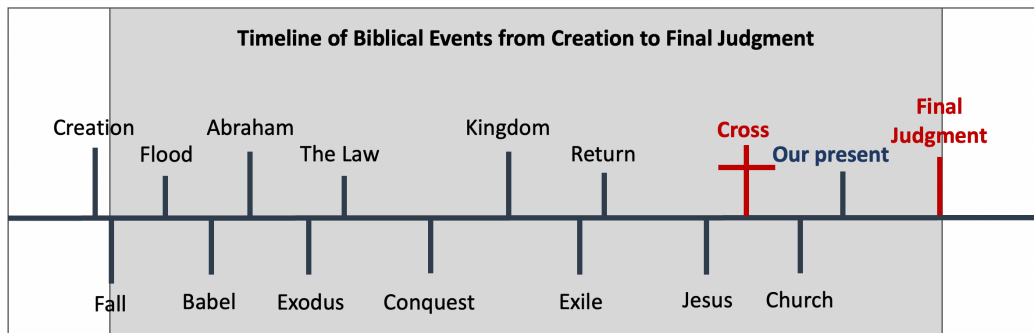


25. God's Invitation – Part 2

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

This final lesson will help those who have accepted Yahweh's invitation to put their faith in Jesus and have been reconciled to Him. Specifically, it covers things that are helpful to know as well as practical aspects of the Christian life. For others, it will provide an overview of what the life of a believer in Jesus looks like.



- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 How the world came to be | 2 Why there is evil in the world | 5 God revealed His standards | 6 God taught about Himself | 9 The Saviour's work | 10 The present age |
| 3 God judged the evil world | 4 God's plan to reach the world | 7 How God's people failed | 8 God's rescue plan | 11 How the world ends | 12 God's invitation |

If you have put your faith in Jesus, you are now saved from eternal death and are joined to Jesus as well as to other believers all over the world. You have God the Holy Spirit living in you and you are now part of what the Bible calls the body of Christ. You have become part of the global church. And other believers will see you as a sibling-in-Christ. You are now part of God's family.

When a person puts their faith in Christ



This is just the start of your journey.

What do you need to know about this journey? There is a lot to learn but here are eight practical characteristics of the Christian life that are helpful to know. We will go through each in turn.



1. Pray with thankfulness to Yahweh

One of the greatest privileges that a Christian has is unhindered access to talk to the God of the universe anytime and anywhere. Yahweh is an extremely relational God who chooses to initiate personal relationships with His creation. This means that He delights in His creation. This means that He delights in you.



He wants to spend time with you and hear about your thoughts, your feelings, your day, what you are happy about, what you are upset about, what your needs and struggles are and more. He wants a genuine relationship with you where you can go to Him as you would a loved one. Talking to God like this is to “pray”.

Christians pray to God at any time of the day, and many pray multiple times during the day when they need to discuss something with God. Christians also set aside time in their busy day to pray. When praying, it is always good to thank God for His wonderful gift of salvation and for the privilege of talking to Him personally.

When Christians read the Bible and learn more about Yahweh, it leads to a greater appreciation of who He is: His all-loving, all-righteous, all-just and all-powerful character. Understanding God more deeply leads Christians to appreciate Him more and to be more in awe of Him. Christians also learn to recognise how God works in their lives. All of this leads to a deeper desire to worship and praise Him. Yahweh delights to hear His people recognise and acknowledge with a heart of thankfulness all He has done for them.

It is a real privilege to pray and then have Yahweh respond to you. Enjoy this privilege and enjoy praying to God often.

2. Study the Bible

The Bible is God's Word and it contains all a believer needs to know about Yahweh and how to live well in this life. Spend time regularly reading the Bible. Christians often call spending dedicated time with Yahweh in prayer and Bible reading their "quiet time".



Aside from these personal daily "quiet times" or "daily devotionals", many Christians also spend additional time studying the Bible in a more dedicated way. They take time during the week or on the weekend to read more from their Bibles. At other times, Christians gather to study the Bible together.

Christians often use resources to understand the Bible better. Commentaries are an example of a helpful resource. A commentary is often a book written by Bible scholars or teachers containing a series of notes that explain the meaning of passages of Scripture. (The leader has a list of recommendations.)

