

GOING TO HEAVEN

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Preface / Syllabus

***Are you going to Heaven? Are you sure? Nothing is more important than being absolutely certain. Life on this earth is just the first stage of our existence. It is the time when every person determines where he or she will spend eternity. Getting it right is the very purpose of your life. And yes, you can know for sure.**

Gaining that certainty is extremely empowering. It refocuses your perspective and your priorities; liberating you to contribute in extending the kingdom of God. Such certainty has made bold and powerful witnesses of the timid and the tongue-tied. It has given the courage of lions to those facing martyrdom unto death for following the Lord Jesus Christ. It has transformed the selfish and greedy into fountains of generosity and sacrifice. And it has freed the addicted, the possessed, and those paralyzed by doubt. For with salvation, deliverance and certainty can also come, when one is born again.

****Focusing on such a salvation, hear clearly what Jesus says, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). Stressing that fact, Jesus repeated, “... *you must be born again*” (John 3:7).**

That is the line of demarcation between those that are going to Heaven, and those that are going to Hell. Unless you are born again, you will never even see the kingdom of God. Your admission depends upon it. Jesus said so.

Understanding what the Bible teaches about being born again, is the key to gaining certainty of your status. There is always a substantive change when one is born again. In fact, if you are what you were, then you are not. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). But, change alone is not the evidence of being born again. Most people will “clean up their act”, attempting to fit in, when attending a church.

Many people will quickly answer “yes” if asked, “Are you a Christian?”, “Are you saved?”, or “Do you believe in God?”. But, asking for the details of when they were born again, far too often meets with the blank stare of someone completely unfamiliar with the term. Generally, they will respond with when they were baptized, where they go to church and how long they have attended. Or perhaps they might claim some title such as elder, deacon, Sunday School teacher, or the like.

All of those are good things, but none of them are the elements of the new birth process. Your rebirth only becomes evident when you reflect back upon :

- Your lifestyle and worldview before being confronted with the gospel...
- When and how you were exposed to the gospel of grace, made aware of the wrath of God toward sin and rebellion, and convicted of your sins by the Holy Spirit...
- When you repented of your sins and asked God to forgive you, and then devoted the rest of your life to following and serving Him...
- What God has done in and through your life since you exchanged your agenda for His kingdom agenda.

*****Those are the elements of a salvation testimony of being born again:
Conviction - Repentance - Surrender in grateful devotion to Jesus Christ as your Lord.**

And invariably, there is deliverance, dramatic transformation, or something else that can only be attributed to His divine provision and guidance.

Unfortunately, that blank stare of confusion about being born again, can be an indication that the person is still unregenerate; perhaps reformed, but not reborn. There is a vast and tragic difference.

Attempts to “do better” are usually prompted by a desire to conform; to become socially acceptable. Wanting to reform and gain acceptance, is almost a rite of passage as one matures and experiences the consequences of sin, reckless behavior, and social disapproval. But, reformation is always a work in progress. It is never complete. Twenty years of sobriety does not change being an alcoholic. Years of self control does not alter being a pedophile. And social acceptance is far, far short of being forgiven and redeemed by God. That requires His birthing a new spiritual nature in us. It is His desire that we, who are made in His image, would all seek that from Him. *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:4).

And unfortunately, many who have indeed been born again, are uncertain of their eternal destiny. That is paralyzing and so unnecessary. As with every major life issue, the answer is in the Word of God. And it needs to be shared clearly, with as many as possible.

This work is a substantive listing of what God wants everyone to know about the process of being born again. Spiritual rebirth is indeed a supernatural event, but it is not some vague, unsolvable mystery. He clearly states that information was recorded in His Word so that, *“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...”* (2 John 5:13). God obviously wants His children to be secure in the knowledge that they are Heaven bound; to be fruitful, not tentative or inhibited.

So, what is your circumstance?

- If you are not absolutely 100% certain that you are going to Heaven...
- If a lack of certainty has you struggling to be a disciple, and frustrated in making disciples...
- If you lack the certainty that inspires you to share the gospel with lost people at every occasion; perhaps having never even tried to do so...
- Or, if no one has ever shared with you how to approach God, on His terms, to ask for forgiveness, rebirth, and adoption into His eternal family...

...then this information was compiled for you.

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A lifetime of accomplishments and accumulations is completely meaningless, if someone fails to fulfill the real purpose of their life. An eternity of misery and separation awaits them. The purpose of this physical life is to connect with our Creator; to be made whole and complete. Only He can bridge the vast gap between His holy perfection, and our flawed humanity.

“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;...” (Acts 17: 26-27)

“You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart”.
(Jeremiah 29:13)

“Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” (Jeremiah 33:3)

Imagine that! God has placed each of us in the timeframe and location that is the most likely to encourage us to seek His presence. And He has guaranteed that we will be successful, if we are sincere in our efforts to establish a relationship with Him as the sovereign Lord of all creation. He created each of us to know Him. That is what relationship is all about; getting to know one another. He already knows everything about each one of us. There is not a single molecule in anyone that He is not aware of, and actively maintaining. Our getting to know Him is the objective. Such an incredible relationship for all eternity is beyond our full comprehension. Yet that is the offer. But, there has always been that insurmountable hurdle of our selfish, deceptive, and rebellious human nature. None of us qualify for entry into God’s Heaven.

