

Foundations 2

How to Develop a Strong Relationship with God

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Lesson 1: Get to know God

God has revealed Himself in the Bible. The more we get to know Him, the closer we will grow in our relationship with him.

For example, in the Bible, Jesus tells us a story that illustrates the Father's love for those who have turned away from him.

Luke 15:11-24 **11** Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' **20** So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

From this one story we learn that God is full of compassion, loving, forgiving, and waiting for us to return to him. We also learn that God is giving and wants to bless his children. All of these things are seen in this one story of the Father. When we learn about God's amazing character, we appreciate Him more. We also grow in our love and respect for Him.

We learn these truths from a story, but there are verses that specifically tell us God's character. For example in John 3:16 we learn through His actions that God is loving and giving:

John 3:16 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.

Everytime we open the Bible we have the opportunity to know God better. From this knowledge we grow spiritually.

One more example from the book of Exodus is when Moses was able to see God. *Exodus 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."*

Here we learn that God is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness.

As we think about these truths, we can't help but appreciate and worship Him. And the more we know about God the better we can worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Lesson 2: PRAYER, Part I

If we want to have a strong relationship with God, pray!

A. Prayer is talking to God

God created Adam and Eve so that He might have fellowship with them, and they with Him. Before they sinned, Adam and Eve would meet with God in the cool of the afternoon. They enjoyed each other's company.

This close fellowship was all lost, however, because of sin. But Jesus died on the cross to restore our fellowship with God! Today God is calling us back to a personal relationship with Him!

1 John 1:3 We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

The number one way we can have fellowship daily with God is to talk to him in prayer!

We should wake up saying, "Good morning God." It's good to talk to God first, before anyone else. *Mark 1:35 tells how Jesus also prayed in the morning. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."*

We should talk to Him throughout the day.

Psalms 55:17, "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." In fact, the Bible says that we should pray without ceasing. This means always be talking to God. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Never stop praying." We do not have to pray out loud. We can also just pray in our minds.

We are told to pray without ceasing, but we should also set aside special times to pray. Jesus, who is our example, would often get away from everyone and pray. *Luke 5:16 says, "But Jesus would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."*

B. Prayer is Praise and Thanksgiving

Psalm 34:1 "...I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

See chapter 6 for more verses and explanation on the importance of praise and thanksgiving.

C. Prayer is making your requests known to God

Jesus told us in Matthew 7:7-10, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

Because God is good and loves us, He is willing to answer our prayers and give us good gifts.

If you pray and ask God for things, He will give them.

If you seek God, you will find Him.

If you knock on the door of heaven, He will answer you!

You are His children. Because God is a loving heavenly Father, He wants to give good gifts to you.

The Bible says that a lot of the fighting, jealousy, and conflict in the church happen because "You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God" (James 4:2).

This is so important. "You do not have because you do not ask God."

God is our loving Heavenly Father! Ask Him for things. We do not need to be jealous of others or fight with others for things! Ask God!

When we ask for things, we need to **ask with the right motives**. *James 4:3 says, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."*

Remember, our motives should always come out of love for God and love for others.

God says don't worry about things, instead, **pray about everything** and do it with thanksgiving!

Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

When praying for things you need, **pray with faith** that He's listening, and cares about you. Remember, He's a loving God!

Matthew 6:26-34 says, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you, if you by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature?" 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Pray with a spirit of humility. *James 4:6 says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

Pray with a pure heart. *James 5:16, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."*

Regular daily prayer can bless you, your family, and all those you pray for. It can destroy anxiety and bring peace into your life. Prayer can help you commune with God. Learn his heart for you and learn his plan for your life.

Lesson 3: PRAYER, Part II

A. Prayer is asking God for spiritual transformation

King David wrote in *Psalms 51:10*, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

He prayed that God would create a clean heart and a right spirit in him. He knew that this right attitude within him needed to be renewed.

Ephesians 3:16-19 Paul prays for the believers in Ephesus, “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

These are good things to pray for.

