

Christ our Life

BEGINNING
CHRISTIAN
LIFE
STUDIES
[BCLS]

2nd Edition



SPIRITUAL FORMATION INSTITUTE
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Introduction to the second edition

CHRIST OUR LIFE

The first edition of this Beginning Christian Life Study (BCLS) was based upon *Christ Our Life: A Communicant's Manual*, published by the Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia and the Presbyterian Church of Singapore in 1977. That was used as a study for many years in Holy Light Church (English). Recently, it was recognised that there is a need to get deeper into our theological roots and the study was rewritten with *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* as its biblical and theological basis. An easy version to read is *The Westminster Shorter Catechism in Modern English* by Kelly D., Rollinson P., et al (Phillipsburg, NJ: 1986, Presbyterian and reformed Publishing Company) or download from <http://www.stonebridgecharlotte.com/Ministries/Youth/page124/assets/ShorterCatechism.pdf>

This study is useful for use as

- Catechism for baptism
- Those seeking to renew their faith
- Those who want to know more about the Christian faith.

May God bless you in the use of this study.

In this study SC# stand for Shorter Catechism and the # represent the question number. The version of the Bible used is the New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: 1990, Zondervan Bible Publishers).

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Soli Deo Gloria

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Introduction to first edition

The foundational basis of our Christian faith is ‘Christ our life’. This *Beginning Christian Life Studies* has been carefully planned to help you

- Prepare for Baptism
- Establish a programme of personal Bible study
- Understand the great Truths of the Bible
- Learn and practice the essentials of spiritual formation

The basic text for this study is “*Christ Our Life*”: *A Communicant’s Manual* published by Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia and the Presbyterian Church of Singapore (September 1977). To benefit from the study, it is important to read the respective chapter or chapters of “Christ Our Life” for each specific study. You will also need a Bible. Each question will direct you to a specific section of “Christ Our Life” or to a Bible verse. After thinking about the question, write your answer in the space provided. Remember to pray before you begin your study. Ask the Lord for understanding.

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Study One

Knowing God

Prayer:

“As a deer longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for Thee, O Lord” (Psalm 42:1). O God, Lord of the Universe and Creator of all things, we come now before You to learn more about You. Give us the Holy Spirit to teach us all things about You. Thank You for making it possible for us to know You. We pray in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

The God we worship is a real Person. He created everything, from the multiple universes to the smallest sub-atomic particles. He also created you and me. Yet this Great Creator is not a God who created his creation and distanced Himself from His creation and watched it from afar. God wants to live with His creation especially us. We are very special because God loves us. In this study, we shall learn about the ways in which we can get to know God and what God is like.

HOW CAN I KNOW GOD?

1. You have a special friend that you like very much. What are some of the ways you can get to know him/her better?
2. What are some of the ways you can know God?
3. God helps us to know Him by revealing Himself. How does the Bible help us to know God? *Read Psalm 19:7-9*
4. How does the historical record of God’s dealing with the Israelites in the Old Testament help us to know Him? *Read Psalm 103:7*
5. How does knowing about Jesus Christ help us to know God? *Read John 14:9*

11. God is ONE. The great mystery of Christianity is that God is one yet three (God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit). This is known as the Trinity. What do you understand by the Trinity? (SC # 5 & # 6)

12. What do the following statements mean? (SC# 4)

(a) God is a Person.

(b) God is Spirit.

(c) God is Holy.

(d) God is Sovereign. (SC# 7 & # 8)

(e) God is Love.

The most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate the investigation of His essence, which we ought to adore than meticulously to search out, but for us to contemplate Him in His works, whereby He renders Himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates Himself.

John Calvin

Prayer:

Dear God, I want to know You. Thank you for revealing Yourself to us in so many ways. Help me to know You as a personal God, a God who loves me. Amen.

Study Two

Knowing Man

Prayer:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”(Psalm 139:23,24). O God, give me understanding of the human condition. Give me understanding of our relationship with You. We pray in the Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

We have only to read the local newspaper and watch the news on television to know the mess the world is in today. Everyday we hear of murders, terrorist acts against the innocent, injustice, man’s cruelty towards man and animals and the irresponsible destruction of the environment. In the last century we thought that we could change man’s nature with better education and socioeconomic development. That it has failed miserably is obvious to all. In this study, we shall learn about the true nature of man and his/her relationship to God.

WHAT IS MAN?

1. The Bible says man is special because he is made in the image of God. *Read Genesis 1:26,27.* What do you understand by the ‘image of God?’(SC#10)
2. Why do you think God created man? (SC #1; #2 & #12)
3. Why do you think Adam and Eve disobeyed God? Why do you think it is called the ‘Fall’? *Read Genesis 3:1-7.* (SC#13; #14; #15 & #16)
4. What are the consequences of Adam and Eve’s disobedience? *Read Genesis 3:14-24.* (SC#17)

5. As we are all descendents of Adam and Eve, what do you think are the effects of Adam and Eve's disobedience on us today? (SC#18 & SC#19)

SIN

6. What do you understand by the word 'sin'?
7. What does the Bible teach about sin? *Read Romans 3:23.*
8. What are some of the consequences of sin?