We are all fatally flawed. Those Ten Commandments are all restrictions and responsibilities that we totally agree with. We think that if everyone else would quit lying, stealing, committing adultery or murder, etc., that there would be a paradise on earth right now. Yet each of us has broken some, if not all of those commandments.

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumbles at one point, he is guilty of all. (James 2:10)

That is the universal problem for all of us. Upon breaking even one of the commandments - telling even one lie, stealing even one ink pen, or one lustful gazing at a stranger, our status changed. We went from being law keepers, to being law breakers. Not only are we condemned at our first transgression, but Jesus also explained that our thoughts, motives, and intents are subject to judgement as well.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery’. But, I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28)

The apostle John said that hatred was the mental equivalent of murder.

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (1 John 3:15)

That standard of 100% perfect, 100% of the time, excludes all of us from making it to Heaven, absent entering into some sort of “plea bargain” before judgement.

Only one person ever walked this earth who never broke a single one of the commandments. Two thousand years ago, Divinity took on human form to live that sinless life that none of us have ever lived. Jesus Christ came as predicted in hundreds of prophecies, lived in virtual obscurity until about thirty years of age, and then began to proclaim that he was the Son of God. Those proclamations He validated with an incredible series of miracles. He challenged those offended by His claims, and intent on killing Him, to name even one sin that He had committed. They could not name one. There were none. He was sinless. And we will be judged with Him as the standard. We will be found guilty of breaking the law. But, that “plea bargain” is available to all of us.

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”.
(Acts 17:30-31)

Thus on judgement day, if we are judged on our performance, we will each be judged by the standard of perfection : Jesus Christ. We do not want to be judged on our performance. We do not want justice; we want mercy. In order to display His grace and His righteousness, and not because we deserve it, His sacrifice on the cross paid the sin debt that we owe. That payment is credited to the account of anyone who embraces Jesus as Lord, and heeds His instruction to “Follow Me”. (Mat. 4:19, Mat. 8:22, Mt. 9:9, Mat. 16:24, Mat. 19:21, Mk. 2:14, Mk. 8:34, Mk. 10:21, Lk. 5:27, Lk. 9:23. Lk. 9:59-62, Lk. 18:22, Jn. 1:43, Jn. 10:27, Jn. 12:26, Jn. 21:19 all quoted on pages 21-22) There is nothing ambiguous about the level of devotion and allegiance that the Lord expects and deserves. Being a Christ follower is manifested in actually following as God directs. *He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Corinthians 5:15)*

The necessity of our devotion and surrender to His lordship was always presented as part and parcel of the gospel. Never once did He announce that “He has a wonderful plan for your life”; indicating things would improve here and now. In fact, He warned that in this world, we would have tribulation (John 16:33), and that the world would hate us because it first hated Him (John 15:18-20). Jesus did not come to make us happy, or to smooth out the bumps in the road on a self directed journey. He came to make us righteous. It is His righteousness that cloaks His followers, allowing admission into Heaven for those who are devoted to Him.

In expanding on that road trip analogy, God is not like a spare tire in the trunk, as we motor down the highway of life. He is not just hanging around to bail us out of car trouble on our journey, only to be returned to the trunk once we are again underway. Nor, is He the steering wheel. We are gifted with free will, and have the ability to steer where our natural impulses would lead. Rather, He is the ultimate GPS guidance system that when followed consistently, leads us where we need to go, and at just the right speed. None of us follow perfectly. But, if following is our consistent focus and our heartfelt intent, it becomes our lifestyle and worldview.

Can you know for sure that you are going to Heaven? Here is the “acid test” supplied in the Word of God :

Your ears shall hear a voice behind you saying, “This is the way, walk in it. Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:21)

*“I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known by My own.”
(John 10:14)*

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” (John 10:27)

*“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”
(Romans 8:14)*

Consider your last few big decisions. Things like where to go to school, who to marry, whether to make some large purchase, whether to change jobs, when to start a family, how to deal with a major personal problem, and those kind of things. If those decisions and responses were filtered through the Word of God, presented in prayer, and then delayed awaiting a response ... then you are on the right path. If you are operating in your own abilities, instincts, and best judgement, you are treading on dangerous ground. The path you are on leads someplace that you do not want to go. God does not send anyone to Hell, but in the end, He will tell them : “*Your will be done*”.

The Holy Spirit leads those he indwells. *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.* (Romans 8:16) Primarily, that guidance comes from the Word of God, as the Spirit illuminates what scripture has to say about whatever issue someone is facing. Occasionally, there will be special revelation when it is

needed. Quite frequently, it will take us way out of our comfort zone, but the unforeseeable results will validate that it was the will of God, and will always align with the basic principles taught throughout Scripture. Rely not on feelings, but on the Word.

Those still navigating solo, not led of the Holy Spirit, know deep down what their circumstance is. Each person knows whether they are following, or if they are charting their own path. And while only the born again are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the one impact that He has on all people is to convict them of sin.