Note: Often it is good to pray Scripture. If Paul prayed that the believers might be strengthened with power, then you pray the same thing! “God, strengthen me with power through your Spirit!” Read the Bible and pray the Bible.

Pray for these things that are listed here in Ephesians 3:16-19,

- Pray for strength
- Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.
- Pray for strength in your inner being
- Pray that Christ would dwell in your heart • Pray that you would be rooted in love.
- Pray that you would understand how great God’s love is.
- Pray that you would be filled with the fullness of God.

Pray these things for yourself, for your family, and for the people in the church.

Col 1:9-10 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy

of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,”

- Pray that you would know the will of God
- Pray that you would have spiritual wisdom and understanding
- Pray that you would walk worthy of the Lord • Pray that you would please Him in all you do.
- Pray that you would bear fruit.
- Pray that you would increase in knowledge and strength
- Pray for patience and longsuffering with joy.

Conclusion/Application:

Talk to God throughout the day! Ask Him for the things you need. Pray for your own spiritual strength and growth. Pray the same thing for others. The most important lesson about prayer is that you DO IT!

Note: prayer is also worship and praise, listening to God, and quiet meditation. We will cover these topics in future lessons.

B. How to Pray with Confidence

It is important when talking to God in prayer, we remember who we are talking to. God is a God who loves us.

Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God knows our weaknesses. He knows everything about us - He created us and continues to give us life every day.

Psalms 139:1-4, 7, 17,18, “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you, Lord, know it completely...7 Where can I go from your Spirit? ...Where can I flee from your presence? 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.”

God knows us well – the good and the bad. But He chose to die for our sins while we were still sinners. He does not wait till we stop sinning before He shows us His love and

grace. Salvation and forgiveness is a gift. He is calling us to accept it. We don't need to wait till we make ourselves better before we come to Him.

1 Corinthians 1: 26-27, "Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong."

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

- We do not need to be afraid to go to God.
- God loves us and wants the best for us.
- God is ready to help us and bless us if we will follow his ways.

Hebrews 4:16, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Ephesians 2:4-5, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—"

1 John 4:9-11 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

Psalms 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

1 John 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

When you pray, try to always remember that God loves you more than a brother, more than a friend, more than anyone.

Lesson 4: Read and obey the Word of God

If we want a strong relationship with God, we need to know the Bible and follow it!

A. The Bible is powerful!

One of the best Christian ministers who ever worked with us was Helder Francisco. When he started to attend one of our churches in Pemba, Mozambique, he did not understand salvation. He began to translate for me in the Bible school and listen to the Bible on a solar radio. He soon understood the gospel and believed in Jesus. Every day, when he walked to work, he would listen to the Bible. On his way home, he would again listen to the Bible. He was always listening to the Word of God. Helder's spirituality grew incredibly fast. He became an excellent teacher and a very strong Christian. He not only listened to the Word of God, but he also followed it and the Lord blessed him. Helder grew and became a strong minister of the gospel to hundreds of children as he listened to, read, and obeyed the Word of God. The Bible is powerful and able to transform anyone's life.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

The Bible is powerful because we learn about who Jesus is, what he has done for us, who we are as Christians, and what God's will is for our lives. I have been in ministry for forty years. In all this time, I have seen that those who read, listen and obey the Bible are the ones who grow. They are the ones God uses in ministry and the ones the Holy Spirit works through and empowers.

B. The Bible is inspired by God

Men wrote the Bible as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2 Tim 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches

us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.”

All 66 books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation are inspired by God and completely trustworthy.

How can we know the Bible is true?

Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, 55 predictions were made about his life.

They were written down in the Old Testament. These 55 predictions all came true. They spoke of where Jesus would be born, that he would be born of a virgin, that he would be pierced, suffer, and die for our sins.

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 old, from ancient times.”

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.

