

— Giving Instructions to

NEW CONVERTS

An excerpt from
'The Shepherds Staff'



GIVING INSTRUCTIONS TO NEW CONVERTS

1. **The New Life**
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INSTRUCTION TO LEADERS: You (or someone you appoint) should review this information with every new believer within a day or two of his or her decision to receive Christ. If you have a class or study course for New Believers — enroll them in it. If not — assign someone (or do it yourself) to teach them week by week the material in the **New Believers Training Manual** at the beginning of this book.

NOTE: The Scripture quotations in this material are from The Living Bible and used by permission.

Chapter 1

The New Life

By Paul Collins

A. A NEW LIFE BEGINS

You started a brand new dimension of living when you received Jesus into your life. One man said, “When you find Jesus Christ, life finds you!”

The Living Bible puts it this way: “*When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun!*” (2Cor 5:17-20).

1. What Does It Mean To Be “Saved”?

Salvation is not something you do, but something Jesus does when you receive Him. No way can you save yourself, any more than a drowning man can. He needs the help of someone else. He's saved when he puts his total trust in the lifesaver.

That's what Jesus has done for you. He has rescued you from a life that was overwhelmed by sin, under the control of Satan, and heading for the well deserved judgment of God... and He's planted your feet on the firm ground of God's domain, taking you out of your old ways and giving you eternal life.

The Bible says that God has “*rescued us out of the darkness and gloom of Satan's kingdom and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son, who bought our freedom with his blood and forgave us all our sins*” (Col 1:13,14 tlb).

An eternal transaction was taking place as Jesus was dying on the Cross. He was representing you and me before His Father. God's righteous judgment had pronounced us guilty because we had sinned... but His great love had sent His Son to take the punishment we deserved instead.

When you received Jesus into your life, this is the wonderful exchange that took place... “*God took the sinless Christ and poured into him our sins. Then, in exchange he poured God's goodness into us*” (2Cor 5:21 tlb).

Now a whole new way of living spreads before you... and it all revolves around a special person... Jesus Christ. When you opened your life to Him, you started living under His control.

2. What Does It Mean To Be “Born Again”?

The Bible has another way of describing what has happened to you. It calls it being “*born of the Spirit.*”

A man came to Jesus one night. He was a very religious man, but Jesus took one look at him and knew that he was lacking the most important thing of all.

“*Nicodemus,*” He said, “*you must be born again!*” Poor Nicodemus. He'd never heard of such a thing. He found this difficult to understand. How could he possibly enter his mother's womb and be born a second time? Then Jesus explained it to him: “*What I am telling you so earnestly is this: Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*”

“*Men can only reproduce human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven; so don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again*” (John 3:57 tlb).

Jesus was using birth as an illustration. He was picturing the experience of coming alive to God in the realm of the Spirit.

A baby has no knowledge or contact with the outside world before it is born; in the same way every individual who has not been born of the Spirit of God has no knowledge or contact with God, and with the things of Heaven and eternity.

For nine months before it is born a baby is alive. It has all the potential of life, without the ability to use it.

a. It Has Eyes But It Can't See. There is another eyesight lying dormant in each one of us, waiting to be “turned on” by the Spirit of God. It is the ability to understand the things of God.

Imagine if two unborn babies could communicate with one another, and one said to the other, “I don't believe in what I've heard about this life after birth!”

To us that seems ridiculous when we realize all the tremendous possibilities that lie before a young life as it's born into the world. But the same thing is true of spiritual life.

The Bible puts it this way:

“*The unspiritual person doesn't accept the things of the Spirit of God; to him they are foolish and he can't understand them, because they are spiritually understood*” (1Cor 2:14).

b. It Has Ears But It Can't Hear. Many times before He spoke to the crowds Jesus would cry out: “*He that has ears... let him hear!*”

There is an ability to hear God through spiritual ears. God has always desired to communicate with you. He's made you alive in the Spirit so that you can hear Him!

c. It Has A Mouth But It Can't Speak. A baby also has a mouth and the potential of speech before it is born... but has no ability to communicate.