Other Christians enjoy reading Christian literature focused on different topics to supplement their Bible reading. There are resources dedicated to particular books of the Bible and specific topics such as spiritual growth or marriage and family, etc.

Whatever other resources you might use to supplement your Bible reading, studying Yahweh's own words in the Bible are the most important. This is an essential part of the Christian life.

3. Be part of a local church

God designed believers to gather as a local body (or group) to worship Him together, study the Bible together, encourage each other and serve each other in their spiritual growth journeys. Christians all need each other because that's how God designed the church to be: believers being interdependent on each other and on Him. So it is very important to be part of a local church community.



How would you find a local church or a community of believers near you? The leader or a trusted Christian friend might be able to bring you to his or her church or recommend one to you. Or you can look around for churches and visit them.

Knowing that the Bible warns against fake believers and false teachers, it is very important to find a church that recognises the authority of Scripture and is very serious about teaching the Bible.

Also, if available, it would be helpful to look at a church's "Statement of Faith" before deciding to visit that church.

The statement of faith or similar document lists what that church believes. Typically, it should refer to topics that you have learnt about in this series and make statements such as:

- The Bible is the inerrant word of God ("inerrant" means "without error").
- God is one God but three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Jesus is God.
- Mankind are helpless sinners in need of a Saviour.
- Jesus is the only Saviour that God provided and trusting in Jesus alone is the only way of salvation from eternal death.
- And more.

You can get a Christian friend to help you evaluate the statement of faith of the church that you would like to visit to see if its members truly teach and live by what the Bible says.

Most churches meet for a time to worship God and listen to Bible teaching on Sundays. These meetings are often called "services". Some churches also have Saturday or mid-week services. You are free to join any local community of believers that you are comfortable with.

Once you have found a church and are attending its regular services, it is also very important to involve yourself with a "small group". Typically, small groups are groups of Christians from the church who gather for Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship and sometimes to work together to serve the needs of others.



Many churches have small group meetings at various times and places during the week. Small groups typically range in size depending on the church, but a common size would be from eight to ten people. Visit a small group to see how one functions.

Church services involve larger groups of people, but small groups are where "life is lived together". This means that people often share about their lives in greater detail and also share more specific prayer requests with each other. And members of small groups help pray and take care of each other's physical and spiritual needs as each is able.

4. Be baptised in water (once)

The Bible teaches that those who believe in Jesus should go through water baptism.

What is baptism? After you have put your faith in Christ, you are immediately saved and are a believer. However, that change from unbeliever to believer is “invisible”, meaning that only Yahweh can look into your heart and know that you are now a Christian.

Being baptised in water is the biblical way of publicly and outwardly proclaiming your faith in Christ and your commitment to follow Him. Every believer goes through baptism only once.



To be clear, the ritual of water baptism should only be carried out on a person who wants to obey Christ's instruction and is able to explain how they have put their trust in Jesus. Being baptised in water is not what saves a person. Water baptism is symbolic. It is the outward sign of what has already happened inwardly or spiritually when one places their faith in Jesus.

The pastor of the church you are attending will be able to share more regarding how and when that church conducts water baptism.

5. Participate in Holy Communion

On the night before Jesus went to the cross, He broke bread and gave it to His disciples. He also took wine and shared it. He said that the bread represented His body and the wine, His blood. He was saying that He was the sacrificial lamb who would die for mankind.



Because of what Jesus would do for all mankind, by dying and therefore rescuing mankind from eternal death, Jesus told His disciples to commemorate His death and resurrection. How? By taking part in what is known as the “Lord's Supper”, “Holy Communion” or “Communion”.

Many churches observe Communion by having a part of their regular church service include a time where believers each eat a small piece of bread (or wafer) and drink a small cup of wine (or juice) together. This is done in thankful remembrance of what Jesus did on the cross for them.

The local church that you attend will also have Holy Communion that you can participate in regularly.

6. Have spiritually focused relationships

It is important to intentionally develop deeper relationships with one or two believers who can help you grow spiritually. This means that you can be honest and talk and pray together about deep, serious matters about God, the Bible and each of your personal journeys with God. You can encourage each other to lead God-honouring lives and also hold each other accountable for the way each is living.