“And when He (the Holy Spirit) has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement : of sin because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgement, because the ruler of this world (Satan) is judged.” (John 16:8-11)

Guilt is a universal burden borne by all humanity. Upon serious and deep reflection, none of us really expect to earn a place in a sinless, perfect paradise with a holy and righteous God. Many have been confused, or have deluded themselves, about what being a Christ follower is. Church membership, church attendance, having been baptized, giving money, filling volunteer jobs on Sunday morning, are all good things but are not the main thing. The following passages are the most troubling, gut-wrenching, terrifying statements ever uttered by Jesus.

“Enter in by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there be few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21-23)

Imagine the shock and horror of all those church members who are not born again. After having spent years coming to church services and activities, they will then be cast into Hell to pay for their own sins. They will be watching those, whose sins are no less grievous to the holiness of God, being welcomed as family into His glorious Heaven. The only difference will be that He will know them. And they will know Him, having responded and followed His leading.

We can not earn Heaven. Those things done in the flesh, presumed to be “spiritual” and worthy of God’s approval, will be revealed for what they are - counterfeits.

But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6)

**** Focusing on such a salvation, hear clearly what Jesus says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” . (John 3:3)**

Stressing that fact, Jesus repeated, “...you must be born again”. (John 3:7)

Jesus said these things to a religious leader of the Jews named Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night, no doubt to avoid jeopardizing his prominent position and privileged status. Convinced by the miracles, he understood that Jesus represented God in some fashion, and wanted to know more. At first, Nicodemus misunderstood, and thought Jesus was referring to a second physical birth. So, then Jesus explained that He was actually describing a spiritual event.

No one fully understands the mechanics and power involved in God giving someone a new spiritual nature. For every person has an immortal soul that will continue after the physical body has ceased functioning and begun to rot. Apparently, each soul has a dormant component that God calls the spirit. Prior to His quickening that component, each of us is literally spiritually dead. That component, spirit, has to be brought to life.

And you He made alive, (more colorfully translated quickened in the KJV) who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the power of the prince of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature, children of wrath, just like the others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive (quickened us) together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:1-7)

Chapter 8 of the book of Romans tells us that those who are in Christ are indwelled by the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune Godhead. Verse 16 tells us that :

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”, ...

That dormant component of our immortal souls called spirit, once quickened, is our direct link to God. Actually, God is not in the business of making good people out of bad people. He is in the quickening business; bringing that dormant portion of our souls to life. But, He loves us too much to leave us as damaged and deficient as we are when we come to Him. So, He does work with us on our shortcomings, and we improve in direct relation to how much we cooperate. That is called sanctification. But, it is that quickening, that bringing to life of our spirit, that is the essence of being born again.

Curiously, God keeps track of which part of the soul is the spirit. It says elsewhere :

For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

He can distinguish between the quickened component and the rest of the soul. In some regard, it is probably a measure of our sincerity and true intentions.

Frankly, none of us can be absolutely certain whether anyone that we know is truly born again. But each of us can indeed be certain, way beyond the shadow of a doubt, whether we personally have been born again. And we can observe the basics of the process simply by studying those whom Jesus pronounced saved.

In Luke 19:1-10, is the account of a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus who ran to see this Jesus who was performing miracles, as He passed through the town of Jericho. This man had a job that would have earned him the hatred and disgust of his fellow Jews. He had become rich, using his role as an employee of the Romans; taxing his fellow Jews and keeping the excess money he could squeeze out of that very poor population.

Because the crowd around Jesus was very large, and Zacchaeus was short, he climbed a tree to see better. But, Jesus called him down, and announced that He was going to join Zacchaeus at his home for a visit. The Bible records that :

So he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. (Luke 19:6)

Of course, the crowd complained that Jesus was socializing with a sinner. But after being with Jesus just a short time, Zacchaeus did something that was way out of character for him. He announced that he was going to give half of his wealth to the poor, and that he would repay anyone whom he had cheated; giving back four times more than he had taken. Meeting Jesus effected a dramatic transformation in the person of Zacchaeus. He was convicted of and admitted his sin. He repented, and turned from it, volunteering to replace fourfold anything he had stolen. Zacchaeus chose the connection with Jesus, and His approval, over his former god - the god named Greed.

And Jesus said of him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost". (Luke 19:9-10)

*****Those are the elements of a salvation testimony of being born again :
Conviction - Repentance - Surrender in grateful devotion to Jesus as your Lord.
And invariably, there is deliverance, dramatic transformation, or something else that can only be attributed to His divine provision and guidance.**

A second incidence of someone being born again is recorded in Luke 23:39-43 and also in Matthew 27:44. We do not know his name, but we do know that he got to accompany Jesus into Paradise. Jesus was one of three men crucified that day, on that bloody hill of Calvary. Two criminals died on their own crosses; one on each side of the Lord. At first, even they reviled Him, along with the jeering crowd and the soldiers, for saying that He was the Son of God. But then, something transformed one of them.

One of the criminals, saw through his pain and anguish, and recognized something that the other criminal did not. Jesus did not answer back with anger and hatred at his cruel mistreatment. He did not curse and rant at his tormentors. In fact, He asked His Father to forgive those killing Him, saying that they did not know what they were doing. This was no ordinary man; certainly no ordinary criminal. Who, but the real Son of God, would respond like that as He was being tortured to death?