*Isaiah 53:3-6 3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. 4 Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 **But** he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 **We** all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

In the New Testament, the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John present an accurate record of the life and ministry of Jesus. These four books of the Bible, called the gospels, are written from eyewitness testimonies. The facts they present can be verified by ancient historical writings. They are further verified by the impact they made on history. The followers of Jesus changed the world. All these followers supported the reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In these four books, Jesus Himself supported the truth of the Bible.

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them,” meaning that Jesus believed and trusted in the Old Testament “Law” and “Prophets.” Jesus also said, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4). Jesus continually spoke of Scripture as authoritative and from

God. Jesus also spoke of several stories in the Old Testament and presented them as authoritative and from God.

Although the Bible was written over many centuries by different writers, the messages it contains fits together perfectly. The Bible presents a clear presentation of God and His will for human beings.

C. The Bible can help you grow

2 Tim 3:15, "You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus." We learn in this verse that the Bible can make us wise unto salvation. In the previous verses

From 2 Tim 3:16-17 we learn that the Bible can correct us, teach us right from wrong, and prepare us to do every good work.

We are also taught in the Bible that we can grow in faith through the Word of God.

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

In the Church, we must continually learn from the Bible. Therefore, it must be faithfully taught each week. If your church does not teach the Bible each week, then find or start a new church!

We learn in 2 Timothy 4:1 that Christian leaders should...

2 Tim 4:1, "Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching."

Paul told Timothy, *1 Timothy 4:13, "Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them."*

Christian leaders need to read the Bible to the church. Pastors and teachers need to encourage and teach the Bible so church members can become strong Christians.

A very important qualification for anyone who wants to be a leader in the church is the ability to understand and teach the Word of God.

2 Timothy 2:24, "A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people."

D. More valuable than any earthly thing

Psalm 19:8-9, “The decrees of the LORD (the Bible) are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold.”

The Bible comes to us in two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Thirty-nine books were written before the birth of Jesus (the Old Testament) and twenty-seven were written after Jesus’ birth (the New Testament). In the Old and New Testaments there are 66 books. The first book is Genesis and the last book is Revelation. All of these books were given to us by God. Since the Bible is so valuable, we need to read all 66 books, listen to it, and obey it!

E. Practical ways to engage with scripture

The Bible itself teaches us how we’re to approach God’s Word. It uses such vocabulary as “meditate” (Psalm 1:2; Joshua 1:8), “reflect” (2 Timothy 2:7), “look intently” (James 1:25), “dwell” (Colossians 3:16), “ponder” (Psalm 119:95), “consider” (Jeremiah 2:31), and even “eat” (Jeremiah 15:16). These words describe Scripture engagement.

*Psalm 1:1-2, “Blessed is the one... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who **meditates** on his law day and night.”*

*Joshua 1:8, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*

*2 Timothy 2:7, “**Reflect** on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.”*

*James 1:25, “But whoever **looks intently** into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”*

*Colossians 3:16, Let the message of Christ **dwell** among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*

*Psalm 119:95, “The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will **ponder** your statutes.”*

Before reading the Bible, it’s helpful to choose a quiet place where you can be alone with God. Set aside anything that would distract you, like a phone. If you live in a noisy, busy environment, you may need to get up earlier than those around you. Jesus often escaped into the hills late at night or early in the morning to be alone with his heavenly Father.

Begin by talking to God, acknowledging his holy presence with praise and thanksgiving for who he is and how much he loves you. Pray about any worries or distractions you’re currently experiencing. Surrender those things to God with full trust and thanksgiving so

that you can focus on Him with peace of mind. Ask him to help you hear his voice and understand his Word. The Holy Spirit is your teacher and is ready to draw you closer to God as you spend time with him.

Below are four ways to engage with Scripture. You can try one method for a month, then another for the next month, etc. You may also want to try a combination of methods.

