

How To Get Started Right

A Believer's Handbook to
Running the Effective Christian Race



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Introduction

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”
Mark 16:15

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
Matthew 28:19,20

Prior to His glorious ascension, the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples what we commonly refer to as the Great Commission. In these final instructions to what was the beginning of the New Testament church, we find that there are three specific things that are crucial to world evangelization: aggressive evangelism, believer’s baptism, and thorough teaching. Together, God uses these three activities in His partnership with the Church to “make disciples.”

At the Knotty Oak Baptist Church, we want to do our part in “making disciples.” We do not want people to simply come to Christ and then miss out on the blessings of living for Him.

Pastor Chris

First, Make Sure That You Are Saved

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort,
saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

Acts 2:40

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your
calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall
never fall.”

II Peter 1:10

One

Always remember that there is only one way to Heaven. There is only one true gospel. All religions are not the same, and it does matter what we believe. It is God who forgives, and the Plan of Salvation begins and ends with Him.

John 14:6

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Acts 4:12

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Matthew 7:13,14

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Proverbs 16:25

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

Galatians 1:9

“As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

Two

The true gospel is a clearly defined set of facts relating to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The word “gospel” means “good news,” and it is good news that Jesus died for our sins and raised Himself from the dead.

Mark 8:31

“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

Luke 24:45-46

“Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And He said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:”

1 Corinthians 15:1,3,4

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”

1 Peter 3:18

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”

Three

The true gospel attributes all of the saving work to the Lord God alone. It is Christ who died, and His death was the payment for all of our sins -- past, present, and future. We cannot earn our salvation, because we are sinners.

Isaiah 64:6

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Romans 3:19,20

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Ephesians 2:8,9

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Titus 3:5

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”

Four

Since it is clear that we cannot save ourselves, and since Jesus already paid for our sins, the only proper response to the gospel is that we truly believe it and by faith receive the free gift of eternal life by trusting Christ as our Saviour.

John 1:12,13

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Romans 4:4,5

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Ephesians 1:12,13

“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

Acts 16:30,31

“And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

Five

When a person believes the Gospel, and trusts Jesus Christ as Saviour, the Scriptures teach us that God fully forgives that person, gives him everlasting life, and that an eternal home in Heaven is prepared for him.

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

John 5:24

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Colossians 1:5

“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;”

1 Peter 1:3,4

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Six

There are some severe warnings for those who refuse God's offer of eternal life through His Son. If trusting Christ brings union with the Father and a home in Heaven, refusing Christ brings separation from the Father and eternity in Hell.

Luke 16:23

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

John 3:36

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Matthew 25:41

"Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

II Thessalonians 1:8,9

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"

Revelation 20:14,15

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Some Review Questions

1. Is there more than one true gospel?

2. What is the true gospel?

3. Can we earn our way to Heaven?

4. What is the proper response to the gospel?

5. What is the result of believing the gospel?

6. What warnings are given about refusing the gospel?

Second, Make Sure That You Are Baptized

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Acts 2:41

“The like figure whereunto even baptism
doth also now save us;
(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,
but the answer of a good conscience toward God,)”

I Peter 3:21

True Baptism Is Only For Believers

There is great confusion about the whole topic of water baptism. This is truly unfortunate, because baptism is an important part of the Christian life. Always remember, however, baptism does not save -- but is for the saved.

Acts 8:12

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

Acts 8:36,37

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Acts 16:14,15

“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

Acts 18:8

“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”

True Baptism Is Commanded To All Believers

Although baptism does not save, it is still an act of obedience that God commands to all saved people. Jesus was baptized in obedience to the Father, and all who have trusted in Christ are supposed to follow Him in obedience.

Matthew 3:13-15

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.”

Matthew 28:19-20

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Acts 2:37-38

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Acts 10:48

“And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

True Baptism Is Only By Immersion

The confusion over baptism has resulted in many simply asking: "what's the difference?" However, there is a symbolism to baptism (the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ) that can only be fulfilled by full immersion.

