

The Christian Faith and the Call to Obedience

Congratulations on making the decision to follow Jesus Christ.

I pray that as you complete this short—but very important—study, you will understand what it truly means to be a Christian and become much more informed about the decision you have made.

Baptism is an important and essential part of Christianity. You are following in the footsteps of millions of believers. Most importantly, you are following the example our Lord gave us when He was baptized by John the Baptist.

Take your time. Pray. Read carefully.

If you have any questions, please call us or ask us.

— Pastor Mike Salman Pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship

UNDERSTANDING OUR SITUATION — READ GENESIS 1–3

God created the heavens and the earth, and He created the first man and woman. He told Adam, the first man, not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam and Eve did not obey God and ate from the tree. They were the first to sin. Because of this, they were removed from the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve began life outside the garden, and due to their disobedience, sin infected their lives. They had two children, Cain and Abel. Cain became jealous and hateful toward Abel, and his hatred moved him to kill his brother.

Sin became inherited by all humanity because of the sin of Adam and Eve.

WHAT IS SIN?

Disobedience to God is called sin.

When God tells us to do something and we refuse, we sin. When God tells us not to do something and we do it anyway, we sin.

Has there been something you were supposed to do or not do, and you did not listen? YES or NO

GOD'S LAW — THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

God has given us His laws. The Ten Commandments are part of the Law of God.

Do you know any of the commandments of God? PAUSE and try to think of some.

READ EXODUS 20:1–17

The Ten Commandments (in summary)

1. You shall have no other gods before the Lord. Have you lived your life without God?
2. You shall not make anything more important than the Lord. Have you placed other things before God—sports, family, sleep, hobbies, yourself, etc.?
3. You shall not take God's name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Dedicate a day to God.
5. Honor your father and mother. Have you ever disobeyed or dishonored your parents?
6. You shall not murder. Have you ever hated someone so much that you wished they were dead?
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal. Have you ever taken something that was not yours?
9. You shall not bear false witness (lie). Have you ever lied to deceive someone?
10. You shall not covet. Have you ever strongly desired something that belongs to someone else?

Now ask yourself: Have you ever broken any of these commandments?

The answer is probably yes, and more than one.

Don't feel bad. The truth is: everyone has sinned.

Romans 3:23 says:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

This means everyone has sinned, and everyone has missed the mark.

Romans 6:23 continues:

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

This means the payment and consequence of sin is death—and that means hell.

THE GOOD NEWS

Imagine how many people have sinned—and how many would be destined for hell. Every one of us would be.

Sin requires payment. That payment is death.

It is like receiving a speeding ticket—someone must pay it.

The good news is this: God loves us so much, and He did not want us to go to hell. So He chose to pay for our sins.

That is right—God never wanted people to go to hell. But people’s choices lead them there. So God made a plan.

He provided the greatest—and only—sacrifice that could pay for sin: Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and He is the sacrifice who paid for our sins.

John 3:16–17 says:

“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. (17) For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

Think about the love God has for you.

He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for you. Jesus was crucified, buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead.

REVIEW QUIZ

1. What is sin? 2. Who was the first to sin? 3. Sin has infected everyone. TRUE or FALSE 4. What are the consequences for a person who has sinned? 5. What did God give us to follow, and we broke? 6. Have you sinned? 7. What did God do for you so that you do not go to hell? 8. Do you believe in Jesus Christ—that He died, was buried, and rose from the dead?

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP (If you said “Yes,” continue.)

There are many people like you who believed the Good News—the Gospel.

When they believed, they asked:

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? (38) 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.”

These people were like you:

- They knew they had sinned
- They did not want to go to hell
- They asked what they must do to be saved

So what did the apostles tell them?

STEP 1: REPENT

Repent means to turn away from sin. It means to stop sinning and to choose a new direction.

The first step is deciding you will no longer live in sin.

Are there sins in your life that you need to stop? Are you ready to stop them?

If not, STOP HERE.

STEP 2: LIVE FOR GOD

Are you ready to live for God?

Living for God includes:

- Reading the Scriptures (the Bible)
- Going to church
- Praying
- Doing good works

Are you ready to do that?