Some people find such friendships within their church small group. Among the members of the small group, they may find themselves growing closer to one person. Other Christians find that this friend may be a believer from another church, a believer from their workplace or even a believer they have met in their community. Still others have such relationships with their spouses, siblings or other family members.



Spiritual growth is not something that is done on your own. That's why God describes the church as the body of Christ, to indicate the interconnectedness that exists between believers.

Making friends and developing deep spiritual friendships takes time and intentionality. This is why it is not uncommon for people to have just one or two such close and deep friendships. But spiritual friendships where there is mutual support, encouragement and prayer for each other are invaluable in a healthy Christian life.

7. Grow by cooperating with the Holy Spirit

One very important aspect of the Christian life is to focus on growing spiritually or becoming more mature in your faith in Yahweh by cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

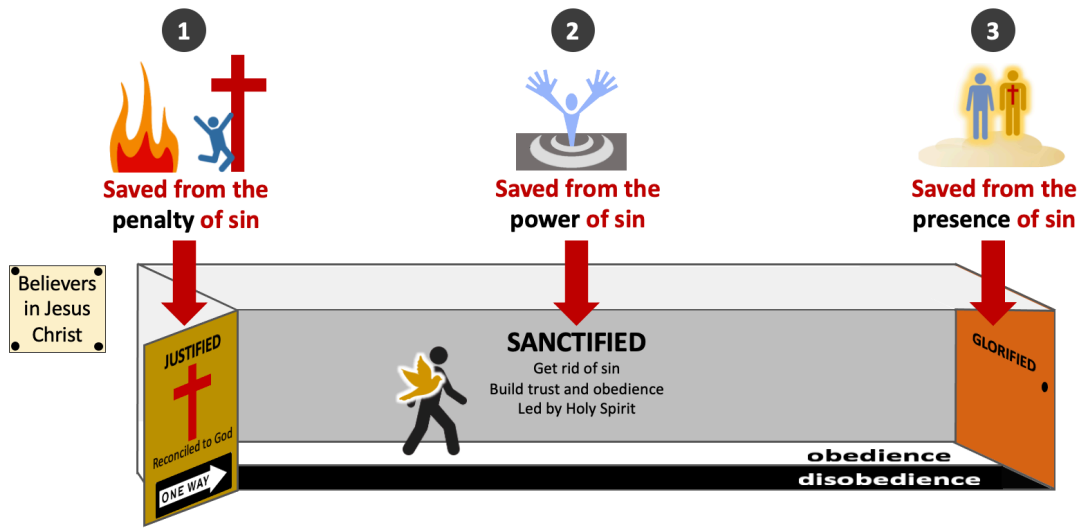


What does this mean? To get a clearer picture, it will be helpful to review Lesson 20, pages 3–14 on what happens when someone trusts in Jesus and what a believer's life looks like.

However, there is much more to learn about this journey of spiritual growth. We will discuss two other important points here.

A. The sanctification journey

When you put your faith in Jesus, Yahweh justified you (*saved from the penalty of sin*) and guaranteed that you will be glorified (*saved from the presence of sin*) at the end of your life on earth.



However, while living your life on earth, Yahweh also wants to save you from the influence of sin (*saved from the power of sin*). Yahweh wants you to become more and more like Jesus in character and behaviour.

The Holy Spirit will work from within you to produce the fruit of the Spirit (the fruit of the Spirit are characteristics or traits that mature Christians have).

But this work requires your cooperation. Since God gives mankind choices, you will have to choose each day and each moment if you want to listen to the Holy Spirit's guidance.



Each day, you need to decide if you will live the way the Bible instructs or rebel against God's good will for your life.

This is what the Bible says.

Galatians 5:16–26

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

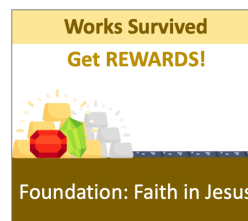
²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

Believers who cooperate with the Holy Spirit and grow spiritually will be rewarded in this mortal life. How?

