

CHRISTIANITY EXPLAINED

CHAPTER TWO

God loves you and has a purpose for your life. God created you with special gifts, talents and abilities that equip you to fulfill His purpose. You are on this earth for a reason. God's purpose for you includes three "phases." God's purpose for you is that you be (1) saved, (2) sanctified and (3) serving Him. We have considered the first one, now let's look at the second one. Positionally we are 100% sanctified in God's sight because of the sacrifice of Jesus. In this chapter, we will discuss how we can become sanctified practically. To be sanctified means to be set apart. It means being set apart from the world and set apart to God. Sanctification is a life-long process that begins when you become a Christian and will continue as long as you are alive on this earth. It is the process of growing in the grace and knowledge of God and of His will for your life. I've divided this section into three parts:

- Follow the four-fold example of the first Christians as seen in Acts 2:42.
- Learn and apply 5 key "assurance" scriptures.
- Learn how to overcome sin in your life.

Follow the Four-Fold Example for the First Christians Found in Acts 2:42

Acts chapter two describes the beginning of the church. The Apostle Peter preached a sermon about Jesus being the Messiah and challenged the people to accept Him as their personal Lord and Savior. Three thousand people responded and were baptized that day. Verse 42 of Acts 2 explains what they did after becoming Christians. It says, "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." A Christian is involved in these four activities all his life.

Bible Study

The first Christians continually devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching. They listened to and obeyed what the apostles taught. The apostles wrote what they taught in what has become the New Testament. Therefore for us, we should study and obey the Bible, especially the New Testament. You study the Bible by hearing it, reading it, studying it, memorizing parts of it and meditating on it.

Every Christian should have a program of Bible study. The program may change from time to time, but there should always be some plan in effect. Some possible programs include: studying your Sunday School lessons, reading through the Bible in a year, reading through the New Testament twice in a year, memorize 100 key Bible verses, concentrate on one verse per week.

Fellowship

The first Christians continually devoted themselves to fellowship. The Greek word (the original language of the New Testament) for fellowship was koinonia. It means sharing a common life. It describes the idea of teamwork or a business partnership. Christians care for other Christians. Everywhere God has a son, I have a brother. Everywhere God has a daughter, I have a sister. Fellowship includes church attendance, but it goes much deeper than just attending church services. It involves meeting the needs of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Breaking of Bread

The first Christians continually devoted themselves to the breaking of bread or participating in the communion service. This is also called the Lord's Supper. It seems that they partook daily for a while and then settled into a pattern of weekly communion on the Lord's Day (Sunday). When we partake we remember Jesus and His death for us. The (unleavened) bread represents His body which was broken for us. The juice (fruit of the vine) represents His blood that was shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. As we partake we are to remember Him, think about the fact that He died for us and that He is coming back soon. It is also a time to rededicate yourself to Him.

Prayer

The first Christians continually devoted themselves to prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God. Communication is a key to the success of any relationship. Prayer is communicating with God. You should both talk and listen. Christians should stay in an attitude of prayer all the time. They should also have a set time each day in which praying is all they do.

Learn and Apply Several Key Assurance Scriptures

A Christian is in a spiritual battle with Satan and his angels. Jesus taught us how to win this battle in Matthew 4:1-11 as He faced and overcame three temptations. He quoted Scripture that applied to the temptation he was facing. Satan will tempt you by bringing thoughts to your mind and by speaking through people. Below are five primary temptations that Satan uses with Christians. He has used them for years and they have been very effective. But prayer and specific statements from the Bible will help overcome these temptations.

Are you really a Christian?

Satan says to the Christians: "You are not really saved. Being a Christian can't be that simple. There has got to be more to it than just trusting Jesus to forgive you." The Bible says, "And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." (I John 5:11-13) Eternal life is a free gift from God to those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and

Savior. It is not based on my performance as a Christian. It is based on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Jesus paid for my ticket to Heaven.

Are you sure that you can be good enough to be a Christian?

Satan says to the Christians: “You’ll never be able to live up to the standards of Christianity. You know how weak you are. You should have waited until you had all your problems solved before you became a Christian.”

The Bible says, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.” (I Corinthians 10:13) God will not allow the Christian to be tempted, tested or tried beyond his ability to handle. God limited how much Satan can do to the Christian. There is always a Godly way out of troubles, temptations, trials, problems, etc.

You sinned again. It’s all over now.

Satan says to the Christians: “You have really messed up now. You became a Christian and God forgave your sins. But now you have sinned again. You are no better off than before. Those sins are going to destroy your relationship with God.”

The Bible says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9) There is never an excuse for sin because God has provided us a way out of every temptation. But even when we fail to take advantage of that offer and we do sin, He will forgive us. All we need to do is to confess to Him that we have sinned. We must acknowledge our responsibility for the sin. When we confess it and admit that it is our fault He will forgive us.

You don’t really believe that God hears your prayers, do you?

Satan says to the Christians: “Who are you talking to? God is not interested in hearing your prayers. He is too busy with important things. You know better than to think that the God who created the entire universe will listen to your rambling.”

The Bible says, “And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” (I John 5:14) God always hears the prayers of the Christian. He always answers the prayers of the Christian. Sometimes His answer is Yes. Sometimes His answer is No. Sometimes His answer is “Not now.” But He always answers! You can rest assured that God will do what He promised He would do and He promised to answer the Christian’s prayers.