Good works include (but are not limited to):

- Living a life of holiness (set apart for God)
- Giving
- Volunteering
- Witnessing (telling others about Jesus)
- Forgiveness
- Mercy
- Love

COUNT THE COST — READ LUKE 14:25–33

Jesus did not accept everyone automatically. He allowed people to choose whether they truly wanted to follow Him.

He told people to count the cost and understand what it means to be His disciple.

(Read Luke 14:25–33 and think deeply about what Jesus is saying.)

As you can see, this is not just a simple “yes” and a prayer. This is a true heart decision.

Many people say they believe, but they never truly think about what it means to be a Christian—or the sacrifices that come with it.

BAPTISM — YOUR PUBLIC DECLARATION

If you are ready to move forward, it is time to declare your faith openly.

This is done through baptism.

To be baptized is to declare your love and commitment to follow Jesus Christ openly—to say: “I have considered the cost, and I am ready.”

Baptism is a sacrament given to us by God. It brings us into grace and commitment with Him.

When you are baptized, you symbolically and spiritually follow Christ in His sacrifice:

- Jesus died
- Jesus was buried
- Jesus rose again

And through baptism, you follow Him.

WHAT BAPTISM REPRESENTS

YOU DECLARE THAT YOU RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST

Your old ways are dead, and you are crucified with Christ.

YOU ARE DUNKED UNDER WATER

You are buried, just as Christ was buried.

THEN YOU ARE RAISED FROM THE WATER

Just as Christ rose from the dead, you rise to new life—living for God.

ARE YOU STILL READY TO MAKE THIS COMMITMENT?

THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

A Christian is someone who lives for God.

What does it mean to live for God?

Acts 2:41–42:

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. (42) And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Questions:

1. How did they receive the Word of God? 2. What did they do after receiving the Word? 3. What did they continue in consistently?

FOUR MARKS OF TRUE CHRISTIANS

1. The Apostles' Doctrine This is the teaching of Christ. Today, this means reading the Bible regularly.

2. Fellowship This means going to church and being connected with other believers.

3. Breaking of Bread This includes helping others, sharing, serving, and being part of the work of God. It also includes communion.

4. Prayer This is spending time with God.

Prayer is not complicated. Just talk to God like He is sitting next to you.

Ask Him what you need. Tell Him what you are going through. Ask Him how you can serve Him.

There is no "perfect" way to pray. Do not be afraid.

Pray for:

- Your family
- Your friends
- Your church
- Your leaders

HOLINESS AND OBEDIENCE

There are many things you will learn in your Christian life. Not everything can be covered in this packet. Your pastors and teachers will help you grow.

There will be times when you are doing well, and there will be times when you fail.

You will make mistakes. You will say or do things you know you should not have done.

When this happens:

- Go to God in prayer
- Ask Him to forgive you
- Get back up
- Continue living for Him

No matter how many times you fall, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to forgive you and restore you.

God also gives you the Holy Spirit to guide you. He will show you what you need to do. He is that small voice in your heart and mind reminding you that God loves you and to do what is right.

Listen to Him.

When life gets hard, always remember: it is all about Jesus Christ. Talk to God. There may be something He is teaching you.

HOLINESS MEANS SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

Holiness means you live for God and not for the world.

You may have habits, clothing, entertainment, or things in your life that are worldly.

It is important to look around your house, car, room, and life and remove anything that does not reflect Christian living.

Remember: you belong to the Lord now, not the world.

Just like you would not want your spouse to wear a former boyfriend or girlfriend's jacket—or keep their pictures and gifts—God does not want you holding on to the world.

ARE YOU READY TO BE BAPTIZED? (ONE LAST THING)

Once you make the decision to fully follow Jesus, many things will try to stop you from being obedient.

Do not let anything stop you from:

- Going to church
- Praying
- Reading the Bible

- Living obediently

Even in the apostles' time, some people believed and were baptized—but later returned to the world.

2 Peter 2:21–22:

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. (22) But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

Peter compares them to:

- Dogs returning to vomit
- Pigs returning to mud

Don't be like them.

They will not be saved—even if they once believed and were baptized—because they did not continue.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Just remember: God loves you, and it is in Christ that we are saved.

If you finished this packet and are still ready to move forward—congratulations.

It is the best decision you will ever make.

LOVE JESUS, BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU SO MUCH!