Matthew 3:16

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:"

John 3:23

"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized."

Acts 8:38

"And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

Romans 6:4

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Colossians 2:12

"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

True Baptism Is Commanded Immediately

The example of the New Testament is immediate baptism of the newly professing convert. Baptism is portrayed as a simple act of obedience that demonstrates loyalty to Christ and prepares the believer for future steps of faith.

Acts 2:41

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Acts 9:17,18

“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”

Acts 16:32,33

“And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

1 Peter 3:21

“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”

Some Review Questions

1. Does baptism save a person?

2. Who should be baptized?

3. Does it matter whether we are baptized or not?

4. Is sprinkling considered true baptism?

5. What does baptism symbolize?

6. When should the believer be baptized?

Third, Make Sure That You Are Growing

“And they continued stedfastly
in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship,
and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
Acts 2:42

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and
Saviour Jesus Christ.
To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”
II Peter 3:18

**“And they continued steadfastly...”
(The perseverance for serving God)**

Trusting Christ and becoming a Christian is just the beginning of a lifelong relationship with God. This new relationship is supposed to grow in intimacy and enjoyment. The key to this growth is steadfast consistency in the Spiritual Disciplines.

1 Corinthians 15:58

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 9:24-26

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that breateth the air.”

Hebrews 12:1

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Galatians 6:9

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

**“In the Apostles’ Doctrine”
(The precepts for serving God)**

The Bible is God’s Word, and is designed to be the spiritual nourishment of the believer. Just as the Word of God was used to bring us to Christ, the Word of God also is instrumental in teaching us how to live for Christ.

II Timothy 3:16,17

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

Joshua 1:8

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

Romans 12:2

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

James 1:22,25

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

**“And Fellowship”
(The provocation for serving God)**

Developing proper relationships with other members of the family of God is a crucial part of our Spiritual Growth. Real fellowship begins with worshipping together, and results in loving ministry to and with each other.

1 Corinthians 12:12

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”

Philippians 1:7,8

“Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.”

Acts 20:7,8

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.”

Hebrews 10:24,25

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

**“And in Breaking of Bread
(The purification for serving God)**

As new testament Christians, we are commanded to daily confess our sins to God. And, at the Lord’s Table, as we are reminded of His death for us, we are commanded to examine ourselves and confess known sin.

Isaiah 6:5-7

“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”

I John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

John 13:8

“Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.”

1 Corinthians 11:26,28

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

**“And in Prayers”
(The power for serving God)**

Prayer is a divine privilege that God gives to His children to aid them in their service for Him. God said that without Him we “can do nothing,” but that through Him we can do all things. The key to enjoying God’s strength is prayer.

Luke 11:9,10

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Acts 4:31

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

James 4:2

“Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.”

Hebrews 4:16

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

1Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing.

Some Review Questions

1. How should we approach the Spiritual Disciplines?

2. What are the four Spiritual Disciplines?

3. What is the importance of learning God's Word?

4. What is the importance of Christian Fellowship?

5. What is the importance of the Lord's Table?

6. What is the importance of Prayer?

Afterword

Now that you have successfully completed this little booklet, you are well on your way toward enjoying a productive Christian life filled with spiritual blessing. However, the key to going on to spiritual maturity does not lie in the fact that you have completed the booklet, but that you are continuing steadfastly in the principles taught in the booklet. Recall the testimony of the early Christians: "and they continued steadfastly."

If you ever have a spiritual problem or question, please do not hesitate to ask any one of the ministerial staff for assistance. Our job is to help, and we will be more than glad to do so! Always remember, however, that we will ask about your commitment to the four spiritual disciplines outlined in this booklet. There is no substitute for these principles nor is there a shortcut to spiritual maturity.

**"And beside this, giving all diligence,
add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience
godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
For if these things be in you, and abound,
they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful
in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."
II Peter 1:5-8**

"All to the Glory of God"