As the result of the Fall, the image of God in man was badly marred in both its moral and its natural dimensions. Man lost his original inclination toward God and became a perverted creature, inclined away from his Creator. His personality was sadly marred. His intellect became bound, his emotions corrupted, and his will enslaved. He lost his true manhood. Men speak about man as "evolving" from a primitive condition, but the Bible (Romans 1:18-32) graphically portrays his *descent* rather than *ascent*.

Paul Little

9. How does God regard sin? Why?

WHAT CAN TAKE AWAY MY SIN?

10. In many religions, man tries to save himself from the punishment of sin by doing good works and obeying the tenets of their religions. Do you think a man with a sinful nature can save himself?
11. Only a man with a sinless nature can save us, who have the sinful nature. God has provided such a man. Who do you think he is? Why do you think he does not have a sinful nature? Read *Luke 1:26-35* (SC#20 & SC#21)

We all have a sinful nature because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Because of our sinful nature, we cannot approach God because He is Holy. God will one day in the future judge all men and women. The judgement for sin is eternal damnation in hell. Because of our sinful nature, we cannot save ourselves. God, however, have provided a way to save us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

Dear God, have mercy on me a sinner. We know that You are a Holy God and cannot tolerate sin. The consequences of sin is death. Thank You for sending us Your Son, Jesus Christ to save us.

Amen

Study Three

Knowing Christ

Prayer:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16). O, God. Thank You for Your love for us. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will open our eyes to behold the spiritual truths about Your Son. Amen

Many people consider Jesus Christ to be a great teacher. Mahatma Gandhi considered Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount as the greatest spiritual writing ever written. Others consider Jesus as a prophet. The Bible reveals Jesus as the Son of God and is God. Man is incapable of knowing God because he is sinful. So God took the form of man in Jesus Christ to bridge the gap between God and man. Jesus has a dual nature-He is fully God and fully man.

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

1. The Old Testaments has many prophecies about Jesus Christ, written centuries before He was born. What are some of these prophecies and how are they fulfilled?

| Prophecy | Fulfilment |
|--|-------------------|
| Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. " | Matthew 2:1 |
| Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. | Matthew 1:18 |
| Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. | John 12:13-14 |
| Psalms 41:9 Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. | Mark 14:10 |
| Isaiah 53:12 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. | Matthew 27:38 |
| Psalms 22:16 Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. | John 20:27 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Psalms 16:10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. | Acts 3:15 |
| Psalms 68:18 When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious-- that you, O LORD God, might dwell there. | Acts 1:9 |

THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

2. What did Jesus reveal about Himself?
3. How does God address Jesus? *Read Hebrews 1:8*
4. What miraculous deeds did Jesus do to reveal His divine power? *Read John 2:1-11; Mark 5:22-24; Matthew 17: 26-27; Mark 8:22-26*
5. What do Jesus' disciples think of Him?
6. What other happenings showed that Jesus is God?

THE HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST

7. How is Jesus' humanity revealed in the following incidents? (SC#22)
Luke 24:39

Matthew 26:38

John 11:38

IS JESUS THE ONLY WAY?

12. All religions claim to be the way to God and salvation. Is Jesus the only way? Are all religions the same? (SC#29)

Jesus said “I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life; no one goes to the Father except by me” (John 14:6). In this study, we have learned about Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man. His coming was foretold by many prophecies and his work on the cross is the pivotal point of our salvation. Jesus is also a prophet, priest, king and judge. He is our Lord and Saviour.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for coming to earth as a man so that we can behold the glory of the Father God. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I know that if I accept Your redeeming work on the cross, I shall become holy and will no longer be separated from God. Lord, thank You for Your love and Your work of salvation.

Amen

Study Four

Knowing Faith

Prayer:

“Listen, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into His house and eat with him, and he will eat with Me.”(Revelation 3:20). O God, I hear You knocking at the door of my heart. I know that I want You to come in and I know that when You do, things will be different. Lord, help me to open the door of my heart to You. Amen

There is a painting based on Revelation 3:20 that shows Jesus standing outside a door, poised to knock. The interesting thing about the door is that there is no doorknob. Hence the door can only be opened from the inside. It is the same for us. God wants to forgive us and bring us back to the state of fellowship He has enjoyed with Adam and Eve. Jesus Christ is God’s way of forgiveness for us. He stands at the door. But we still have to open the door. We have to believe in God’s promises, repent of our sins and open the door to receive His Son. That is faith.

REPENTANCE

1. What do you understand by ‘repentance’?
Mark1:4,15

1John 1:9

Luke19:1-10

FAITH IN CHRIST

2. What God offers is salvation, what we do to receive this salvation is faith. Read the following verses to see what we must do and what God offers.

| | <i>What we must do</i> | <i>What God offers</i> |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Revelation 3:20 | | |
| John 1:12 | | |
| Isaiah 45:22 | | |
| Psalms 34:8 | | |

FRUITS OF FAITH

3. What is this salvation that God offers?
Romans 5:1

1 John 1:7,9

Galatians 4:5

John 5:24

John 10:28

In our study so far, we have learned about a holy God and his love for us. Man sinned when they disobeyed God. To restore our relationship with God, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ who is fully God and fully man to die on the cross for our sins. When we believe in what God has offered us, repent and invite Jesus into our hearts, the Bible says that we are 'born again'. We are a new creation in Jesus Christ. Here, let us take a moment to consider whether you have believed in God's promises and have invited Jesus into your life.

