







Session 12: God's Invitation

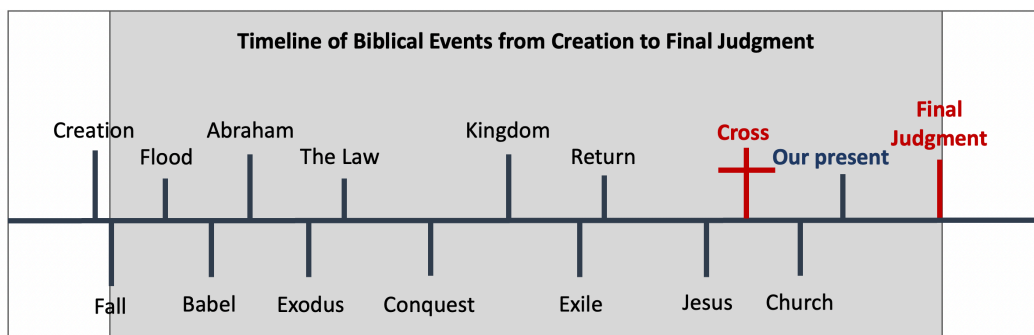
THE JOURNEY

In our journey through *Come and See*, we have attempted to accomplish the following:

 <p>1. Gain a good overview of the message of the Bible.</p>	 <p>2. Gain an understanding of the God of the Bible.</p>	 <p>3. Learn the Bible's perspective on mankind.</p>
 <p>4. Understand who Jesus Christ is.</p>	 <p>5. Understand what a Christian is.</p>	 <p>6. Learn what the Bible says about the future.</p>

The Bible says a lot more than what has been covered in this series.

However, what we have gone through is an attempt to help you understand one of the reasons Yahweh gave the Bible to mankind: it is so that all can understand His invitation.



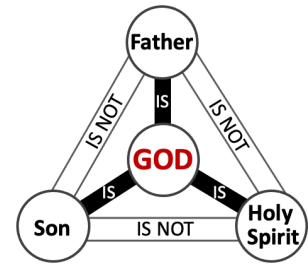
1 How the world came to be	2 Why there is evil in the world	5 God revealed His standards	6 God taught about Himself	9 The Saviour's work	10 The present age
3 God judged the evil world	4 God's plan to reach the world	7 How God's people failed	8 God's rescue plan	11 How the world ends	12 God's invitation

But what is God inviting mankind to?

IT'S ABOUT RELATIONSHIP

The Creator-God of the Bible is wholly independent and self-contained. Yahweh did not need to create anything or anyone. It was not as if He were lonely.

He is a triune God, meaning there is only one God, but in Him are three divine Persons—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They love each other, communicate with each other and are always in harmony with each other. They do not need mankind, anyone else or anything else.



This is what Paul says of God.

Acts 17:24–25

²⁴ “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, ²⁵ and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.

The Creator-God is totally unique. This is what Yahweh said as recorded by the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 46:9

Remember the things I have done in the past.

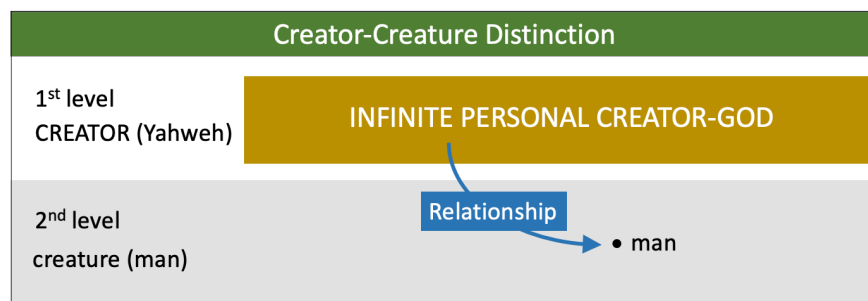
For I alone am God!

I am God, and there is none like me.

It is not easy for people to understand that Yahweh has no needs. This is because all people have many needs. Right from the moment of birth, people are totally dependent on others for shelter, food, relationship and companionship. Even as independent adults, people have various kinds of physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual needs. But Yahweh is not like that. He is complete in Himself.



Despite not needing anyone, Yahweh created mankind and “came down” to the creature level to have a relationship with mankind.



This relationship was not a “master-slave” relationship nor an “employer-employee” relationship. Yahweh defined it as a close and intimate family relationship.