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him saying, Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward for our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom". And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Based on what he observed, the perceptive criminal considered who Jesus claimed to be, and recognized it to be the truth. Then he acknowledged his transgression, turning from that mindset by admitting he deserved execution, and surrendered his eternal fate to faith in Jesus as the One to forgive and save. He did not even ask to be delivered from physical death, but to be accepted by God as a repentant sinner. Again, the biblical pattern ... conviction, repentance, and surrender in grateful devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord.

A third individual likewise illustrates that biblical pattern. We read in Luke 7: 37-50 :

And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the fragrant oil.

Jesus spoke to the Pharisee and said: "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore, I say to you, her sins are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Unlike Zacchaeus, this woman was not despised and shunned for her greed and cruelty. Unlike the crucified criminal, she was not at death's door and facing eternity. Her circumstance was much less "dramatic". But, she was aware of, and convicted of her sin. She turned from it, and turned to Jesus. She abandoned her pride and priorities, to display her love and devotion to Him. His acceptance of her was all that mattered. She was all in. That is what surrender involves. It is a complete exchange of your agenda for His; a subordinating of your interests to His direction and purpose.

But, what about the man to whom Jesus first explained this need to be born again? Well, we do not have all the details of his spiritual progress after meeting with the Lord. We do not know the details of him being convicted of his sin, or when he might have repented. But, we do know that he had a dramatic transformation of priorities.

Forsaking the privilege, prestige, and income from being a religious leader of the most legalistic branch of Judaism, he displayed his devotion to Jesus. He did so with no concern for any loss or persecution it might bring. He brought the material necessary, and helped to embalm the mutilated body of his Lord, with great reverence. This insured his rejection by the other religious leaders who had orchestrated Jesus being arrested and crucified. His prestige, position, and income from the temple was gone, and his life was probably in jeopardy. Life as he knew it, was no more. But, it did not matter. He and Joseph of Arimathea, formerly secret disciples, came out of the shadows to honor Jesus, even as the other disciples fled in fear and went into hiding.

Instead of letting the body of Jesus be cast upon the town trash dump, as the other crucifixion victims usually were, they interred Him as someone much beloved. There was no more of being a secret disciple. This was done in the open, with no regard for the consequences of being known as a Christ follower. It was too important to consider anything but doing the right thing. That is the nature of wholehearted devotion.

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby. (John 19:39-42)

While an effort of the will to become accepted by society might mimic conviction and repentance, it is not. Reformed is not reborn. Any confusion is cleared up when considering the third element of the new birth process. Complete surrender in grateful devotion is that third element demonstrated in Holy Scripture. And it is made manifest in following at the disregard of your self interest. So yes, we should expect to see Nicodemus when we get to Heaven.

The Word of God clearly records his level of allegiance and devotion. Nicodemus, wanting to see Heaven more than anything this world had to offer, had obviously been born again.

What would that plea for rebirth be like, for someone like him; someone who would know about Jesus, but not really have a relationship with Him? Remembering that God said we would find Him when we seek Him with all our heart, that would be the obvious starting point. No doubt, Nicodemus abandoned the legalistic games of being a Pharisee, and cried out to God for that relationship. Knowing that God wants such a relationship, and that Jesus is the member of the triune Godhead through which that is possible, one is to go to Him for it.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me."
(John 14:6)

He came unto His own, and His own did not receive Him. But, as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. (John 1:11-12)

Obviously, expressing gratitude for what Jesus did to purchase our redemption, is beyond our ability to communicate. But, we should try. We do so by giving Him the rest of our lives to use in extending His kingdom. It is not nearly sufficient to acknowledge His sacrifice, but is the only reasonable response.

If you have never had that heartfelt interaction with the Lord, this is the day that you need to do so. No one is promised a tomorrow, and eternity is a very, very long time.

There is no magic word formula for approaching the Lord to ask to be born again. But, the below listed phraseology covers the bases of what a sincere and repentant sinner might want to express. Receive Him as the Lord of all, including your life. Tell Him that you are ready to start following. Then await instructions and follow them; anywhere, anytime, anyhow, and at any cost.

Lord Jesus, I want to know You personally. I receive You as the Lord of my life. Thank you so much for dying on that cross for my sins, for forgiving my sins, and giving me eternal life with You in Heaven. Help me to live daily for You, teaching me to be the person that You created me to be. Amen.

God is aware of your every heartbeat and breath. He knows if you are sincerely repentant and ready to be born again. He knows if you are intent on following. And He will accept you. *"For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved"* Romans 10: 13. Just be listening and determined to follow, before the instruction is given. Whatever it costs you, this is so very worth it. May we all meet in Heaven.

ONCE ONE IS BORN AGAIN, ...

THEN WHAT?

BEING A DISCIPLE AND MAKING DISCIPLES

The term “discipleship” refers to the process of studying the teachings of Jesus, assimilating them, and committing to wholeheartedly follow them. None of us do so perfectly. For we are still saddled with our inherent sin nature as well. There is a constant tension between the two natures; sometimes almost to the pitch of two wild animals fighting for dominance. Paul the apostle recorded that :

“I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But, I see another law within my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O, wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with my mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Romans 7:23-25)

It is necessary and beneficial to be aware of these warring natures within ourselves, if we are to focus on truly following. Knowing what is right, and being inclined to do what is wrong, is just who we are. The battle is fought each day. The nature that prevails is usually determined by which one you “feed” that day.