If you want to invite Jesus into your life, here is a simple prayer to God:

“Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner. Thank You for bearing my sins on the cross for me. Thank You for making it possible for me to receive God’s forgiveness. Come into my life now and take control. I profess that You are my Lord and Saviour.”

Amen

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ARE ‘BORN AGAIN’?

4. What happens to you when you receive Jesus into your life? (SC#36)

Romans 3:24 (SC#33)

Romans 8:9 (SC#34)

2 Corinthians 5:17 (SC#35)

“The basis or ground, of our justification, or being declared righteous, is twofold. Christ’s death as our Substitute satisfied the claims of God’s holy law against our sin. ‘While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him’ (Romans 5:8,9).

Study Five

Knowing The Holy Spirit

Prayer:

“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26). O, God, thank You for sending us the Holy Spirit as Jesus as requested. Thank You for the Holy Spirit who will teach us to live in truth and in obedience to Your teachings. We pray in the Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Jesus was crucified, died and rose on the third day and later ascended to heaven leaving behind His disciples. Jesus understands the weaknesses of human beings, being a human himself and knows that we lack the strength to live the Christian or ‘born again’ life on our own. That is why He asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit to us. The Holy Spirit is given to all that have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour. The Holy Spirit indwells within all ‘born again’ Christians.

THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. What does the Old Testament tells us about the work of the Holy Spirit?
Genesis 1:2

2. What did the Holy Spirit do in Genesis 6:3?

THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST

3. What does Jesus teach about the Holy Spirit?
John 14:15-18

John14:25, 26

John 15:26, 27

John 16:7-11

4. What characteristics of the Holy Spirit have reveals that He is a person?

John 16:13-16

John 14:26

Romans 8:26

Ephesians 4:30

THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

5. What evidences does the Bible give to show that the Holy Spirit is also God?

Genesis 1:2

Hebrews 9:14

Psalm 139:7, 8

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

6. What is the Holy Spirit doing in the world today? *Read John 16: 8-11*

What other work do you think is the Holy Spirit doing in the world today?

7. What is the Holy Spirit's role in the Church?
Ephesians 4:1-7

1 Corinthians 12:4-9

Acts 2:37

Acts 1:1-8

8. How does the Holy Spirit work in the life of individual Christians? (SC#29-31)
John 3:3-7

1 Corinthians 3:16

Ephesians 1:13, 14

Galatians 5:22, 23

Ephesians 5:18

Ephesians 5:18 is not just an experience to be enjoyed but a command to be obeyed. If we do not open ourselves to a daily encounter with the Holy Spirit, then the inevitable conclusions are that we are disobedient Christians.

Dwight L. Moody

The gift of the Holy Spirit to all Christians is a very precious gift. The Holy Spirit lives in us and helps us to grow more like Jesus Christ, bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

Prayer:

*O, Lord, thank You for Your Holy Spirit who now dwells in us. Teach us to listen and to learn from Him.
Let us be always empowered by Him. Amen.*

Study Six

Knowing The Church

Prayer:

“And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.” (Colossians 1:18). O God, thank You for Jesus Christ as the head of the church, and thank You for making me a member of His body which is the church. We ask for Your blessing on Your church. We ask in the Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Being a Christian is never being alone. Christians are part of a worldwide fellowship of believers from all nations. The worldwide fellowship is called the Church. However, Christians gather to fellowship and worship in their own locality and these form the local churches. The worldwide Church can be subdivided into 3 groups: Protestants, Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodox. Within the Protestant group are also many subgroups known as denominations. Some examples of denominations are Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal and Brethren.

NEW TESTAMENT WORD FOR CHURCH

1. What do you understand by the word church (Greek “ecclesia”)?

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

2. What is the foundation of the Church?
1 Corinthians 3:11

1 Peter 2:4-7

THE EARLY GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

3. What are some of the characteristics of the early church in Acts 2:42-47?

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

4. What are some of the metaphors or word pictures used to denote membership of a church?
Ephesians 4:1-16

Ephesians 5:22-27

1 Peter 2:3-6

The church is the gathering of God's children, where they can be helped and fed like babies and then guided by her motherly care, and grow up to manhood in the maturity of faith.

John Calvin

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE

The London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Presbyterian Church (England) Mission in South China appointed Rev. Benjamin Keasberry as a missionary to the Malays in Malaya in 1829. The Prinsep Street Church in Singapore was started in 1843. When China was opened to the missionaries, most LMS missionaries went to China except Keasberry. Glory Church was established in 1862 and Orchard Road Church in 1878. Both of these churches are in Singapore. The history of the Presbyterian churches in Malaysia and Singapore may be divided into the following periods:

The Presbyterian Church in England sent Rev. John Cook to Singapore in 1881 to take charge of the Chinese Christian Church in Bukit Timah (presently Glory Church), Singapore. Within twenty years, the following churches were established: Jubilee Church (1883), Prinsep Street Life Church (1883), Bethel Church (1883) in Singapore and Holy Light Church (1886), Johor Bahru and Muar Living Water Church in Malaya.

