5 IMPORTANT PROMISES

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INTRODUCTION

When a person believes in Jesus Christ for salvation, they become a child of God (John 1:12-13). This new Christian is a spiritual baby and God helps them to spiritually grow (2 Cor 3:18; 2 Thes 3:3-5). The new Christian also has a responsibility to spiritually grow themselves in order to be kept safe from the attacks of Satan and his kingdom (Eph 4:11-16; 6:10-18; 1 Pet 2:2). Sometimes new Christians (even those who have been Christians for a long time) make the mistake of determining the certainty of their salvation, with its blessings, by their feelings or circumstances. But feelings and circumstances always change and are not an accurate way of determining truth. We must always go to the Bible for truth, since it's God's word (2 Tim 3:16-17).

God gives us many promises in the Bible. This study looks at **five important promises** that God gives Christians to help them be certain of their salvation and its blessings (so they don't rely on their feelings or circumstances). These five important promises will help strengthen your faith and deal with the attacks of the enemy.

Each chapter has a verse to be memorised. **Scripture memorisation** plays an important role in every Christian's spiritual growth. Its benefits include:

- **It helps develop our Christian faith.** Verse memorisation helps lay down Christian foundations, and then builds upon that. It increases our knowledge and understanding of God, his plan of salvation, who we are in Christ, what he expects of us etc.
- **It helps when tempted to sin.** King David said that having God's Word in our heart helps us not to sin (Psa 37:31; 119:9-11), and the Scriptures were recited from memory by Jesus Christ to counteract specific sins that Satan tempted him with (Mat 4:1-11). Verse memorisation strengthens us when tempted by reminding us of God's will for us and gives us peace as we remember his promises.
- **It helps in evangelism.** The more verses we memorise, the easier it becomes to share the good news with people and answer any questions, objections or misunderstandings they may have. This is shown by the examples of Jesus Christ (Mat 21:12-17), Stephen (Acts 7:1-53), Paul (Acts 13:13-48) and others.

When memorising Scripture it's helpful to read the verse aloud several times a day. It might also be helpful to initially memorise the first phrase of the verse, gradually adding the other phrases until you've memorised the whole verse.

Using *The Promise of Salvation* memory verse as an example, you should memorise verses in the following way:

- **Topic** - "The Promise of Salvation."
- **Reference** - "First John five, eleven to thirteen."
- **Verse** - "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life …"
- **Reference** - "First John five, eleven to thirteen."
- **Topic** - "The Promise of Salvation."

1. THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

Memory Verse

The Promise of Salvation

1 John 5:11-13

And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

Sometimes, because of our circumstances or feelings, we can doubt our salvation. This doubt can come from ourselves, other people or Satan. It's crucial to know whether or not you're saved - your eternity depends on it and when you know you're saved it gives you peace of mind for today and the future. We can know now if we are saved or not.

After you became a Christian, did you ever doubt you were saved? Why?

How did you overcome that doubt?

READ 1 JOHN 5:11-13

1. Who gives eternal life?

2. Where is eternal life found?

3. Who has eternal life?

4. How do we "have the Son" in order to have eternal life? (John 1:12; 3:36)

To believe (or have faith) in Jesus Christ means to believe in **who he is** and in **what he did for us** (we must believe that he is the God-man who died on the cross to pay for our sin, and that he was buried and rose from the dead) (Mat 16:13-18; John 3:16; 8:24; 11:25-27; 20:30-31; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 15:1-8; 1 John 4:15; 5:1,5).

5. According to 1 John 5:11-13 who does not have eternal life?

6. When does eternal life begin? (John 3:36; 5:24)

7. Are you saved according to 1 John 5:11-13? Why or why not?

If you ever doubt your salvation, remind yourself of **1 John 5:11-13**. As long as you believe in Jesus Christ, God promises you have eternal life. So you should stop doubting, praise and thank God, be encouraged and focus on spiritual growth.

GOOD WORKS DO NOT SAVE US

8. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. What two things save us?

9. What are some examples of God's grace that save us?

10. Why do good works fail to save us?

11. Why is it positive that good works don't save us?

12. If good works were necessary for salvation, how might this cause you to doubt your salvation?

Since salvation does not depend on good works, our salvation is guaranteed. Religions that have a works-based salvation cannot guarantee salvation.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SALVATION

13. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, who lives in them? (John 7:37-39; Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-18; Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13-14)

14. The Holy Spirit does many important things in the life of a Christian. What is his role in salvation? (Rom 8:9-11; 2 Cor 1:21-22; 5:1-5; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30)

THE CHRISTIAN'S RIGHT STANDING BEFORE GOD

15. Read Rom 3:21-31; Gal 2:15-16. When a person believes in Jesus, he is **justified** (declared **righteous**). What does this mean?

How does justification guarantee your salvation?