We’ll look at some of His relationships with people in the Bible.



Adam and Eve

Right from the beginning, when Yahweh created the first man and woman, He established the type of relationship that they were to have with Him.












God was extremely hands-on, personable and intimate with Adam and Eve. Even though He was the Creator-God who was all-knowing and everywhere present at the same time, He chose to have a personal relationship by going to the garden of Eden to be with them. He spent time with them and conversed with them. Yahweh was very interested in them.



Not only that, just as a loving father would, He shared the work that He enjoyed with mankind.

Consider this: the first image we see of God in the Bible is as a labourer. He was working and creating in the first workweek in history.

What Yahweh created in the first six days

First 3 Days: Domains		Second 3 days: Occupants	
	 Domain of light and darkness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun for day • Moon and stars for night 	 
	 Domain of sea and atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish for sea • Birds for atmosphere 	 
	Domain of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals for land • Man to rule fish, birds, animals 	 

Similarly, to reflect God’s own image, God assigned man creative labour in the garden of Eden.

Genesis 2:8, 15

⁸ Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ¹⁵ The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.

God planted a garden and then placed Adam there to take care of it. Looking around the garden, Adam could see a model of what God meant by responsibly caring for the land.

Adam was then given the task of carefully tending the garden that God had planted as well as subduing the wilderness outside the garden so that it would no longer be wild, but fruitful and full of resources for living. Yahweh didn't just tell Adam what to do. He modelled it and then told Adam to do the same. God shared with Adam the work of responsibly governing the earth.

Here is another aspect of God sharing His work with man. During the creation of the world, God started naming what He created. Again, as the Creator, He had the authority to name what He had made. The ability to name something demonstrates one's ownership of that thing.

Genesis 1:5a, 10

⁵ God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good.

But after that initial naming exercise, God handed to man the responsibility and enjoyment of naming the creatures because Adam was God's representative.



Genesis 2:19

So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one.

The relationship between Yahweh and Adam was like that of a father and son. The father first created something for the son to enjoy, taught the son how to care for it and then allowed the son to actually do it.



Yahweh was very committed and serious about the relationship He had with Adam and Eve. Though they rebelled and ruined their relationship with Him, God was not going to abandon them. He committed Himself to rescuing them by sending a promised Saviour. And He also immediately and personally made clothes for them to cover their nakedness.

Genesis 3:21

And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.



Yahweh created the world to enjoy with His creation, mankind. He did not sit back and watch His creation from a distance. Rather, He chose to engage in a personal relationship with them.

Let's look at another example of how He engaged with mankind, this time with Abraham.



Abraham

When Yahweh approached Abraham and made a contract with him, it was not an impersonal “supplier-client” relationship. It was not a cold, heartless contract. Rather, the contract showed that God was formally entering into a relationship with Abraham. Yahweh was serious and fully committed to their relationship. He was defining the type of relationship that He, as the God of the universe, wanted to have with Abraham.



In the following event that happened some time after the Global Flood, Yahweh was very angry with two evil cities called Sodom and Gomorrah. He planned to utterly destroy them. However, observe how Yahweh interacted with Abraham as they discussed the two cities.



Let’s turn to our Bibles and read Genesis 18:1–33.

(The leader reads aloud. For reference, the verses are also here.)

Genesis 18:1–33

¹ The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. ² He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

³ “My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴ Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. ⁵ And since you’ve honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.”

“All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.”

⁶ So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.” ⁷ Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸ When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

⁹ “Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked.

“She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹² So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?”

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.”

But the LORD said, “No, you did laugh.”

¹⁶ Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

¹⁷ “Should I hide my plan from Abraham?” the LORD asked. ¹⁸ “For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised.”

²⁰ So the LORD told Abraham, “I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. ²¹ I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know.”

²² The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham. ²³ Abraham approached him and said, “Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? ²⁵ Surely you wouldn’t do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn’t do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?”

²⁶ And the LORD replied, “If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake.”

²⁷ Then Abraham spoke again. “Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?”

And the LORD said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there.”

²⁹ Then Abraham pressed his request further. “Suppose there are only forty?”

And the LORD replied, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty.”

³⁰ “Please don’t be angry, my Lord,” Abraham pleaded. “Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?”

And the LORD replied, “I will not destroy it if I find thirty.”

³¹ Then Abraham said, “Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?”

And the LORD replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.”

³² Finally, Abraham said, “Lord, please don’t be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?”