In 1901, the local Presbyterian churches formed a Synod and became autonomous from the British Presbyterian support. They called themselves "The Nanyang Chinese Christian Presbyterian Church." Today, the Synod consists of three Chinese-speaking Presbyteries (Northern, Southern, Western) and one English-speaking Presbytery in Peninsular Malaysia. Holy Light Church (English) is a member of the English-speaking Presbytery. A presbytery is a grouping of Presbyterian churches.

The Holy Light Church was founded by Rev. Cook in 1886 in Johor Bahru. Rev. Cook received a lot of support from a Scotsman, Datuk James Meldrum who was the son-in-law of Rev. Keasberry. Rev. Keasberry was a tutor to Sultan Abu Bakar, the Sultan of Johore.

With Meldrum's help, the church received a piece of land to build their worship hall (present Jalan Gertak Merah site). During this period, the Sunday services have both Chinese and English sessions.

When Meldrum died, the English Sunday service was stopped while the Chinese service continued. In February 1952 Rev. George Hood of the English Presbyterian Mission was appointed as the resident moderator of the Holy Light Church. On 3 August 1952, the English Sunday service was restarted. And this date was regarded by many as the inception of the Holy Light Church (English). Rev. Hood served as the pastor of the English-speaking congregation from 1952-1959 and 1967-1969 as well as moderator of the mother church, Holy Light Church (Chinese). On 30 December 1973, Nicholas Yeo was inducted as a preacher of the English service.

The English service was formally established as the daughter church of Holy Light Church on 10 November 1977 with the name Holy Light Church (English) or HLCE. On 31 August 1979 Nicholas Yeo was ordained as the first Asian minister of the Holy Light Church (English). Rev. Yeo served the church faithfully until his retirement in 2009.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE FEATURES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH?

5. Holy Light Church (English) is a Presbyterian church.

Presbyterian comes from the Greek word for elders (Greek "presbuteros") which imply that the leadership of the church is to be led by elders who are in turn assisted by deacons (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-7). The Presbyterian tradition arose out of the Reformation of the church. It is also known as Reformed churches. Elders may be further categorised into teaching elders (usually full time staff) and ruling elders. Teaching elders are either Ministers (ordained) or Preachers (on route to ordination). Recently, the divisions have not been so clear cut.

The council of elders is called a session which oversees the Deacon Court which is made up of deacons and invited church members.

What are the qualifications of an elder? (1 Timothy 3: 1-7)

What are the qualifications of a deacon? (1 Timothy 3:12)

SPECIAL MARKS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

6. What are some of the special characteristics of the Presbyterian church?
- (1) There is a simple, relevant and dignified worship and church order
 - (2) Centrality is given to the preaching of the Word and the sacraments
 - (3) Significant place is given to church discipline.
 - (4) Recognised the sovereignty of God in all things
 - (5) Others

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

7. To become a member of a Presbyterian church requires certain commitments (vows) from you. What are these commitments?
- (1) Humbly confess that Jesus Christ is your saviour and Lord
 - (2) Pledge yourself to be His disciple and faithful servant
 - (3) Promise to make diligent use of the ways by which God brings His help and Grace to you
These are prayer, Bible study, the Sacraments and public worship (SC#88)
 - (4) Promise to serve the church and society with your abilities and possessions

To be a member of a church is to be part of the community of faith. It is to be part of a caring, loving compassionate community where there is mutual love and respect. There is unity because we all worship the same God and come under the same authority.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank You for making me a member of this church. Lord, help me to love my brothers and sisters in this church. Give me the gifts to build up this church so that it will fulfil the great role You have given this church. We thank You in Jesus' Name. Amen

Study Seven

Knowing the Sacraments

Prayer:

“If you love Me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). O, Lord Jesus, we do love You and want to follow what You have commanded. Help us to understand the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Give us the desire to be baptised and remove any obstacles to our being baptised. Bless us when we partake of the Lord’s Supper. We pray in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

The sacraments of baptism and of the Lord’s Supper, sometimes called the Holy Communion are two of the most significant actions in our new life as a Christian. These sacraments show our commitment to our God and obedience to His commands. These sacraments are not mere actions but also the means where we can come into the Presence of God. Hence the sacraments are not to be taken lightly but with full reverence and seriousness. (SC#91-93).

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM (SC#94-95)

1. In the Old Testament, what did God require of His people, Israel to set them apart from other people? Read *Genesis 17:1-14*. Why?
2. What is infant baptism?
3. Why baptise infants? You may want to relate this to question one.

For it is very clear from many testimonies of Scripture that circumcision was also a sign of repentance. Then Paul calls it the seal of the righteousness of faith...For although infants, at the very moment they were circumcised, did not comprehend with their understanding what that sign meant, they were truly circumcised to the mortification of their corrupt and defiled nature, a mortification that they would afterward practice in mature years.

To sum up, this objection can be solved without difficulty: infants are “baptised into future repentance and faith, and even though these have not yet been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit.