16. Read 1 Cor 1:2; 6:9-11; Heb 10:10. When a person believes in Jesus, he is made **holy** (**sanctified**). What does this mean?

How does sanctification guarantee your salvation?

17. Read John 1:12-13; Gal 3:26; 4:4-7. When a person believes in Jesus, he is **adopted** into God's family. What does this mean?

How does adoption guarantee your salvation?

CIRCUMSTANCES, CREATION AND SALVATION

18. What circumstances can cause Christians to think they're no longer saved, or that God no longer loves them?

19. What or who can separate Christians from God? (John 10:28-29; Rom 8:35-39)

20. How does this truth encourage you?

A person's salvation is based on God's grace through their faith in Jesus Christ and not by works. This faith results in forgiveness of all sins, immediate eternal life, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, justification, adoption into God's family etc. All of these things guarantee a person's salvation. This is why Christians will be presented blameless when they leave this world to meet God in the next age (1 Cor 1:4-8; Col 1:21-22; Jude 1:24).

Therefore, as long as you have faith in Jesus Christ, God promises that you **are saved** and **will be saved** (John 3:16; 1 John 5:11-13 etc.). We can know **now** that we are going to heaven.

21. How does God's promise of salvation impact you?

2. THE PROMISE OF ANSWERED PRAYER

Memory Verse

The Promise of Answered Prayer

John 16:24

Until now you have asked nothing in my name.
Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Sometimes, because of our circumstances or feelings, we question whether God hears our prayers. This questioning can come from ourselves, other people or Satan. We may think that we're not worthy to talk to God, or that God is not interested in us, he's far away or has more important things to worry about. The reality is that God loves us and wants us to talk to him. He wants to provide the best for his children.

After you became a Christian, was there a time when you thought God wasn't listening to your prayers? When?

How did you respond?

READ JOHN 16:24

1. What is prayer?

2. In whose name should we now pray? (John 14:13-14; 15:16)

3. How does a person pray in Jesus' name?

4. To pray in Jesus' name has several meanings:

• To pray according to **Jesus' will**. How do we know what Jesus' will is?

- To **acknowledge the blessings** we have in Jesus. Read one of the following passages: Eph 5:20; Col 3:17; Heb 13:15. What blessings in Jesus can you praise and thank God for?

- To ask Jesus to **intercede** for us. Read one of the following passages: Rom 8:33-34; Heb 7:23-25; 1 John 1:9-2:2. What is intercession? Why should Jesus' intercession encourage you to pray?

- To acknowledge that **Jesus' sacrifice gives us permission to approach God the Father** (because he forgives our sin), therefore human priests are no longer needed. Read one of the following passages: Eph 2:18; 3:11-12; Heb 4:14-16; 7:23-25; 10:19-22. What attitude should we have when we pray to God?

5. Why weren't believers praying in Jesus' name before John 16:24? Why are we told to pray in Jesus' name from this point onwards?

6. How does John 16:24 encourage you to pray?

We should **always pray in Jesus' name**, whether our prayer involves **adoration** (Heb 13:15), **supplication** (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:24), **thanksgiving** (Eph 5:20; Col 3:17) etc.

OUR PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS ANSWERED

Jesus said that when we pray in his name we "will receive" (John 16:24). Our prayers are always answered by God, but not always according to our desires. There are 3 basic responses to our prayers by God:

- No – (2 Sam 12:15-23; Mat 26:36-46).
- Not yet – ([Gen 15:2-6 & Gen 21:1-5]; John 11:1-44).
- Yes – (1 Kings 18:36-39; Acts 12:5-11; Jam 5:17-18).

7. Praying in Jesus' name is one **condition** for answered prayer. What other conditions need to be met in order for our prayers to be answered as we ask? Why is each condition necessary?

a) Mat 6:10; 26:36-46; 1 John 5:14-15

b) Mark 11:12-14,20-24; Heb 11:1,6; Jam 1:5-7

c) Mat 6:5-6; Heb 5:7

d) Mat 6:7-8

e) Psa 66:18; Prov 15:29; Isa 59:1-2; 1 Pet 3:7,10-12; 1 John 3:22-23

f) Jam 4:3

g) Mat 6:14-15; 18:21-35

h) 1 Cor 11:2-16

8. Read Matthew 7:7-11. How interested is God in listening to your prayers?

What kinds of gifts does God give his children?

How do you think God would respond to a request for something he knew would be bad for you?

What do you think God would do if he knew the answer would be better for you at another time?

9. Describe a time when God answered your prayer as “no” and it was a blessing for you.

10. Describe a time when God answered your prayer as “not yet” and it was a blessing for you.

11. Describe a time when God answered your prayer as “yes” and it was a blessing for you.

If we pray according to God's will, our prayer will be answered as requested (1 John 5:14-15). Regardless of how God answers our prayer (no, not yet or yes) his will is always best for us (Rom 8:28-30); his will gives us full joy (John 16:24).