Devoting time daily to communing with God in prayer, reading and applying the Word of God to circumstances as they develop, and sharing the gospel with lost people, will usually keep the fleshly nature in check. Time away from interacting with God will invariably find you having to struggle much harder to avoid temptation.

Studying and applying the Word of God is the roadmap for Christ followers. Having the wisdom of Almighty God right at our fingertips, is almost too great a treasure to comprehend. But, it can be somewhat intimidating. Having an overview that lists references and connects the basic themes, can certainly make it easier to grasp. The interrelated truths are more easily seen when arranged in groupings. And there is a cohesiveness to Scripture, that becomes more apparent with each reading.

The following is a listing of the essentials of historic Christianity. Every denomination has one or more secondary preferences which it holds dear. None of those are included. These are the basics that all biblical Christendom agree upon. If one was to distill the Christian life to a bare minimum set of convictions, it would be that :

The Bible is what it claims to be; and Jesus is who He says He is.

Every other truth emanates from those two self evident and foundational truths. This listing of essentials is expanded sufficiently to give a fully orbbed and user friendly reference guide.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)

Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, “How long do you keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But, you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:26-30)

“Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.” (Revelation 1:17-18)

The next six pages, when copied on three sheets of paper (front and back) , will fit nicely inside a full size Bible when folded. It is a user friendly and comprehensive compilation of the basic themes and doctrines contained in God’s Word. Feel free to copy and distribute as you wish.

THE ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY

1) The Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and effectual Word of God.

Prov. 30:5-6, Matt. 22:29, Matt. 24:35, Lk. 24:27, Lk. 24:32, Rom. 3:2, Rom. 15:4, Heb. 4:12, 2Tim. 3:16-17, 2Pet. 1:21, Jam. 2:8

2) The Bible reveals the nature of God; a triune being: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Gen. 1:2, Gen. 1:26, Ps. 2:7-12, Matt. 3:16-17, Matt. 28:19, Mk. 1:9-11, Lk. 3:21-22, Jn. 1:32-34, Jn. 10:30, Jn. 14:26, Jn. 15:26, 2Cor. 13:14, Eph. 4:4-6

3) Man was created in the image of God, to commune with God, but rejected His authority and fell from fellowship, into a state of sin and enmity with God.

Genesis chapters 1 through 3, Gen. 5:1, 1Cor 11:7, Jam. 3:9

4) Grace is His unmerited love for man, through which God provided for our reconciliation unto Himself.

Jn. 1:16-17, Acts 15:11, Rom. 3:23-24, Rom. 4:16, Rom. 5:2, Rom. 5:14-21, Rom. 6:14, Rom. 11:5-6, 1Cor. 15:16, 2Cor.9:8, 2Cor. 12:9, Eph. 2:5, Eph. 2:8-9,

5) Jesus, who is God the Son, took on the form of man, to provide for the salvation of fallen man, and enable his reconciliation to God.

Isa. 7:14, Isa. 9:6-7, Matt. 1:23, Jn. 1:14, Jn. 5:39, Jn. 18:37, Heb. 2:14, Heb.10:5-7 Gal. 4:4-5, 1Jn.4:10

6) Jesus came to earth via a virgin birth, and fulfilled every prophecy foretelling the coming of a Savior, then lived a sinless life for more than 33 years.

Isa. 7:14, Isa. 9:6-7, Isa. 53:4-5, Matt. 1:18-25, Lk. 1:26-38, Rom. 16:25-26, 2Cor. 5:21, 1Pet.2:21-22

7) After proving Himself the Savior by many miracles, He offered Himself up as the perfect sacrifice to pay every sin debt, and satisfy God's righteous judgment of sin.

Matt. 9:27-31, Matt. 14:15-21, Lk. 4:33-35, Jn. 4:43-54, Jn. 11:1-44, Rom. 3:25 Heb. 9:22-28, Heb. 10:5-7, Heb. 10:18, 1Jn. 2:2

8) He was crucified, died, and buried three days. Matt. chapters 27-28, Mk. chapters 15-16, Lk. chapters 23-24, Jn. chapters 18-21

9) He was bodily resurrected, appearing to hundreds of people, before returning to His throne in Heaven.

Matt. chapters 27-28, Mk. chapters 15-16, Lk. chapters 23-24, Jn. chapters 18-21

10) He is coming back again:

.....to gather the repentant and reconciled unto eternal life and reward in Heaven
and

.....to dispatch the unrepentant and unreconciled to eternal separation from the love of God, and subjection to His wrath.....eternal punishment in Hell.

Matt. 13:24-43, Matt. 20:1-16, Matt. 22:2-14, Matt. 25:1-13, Matt. 25:31-46,
Jn. 14:1-3, Jn. 16:22, Rev. 1:7, Rev. 16:15, Rev. 20:11-15

11) Saving faith is entering into a love relationship with Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior; coming under His authority and His provision, by trusting completely in His finished work of atonement on the cross for redemption. The path to salvation:

REPENT – CONFESS - BELIEVE (Enough to follow)

Isa. 26:2-4, Matt. 7:21-23, Lk. 23:42-43, Jn. 3:16, Jn. 6:28-29, Jn. 14:15
Jn. 14:23, Rom. 3:28, Rom. 4:4-5, Rom. 9:11

12) We are JUSTIFIED (made blameless) by Jesus atonement for our sins.