Four Ways to Engage with Scripture:

1. Praying Scripture

Read slowly. Allow time for the Holy Spirit to highlight certain scriptures as you go. Stop and respond to God in prayer. Feel free to underline or highlight what stands out to you. If the passage is challenging, ask God for help. If it's confusing, ask God for wisdom. If it stirs up conviction, take time to reflect and repent. If it stimulates praise or thanksgiving, take a moment to worship Him. Then read a little bit more and pray immediately. Repeat this process little by little as you read. Remember, God is right there with you and wants us to interact with Him.

Read the scripture in a personal, first person manner. For example, let's look at I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." If I read this in first person, between me and God, you could say, "If I confess my sins, You Lord, are faithful and just and will forgive me for my sins and purify me from all unrighteousness."

Read scripture as a prayer for someone else. For example, let's look at Colossians

1:9b-10a, "We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way..." You can pray this over someone you know that needs direction. Sometimes praying scripture is more powerful than our own words, especially if we don't know what to say. You can pray, "I ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will..." One person's testimony:

"My prayers bore me now. I've been praying for so many years, I tend to pray the same things over and over again. As I pray scriptures, I find my prayers take on much more depth. If I'm praying a passage over somebody, I just pray for them in a whole different way. It's very powerful. I feel I'm praying the way God wants me to be praying, because they are His words - very powerful."

2. Picture It

Imagine yourself as a character in the story or a bystander watching the story play out.

Imagine the scene with all your senses - what do you see, feel, taste, smell, or hear?
What are you feeling emotionally?

3. Journal

Focus and reflect on Scripture and its meaning for your life. Calm your mind and listen to God's voice as you ponder. Writing things out slows you down and helps you focus in on a passage, which is very powerful.

Hand copy a verse or verses that stand out to you.

Reflect on the meaning of the passage, asking the Holy Spirit for understanding. Listen to what He says and write it down.

Expand your journaling experience by writing down anything else the Holy Spirit tells you during this quiet time, any God dreams, and/or prophetic words given to you, or wonderful experiences with God you want to remember such as answered prayer or testimonies.

4. Contemplate

Read the passage

Meditate on the passage. Read again and look for something in the passage that lights up or gets your attention, something that affects your life. Then reread that part a few times so you can remember it.

Pray about that passage, talk to God about what you read and how it affects you.

Be quiet and **enjoy God's presence.**

Lesson 5: Go to a Good Church

Finding and getting involved in a good local church will help us develop a strong relationship with God.

The word “church” is a word that describes all believers throughout the world. We also use the word church to refer to the local church, which is a place where believers gather to pray, worship, fellowship, and hear the reading, preaching, and teaching of the Word of God.

Part of God’s plan for every believer is that they would be involved in a local church. It is something we should never neglect to do.

Hebrews 10:23-25, “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” We cannot forsake assembling together! Notice we get together at the local church to “provoke one another to love and good works” and “to exhort one another.”

We go to church to worship God and be strengthened, but we also go to church to encourage others.

Jesus started the church and said the gates of hell would not be able to stand against it.

Matthew 16:18, “Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.” **What makes a good church?**

1. In a good church, the pastor and leaders love God and follow His commands.

1 Timothy 3:2-11 So an elder must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation.

He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. 3 He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. 4 He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. 5 For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church? 6 An elder must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. 7 Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil’s trap. 8 In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. 9

They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. 10 Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons. 11 In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do. 12 A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. 13 Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

2. In a good church, the Word of God is taught every week by people who have a good relationship with God and have studied God's Word.

In 2 Tim 2:15 Paul wrote that Christian leaders need to study the word of God and be able to teach.

2 Tim 2:15 "Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker; one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth."

3. A good church is a place where people pray. In Matthew 21:13 Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer."

4. A good church is a place where people love one another and show this love by helping one another.

Paul prayed for the church in Philippi, Philippians 1:9, "I pray that your love would abound more and more."

5. In a good church, the gospel of salvation is preached, and people are disciplined!

Matthew 28:18-20 says that we should go out into the world and make disciples, teaching them to obey everything that Jesus taught.

Matthew 28:19-20, "19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Lesson 6: Thanksgiving and Praise

Our relationship with God grows as we learn to continually give Him thanksgiving and praise.