PRAYER RESULTS IN JOY, PEACE ETC.

12. Jesus said that your joy will be full when you pray (John 16:24). How often should you pray in order for your life to be full of joy? (1 Thes 5:17-18)

13. List some things you pray about.

14. What don't you pray about but should, in order to have a life full of joy?

15. How does the world usually respond to anxiety and worry?

16. How does God want Christians to respond to anxiety and worry? (Phil 4:6-9)

17. When you've been worried or anxious, how did you respond? What was the result?

A.C.T.S.

The 4 main things we do in prayer are summarised by the acronym A.C.T.S.

- **A**doration = giving God praise, adoring God (Jer 32:16-25; Mat 6:9).
- **C**onfession = asking God to forgive you of your sins (Mat 6:12-15; 1 John 1:9).
- **T**hanksgiving = thanking God (Eph 5:20; Phil 1:3-5; Col 4:2).
- **S**upplication = asking God for things (Mat 6:11-13; Luke 11:9-13; Phil 4:6-7).

Every prayer in the Bible has at least one element of A.C.T.S. A balanced prayer life will include A.C.T.S.

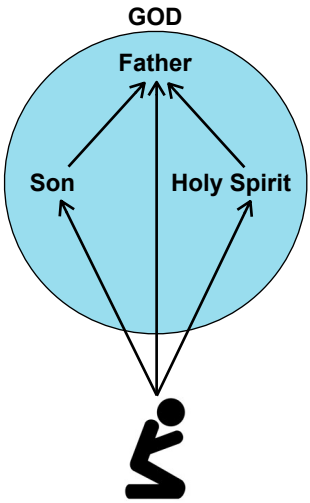
18. Most people spend a lot of their prayer time in supplication. How will spending time in adoration, confession, and thanksgiving positively affect our time in supplication?

PRAY TO GOD

For our prayers to be heard and answered we must ensure that we pray to God and not to anybody or anything else (such as dead people, angels etc.).
In the Old Testament, all prayer is directed to God (Gen 20:17; Exod 8:12-13; Josh 10:12-14; Hab 3:1-2 etc.). In the New Testament, the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit in prayer is developed and explained.

God the Father's role in prayer

- We're commanded to pray to the Father (Mat 6:9; 7:7-11; Luke 11:1-2; John 15:16; 16:23; Eph 5:20).
- God the Father answers our prayers (Mat 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8; 1 John 3:19-23; 5:11-15).



God the Son's role in prayer

- We pray to the Father in Jesus' name (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:24; Eph 5:20; Col 3:17).
- Jesus intercedes to the Father for us (Rom 8:34; Heb 2:16-18; 4:14-16; 7:23-25; 8:1-7; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).
- We can pray to Jesus (John 14:14; Acts 7:59-60; 1 Cor 1:2; 16:22; 2 Cor 12:8-9; 1 Tim 1:12; Rev 22:20). It seems that if we pray to Jesus, the prayer is directed to the Father, since Jesus intercedes for us.

God the Holy Spirit's role in prayer

- The Holy Spirit intercedes to the Father for us (Rom 8:26-27).
- We must pray in the Spirit (Eph 6:18; Jude 1:20). This means we must pray in accordance with the Spirit's will.
- There are no commands to pray to the Spirit, but since the Holy Spirit is God it would be acceptable to pray to him, and since the Holy Spirit intercedes for us it can imply that it's acceptable to pray to him.

19. Why do you think the Trinity deals with prayer in this way?

PRAYER AND FASTING

20. Sometimes our prayers need to be accompanied with fasting in order to be answered. In the following passages, who fasted and why? How did God answer their prayer?

a) Ezra 8:21-23,31-32

b) Jonah 3:1-10

Like prayer, fasting humbles us before God (1 Kings 21:25-29; Ezra 8:21; Isa 58:3). Fasting humbles us by at least two ways:

- It removes the focus away from ourselves and the desires of our body, and directs our focus on God (we eat and drink less and pray more).
- It causes us to realise that we are mortal and weak, and therefore need to pray to the omnipotent God who can sustain us and deal with the situation at hand.

DON'T NAG GOD

Our prayer requests should always be in accordance with God's will (Mat 6:10; 26:36-42; 1 John 5:14-15). When we know that our prayer request opposes God's will, we shouldn't nag him to change his mind. Sometimes God may actually grant our request if we keep nagging him, but the outcome isn't positive.