We are SANCTIFIED (set apart) as the Holy Spirit conforms us unto the likeness of Christ.

We will be GLORIFIED (made perfect) by God Almighty when we are translated into our immortal, incorruptible bodies to dwell in His presence forever.

Justified: Isa. 53:11, Acts 13:38-39, Rom. 3:21-28, Rom. 5:1, Rom. 8:30, Gal. 2:16
Gal. 3:8-9, Gal. 3:24, Titus 3:4-7

Sanctified: Jn. 17:17, Acts 20:32, Acts 26:15-18, Rom. 15:16, 1Cor. 1:30
1Cor. 6:11, Eph. 5:26, Heb 2:11, 2Tim.2:21, 1Pet.1:2

Glorified: Jn. 3:16, Jn.5:24, Jn.12:44-50, Rom.2:11, Rom.5:20-21, Rom.8:13
Rom.8:30, 1Cor.15:51-54, 1Pet.1:23, Gal.6:8

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT – Matthew 22: 37-39

Jesus said to him, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**”

Christians claim this as our *identity*. We are the people who love God with all our being, and determine to love those around us in His name.

THE GREAT COMMISSION – Matthew 28: 18-20

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**”

This is *the function* of the church - to be part of the kingdom, and to extend the kingdom. We are to be disciples, and we are to make disciples.

BAPTISM

Conducting baptisms and submitting to baptism are acts of obedience. The Great Commission was a clear directive for the church to reach the lost, baptize those making professions of faith, and to teach them the Word of God. For the reborn, baptism is an initial act of obedience, to begin a lifetime of obedience. It is a statement to the world of identifying with Christ, and announcing commitment to Him. The full implication of the act is probably beyond our comprehension. It is done because it was commanded; the emphasis is on being *obedient*.

THE LORD’S SUPPER / COMMUNION - 1 Corinthians 11: 24-26

At the last supper with His disciples, Jesus decreed a “family tradition” to be observed periodically by the corporate body. He broke bread saying: “**Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me**”. He then took the cup and said: “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.**” This corporate breaking of bread and drinking of the cup is done in *remembrance*.

“You must be born again.”

Jesus said: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

John 3:3

Being born again is the supernatural quickening (bringing to life) of your spirit, which God does at the moment of your salvation. Your spirit, that previously dormant component of your immortal soul, is birthed. An eternal bond forges it to your loving Creator. Communion is established, reconciliation is completed, and the Holy Spirit indwells you – guiding, teaching, reminding, and convicting.

John 3:6
Eph 2:1-5
I Cor 2:14
Rom 5:8-21
John 14:17, 26
John 16:13
Heb 4:12

Because God loves you, Jesus suffered and died a painful, physical death on the cross – to pay your sin debt. Having satisfied His righteous judgment of sin, God extends to you His grace and His mercy. *Grace* is His unmerited favor. You receive something incredibly wonderful that you do not deserve, could never earn, and can not repay – HEAVEN. *Mercy* is His unmerited pardon. You are forgiven your sin debt and escape what you do deserve – separation from God for eternity in the pit of HELL. That is the repository for the evil and the rebellious.

John 3:16

II Cor 5:17

Jesus lived, and then sacrificed, His life for you. Giving Him the remainder of your life in gratitude, is not even partial repayment. But, it is the only conceivable, only appropriate response.

II Cor 5:14-21

Have you been born again? Have you come into the family of God, into His provision, and under His authority? Who directs your steps? Is it God, or do you wander your own path? The Kingdom of God, is where the King reigns. Are you a Christ-follower or charting your own course? His incredible offer requires a considered and committed response.

Rom 8:1-16

Matt 7:13

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

Rev 3:20

“FOLLOW ME”

Our invitation and instruction from Jesus has always been clear, always been succinct, and always been unequivocal : He repeatedly said, “*Follow Me*”.

Mat. 4:19 And he said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Mat. 8:22 But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Mat. 9:9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the tax office. And he said to him, “Follow Me”. So he arose and followed him.

Mat. 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

Mat. 19:21 Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Mk. 2:14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed him.

Mk. 8:34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross , and follow Me.”

Mk. 10:21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

Lk. 5:27 After these things he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And he said to him, “Follow Me.”

Lk. 9:23 Then he said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Lk. 9:59-62 Then he said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” But, Jesus said to him, “No one having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Lk. 18:22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Jn. 1:43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."

Jn. 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me."

Jn. 12:26 "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me: and where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Jn. 21:19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him, "Follow Me."

The truth is, that Jesus did not come to make us happy or fulfilled. He came to make us righteous. And He uses the saved to reach the lost. That requires our allegiance; that requires following. There is no plan B.

How frivolous the phrase "God has a wonderful plan for your life" would have sounded to those early saints who were hounded, afflicted, and even killed for proclaiming Jesus. The blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the church. Tens of millions forfeited their lives as they clung to their faith over the past two millennium. They set an example that would shame the typical American church. That persecution continues even today in some parts of the world, though we may turn a blind eye to it.