John Calvin

4. What is 'confirmation'?
5. Why must a Christian be baptised?
6. What is the meaning of baptism?

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (SC#96-97)

7. Relate the story of the Lord's Supper. *Read Matthew 26:17-30.*



A sacrament is a visible sign of a sacred thing, or a visible form of an invisible grace.
Augustine of Hippo

8. What is the relationship of the Lord's Supper to the Passover? *Read Exodus 12:21-28*

9. How does partaking of the Lord's Supper deepen our relationship with God?
10. How should we prepare ourselves before we partake of the Lord's Supper?
Why? Read *1 Corinthians 11:27-32*

The Lord's command is for us to be baptised and for us to partake of the Lord's Supper whenever we can. Whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, the bread is a reminder of Christ's body broken for us and the wine, Christ's blood shed for our sins. We share in His sufferings and His sacrifice. Also in celebrating the sacraments, we are celebrating together with millions of other Christians in the worldwide Church and millions of saints who went before us.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for the sacrament of baptism. We are symbolically washed clean and reborn spiritually. Thank You for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Help us to prepare ourselves to receive this sacrament. Holy Spirit, bring to light any hidden sins and disobedience in our lives. Let us feel Your Presence as we partake of the bread and drink of the wine. Amen

Study Eight

Knowing The Christian Life

Prayer:

“To love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”(Mark 12:33) O God, teach me to love You more and more every day. Teach me to grow in my spiritual devotions and to mature spiritually. Let Your Holy Spirit touch all areas of my life and help me surrender gracefully to You. And teach me to love others as myself. Amen.

After we become Christians, the life we now live is called the Christian life. Being a Christian involves all areas of our lives: our intellect, emotions, body, hopes, ambitions, possessions and our relationships. We start off by being spiritual babies and grow to spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is to be like Christ. The process of spiritual growing is called by many names: life of communion, life of obedience, sanctification, spiritual formation, or discipleship. Just like a baby needs food, protection and nurturing to grow, a spiritual baby also needs nurturing to grow. In this study, we shall see some of the means of nurturing that can help us to grow spiritually.

BIBLE READING (SC#89-90)

1. Why should we study the Bible? *Read 2 Timothy 3:16*
2. The Bible is a unique book. Even though it was written by about forty people over a period of 1,500 years, the Bible has only one great theme which is Jesus Christ. Who do you think is the actual author of the Bible? *Read 2 Peter 1:20,21*
3. Read Colossians 3:16. List some of the ways you can “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”.
4. What does James 1:22 encourage us to do with our Bible reading?

I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light and power from above.

George Whitefield

SERVICE

9. To live a Christian life is to live a life of service to others. Jesus Himself came to serve. Read Matthew 20:28. List some of the ways you can serve in:
- (a) school/polytech/college/university

 - (b) workplace

 - (c) home

 - (d) church

 - (e) community
10. Another way of service is to give of your money. What does the Bible teach about giving (money)? *Read 2 Corinthians 9:7*

'TO GLORIFY GOD'

11. What does it mean to 'glorify God'? (SC#1)

12. How does the moral law as summarised in the Ten Commandments impact our daily lives?
(Deuteronomy 5:1-22)(SC#39-82)

1st Commandment

2nd Commandment

3rd Commandment

4th Commandment

5th Commandment

6th Commandment

7th Commandment

8th Commandment

9th Commandment

10th Commandment

In this series of studies, we have learned the basics of our belief as a Christian. We have learnt to know God, man, Christ, faith, the Holy Spirit, Church, the Sacraments and the Christian life. The Christian life is often described as a journey and we have just begun. There will be many more things to learn and to experience. But it is nice to know we do not travel alone. We travel with other Christians and with our Lord who will be with us every step of the way.

Prayer:

Lord, we thank You for this series of studies. We thank You for your Holy Spirit who has been with us, teaching us and opening our eyes to new spiritual truths. Lord, we now commit one another into Your Hands. Help us and guide us, protect us and strengthen us for the journey ahead. We ask all this in Jesus' Name.

Amen

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM (IN MODERN ENGLISH)

The Shorter Catechism, along with the 'Larger Catechism' and the Westminster Confession of Faith, were written in 1647 in England by a large group of pastors; they wanted to create some questions and answers that would help teach some of the major truths of the Bible to future generations. This modern translation isn't the 'official' version that our church uses but it's a nice modern summary. If you want to see the original, official version with all its 'thee's-and-thou's' :-), it's on the web... try <http://www.reformed.org/documents/wsc/index.html>

Q. 1. What is man's primary purpose?

A. Man's primary purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Q. 2. What authority from God directs us how to glorify and enjoy Him?

A. The only authority for glorifying and enjoying Him is the bible, which is the word of God and is made up of the Old and New Testaments.

Q. 3. What does the bible primarily teach?

A. The Bible primarily teaches what man must believe about God and what God requires of man.

Q. 4. What is God?

A. God is a spirit, Whose being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.

Q. 5. Is there more than one God?

A. There is only one, the living and true God.

Q. 6. How many persons are there in the one God?

A. Three persons are in the one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, the same in substance and equal in power and glory.