Balaam the prophet

21. What was Balaam's prayer request and what was God's answer? (Num 22:1-14)

22. What was Balaam's second prayer request and how did God answer? (Num 22:15-21)

23. How did God show his displeasure for granting the request? (Num 22:22-35)

24. What was the result of God granting the request? (Num 23; 24; Deut 23:3-5)

25. Why do you think Balaam nagged God? (Num 22:7,15-18; 2 Pet 2:15-16; Jude 1:11)

The Israelites

26. What did Israel request of God, and what was God's answer? (1 Sam 8:1-18)

27. What was Israel's second prayer request and how did God answer? (1 Sam 8:19-22; Hos 13:9-11)

28. How did God show his displeasure for granting the request? (1 Sam 12:16-20)

29. The list of the kings of Israel can be found in 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. What was their overall impact on Israel?

30. Why do you think Israel nagged God for a king? (I Sam 8:1-8,19-20; 12:12)

31. How can we know God's will on an issue, before we ask him?

32. Why would God sometimes grant our request if we nag him (even though we know it's against his will)?

33. Are you currently praying for something that is against God's will? What should you do?

If you ever doubt that God hears your prayers, remind yourself of **John 16:24**. When you pray in accordance with God's will he promises to hear your prayers and answer them according to his will (which is always best for you). So you should stop doubting, praise and thank God, be encouraged and focus on spiritual growth.

God loves you and wants you to pray to him. We pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. We should praise and thank God for how he answers our prayers, and accept his will.

3. THE PROMISE OF VICTORY

Memory Verse

The Promise of Victory

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Temptation is the encouragement to sin. Temptation is not sin. Temptation to sin doesn't stop once you become a Christian. Jesus (the perfect man) was tempted by Satan (Mat 4:1-11) but never sinned (John 8:29; 1 Pet 2:22). Sometimes Christians feel powerless against temptation but God has empowered believers to have victory over temptation.

After you became a Christian, did you ever give in to temptation? When?

How did you feel?

What did you do after you sinned?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

1. What is true about every temptation you face?

2. What are the two ways God helps you when tempted?

3. Does God always remove temptation?

4. Next time you're tempted to sin, how will this verse encourage you to have victory?

TEMPTATION COMES FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES

5. Who tempts us according to the following passages?

a) Gen 3:1-7,13; Mat 4:1-11; John 13:2; Acts 5:1-3; 1 Cor 7:5

b) 2 Chr 18:18-22

c) Gen 3:6,11-12; 39:6-12; Mat 18:7

d) Mat 5:29-30; Jam 1:13-15

6. Who doesn't tempt us to sin? Why not? (Jam 1:13)

Wherever temptation comes from, we make the final choice to sin (Jam 1:13-15).

TEMPTATION TARGETS YOUR ENTIRE BEING

7. We are commanded to keep our body, soul and spirit blameless (1 Thes 5:23). How do the following passages show that temptation targets a person's body, soul and spirit?

a) Gen 3:6

b) Mat 4:1-11

c) 1 John 2:15-16

8. What does this tell you about us and the nature of temptation?

FOR CHRISTIANS, TEMPTATION CAN LEAD TO SPIRITUAL DESTRUCTION

9. How do the following passages show that a believer who repeatedly sins can fall away from God?

a) 1 Tim 6:9-10

b) Jam 1:12-15

It's therefore important that Christians immediately confess any sin they've committed in order to be forgiven, otherwise it can lead to a hardening of one's heart and a loss of faith in Jesus Christ (Heb 3:12-14).

GOD'S HELP TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION

God loves us so much that he helps us overcome temptation. He doesn't want us to fall into sin. We don't have to sin. Anybody wanting victory over temptation must be a Christian. When we repent and believe in Jesus Christ, God forgives our sin and makes many positive changes in us which help us overcome temptation. We have already seen in **1 Corinthians 10:13** how God helps us when we're tempted, but He also helps us in many other ways to overcome temptation.

10. Read at least one passage from each of the following principles. How do these principles show that God gives Christians victory over sin?

- You are a **new creation** (2 Cor 5:17-19).

- You are no longer a slave to sin but a **slave to righteousness** (Rom 6:6-22; Gal 5:24).

- You have been **redeemed from Satan's family and kingdom** and **adopted into God's family and kingdom** (Rom 8:15-17; Col 1:13-14).

- You have **received the Holy Spirit** (John 7:37-39; Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13-14) who does the following in you:
  - *Displays fruit in you (Gal 5:22-23)*

  - *Teaches you about Jesus Christ (John 14:25-26; 16:13-15)*

  - *Makes you more like Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:18)*

• **Jesus** is the **vine** and **God the Father** is the **vinedresser** (John 15:1-11).

• **Jesus** is your **high priest** interceding for you (Heb 4:14-16; 7:23-25).

OUR PART IN OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

As God helps us to overcome temptation, he expects us to do our part in overcoming temptation. As Christians, we have a personal responsibility to avoid sinning; in the end, it's our choice (Jam 1:13-15). There are several things we can do to reduce the risk of sinning, and therefore show our continued love for God (John 14:15,21-24; 1 John 5:3).