A. Give Thanks

Psalm 188:1, “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.”

*1 Thess. 5:16-18, “Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in **all** circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”*

We are always supposed to be joyful, never stop praying, and give thanks in all circumstances. This is all part of having a great personal relationship with God! We have so much to be thankful for - eternal life, God loves for us, his Word, our families, food, and so many other things. This list could go on forever because we are supposed to continually thank God for every circumstance.

What if things don’t look very positive? At what point are we going to give thanks? We have a choice. *Matthew 14:19 says, “And taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He (Jesus) gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.”*

Jesus gave thanks before anything happened. He gave thanks from a place of faith, knowing the miracle would take place. Thanksgiving is not only something we do, it is something that determines the position of our heart. Whatever we focus on will grow.

Giving thanks when things don’t look good takes faith and trust that God is still in control and that He’s a good God. It takes faith to believe the promises in the Bible. (There are over 7,000!) God honors our faith, which means having confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1) Believing in God’s promises gives us hope, and having hope helps us have a heart of thanksgiving.

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.

Romans 5:3,4, “...we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Here's another promise that helps us give thanks in all things: *"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).

Note: We are called to give thanks IN all circumstances. We are not told to give thanks FOR all circumstances. Many of the bad things that happen to people are not good. What we are told is to give thanks despite the evil we experience. Find the good in each and every situation. To do this we need to understand that God works everything together for good and all trials can produce eternal fruit in our lives.

B. Praise the Lord

Psalm 117 says, "Praise the Lord, all you nations. Praise him, all you people of the earth. For he loves us with unfailing love; the Lord's faithfulness endures forever. Praise the Lord!"

Psalm 34:1-3 says, "I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart. Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness; let us exalt his name together."

What does praise mean? Praise comes from the Old Testament word, Hallel. We use it almost every week at church when we say Hallelujah. The word hallelujah means,

"Praise ye Jehovah." When we say, "praise the Lord," it is very similar to the word, "hallelujah."

The word, "praise" means "glory to God," "to give thanks to God," "to bless the Lord," "to proclaim... his goodness, his love, his grace," or anything else that exalts the name of the Lord.

Anything that lifts God and/or proclaims his greatness, is praise.

The Bible says that we were chosen and created by God to praise him.

Isaiah 43:21, "the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise."

We are to praise God all throughout the day. We can do this through speech or singing. We can do this out loud or we can do it in our hearts.

Ephesians 5:19-20, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

One of the primary reasons we meet together as the church is to sing praise songs to the Lord. The book of Psalms continually calls us to praise God together in the sanctuary.

How do we grow in our relationship with God through praising him?

When we praise and worship God, we draw close to him. God says if we draw close to him, he will draw close to us.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

In the Old Testament people would gain victory over their enemies through praise.

2 Chronicles 20:22 As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

When we worship the Lord, it brings satisfaction to our souls.

Psalms 63:4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. 5 I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

Praise and worship brings joy!

Psalms 100:4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

Psalms 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

We are also called to praise Him with whatever kind of musical instruments we have.

Psalms 150:1, "Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD."

Let us continually give thanks and praise the Lord!

Notice how many times in Psalm 151 we are told to praise the Lord. The Bible is full of Scriptures that tells us to give thanks and to praise the Lord!

1 Chronicles 16:8 Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.

Psalm 75:1 Unto you, O God, do we give thanks, unto you do we give thanks: for that your name is near your wondrous works declare.

1 Chronicles 16:34 O give thanks to the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endures forever.

Psalm 92:1 It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises unto his name, O Most High.

Psalm 30:12 that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you forever.

C. Growing through constant thanksgiving and praise

Thanksgiving and praise bring our attention to God's continual presence in and around us, putting hope, faith, and trust into practice. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. If we obey by giving thanks in all circumstances, we exercise our faith in that He is worthy of being thanked and praised even when we don't know how our situation will turn out.