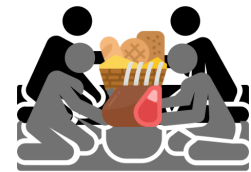
And the LORD replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

³³ When the LORD had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Let’s make some observations about this incident.

Yahweh came to have a meal with Abraham

Yahweh took on the form of a man and, along with two angels, went to visit Abraham. The God of the Bible who created and owned everything in the universe, lowered Himself to go to Abraham’s tent to spend time with him and even have a meal with him. He is not a God who is far away and uninterested in mankind. Yahweh took the initiative to seek out and continue a personal relationship with Abraham.



How did Abraham respond? Abraham too, related to God personally and intimately by running to meet Him and bowing before Him. Then he personally arranged for a lot of food to be prepared and he spent time with God.

Yahweh chose to have an authentic relationship with Abraham by revealing His heart to him

God defined what an intimate, personal relationship with Him looked like by sharing His own heart with Abraham. This was shocking.

God and man are on totally different levels. As the Creator-God, He has every right to choose how to interact with mankind. He does not owe mankind anything. And He does not need to tell mankind anything.



Biblical Creation: Creator-Creature Distinction	
1 st level	CREATOR
2 nd level	Creature: what God created

Yet, we see Yahweh’s sincerity in being a friend to His own creation, Abraham. God chose to communicate and share His plans with him.

Yahweh offered Abraham the opportunity to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah

After God shared His plan with Abraham about destroying the two cities, He intentionally stayed behind while the two angels left. It was almost as if God was inviting Abraham to talk to Him about the plan.

Abraham approached God boldly but respectfully to plead for Sodom and Gomorrah. He knew that God was a righteous and just Judge and therefore, he appealed to God's own character. And God encouraged him by agreeing to his request. In fact, Abraham persisted in his request till God agreed to spare the cities even if only ten righteous people were found in them.

One thing we observe from this account is that Yahweh was approachable. He wanted a genuine relationship with His creation and He encouraged it. Also, He was intentional about allowing Abraham into His plan: not just telling Abraham about it, but encouraging him to be involved in it by being a mediator and asking for God's mercy for Sodom and Gomorrah.

Let's learn more about God's desire for a personal relationship by going to another account in the Bible, this time in the New Testament.



The Disciples

After Jesus died and resurrected, He appeared to His disciples multiple times. Here was one occasion when He showed Himself to them.



Let's turn to our Bibles and read John 21:1–17.

(The leader reads aloud. For reference, the verses are also here.)

John 21:1–17

¹ Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. ² Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

³ Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

⁴ At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was.

⁵ He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"

"No," they replied.

⁶ Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

⁷ Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water,

and headed to shore. ⁸ The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. ⁹ When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

¹⁰ “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said. ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.

¹² “Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. ¹⁴ This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

¹⁵ After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

¹⁶ Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

¹⁷ A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

Now let’s make some observations about this incident.

Jesus prepared breakfast and served His disciples

The God of the universe is not a proud, arrogant God who treats His creation like slaves. Not at all. Throughout the Bible, we see Yahweh taking the initiative, engaging with mankind and providing for people.

And when Jesus came to earth, He continued interacting with His creation in the same way. In fact, we see that Jesus showed great love in taking care of His disciples. He was not too “high up” to cook breakfast for them and serve it.



In the Bible, there are many other examples of how Jesus genuinely cared for people. In Session 8, we saw Jesus feed more than 5,000 people, working to personally break the loaves of bread and then getting His disciples to distribute the food.



On another occasion, He took on the job of a servant by washing each of His disciples' dirty, muddy feet before a meal. It was totally unheard of for a respectable Jewish teacher to do such a thing for his disciples. In the culture of that time, feet washing was a job meant for the lowliest servant in the household. But the God of the world thought nothing of stooping down to do this menial task for His own creatures.



But we know that was not all. Jesus offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, to die in order to save mankind whom He had created.

This is what the Bible says about Jesus.

Philippians 2:6–8

- ⁶ Though he was God,
 he did not think of equality with God
 as something to cling to.
- ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
 and was born as a human being.
- When he appeared in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.



Yahweh had planned that Jesus, the second Person of God, would die for all mankind. Jesus willingly became a “humble slave” and went to the cross.

But even after His death on the cross and His resurrection, Jesus continued to relate lovingly and personally to His disciples. He made breakfast for them, then sat and chatted with them.