Q. 7. What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are His eternal plan based on the purpose of His will, by which, for His own glory, He has foreordained everything that happens.

Q. 8. How does God carry out His decrees?

A. God carries out His decrees in creation and providence.

Q. 9. What is creation?

A. Creation is God's making everything out of nothing by His powerful word in six days – and all very good.

Q. 10. How did God create man?

A. God created man, male and female, in His own image and in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, to rule over the other creatures.

Q. 11. What is God's providence?

A. God's providence is His completely holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing every creature and every action.

- Q. 12. What did God's providence specifically do for man whom He created?
A. After the creation God made a covenant with man to give him life, if he perfectly obeyed; God told him not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil or he would die.
- Q. 13. Did our first parents remain as they were created?
A. Left to the freedom of their own wills, our first parents sinned against God and fell from their original condition.
- Q. 14. What is sin?
A. Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God's law in any way.
- Q. 15. By what sin did our first parents fall from their original condition?
A. Our first parents' sin was eating the forbidden fruit.
- Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first disobedience?
A. Since the covenant was made not only for Adam but also for his natural descendants, all mankind sinned in him and fell with him in his first disobedience.
- Q. 17. What happened to man in the fall?
A. Man fell into a condition of sin and misery.
- Q. 18. What is sinful about man's fallen condition?
A. The sinfulness of that fallen condition is twofold. First, in what is commonly called original sin, there is the guilt of Adam's first sin with its lack of original righteousness and the corruption of his whole nature. Second are all the specific acts of disobedience that come from original sin.
- Q. 19. What is the misery of man's fallen condition?
A. By their fall all mankind lost fellowship with God and brought His anger and curse on themselves. They are therefore subject to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.
- Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to die in sin and misery?
A. From all eternity and merely because it pleased Him God chose some to have everlasting life. These He freed from sin and misery by a covenant of grace and brought them to salvation by a redeemer.
- Q. 21. Who is the redeemer of God's chosen ones?
A. The only redeemer of God's chosen is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who became man. He was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever.
- Q. 22. How did Christ, the Son of God, become man?
A. Christ, the Son of God, became man by assuming a real body and a reasoning soul. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to Him; yet He was sinless.
- Q. 23. How is Christ our redeemer?
A. As our redeemer, Christ is a prophet, priest, and king in both His humiliation and His exaltation.
- Q. 24. How is Christ a prophet?
A. As a prophet, Christ reveals the will of God to us for our salvation by His word and Spirit.

- Q. 25. How is Christ a priest?
A. As a priest, Christ offered Himself up once as a sacrifice for us to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God, and He continually intercedes for us.
- Q. 26. How is Christ a king?
A. As a king, Christ brings us under His power, rules and defends us, and retracts and conquers all His and all our enemies.
- Q. 27. How was Christ humiliated?
A. Christ was humiliated: by being born as a man and born into a poor family; by being made subject to the law and suffering the miseries of this life, the anger of God, and the curse of death on the cross; and by being buried and remaining under the power of death for a time.
- Q. 28. How is Christ exalted?
A. Christ is exalted by His rising from the dead on the third day, His going up into heaven, His sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and His coming to judge the world at the last day.
- Q. 29. How are we made to take part in the redemption Christ bought?
A. We take part in the redemption Christ bought when the Holy Spirit effectively applies it to us.
- Q. 30. How does the Holy Spirit apply to us the redemption Christ bought?
A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption Christ bought by producing faith in us and so uniting us to Christ in our effective calling.
- Q. 31. What is effective calling?
A. Effective calling is the work of God's Spirit, Who convinces us that we are sinful and miserable, Who enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and Who renews our wills. This is how He persuades and makes us able to receive Jesus Christ, Who is freely offered to us in the gospel.
- Q. 32. What benefits do those who are effectively called share in this life?
A. In this life those who are effectively called share justification, adoption, sanctification, and the other benefits that either go with or come from them.
- Q. 33. What is justification?
A. Justification is the act of God's free grace by which He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight. He does so only because He counts the righteousness of Christ as ours. Justification is received by faith alone.
- Q. 34. What is adoption?
A. Adoption is the act of God's free grace by which we become His sons with all the rights and privileges of being His.
- Q. 35. What is sanctification?
A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace by which our whole person is made new in the image of God, and we are made more and more able to become dead to sin and alive to righteousness.