The most important thing for any person to do is to repent and believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. Once this happens, you receive all of God's spiritual blessings you'll ever need to deal with temptation during your life on earth. God will do his part in you, and empower you to do your part.

Firstly, remind yourself who you are in Christ to overcome temptation**.** Once you become a Christian your identity changes. You should remind yourself of this changed identity. If you don't understand who you are in Christ, then it negatively impacts your behaviour. Bad beliefs lead to bad behaviour, good beliefs lead to good behaviour. Have the right frame of mind. Beliefs determine behaviour.

11. Read at least one passage from each of the following principles. How does this identity change help a Christian overcome temptation?

• Christians are **justified** (declared to be just or righteous by God) (Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-28; 5:1; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 2:15-16; 3:6-14,24).

• Christians are **holy/sanctified** (set apart for God) (1 Cor 6:9-11; 2 Thes 2:13).

• Christians are **regenerated** (made into a new person) (2 Cor 5:17; Tit 3:5).

• Christians are **adopted** into God's family (John 1:12-13; Rom 8:15-17).

• Christians are **dead to sin** (Rom 6:6-11).

12. How could you apply the above principles to your own life?

Secondly, take action to overcome temptation.

13. Read at least one passage from each of the following principles and explain how they help to overcome temptation. Give at least one example of how each principle could be applied.

• Remove the cause of temptation (Mat 5:29-30; 18:7-9; Heb 12:1-2).

• Spiritually grow (2 Pet 1:3-10).

• Put off sin, put on righteousness (Eph 4:17-32; Col 3:5-11).

- Pray to not enter temptation (Mat 6:13; 26:41).

- Pray for protection and strength against Satan (Luke 22:31-32; Eph 6:10-20).

- Pray to God for help (Heb 4:14-16).

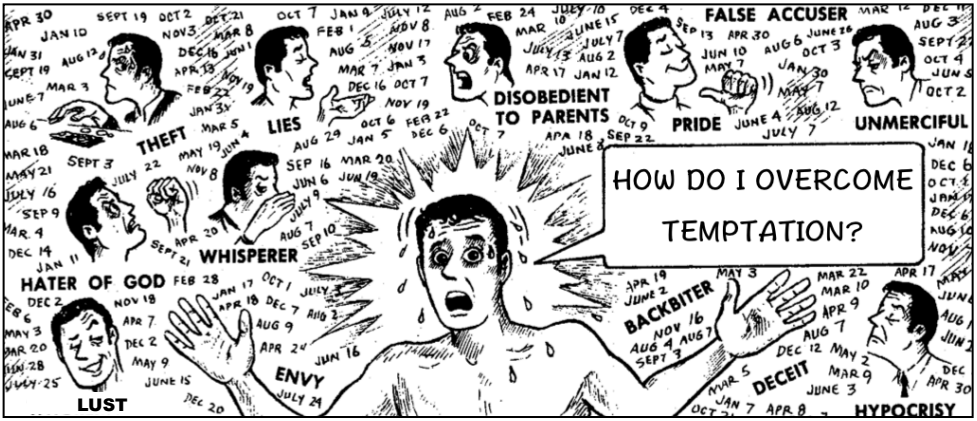
- Quote and memorise the Bible (Psa 37:31; 119:9-11; Mat 4:1-11; 2 Tim 3:16-17).

- Discipline your body (1 Cor 9:24-27).

- Take the way of escape that God has provided (1 Cor 10:13).

- Be alert; be watchful (Mat 26:41; Gal 6:1; 1 Pet 5:8).

- Imitate Jesus (Rom 13:11-14; Heb 12:1-2).



14. What is the most important piece of advice you would give to a non-believer who wants to break free from their life of sin? Why?

15. How does Matthew 28:18-20 help us answer the question above?

16. What is a temptation that frequently seizes you?

17. What do you think God's way of escape is?

4. THE PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS

Memory Verse

The Promise of Forgiveness

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Although victory over temptation is possible for Christians, unfortunately we sometimes sin. As a result we feel guilty, depressed and distant from God. But God, knowing that we'll sin from time to time, has provided a way for us to be forgiven.

When you sin, how long do you wait before you ask God to forgive you?

How do you feel after asking God for forgiveness?

READ 1 JOHN 1:9

1. What does "confess" mean?

2. How do we confess our sins?

3. Why does God promise to forgive our sins?

4. In addition to forgiving our sins, God promises to "cleanse us from all unrighteousness". What does this mean?

5. Sometimes we don't know if we've sinned or can't remember that we sinned. What should we ask God in this case? (Job 13:23; Psa 139:23-24)

When God forgives our sin he casts it behind his back (Isa 38:17), casts it into the depths of the sea (Mic 7:19) and forgets our sin (Isa 43:25; Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12; 10:17-18). When God forgets our sin it doesn't mean that he gets amnesia, but that he doesn't hold it against us anymore (God is omniscient, so he knows what sins you have committed even if they're forgiven). When God forgives us he no longer condemns us. We are at peace with God and have internal peace. We no longer need to remember our former sins, so we shouldn't dwell on them. We must forget about them, live for God and sin no more (John 5:14; 8:11).