But, God hears their cries echoing across the centuries, and weighs them in measure to the anemia of the present church:

And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth? (Lk. 18:7-8)

Like the apostle John, we should pray -

Even so, come Lord Jesus ! (Revelation 22:20)

MAKING DISCIPLES

Any follower can participate in extending the kingdom of God. And every follower is expected to do so. Just “modeling” Christianity, and raising our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord is not enough. The gospel was never meant to be kept a family secret. We are literally surrounded by hordes of lost people. Those people are enroute to an eternity in Hell, just as we once were. If we get serious about reaching the lost, and every follower actually starts sharing the gospel as opportunities arise, we can reach the whole world in a matter of months, instead of millennium.

The Bible tells us that right after Stephen was martyred by being stoned to death, that a great persecution came down on the church in Jerusalem, and all the saints were scattered fleeing for their lives.....except the apostles. And it says, *“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.”* (Acts 8:4)

Behold, the plan for kingdom growth : ***multiplication***. Those fleeing for their very lives, ran as far as their strength permitted, then stopping to catch their breath....they told others about Jesus. Many bore scars that validated their testimony. The likelihood that they would be imprisoned, and even killed for what they believed and preached, gave their witness irrefutable credibility.

The apostles certainly continued to share the gospel too, but they were not the surge beyond the walls of Jerusalem. It was the saints that they had equipped to do so. That has always been the plan. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers are assigned an overarching responsibility to equip the saints (believers) to do the work of the ministry. They also, are to share the gospel. But, more importantly and more strategically, they are to teach everybody else in the church how to do so. We are all to be disciples and to make disciples. That is how multiplication works. Rome, the center of the “civilized” world in that age, had a church when the first apostle (Paul) got there. Laymen already had it up and running, and reproducing.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Pastors were never meant to be the “professional” Christians, doing all the sharing and caring. The very best that process can produce is addition. Multiplication is a lot more effective. And the vast majority of us, who are not pastors, were never meant to be spectators observing from the sidelines. The plan, as explained in Ephesians 4, is that we all get to go out on the field and join in the fray.

Rare is the church goer who has been given any instruction in how to share the gospel. That mandate to equip the saints has morphed into an entertainment format.

At best, there is sometimes a push for those in attendance to invite others to come to church services. “Awesome” music and entertaining activities designed to attract a crowd, have replaced the making of disciples, who would then make other disciples.

Again, the answer is in the Word of God. Equipping the saints, and helping them to come to reproductive maturity, is clearly illustrated in Scripture. Consider the example of Philip, one of the seven selected in Acts 6 to dispense food to the needy widows that were coming to hear the apostles. He was, what we would call a layman. He attended to physical needs, so as to free the apostles to preach and teach about Jesus.

In Acts 8, Philip fled to Samaria to escape the persecution that became so severe right after Stephen was martyred.

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:5-8)

That ministry in Samaria is a pivotal point in the book of Acts, which is itself a book of transitions. The covenant of the Law transitioned into the covenant of grace. The Gentiles were grafted into the plan for the chosen people of God, the Jews. And for the first time, the Holy Spirit actually began to indwell believers. That indwelling first occurred to a rather small group on the day of Pentecost. After Jesus performed so very many miracles, and actually came back from the dead, only 120 people followed His instructions. (Acts 1:12-2:4) They waited in Jerusalem for days for their empowerment to become witnesses. Their patient obedience was well worth it.

Signs and wonders were given those first followers to authenticate that their message was from God. While signs and wonders may, or may not, have ceased at the close of the canon of Scripture, they certainly are not common. We were given something just as powerful to use in sharing the faith. We now have the completed volume of the Word of God. And the ministry of Philip in Samaria is the very beginning of that pivot; the movement to using the Word of God to reach the lost.

So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Philip performed miracles of healing and exorcism, and many people began to believe in his preaching about the kingdom of God, and in the name of Jesus. Many were baptized in His name. But then, God changed things up, for Philip and for us.

An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, telling him to go to a stretch of the desert road, where very few people were normally gathered. When Philip went, he saw a chariot carrying a rich and powerful man of Ethiopia traveling on that road.

Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot”. (Acts 8:29)

Upon approaching the man, Philip saw that he was reading a copy of the book of Isaiah. It was very rare that any individual would have a copy of Scripture, so this was indeed a very rich and influential man. Scripture tells us that he had come to Jerusalem to worship; he was a man seeking God. The passage he was reading was :

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation, His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. (Isaiah 53:7-8)

Philip boldly asked the man, *“Do you understand what you are reading?”*, and he said, *“How can I, unless someone guides me?”*. And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him (Acts 8:30-31)

Signs and wonders are not common today, because we have been furnished a tool just as powerful to reach the lost. The Word of God is not only inerrant and infallible, it is also demonstrably effectual. Sharing the Word of God as effectively as we can, requires studying and becoming familiar with it.

Nationwide, about three quarters of the population are unchurched and presumed to be lost. The most effective way to reach a lost person is to introduce a third Person to the conversation. God, speaking through His Word, is the prescribed and predominant means of evangelism. Again, *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* (Romans 10:17)

Reading or quoting the Word is powerful. More powerful yet, is having the lost person read, and interact with the Word themselves. Forget trying to be persuasive. If you can talk someone into being saved, someone else can talk them out of it. And that means it was not real.