Lesson 7: Not an Outward Show, Part I

We do not develop a strong relationship with God by making an impressive outward show.

In the Bible we read about one of the most famous kings - King David. Israel needed a new king. This was because Saul had disobeyed God. He did not follow God's commands, so a new king was needed.

God told the prophet Samuel to go to the house of Jesse and there he would find the man who was to be anointed King of Israel. When he went to the house of Jesse, he saw Jesse's oldest son - tall, handsome, and strong! He looked like a king - very good on the outside. Samuel was ready to anoint him as the next king in Israel, but then God told him to stop!

We read in *1 Samuel 16:7*, *"But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* God does not look at the outward appearance. The Lord looks at the heart! He wanted to pick Jesse's youngest son, David. The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart.

Acts 13:22 "After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'"

God cares about our relationship with Him. The Bible is full of Scriptures that talk about our hearts.

Luke 10:27 "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart"

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

In Psalms 51:10, the writer asks God to create in him a clean heart, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

We also should pray that God would create in us a clean heart!

Proverbs 7:25 says, "Let not your heart turn aside to her ways [the ways of the adulterous]; do not stray into her paths,"

When the Bible talks about your heart, it is talking about who you are on the inside.

On the outside you can go to church and carry a Bible. On the outside you might look good to others, but God wants you to know that what really matters is what is on the inside - what is in your heart.

The first church I ever attended had a member who sat in one of the front seats every week. He would lift his hands, worship, and pray. He looked very spiritual. On the outside, everyone thought he was a strong Christian. But he had a business that many people in the church invested in. They gave money to him so they could make more money. This man stole all of their money and was eventually arrested by the police and went to jail.

For a long time he looked good on the outside, but God knew his heart!

In Acts 5:1-11 A husband and wife sold their property and gave a bunch of money to the church. This was a good thing but instead of telling the truth, they lied. They wanted everyone to think they gave all the money from the sale of this property to God, but they didn't. They gave most of the money to the church but they kept some for themselves. That was fine. The problem was they lied to look good on the outside. "We gave it all to the church," they said.

Peter, who was led by the Holy Spirit, said in Acts 5:4-5, "Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God." When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died.

This husband and wife looked good on the outside, but they could not fool God! He looks at the heart and doesn't want people in the church to be phony or deceptive.

Pastors and Christian leaders who are seen as spiritual, yet drink, lie, or are immoral, are not guarding their hearts. Their church, evangelism, and ministry will be weak.

How can you spot a deceptive leader?

Matthew 7:15-29, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.

As believers, we obviously do not want to live like hypocrites, proclaiming one thing while living another!

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

A pastor of a large church in Zambezia was at a funeral. He was helping to carry the casket. When he bent down, an amulet from a witch doctor fell out of his top pocket. He wanted to hide it, so he quickly put his foot on top of it. When the people walked some distance away, he looked around and quickly grabbed the amulet and put it back in his pocket. He wanted to keep this a secret but some members of the church saw him. He regularly taught against going to the witch doctor, but he himself went!

He said one thing, but in his heart and in secret, he did another! We need to repent of this in the church!

I Cor. 5:14-15; 17, 14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Thank you, Jesus, for giving us new hearts, born again by your Spirit, that we may live for you and give you glory.

Lesson 8: Not an Outward Show Part II

As our love relationship with God grows, we will naturally want to do good deeds. But the Bible gives us some guidelines and warnings.

Good Deeds - not an outward show

Jesus told us in Matthew 6:1, "Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven."

Jesus gives this warning to the church, "Watch out!" Be careful, because there is always the temptation to do good things just to be noticed by others.

If you do this, God will not reward you!

This can be a huge problem in the church. People want to be seen as spiritual or they want to be admired by others. Stop thinking about being seen by others and think about what pleases God!

When you want to do something good, God says, "Keep it a secret. It's just between you and Me!" Don't boast and tell everyone.