6. If you sin in the future, how will 1 John 1:9 encourage you?

JESUS' SACRIFICE PAID FOR ALL SIN

7. Did Jesus' sacrifice pay for your past, present or future sins? (Isa 53:5; Col 2:13-15; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 John 1:7)

8. How many times does Jesus need to be sacrificed to pay for the world's sin? (Rom 6:10; Heb 7:26-27; 9:11-14,25-28; 10:10-18)

Jesus' sacrifice was paid once for all people, showing that his sacrifice covers all sin, even those not yet committed. No further sacrifices are needed to forgive sin. So we have confidence that we will be forgiven when we confess our sins.

FORGIVENESS FOR THE NON-BELIEVER

We want our sins to be forgiven because sin leads to spiritual death (Gen 2:16-17; Rom 3:23) and eternal death (John 3:16; Rom 6:20-23). Forgiveness from God is made possible because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Jesus Christ bore all our sins on the cross and was punished in our place so that we could be forgiven (Rom 3:23-25; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 John 2:2; 4:9-10).

This forgiveness of sin is only made available to us by God if we **repent** and **believe** in Jesus Christ (Luke 7:36-50; John 8:24; Acts 2:38; 10:43; Rom 3:23-26). **Repentance** is the decision to turn away from sin and to turn to God and obey him. When we turn to God we obey his command to believe in Jesus Christ. To **believe** (or have faith) in Jesus Christ means to believe in who he is and in what he did for us (i.e. he is the God-man who died on the cross and rose from the dead to forgive our sins). Repentance and faith occur together. So Jesus Christ's sacrifice makes forgiveness available to all people, but will only take effect when the non-believer repents and believes in Jesus Christ.

When the non-believer makes the decision to repent and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, they don't need to list every past sin they've committed in order to be forgiven. Firstly, there's no command in the Bible to do this. Secondly, it's impractical - nobody can remember every single sin they've ever committed. The act of repentance and faith tells God that you want to be forgiven of all sin, so at conversion a non-believer simply has to ask God to forgive them of all sin, without the need to confess every single sin they've ever committed.

9. At conversion, some feel the need to ask God to forgive them for specific sins they've done. What potential advantages are there in doing this?

Through faith in Jesus Christ a non-believer is **justified** (Rom 3:21-28; 4; 5), **sanctified/holy** (1 Cor 1:2,30; 6:11) and **adopted** into God's family (John 1:12-13; Gal 3:26). This shows that all their sins are forgiven.

FORGIVENESS FOR THE BELIEVER

Even though God sees you as justified, sanctified etc., he still commands you to spiritually grow (this is also known as **progressive sanctification**). This tells us that from time to time we may still sin, therefore when we sin after salvation what must we do? We must ask for forgiveness.

10. In the following passages, what does God command Christians to do when they sin if they want forgiveness?

a) Acts 8:9-24; Rev 2:4-5,14-16,20-22; 3:2-3,15-19

b) Mat 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4; 1 John 1:9

11. How do we practically repent and confess our sin?

WHY MUST I CONFESS MY SIN IF I'M ALREADY JUSTIFIED?

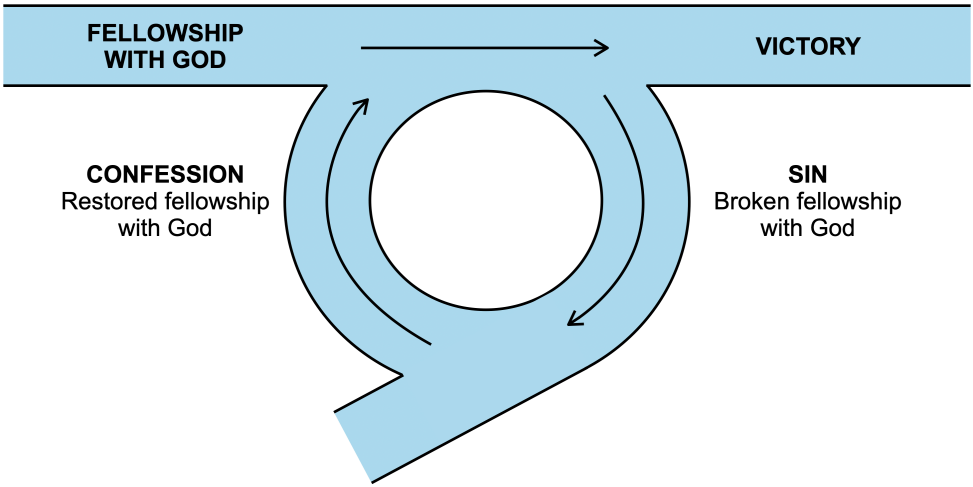
If you sin as a Christian, you're still saved. As shown in chapter 1, Christians are justified, sanctified, adopted etc., showing that they have eternal life from the moment of conversion. So it's often asked, "If I'm still saved, why do I need to ask for forgiveness of new sins I've committed?"