Jesus invited His disciples to share in His love for the world

After breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter three times if Peter loved Him. Although Peter answered His question with a “yes” each time, he was also getting increasingly upset, wondering why Jesus kept asking him the same question over and over.

Each time Peter answered “yes”, Jesus told him: “feed my lambs”, “take care of my sheep” and “feed my sheep”.

What was the meaning of this conversation?

Jesus loved His disciples. While living on earth, He showed the depth of His love through His words and actions.

Now, He asked Peter three times if Peter loved Him. Peter answered “yes” all three times. Based on this love that Peter had for Him, Jesus told him to feed and take care of His sheep.

Jesus was saying that love for Him should motivate how Peter and the other disciples lived. If they loved Jesus, then they would care for those whom He cared for.

But Jesus wasn't talking about animals. He used sheep to refer to all who believe in Him and follow Him. Jesus was telling Peter that based on the loving relationship that they shared, Peter was to care for others.

Relationships are very important to Jesus. Jesus does not want mechanical, legalistic obedience to a list of dos and don'ts. Jesus wants His disciples to have a personal relationship with Him and then extend their loving relationship to include others around them.



YAHWEH'S INVITATION

The Bible is a record of who Yahweh is and what He is like. In reading the Bible, everyone is able to observe His character and personality. Throughout the Bible, we see Yahweh take the initiative to engage with people. We see that He is very interested in a personal relationship with each and every person. And that includes each one of us.



Yahweh chooses to engage with people in an honest, genuine and authentic way. He has made contracts to show His commitment and seriousness to the promises He has made. And He ensures that mankind can observe how He behaves with regards to His promises in the contracts.

Aside from the contracts, we also see how He personally engages with different kinds of people: those who believe in Him and those who do not—men, women, children, Jews and non-Jews.

In reading the Bible, a person should be able to have a better understanding of **Yahweh's character and personality**:

- Who is Yahweh?
- What is He like?
- What track record does He have?
- Does He make and keep promises?
- Is He dependable and reliable?
- Is He trustworthy?

The Bible is also Yahweh's **record of history and truth**. From the pages of Scripture, we learn Yahweh's explanation of:

- How the world came about,
- Where mankind came from,
- When and why evil, sin, pain and suffering came into the world,
- The meaning and purpose of life,
- What happens after mankind's life on earth, and
- Mankind's eternal destiny.

We've taken 11 sessions to go through a brief overview of all this.

Here's a summary of the salvation message of the Bible:

- Yahweh is an infinitely righteous and sovereign God. He created mankind to have a personal and close relationship with Himself.
- But mankind chose rebellion and sin and as a result, all people are bound for eternal separation from Yahweh.
- In His love, Yahweh sent Jesus to die as the sufficient substitute payment for all of mankind's sins.
- In order to benefit from Jesus' substitutionary death and gain Jesus' righteousness for themselves, God says that people will have to make a decision to put their faith in Jesus.
- Those who put their faith in Jesus will be reconciled to Yahweh for eternity. They will immediately enter into a relationship with Him.

A HOLY GOD

Helpless Sinners

A Sufficient
Substitute

A Faith Decision

RECONCILIATION
WITH YAHWEH



What is faith in Jesus?

But what exactly does “putting faith in Jesus” mean? Or, asked another way: what does it mean to trust in Jesus?

In general, when most people think about those in their lives whom they trust, they would be able to say: (i) what the person they trust is like and (ii) what they trust about that person.

Similarly, when people say they trust in Jesus or have put their faith in Jesus, this is what they mean:

1. They understand and believe that Jesus is the Creator-God and He is perfectly righteous.
2. They understand and believe that they themselves are helpless sinners and will be rightly judged by God with eternal punishment.
3. They understand and believe that Jesus died as a sufficient substitute for them personally so that they would not need to die the eternal death.

The Bible says that those who understand and believe these things have “put their faith in Jesus”.

As a result, they are now reconciled to Yahweh and have a personal relationship with Him. They are no longer separated from God. Now, they will live the rest of their lives on earth having a personal relationship with Yahweh and when their mortal lives on earth are finished, they will live face-to-face with Yahweh for all eternity.

John 3:16

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

“Putting faith in Jesus” is what makes someone a Christian and is what creates a relationship between God and that person.

Those who trust Jesus would make statements like:

- “I put my faith in Jesus for my salvation.”
- “I trust in Jesus as my Saviour.”
- “I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sins.”