- Q. 36. What benefits in this life go with or come from justification, adoption, and sanctification?
A. The benefits that in this life go with or come from justification, adoption, and sanctification are: the assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, and growing and persevering in grace to the end of our lives.
- Q. 37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ when they die?
A. When believers die, their souls are made perfectly holy and immediately pass into glory. Their bodies, which are still united to Christ, rest in the grace until the resurrection.
- Q. 38. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?
A. At the resurrection, believers, raised in glory, will be publicly recognized and declared not guilty on the day of judgment and will be made completely happy in the full enjoyment of God forever.
- Q. 39. What does God require of man?
A. God requires man to obey His revealed will.
- Q. 40. What rules did God first reveal for man to obey?
A. The rules He first revealed were the moral law.
- Q. 41. Where is the moral law summarized?
A. The moral law is summarized in the ten commandments.
- Q. 42. What is the essence of the ten commandments?
A. The essence of the ten commandments is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and to love everyone else as we love ourselves.
- Q. 43. What introduces the ten commandments?
A. These words introduce the ten commandments: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
- Q. 44. What does the introduction to the ten commandments teach us?
A. The introduction to the ten commandments teaches us that, because God is Lord and is our God and redeemer, we must keep all His commandments.
- Q. 45. What is the first commandment?
A. The first commandment is: You shall have no other gods before me.
- Q. 46. What does the first commandment require?
A. The first commandment requires us to know and recognize God as the only true God and our god, and to worship and glorify Him accordingly.
- Q. 47. What does the first commandment forbid?
A. The first commandment forbids denying God or not worshipping and glorifying Him as the true God and our God. It also forbids giving worship and glory, which He alone deserves, to anyone or anything else.
- Q. 48. What are we specifically taught in the first commandment by the words before me?
A. The words before me in the first commandment teach us that God, Who sees everything, notices and is very offended by the sin of having any other god.

Q. 49. What is the second commandment?

A. The second commandment is: You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Q. 50. What does the second commandment require?

A. The second commandment requires us to receive, respectfully perform, and preserve completely and purely all the regulations for religion and worship that God has established in His word.

Q. 51. What does the second commandment forbid?

A. The second commandment forbids our worshipping God with images or in any other way not established in His word.

Q. 52. What are the reasons for the second commandment?

A. The reasons for the second commandment are that God totally rules over us, that we belong to Him, and that He is eager to be worshipped correctly.

Q. 53. What is the third commandment?

A. The third commandment is: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Q. 54. What does the third commandment require?

A. The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, qualities, regulations, word, and works.

Q. 55. What does the third commandment forbid?

A. The third commandment forbids our treating as unholy or abusing anything God uses to make Himself known.

Q. 56. What is the reason for the third commandment?

A. The reason for the third commandment is that the Lord our God will not allow those who break this commandment to escape His righteous judgment, although they may escape punishment from men.

Q. 57. What is the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment is: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Q. 58. What does the fourth commandment require?

A. The fourth commandment requires us to set apart to God the times He has established in His word – specifically one whole day out of every seven as a holy Sabbath to Him.

- Q. 59. Which day of the week has God designated as the Sabbath?
A. From the beginning of the world until the resurrection of Christ God established the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. From that time until the end of the world the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath.
- Q. 60. How do we keep the Sabbath holy?
A. We keep the Sabbath holy by resting the whole day from worldly affairs or recreations, even ones that are lawful on other days. Except for necessary works or acts of mercy we should spend all our time publicly and privately worshipping God.
- Q. 61. What does the fourth commandment forbid?
A. The fourth commandment forbids failing to do or carelessly doing what we are supposed to do. It also forbids treating the day as unholy by loafing, by doing anything in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thinking, talking about, or working on our worldly affairs or recreations.
- Q. 62. What are the reasons for the fourth commandment?
A. The reasons for the fourth commandment are these: God allows us six days of the week to take care of our own affairs; He claims the seventh day as His own; He set the example; and He blesses the Sabbath.
- Q. 63. What is the fifth commandment?
A. The fifth commandment is: Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
- Q. 64. What does the fifth commandment require?
A. The fifth commandment requires us to respect and treat others, whether above, below, or equal to us, as their position or our relationship to them demands.
- Q. 65. What does the fifth commandment forbid?
A. The fifth commandment forbids being disrespectful to or not treating others as their position or relationship to us demands.
- Q. 66. What is the reason for the fifth commandment?
A. The reason for the fifth commandment is the promise of long life and prosperity, if these glorify God and are for the good of those who obey this commandment.
- Q. 67. What is the sixth commandment?
A. The sixth commandment is: You shall not murder.
- Q. 68. What does the sixth commandment require?
A. The sixth commandment requires making every lawful effort to preserve one's own life and the lives of others.
- Q. 69. What does the sixth commandment forbid?
A. The sixth commandment forbids taking one's own life or the lives of others unjustly or doing anything that leads to suicide or murder.
- Q. 70. What is the seventh commandment?
A. The seventh commandment is: You shall not commit adultery.

- Q. 71. What does the seventh commandment require?
A. The seventh commandment requires us and everyone else to keep sexually pure in heart, speech, and action.
- Q. 72. What does the seventh commandment forbid?
A. The seventh commandment forbids thinking, saying, or doing anything sexually impure.
- Q. 73. What is the eighth commandment?
A. The eighth commandment is: You shall not steal.
- Q. 74. What does the eighth commandment require?
A. The eighth commandment requires that we lawfully acquire and increase our own and others' money and possessions.
- Q. 75. What does the eighth commandment forbid?
A. The eighth commandment forbids anything that either does or may unjustly take away money or possessions from us or anyone else.
- Q. 76. What is the ninth commandment?
A. The ninth commandment is: You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- Q. 77. What does the ninth commandment require?
A. The ninth commandment requires us to tell the truth and to maintain and promote it and our own and others' reputations, especially when testifying.
- Q. 78. What does the ninth commandment forbid?
A. The ninth commandment forbids anything that gets in the way of the truth or injures anyone's reputation.
- Q. 79. What is the tenth commandment?
A. The tenth commandment is: You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.
- Q. 80. What does the tenth commandment require?
A. The tenth commandment requires us to be completely satisfied with our own status in life and to have a proper, loving attitude toward others and their possessions.
- Q. 81. What does the tenth commandment forbid?
A. The tenth commandment forbids any dissatisfaction with what belongs to us, envy or grief at the success of others, and all improper desire for anything that belongs to someone else.
- Q. 82. Can anyone perfectly keep the commandments of God?
A. Since the fall no ordinary man can perfectly keep the commandments of God in this life but breaks them every day in thought, word, and action.
- Q. 83. Are all sins equally evil?
A. In the eyes of God some sins in themselves are more evil than others, and some are more evil because of the harm that results from them.