12. **Unconfessed sin fractures the Christian's relationship with God.** How do the following passages show this?

a) Rev 2:4-5,14-16

b) Jam 1:5-8; 1 Pet 3:7,10-12

Sin committed after salvation can disrupt your relationship with God and hinder your spiritual growth. You're still a child of God but your relationship with him suffers. This is why a Christian must confess sin as soon as possible.



Unconfessed sin can lead to more sin. If you think that God will automatically forgive you, without the need to confess your sin, then you're more likely to keep sinning. You'll become apathetic and unconcerned about sin. This is why a Christian must confess sin as soon as possible.

Unconfessed sin can lead to loss of faith in Christ. This is also known as "falling away". Unconfessed sin doesn't cancel your initial justification, but a fractured relationship with God can lead to a hardening of one's heart. God's blessings, grace and mercy may be withheld, since prayers aren't answered. This can make us stubborn, harden our hearts further etc. It could eventually lead to losing faith in Christ (Heb 3:12-14). This is why a Christian must confess sin as soon as possible.

So sin committed after salvation still requires forgiveness for a healthy relationship with God. God wants you to acknowledge your sin and confess it to him to be forgiven, and then live a holy life, growing in Christ each day.

13. Are there any sins in your life that you need to confess to God?

If you ever doubt that God has forgiven you, remind yourself of **1 John 1:9**. As long as you confess your sin to God he promises to forgive you; so you should stop doubting, praise and thank God, be encouraged and focus on spiritual growth.

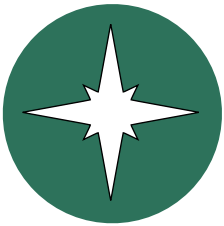
5. THE PROMISE OF GUIDANCE

Memory Verse

The Promise of Guidance

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in YHWH with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.



We all have questions about our personal future. What's God's will for my life? How does God speak to me? Will God show me what path to take in life? God does care about his children and provides guidance and direction for all of us. He promises to guide us if we put our trust in him.

After you became a Christian, were there times when you didn't know what God wanted you to do with your life? How was this resolved?

How do you currently know what God wants you to do with your life?

READ PROVERBS 3:5-6

1. What three things are you told to do? Explain.

2. When these conditions are met, what are you promised?

3. How does this verse encourage you when facing the future?

God has guided his people in many different ways since the beginning of time. Some of these methods of guidance are obsolete and others are still used by God today.

OBSOLETE METHODS OF GUIDANCE

4. The following methods of guidance by God no longer exist today since they were part of the Law of Moses, and we are no longer under the Law of Moses today (Rom 7:1-6; 2 Cor 3:4-18; Gal 3; 4; Heb 7:11-28; 8; 9; 10:1-18). Explain what each of these methods were.

a) Exod 25:10-22; Num 7:89

b) Exod 40:34-38; Num 9:15-23

c) Exod 28:30; 1 Sam 14:1-46

LESS COMMON METHODS OF GUIDANCE

5. There are several less common methods God can still use today to guide his people. Since they aren't common, we shouldn't constantly seek them. What are these less common methods of guidance, and what potential problems should we consider with these?

a) Exod 3; Mat 17:5

b) Prov 16:33; Jonah 1:1-16; Acts 1:21-26

c) Judg 6:36-40

d) Mat 1:18-25; 2:12-15,19-23

e) Acts 9:1-19; 10:1-17

f) 1 Chr 17:1-15; Acts 11:27-30

g) Gen 19:1-22; Luke 1:26-38

REGULAR METHODS OF GUIDANCE

6. There are several ways God regularly guides his people. What are these, and what potential problems should we consider with these?