These statements (and others like them) all mean that a person believes in Jesus.

People cannot do anything to “earn” this relationship and eternal life. They do not need to do any ritual, say any specific prayers or words, respond to church invitations for events, raise their hand, walk down the aisle of the church, donate things to the church, make promises to do or not do certain things, etc. They simply need to trust in Jesus.

God is inviting all mankind to put their faith in Jesus.

Yahweh, the God of the Bible, wants to have a personal relationship with you.



- He is inviting you into the intimate relationship that was experienced but then lost in the garden of Eden.
- He is inviting you to turn away from restless human effort and striving, and turn to Him for salvation, peace and security by trusting in Jesus and His work of dying on the cross.
- He is inviting you to turn away from your own man-made standards of right and wrong, and unrighteous living which leads to feelings of meaninglessness, unsettledness, frustration, fear, guilt and shame. Instead, He invites you to follow Him in His path of righteousness which leads to peace and joy.
- He is inviting you to spend the rest of your life on earth in close fellowship with Him where He will lead and guide you through the struggles and challenges of life and involve you in working with Him to love and serve others.
- And He is inviting you to spend eternity with Him.

Since Yahweh created mankind to have free will or responsible choice, you now have the choice to accept His invitation or reject it.

Have you accepted this invitation?

If not, are you ready to accept His invitation?

If you're not ready, what is your hesitation?

Explore Further

Here is some additional information that you may find helpful.

If you have more questions or need more information, here are books and websites you can turn to.

The list below is arranged by the different topics you may like to explore.

To learn more about the main message of the Bible

Here are two books that can help you understand the Bible in greater detail.

- **Harbin, Michael A.** *The Promise and the Blessing*. Zondervan, 2005.
This book is formatted like a textbook but is easy to read, and useful for a thorough study of the Scriptures from the first to the last books of the Bible.
- **Halley, Henry H.** *Halley's Bible Handbook with the New International Version*. Zondervan, 2007.
This is a useful reference book to learn about the background of biblical places, peoples and events as you read through the Bible. It's like a Bible guidebook.

Questions about the Bible and related topics

"Got Questions" is a Christian organisation with a website that answers thousands of common (and uncommon) questions that people have about the Bible.

- Visit: <https://www.gotquestions.org>

Questions about creation, science and related topics

There are a number of good Christian organisations staffed by Christian scientists who conduct research and write about the biblical worldview and science. Here are two recommendations you can explore.

- **Answers in Genesis:** This organisation's website has hundreds of articles, videos and books at basic and advanced science levels.
Visit: <https://answersingenesis.org>
- **Institute for Creation Research:** This is another good organisation with useful resources demonstrating how the biblical worldview can be trusted in everything it speaks about.
Visit: <https://www.icr.org/>

Questions about how we got the Bible

There are many books and resources that go into greater detail about how we got the Bible as well as how we know that the Bible we have today is really God's Word delivered to mankind. Here are several suggested resources.

- **Solomon, Robert M.** *The Enduring Word: The Authority and Reliability of the Bible.* Armour Publishing Pte Ltd, 2011.

This is an easy-to-read account of how we got the Bible.

- **Wallace, J. Warner.** *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels.* David C. Cook, 2013.

The author, a former atheist and a retired police detective, offers a layman's explanation of the evidence showing that the resurrection of Christ is a true, historical event. The author uses the same legal methods of today's courts to prove that the resurrection did occur.

- **Strobel, Lee.** *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus.* Zondervan, 2016.

The author, a former atheist and investigative journalist, investigated the claims of the New Testament that Jesus really is the Son of God and that he actually died and rose from the dead. The book takes a look at the evidence from the fields of science, philosophy, and history.

If you have put your faith in Jesus as your Saviour, here are some things that are helpful to know.

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 in 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. (On pages 25 and 26 at the end of this box, there are two recommendations for commentaries that you may like to explore.)

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 is 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? 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, 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, 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 you placed your 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.