- Q. 84. What does every sin deserve?
A. Every sin deserves God's anger and curse, both in this life and in the life to come.
- Q. 85. What does God require from us to escape His anger and curse, which we deserve for our sin?
A. To escape God's anger and curse, which we deserve for our sin, God requires from us faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life along with diligent involvement in all the external ways Christ uses to bring us the benefits of redemption.
- Q. 86. What is faith in Jesus Christ?
A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, by which we receive and rest on Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel.
- Q. 87. What is repentance unto life?
A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, by which a sinner, being truly aware of his sinfulness, understands the mercy of God in Christ, grieves for and hates his sins, and turns from them to God, fully intending and striving for a new obedience.
- Q. 88. What are the ordinary, external ways Christ uses to bring us the benefits of redemption?
A. The ordinary, external ways Christ uses to bring us the benefits of redemption are His regulations, particularly the word, sacraments, and prayer, all of which are made effective for the salvation of His chosen ones.
- Q. 89. What makes the word effective for salvation?
A. The Spirit of God causes the reading and especially the preaching of the word to convince and convert sinners and to build them up in holiness and comfort through faith to salvation.
- Q. 90. How is the word to be read and heard in order to become effective for salvation?
A. For the word to become effective for salvation, we must pay careful attention to it, prepare ourselves, and pray for understanding. We must also receive it with faith and love, treasure it in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.
- Q. 91. How do the sacraments become effective means of salvation?
A. The sacraments become effective means of salvation, not because of any special power in them or in the people who administer them, but rather by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in those who receive them by faith.
- Q. 92. What is a sacrament?
A. A sacrament is a holy regulation established by Christ, in which Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers by physical signs.
- Q. 93. What are the sacraments of the New Testament?
A. The sacraments of the new Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- Q. 94. What is baptism?
A. The sacrament of baptism is a washing with water in the name of the father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which is a sign and seal that we are joined to Christ, that we receive the benefits of the covenant of grace, and that we are engaged to be the Lord's.

Q. 95. Who should be baptized?

A. Those who are not members of churches should not be baptized until they have publicly stated that they believe in Christ and will obey Him, but the infant children of church members should be baptized.

Q. 96. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament in which bread and wine are given and received as Christ directed to proclaim His death. Those who receive the Lord's Supper in the right way share in His body and blood with all His benefits, not physically but by faith, and become spiritually stronger and grow in grace.

Q. 97. What is the right way to receive the Lord's Supper?

A. The right way to receive the Lord's Supper is to examine whether we discern the Lord's body, whether our faith feeds on Him, and whether we have repentance, love, and new obedience – so that we may not come in the wrong way and eat and drink judgment on ourselves.

Q. 98. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is offering our desires to God in the name of Christ for things that agree with His will, confessing our sins, and thankfully recognizing His mercies.

Q. 99. How does God direct us to pray?

A. The whole word of God, but especially the Lord's prayer, which Christ taught His disciples, directs our prayers.

Q. 100. What does the beginning of the Lord's prayer teach us?

A. The beginning of the Lord's prayer (Our Father in heaven) teaches us to draw near to God with completely holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father who is able and ready to help us. It also teaches that we should pray with and for others.

Q. 101. For what do we pray in the first request?

A. In the first request (hallowed by your name) we pray that God will enable us and others to glorify Him in everything He uses to make Himself known and that He will work out everything to His own glory.

Q. 102. For what do we pray in the second request?

A. In the second request (your kingdom come) we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, with ourselves and others brought into and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may come quickly.

Q. 103. For what do we pray in the third request?

A. In the third request (your will be done on earth as it is in heaven) we pray that by His grace God would make us have the capability and the will to know, obey, and submit to His will in everything, as the angels do in heaven.

Q. 104. For what do we pray in the fourth request?

A. In the fourth request (Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors), encouraged by God's grace, which makes it possible for us sincerely to forgive others, we pray that for Christ's sake God would freely pardon all our sins.

Q. 106. For what do we pray in the sixth request?

A. In the sixth request (And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one) we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin or support and deliver us when we are tempted.

Q. 107. What does the conclusion of the Lord's prayer teach us?

A. The conclusion of the Lord's prayer (for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever) teaches us to be encouraged only by God in our prayers and to praise Him by acknowledging that kingdom, power, and glory are His. To show that we want to be heard and have confidence that we are, we say Amen.