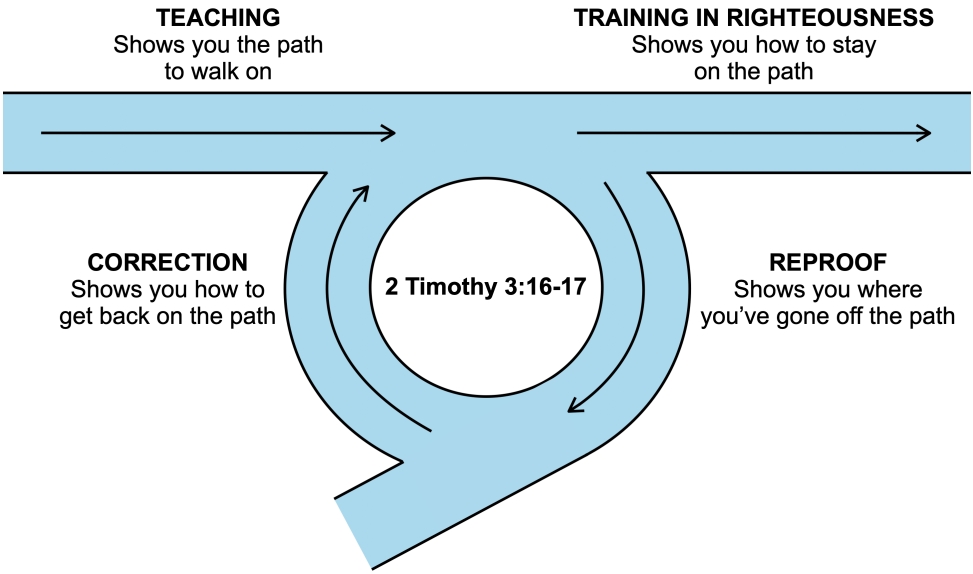
a) Rom 2:15; 9:1-2

b) Num 22:1-35; Jonah 1; Rom 8:28-30

c) John 14:25-26; 16:13-15; Acts 13:1-3

d) Psa 1:1-3; 119:105,130; 2 Tim 3:16-17

Since the Bible is God's written word it has authority over us and shows us what to do with our life (2 Tim 3:16-17). It is the primary way to receive direction from God. It should be the first thing we consult when determining God's will for our life. Any decision we're considering making must not contradict what God has already revealed in the Bible, because God never contradicts himself; God is not a liar (Titus 1:2). So whenever we believe we have heard from God (e.g. an audible voice, sign, dream), we must test the message with the Bible before we act on it. It will help us determine whether God really did speak to us through other means, or whether we were listening to our own imagination, demons etc.

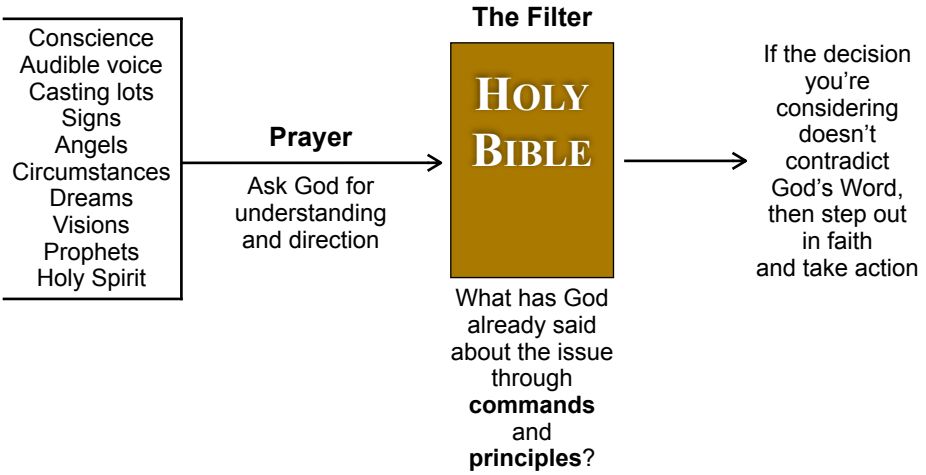


When determining what God's will is, we must ask ourselves at least 2 questions:
- What does the Bible **specifically** say about the issue?
- What **principles** in the Bible can be applied to the issue?

HOW CAN I BE SURE I'M MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION?

7. What should accompany every decision we make? Why? (Mat 7:7-11; Phil 4:6-7; Jam 1:5-8)

Every decision we make must be filtered through the **Bible**, with **prayer**. Through prayer, God will guide us to find answers in his Word. The Bible already contains God's truth, so our decisions should never contradict God's revealed will in the Bible. The Bible is the filter - it will show you whether or not you're taking the right course of action.

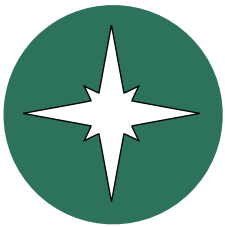


If after praying and checking the Bible you believe that you have heard from God and that there's nothing wrong in taking that specific action, then you must step out in faith and make the decision that you believe God wants. Once you make the decision, you must then assess the outcome, which will help you determine if the right course of action was taken.

8. Describe a current situation in your life in which you are seeking God's guidance.

9. List the things you can do to trust God in this situation.

10. What does the Bible **specifically** say about this situation?

11. What **principles** in the Bible could be applied to this situation?

12. After praying and studying the Bible, what do you believe God wants you to do about this situation?