Giving Money - not an outward show

Matthew 6:2-3, "2 When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I

tell you the truth, they have received all the rewards they will ever get. 3 But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."

Not letting "your left hand know what your right hand is doing" – means that we should do everything we can to keep our giving a secret.

The leaders of the church need to find a way for people to be able to give privately so others do not see what they are giving. A large open basket or tabletop in the front of the church where everyone marches up and puts their money is **not** a good idea. It would be better to have a deep basket so no one could see how much others give. Placing this in the back of the church so people can put money in it on their way out instead of in front so everyone sees who gives and who doesn't, provides even more privacy. The main point is that giving should be between the giver and God.

In church we should NEVER announce how much one individual has given or read lists saying who did not give!

We do not want to manipulate people to give. God calls Christians to give willingly with a joyful heart and never under compulsion.

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

God does not need our money! Giving is a principle that God wants us to learn. If we have faith and give, God will bless us. God wants us to all learn to trust Him!

In the church ALL giving is voluntary. No one has to give. We do not PAY to be a part of the church! Members do not pay – they give voluntarily. Any leader who announces in church that someone did not give needs to repent.

Matthew 6:3 "But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. 4 Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."

This is the kind of giving God wants to see, "Give your gifts in private!"

Praying and Fasting - not an outward show

Matt 6:5 "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth - that is all the reward they will ever get."

It is good to pray in public, but most of our prayers need to be secret!

The same is true when we fast. Don't announce it and let everyone know what you are doing. Christianity is about your **personal** relationship with God. It's not an outward show.

Matt 6:7 “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!”

People at church often think they are more spiritual if they shout or show great emotion. Some think it’s more spiritual to pray longer than everyone else. Again, spirituality is not what you do in front of people. It is your **personal** relationship with God. “... (be) faithful in prayer.” Romans 12:12.

But Jesus says, “Don’t just keep babbling.” We aren’t going to get God to respond if we keep saying the same words over and over again! It’s not about an outward show.

Matthew 6:16-18, “And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Why do we do good deeds? Why do we give? Why do we pray and fast? We do these things because they are natural responses to loving him.

It is amazing that the creator of the whole universe wants to hear us when we talk to him! He tells us to pray, and he promises that he will listen to our words. Since prayer is such an amazing thing, we should not cheapen it by making it a way to show people how spiritual we are.

Lesson 9: Salvation Part I

We read in *Ephesians 2:8-9*, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

A. Not by good works

As we learned in Foundations I, Lesson 6, we are saved by grace through faith. The faith that we have is a gift from God. We cannot boast saying we deserve to go to heaven. All this kind of boasting is false.

- Can I go to heaven by doing good things? NO!
- Can I go to heaven by sinning less? NO!

I go to heaven because I have true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have all sinned, but we can all be saved through faith in Jesus and what He did for us!

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Colossians 2:14 says, "He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross."

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

B. If we continue to sin, can we lose our salvation?

I went to church one time where the pastor said, "If you do not listen to the preaching of the Word of God, you are going to lose your salvation." At another church a top leader said, "If you drink alcohol, you will lose your salvation." These kinds of statements are totally false! No one loses their salvation because they do something wrong!

Jesus took the punishment we deserve for our sins upon Himself when He died on the cross.

We go to heaven because we believe that Jesus Christ did this! We go to hell because we do not believe in Jesus and what he did for us!

Listen carefully to the words of *1 John 5:11-12*, "... God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life."

Everyone sins! Everyone fails. Everyone falls short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) But God loves us and wants us to go to heaven. Jesus died on the cross for our past, current, and future sins!

Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

We read in *1 John 1:8-10*, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us."

We need to confess our sins and ask God to forgive us and cleanse us.

Notice that the Bible says NO ONE can say, “I have stopped sinning.” Anyone who says this is a liar.

Even the Apostle Paul, who wrote the majority of the New Testament, called himself the chief of sinners. He recounts how he persecuted the followers of Jesus before his “born again” experience. But because he remembers how much of a sinner he was, he realizes how gracious God is.