When believers live with understanding and submission to God's worldview and produce the fruit of the Spirit in their lives, they will start making wiser and godlier choices. How they treat the people around them will also start to change: in general, their relationships will be much more positive and they will be much more patient, forgiving and peaceable in difficult relationships.



In this life



After this life

The Bible also makes it clear that believers who have grown spiritually will be rewarded when they meet their Lord Jesus after they die.

Therefore, as the Bible instructs, believers should strive to follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of their lives.

B. The role of suffering in a believer's life

The second important point to note in the Christian life has to do with suffering. Some have the idea that once people become believers, they will be able to live healthy and wealthy lives, free from pain, suffering and bad consequences. However, this is not what the Bible teaches.



God has already solved the eternal death problem for mankind. Those who accept His solution will one day be forever free from brokenness and sin, and will live in a perfect eternity with God Himself.

But while living in this fallen world that is full of sin's effects, Yahweh will not remove the consequences of sin. (This is because a person's free-will choices do have real consequences, whether good or bad. Consequences show that the choices are real.) Yahweh will in fact use all things in the believer's life to accomplish His good plans for them.

Romans 8:28–29

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. ²⁹ For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

This Bible passage is saying that God will use all things, both “good” and “bad” from the human perspective, to bring about good in the believer's life.

This means that nothing in a believer's life is meaningless, random or purposeless. Rather, everything that happens is orchestrated and allowed by God to grow the believer spiritually. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that sometimes, God intentionally uses believers' suffering to draw them and other believers closer to Him. He sometimes also uses the suffering of a believer to turn the attention of unbelievers to Him.



Rather than shielding believers from a challenging life on earth, God instead promises to give wisdom, strength, grace and mercy to believers who lean on Him and trust Him through the circumstances of life. This was what the prophet Jeremiah wrote in the Bible.

Lamentations 3:22–24

²² The faithful love of the LORD never ends!

His mercies never cease.

²³ Great is his faithfulness;

his mercies begin afresh each morning.

²⁴ I say to myself, “The LORD is my inheritance;
therefore, I will hope in him!”

Jeremiah was saying that God's mercies are poured out each day for those who are His. This means Yahweh gives His children the resources they need to live and thrive even through life's most challenging events. This is because He is the sovereign God of all. This was why Jeremiah said he trusted and hoped in God.



Paul also talked about a season of life when he was going through great trials. But he recognised that God was using his difficulties to accomplish good in his life.

2 Corinthians 12:8–10

⁸ Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. ⁹ Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. ¹⁰ That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul was saying that God's power would work in and through him even in the midst of the hardest trials and challenges. His trust was not in human, man-made solutions. Rather, his trust was in Yahweh. God would work through his weaknesses and trials, and give Paul grace and all the resources he needed to live and grow spiritually through the hard times.

For this reason, Paul said he would maintain a good attitude through all the hardships he faced: he knew that God would accomplish good in and through his life. Nothing in his life was meaningless.

There is much more to learn about the Christian life. Christians will continue learning about Yahweh and growing in their personal relationship with Him. But the certainty for all believers is that all the sufferings and hardships of this life are temporary. Jesus promises to be with every believer during this mortal existence now. And He will personally be with them after physical death and prepare them for the next stage of life.

8. Invite others to a relationship with Yahweh

God's invitation for people to have a relationship with Him extends to all mankind. One key mission that Yahweh has for believers is to be His ambassadors on earth. This is because He wants all people everywhere to have the opportunity to know Him and then decide if they want to have a relationship with Him.



Would you be God's ambassador on earth? Do you know anyone in your life who would be interested to get to know Yahweh? Would you share God's history and truth with them?

Just as you now have a relationship with Yahweh, He also wants to have a relationship with your loved ones.

This is a quick summary of the eight practical aspects of the Christian life.



If people get reconciled to God and receive eternal life only by putting their faith in Jesus, then what about those who have never heard of God or the Bible?

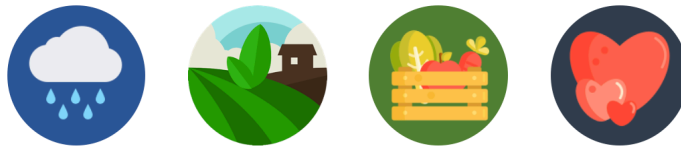
Some people have the idea that there are many people in the world who have never heard of the Creator-God of the universe.