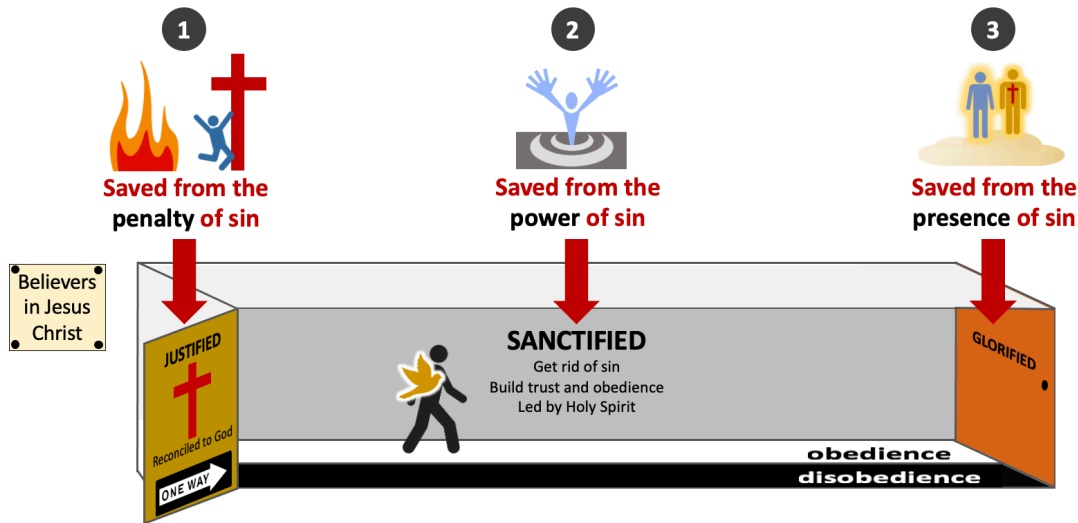


What does this mean? To get a clearer picture, it will be helpful to review Session 10, pages 13–23 on what happens when someone trusts in Jesus and what a believer's life looks like.

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

i. 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.

ii. 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.



Recommendations on Bible commentaries

A good Bible commentary can be very useful in helping you understand the Bible better. Here are two recommendations.

A. BE Series

Author: Wiersbe, Warren W.

Publisher: David C. Cook

Year: Various years

The BE Series is actually a collection of 50 separate volumes. Each booklet provides very good, devotional-type commentary, written in a very warm, approachable and relatable way. The BE Series is especially excellent when used as part of quiet time or focused book study. It shows readers how the Bible can be so relevant and impactful to our everyday Christian lives. Each booklet covers part of a book of the Bible (and sometimes covers several short books of the Bible) so you can just get the booklet(s) related to the area of study you wish to explore.

There are also similar resources from Warren Wiersbe:

- The Bible Exposition Commentary (The entire BE Series repackaged as a six-volume commentary.)
- The Wiersbe Bible Commentary (An edited and condensed version of the BE Series. Two volumes are available separately: Old Testament and New Testament.)

B. Dr. Constable's Expository Notes

Author: Constable, Thomas L.

Publisher: Sonic Light

Year: 2017

These notes are available as PDF (Portable Document Format) documents and as webpages. Dr. Thomas L. Constable's lifetime of notes that cover all 66 books of the Bible have been put together on his church's website and are available for free.

Dr. Constable's notes are thorough, in-depth, scholarly, yet easy enough for regular Christians to use. The commentary provides verse-by-verse explanations as well as extensive background information on the history, time and authors of Scripture.

Visit: <https://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>

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?

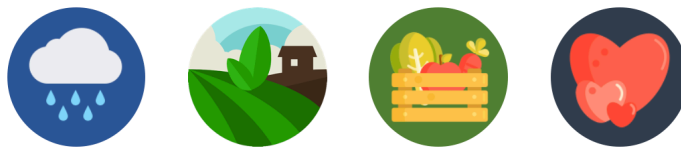
Some people have the idea that there are many people in the world who have never heard of the Creator-God of the universe.

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.

Psalms 19:1–4

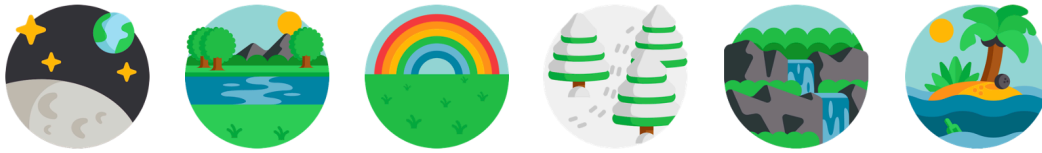
- ¹ The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
- ² Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
- ³ They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
- ⁴ Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to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




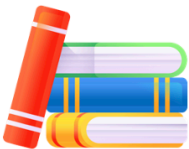

Through His work of creation, God made it obvious to mankind that He exists.

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.