If God is in control, why do all these bad things happen?

Satan says to the Christians: “Either God does not exist or He does not care anything about you. Look at all of the bad things that have happened in your life. Don’t you think that if God were really God He would remove all this evil from the world?”

The Bible says, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans

8:28). Not everything that happens is good. But God promises that He is going to work it all out for good. Bad things do happen and we don't understand all the reasons why. We do know that if God removed all the evil from this world we would not be able to enjoy the benefits. You see, if He removed all evil out of this world, He would remove us too because we are sinful creatures.

Learn How To Overcome Sin

Jesus saved us from the penalty for sin when we became a Christian. We will not have to experience the "second death" which is separation from God for all eternity. We have been promised a home in heaven. Jesus will one day save us from the presence of sin when he takes us home with Him. Whether we die first or He returns, we will go to be with Him. Nothing evil or sinful will enter into the eternal dwelling. We will be away from sin and evil. Jesus also provides a way for us to be saved from the power of sin. The Bible presents a very simple plan to overcome the power of sin in our everyday life.

Here's how:

Recognize sin as sin

Repent of that sin and ask God to forgive you

Replace that sin by allowing the Holy Spirit to produce His fruit in your life.

Recognize sin as sin

We humans have a strong tendency to be able to see everybody else's sin but our own. We will loudly put down the person who lies to us and never even consider the fact that it may be just as bad a sin for us not to forgive that person. We may be angry with a person for mistreating us and know that he has sinned; but we may not recognize that anger we have is also a sin. (There is such a thing as righteous anger, but most of us have never experienced that kind.)

Study the following Scriptures and make a list of all the sins that are mentioned. The Scriptures are: Mark 7:20-23; Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 1:28-31; I Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 4:25-31; Revelation 21:8.

Go through the list of sins and mark each one that you have a problem with. Be completely honest with yourself as you do this. Some of the sins listed in these passages are listed below.

___ Evil thoughts

___ Thefts

___ Adultery

___ Deceit

___ Envy

___ Pride

___ Idolatry

___ Fornications

___ Murder

___ Coveting

___ Sensuality

___ Slander

___ Foolishness

___ Effeminate

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexuality | <input type="checkbox"/> Drunkenness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reviling | <input type="checkbox"/> Swindlers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lying | <input type="checkbox"/> Stealing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unwholesome Words | <input type="checkbox"/> Bitterness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wrath | <input type="checkbox"/> Anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Malice | <input type="checkbox"/> Unforgiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unbelief | <input type="checkbox"/> Cowardly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immorality | <input type="checkbox"/> Sorcerers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unrighteousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Wickedness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greed | <input type="checkbox"/> Gossip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strife | <input type="checkbox"/> Haters of God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insolent | <input type="checkbox"/> Arrogant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boastful | <input type="checkbox"/> Untrustworthy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unloving | <input type="checkbox"/> Unmerciful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inventors of Evil | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disobedient To Parents | |

Repent of your sins

Repentance is a change of the mind caused by a sorrow for sins leading to a reformation of life. It includes being sorry for the sin you committed but sorrow by itself is not repentance. Repentance also includes a sincere intention of not committing that sin again. You pray and ask God to forgive you. As you pray you also ask God to replace that sin with the fruit of the Spirit that is the “opposite equivalent” of the sin.

Replace the sin with the fruit of the Holy Spirit

For every sin there seems to be an “opposite equivalent” of it that the Holy Spirit will produce in my life when I allow Him to control me. Some of these are very obvious. For the sin of hatred there is love. For unforgiveness there is forgiveness. For sexual immorality there is morality and sexual purity.

Study the following Scriptures and make a list of all the good traits that are mentioned. The Scriptures are: Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-14; Romans 12:9-21. These qualities are evident in our lives when we allow the Holy Spirit to control us. The Bible calls this being filled with the Spirit. Some of those qualities are:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Love | <input type="checkbox"/> Joy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peace | <input type="checkbox"/> Patience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kindness | <input type="checkbox"/> Goodness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faithfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Gentleness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-control | <input type="checkbox"/> Kindness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tender-hearted | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holiness | <input type="checkbox"/> Compassion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humility | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayerfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Vengeful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treating Enemies Well | |

Go through the list of righteous qualities that you made (or the one above) and mark each one that is not in your life on a consistent basis. Remember that these qualities are produced supernaturally by the Holy Spirit. You cannot consistently produce them in your human power.

Chapter Summary

We have covered a lot of material in this chapter on how to grow as a Christian. The Bible word for this is sanctification. We suggest that in order to grow in your spiritual life you need to do three things.

Follow the four-fold example of the first Christians as seen in Acts 2:42. Every Christian should study the Bible, fellowship with other Christians, partake of the Lord's Supper and pray regularly.

Learn and apply 5 key "assurance" scriptures. Every Christian should use Scripture to overcome the temptations of Satan. We gave you five key scriptures that answer five prominent temptations that Christians face.

Learn how to overcome sin in your life. Every Christian can overcome the power of sin by recognizing sin as sin, repenting of the sins he commits and replacing the sins with qualities produced when the Holy Spirit controls his life.