But Yahweh, who can read every person's mind and heart and knows what each person really thinks or believes, says that this is not the case.

One day, while speaking to a crowd, the apostle Paul said the following about Yahweh.

Acts 14:16–17

¹⁶ In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, ¹⁷ but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.”



Evidence of God and His goodness

Paul was saying that God had left evidence of Himself in nature. When a person thinks about how the world works, they are actually analysing Yahweh's complex design work. It should lead them to think about the designer—Yahweh. This is how the Bible describes it.

Psalm 19:1–4

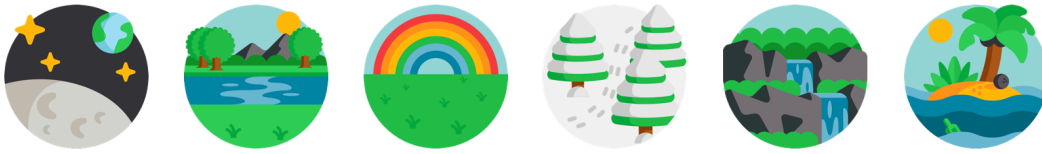
- ¹ The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
- ² Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
- ³ They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
- ⁴ Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to all the world.

In a letter that he wrote to the church in Rome, Paul also stated that while everyone in the world has enough information to realise there is a Creator-God, many have consciously chosen to suppress this knowledge.

Romans 1:18–20

¹⁸ But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹ They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have

seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.






Through His work of creation, God made it obvious to mankind that He exists.

Why do people suppress the truth? They do it on purpose to avoid thinking about Him. They believe that when they insist that the Creator does not exist, they are not answerable to Him.

If they actually stopped to think about how the world works, it would lead them to acknowledge that a Creator-God does exist and this would lead them to look for more information about Him.

But how do people “suppress the truth”?

When they see a piece of work, many people instinctively believe there must be a creator responsible for the work. Yet, when they look at all of creation, they insist there is no Creator of the world.

How mankind suppresses truth		
Movies  I believe there must be a producer, director, actors, etc.	Novels  I believe there must be a writer, editor, proofreader, illustrator, etc.	World  I don't believe anyone created this.

The Bible calls this suppressing the truth. People have tricked themselves into believing what they want.

Romans 1:21

Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

The Bible is saying that once people start suppressing the truth, they become foolish in their thinking and confuse themselves. Their ability to use reason, logic and critical thinking fails them. They have already decided to believe what they themselves have made up in their own minds.

What's more, many who reject the evidence of God found in creation go on to fight against His history and truth as revealed in the Scriptures He has given mankind.



The Bible tells us that ultimately, Yahweh does not agree that mankind has no knowledge of Him. Rather, Scripture says that:

- All people are made in the image of God, and so every human being has some knowledge and understanding of their Creator, Yahweh.
- God has provided mankind with enough evidence of Himself to convince anyone willing to believe there is a Creator-God. Yet, He has not overwhelmed mankind with so much evidence that every person has no choice but to believe.

In fact, God has revealed Himself in such a way that allows the unwilling to reject Him. In other words, the amount of evidence that God provides for mankind gives everyone the genuine choice to seek Him or reject Him.

Yahweh expects people to look around their environment, to stop and think, and to come to the right conclusion that there is a Creator-God. Then they are supposed to find out more about Him. And when the message of Jesus' death and resurrection is shared with them, God expects them to come to Him in faith.

People are not supposed to ignore the evidence He has left for them. They are not supposed to suppress the truth about Him. They are not supposed to shut their minds toward Him and then insist there is no Creator.

Generations of people since Adam and Eve knew the truth. But because they chose unbelief, they hid the truth from their children and descendants. Nevertheless, God left evidence of Himself for each and every generation so everyone can choose for themselves if they will pay attention to the evidence and come to know God or not.

So, God rejects the claim that people do not know there is a Creator-God.

To such people, God says they have “no excuse”.

Romans 1:20

For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.