Praying and speaking to Him
- Seeking His truth by reading the word
- Being aware of Him and listening to Him
- Seeking his presence by having quiet, uninterrupted time with Him

***“I will put my laws in their minds
and write them on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.”***

- Hebrews 8:10

We are no longer following God through a king or a prophet who hears from God.
We can talk directly to God through Holy Spirit.

Action: Pray

Through Jesus we have entered into a new way. A way in which all people can speak directly to God and know Him intimately through the Holy Spirit. How amazing!!

Ask your Essentials leader to pray on you to receive the Holy Spirit afresh.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Congratulations! You have completed Essentials!

Our hope is that you are now a baptised, Spirit-filled follower of Jesus with a good understanding of the foundations of our faith. Our prayer for you is that you would continue to grow stronger and stronger in your relationship with God and that you will take your next spiritual step forward in your walk with Jesus. Whatever that may be for you.

Sharing your new found faith and freedom in Jesus is so important! Your leader will give you some invite cards that you can share with people you know. We are all called to testify about Jesus and share our story of how He has changed our lives.

We hope that you are connected to one of our Freedom Centre Groups where you can Find Freedom, as well as planning to Lead in Life by serving at Freedom Centre.

Your Essentials leader can help connect you to what is next for you on your journey. We hope you have enjoyed this course and pray that you have been strengthened in your walk with Christ as a result.



The Essentials Handbook
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