Of the one quarter of the population that does attend church services, a large percentage is unregenerate. They have not been born again, and will never see Heaven. If you doubt that, just ask. You will probably be the first person to ever do so.

Just ask someone at your church, “Please tell me about when you were born again”, and then listen without interrupting.

Listen specifically for those elements exemplified in Scripture : conviction, repentance, and surrender in grateful devotion to Jesus Christ as their Lord. Expect to get no reply, or else a very scrambled one, from nearly half the people you ask. If there is no mention of those three essential elements, just thank them for sharing. Then give them a copy of this, ask them to read it, and to give you their opinion of it sometime in the next few days. Then go ask another one, and another, and another.....

Introduce and encourage the one topic of conversation that is the most important, and the least occurring, in nearly all church settings. If we, the born again members, do not do so, it will probably never be done.

Today, the vast majority of church services are formatted as a presentation to an audience; to those sitting in the pews. Such was not always the circumstance. The early Christians met in their various homes. Those attending were almost always extended family, neighbors, friends, and any others that they interacted with on a daily basis. Those meetings to pray, worship, and discuss what God was doing in their lives, were modeled on a family gathering. There was confession of sin, testimonies of salvation and provision, church discipline, heartfelt prayer for loved ones struggling to survive, forgiveness and reconciliation. God was the “audience” for simple, pure worship. The highest value was placed on studying His Word, to learn about Him.

In some places, those type of services continue today. But for the most part, our meetings now occur on one day a week, in a crowd of virtual strangers, and at a specially dedicated building. A presentation is scripted, and a group gathers to experience whatever is on the program. “Success” is gauged by whether those gathered like the music, feel that the speaker was interesting, and that the members were friendly. If “successful”, the attendance is expected to grow.

That increase in attendance, is the goal of most church leaders. A very large attendance is considered the ultimate success. Leaders focus on, and use as their single metric, the size of the crowd. But, leadership is not the ability to draw a crowd. Leadership is the ability to focus the attention and efforts of a group upon the common purpose. Our purpose is to be disciples and make disciples. Whether a particular congregation is large or small, is of no expressed importance to the Lord. We were not told to “grow a church”, but to be disciples and make disciples. Individually, or as a local body, we are to participate in extending the kingdom of God. While changing the whole paradigm of how church services are formatted is not a realistic goal, there are some very reasonable and fruitful practices that can address the damage that has been done. Multiple studies and surveys have shown that nearly half of most congregations are unable to articulate a salvation testimony, or an understanding of the gospel of grace. Your own experience, as you ask The Question of various individuals, will confirm that in your mind. Frankly, any ministry where a large percentage of the gathered crowd ends up going to Hell, is an exercise in futility. It is not just unproductive, but it is actually counterproductive to the kingdom. Repeating the same effort, while expecting different results, is the very definition of insanity. We need to rethink how we do what we do.

Being born again can be emphasized by even a small number in any congregation. In fact, just one person can indeed make a difference. The question is, will you try? The bottom line is that everybody wants to go to Heaven. That is why people initially come to church. We have just gotten sidetracked into entertaining them, hoping to grow a church. As a result, more people are on the church roles, than in the Book of Life described in Revelation 20:11-15. We would do well to read that passage quite often.

A church serious about souls, can do a number of things to refocus their efforts. There are many practices considerably more fruitful than what we are doing. Such as:

- Annual church-wide training of all those over sixteen years of age in how to share the gospel, using the Word of God. Remember, the early church did not have what we have; the completed volume of the Word of God. We should use the tool provided us.
- A requirement of membership and/or baptism candidates to be able to articulate a salvation testimony, and an understanding of the gospel of grace.
- Collect video recordings of every salvation testimony, as a Book of Life for that church; with frequent usage of those testimonies in weekly services, to edify the body and glorify God.
- Make it a practice to use those testimonies at the funerals of members. Saved people coming will *want* to hear, and lost people coming will desperately *need* to hear, the details of their salvation and walk with God.
- Emphasize having all members reading the Bible consistently; using something easily monitored and promoted, such as the One Year Bible; and reading through it every year. Asking for a show of hands to answer a question on the current reading is a very appropriate use of service time. We are a very competitive people; use that to inspire.

In summary, a large percentage of church goers are reformed, but have not been born again. And it is so easy to just ask, “**Please tell me about when you were born again**”. Listen for those three elements exemplified in Scripture : conviction, repentance, and surrender in grateful devotion to Jesus as Lord. If no one has shared what the Bible teaches about being born again, and being assured of it, you need to do so.

Learn the material shared here, or just loan them a copy of this and ask for their opinion by the next time you can meet. Asking for their opinion usually ensures that they will read it carefully, to be able to comment on it. Knowing that you value their opinion, they will normally give the material serious consideration.

Start the conversation in your church. We have wasted enough time at our gatherings in discussing the weather, sports, and other frivolous things. No one is promised a tomorrow. And while we can never be sure of another’s status; we can each be sure of our own. Reaching the lost world may well depend on first reaching our lost church members. Most of us go weekly, into the easiest harvest field on the planet. Make that count, and perhaps one day hear, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*”.

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