I Timothy 1:13,14,16-17, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer, a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.”

Key Point: People do not lose their salvation because of their sins! People have faith in Jesus Christ, or they don’t have faith in Jesus Christ. However, if people stop believing in Jesus and decide not to follow Him, this is evidence that they are not saved.

Even though we all continue to sin, a changed heart means we desire to stop sinning. We all fall short because we are not perfect. But the difference is that we desire to be more and more like Jesus. We are repentant when we sin and ask God to help us be more like Him. As Christians, we are continually being changed from “glory to glory” till He returns.

King David was not perfect. He committed adultery. But later, he sincerely repented. In *Psalms 51:1* he prays, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me.” God speaks of David as “a man after His own heart” in Acts 13:22. David never was perfect, but he truly loved God and desired to please Him. God saw his heart.

The more you realize how much you’ve been forgiven, the more you love Jesus and want to obey him. Both King David and Paul were sinners. The Bible gives examples of their sin. But they are also examples of godly men with good hearts. They both realized their weakness and dependence on God’s grace. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1 Cor. 1:26-31, “26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly

things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Can we lose our salvation when we sin? No, but you must understand what it really means to have saving faith in Jesus.

Lesson 10: Salvation Part II

A. True Salvation Will Produce a Changed Life

If your life has not changed since you thought you believed in Jesus Christ, then you may not be a Christian. You need to go back and read the New Testament (in particular the book of Romans) or go to our Foundations I book. Read and pray about lesson 2 – 6. Also, try to find a believer that you trust and respect to help you understand what it means to be saved and how to continually grow closer to God. *Gal. 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

Romans 6:1, “1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

The evidence of true faith in Jesus Christ is 1) a decrease of sin in your life and 2) an increase of good works. These two things prove that you really have faith in Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

People do not lose their salvation because of their sins and failures. But continuing to sin could be proof or evidence that you do not have true faith in Jesus.

Listen carefully to the words of *1 Corinthians 6:9 -11, “9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor*

thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

This may be difficult to understand, but it is very important.

Unrepentant people who continue to do these kinds of sins are NOT CHRISTIANS.

When true believers sin, they feel bad and repent. This is all part of the Christian life.

What are we saying? A person who thinks he or she has faith in Jesus Christ but continues to be involved in sexual immorality, adultery, stealing, or drunkenness and does not repent but just keeps doing these things, will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10). This kind of person does not have true saving faith. They have not truly received Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

B. Demons believe but do not have saving faith

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.

The demons believe that there is one God. The demons believe Jesus is God. The demons even believe that Jesus died on the cross. But they do not have saving faith.

If we have true saving faith, we will desire to follow God! Following God means we die to ourselves and live for Him.

Some are confused and think they are Christians because they go to church or tithe. Some "accept Jesus" to please their friend or spouse that told them they should do this.

But in their heart they don't really want to follow Jesus. Jesus wants your whole heart.

He wants a personal relationship with you. A church or a friend cannot give this to you. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me." When you decide to give your life to Him and love Him with all your heart, soul, and mind, He will give you a new heart. You will be grieved when you sin. You will want to please your heavenly Father and do what is right. If your heart has not changed, you don't yet know Jesus. Light and darkness don't dwell together. Jesus says we will know who the true children of God by their fruit are. This fruit includes love for God, love for one another, joy, and peace.

C. God desires to save us

It is so important that we understand God's heart! He loves us and wants to save us!

John 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

D. God is not going to give up on you!

Jesus said in *John 10:27-29*, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."

Jesus has promised that He "will never leave you or forsake you" (*Hebrews 13:5*).

We read in *Philippians 1:6*, "He [God] who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

We read in *1 John 5:13*, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

We have learned that...

Salvation is a gift from God. It is not something we work for - it is given by grace.

Christians do not lose their salvation because they sin. We all sin, we all repent, and we continue to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

True salvation produces a changed life.

God desires that all would be saved.