God wants to have fellowship with us. That is, He wants to have mutual communication... to talk to us, and for us to talk with Him. It's only possible as we are spiritually alive.

d. It Has Lungs But It Can't Breathe. The first thing a baby does when it is born — is cry. It breaths air for the first time.

The Bible calls the Spirit of God the “*breath of life,*” and when you received Jesus — God “*breathed*” His Spirit into you and you were “*born again.*”

e. Washed At Birth. Next, the nurse will take the baby and wash it. When we are born

spiritually, a cleansing takes place in our souls. All the grime and dirt we have picked up throughout our lives from the things we have thought, and said, and done, is washed away by the Spirit of God.

f. Clothed In New Garments. Think of the hours a mother spends preparing those little garments for the new member of the family. The Bible says God clothes His spiritual children with the garments of His righteousness (Isa 61:10).

g. Nursed And Nourished. The Apostle Peter writes to the new Christians and tells them:

“Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1Pet 2:2).

You will grow in your faith by reading God's Word, the Bible... it's your spiritual food.

h. Given The Family Name. When you were born of the Spirit, you became part of the family of God. God is your Father Who loves and cares for you. Now you bear His Name, and everywhere you go you represent Him.

3. A New Perspective

Here you are then... you've stepped out onto the threshold of a new dimension of living. Suddenly you're seeing life around you in a new perspective.

You feel so clean inside, and so full of the joy God has given you, even the trees and the flowers look brighter. You see your friends... and even your enemies... in a different light. You understand why they sometimes act the way they do... they need Jesus just like you did.

God has been so good to you. Now, instead of being full of your own selfish thoughts, you want to help others and bring them into the same blessing you have received. Life is wonderful. And that is just what Jesus said He had come to do... *“I have come that they might have life... and have it more abundantly!”* (John 10:10).

4. A New Awareness

But not only that! You're also finding that you have a new awareness of eternal realities. God is no longer some great influence way up in the sky somewhere... He's a real person to you. He's a loving Father!

Jesus is so real, you can talk to Him every day, and hear Him speak to you in that quiet voice deep inside. You'll never be alone again. Jesus said, *“I am with you always... I will never leave you nor forsake you”* (Matt 28:20, Heb 13:5).

Every day, for the rest of your natural life, you are going to be discovering more and more about your wonderful Lord. In fact, stretching before you is a lifetime of exciting discoveries.

5. A Map And Manual

You'll need a map and a guide to help you... and God has provided both. The Bible is His written Word to you. It maps out for you all that Jesus has done, is doing, and is going to do.

It contains all the wonderful promises of God that now belong to you because you belong to Him. It is a complete manual for life, which covers instructions and promises for every aspect of your life and future.

You will be wanting to read it more than doing anything else. As you read, you will learn the wonders of God's love for you; His plan for your life both now and throughout eternity. You will start to have unfolded to you the fullness of what Jesus has given you, and the kind of person you are now because you are His.

6. A Companion And Guide

Just as God has given us the Bible to be our map for life, so He has given us the Holy

Spirit to be our constant companion and guide.

As you begin to walk along your road of discovery, the Holy Spirit is leading you every step of the way.

His work is to lead us into all truth, and to reveal the many qualities of God's character to us... not only showing us what God is like, but changing us to be like Him.

God's plan is for us to live with Him forever. Thus, the years we live on earth are given to us to develop the capacity to live comfortably in His atmosphere of purity, holiness, peace, joy and truthfulness.

The work of the Holy Spirit in us performs the initial miracle of new birth, and thereafter causes us to continue growing in our new life. One day, all Christians will be fully matured and made perfect before the Lord.

This is how the Bible describes the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives:

“But we Christians have no veil over our faces; we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him” (2Cor 3:18 tlb).

7. A New Relationship

This is a real time of rejoicing. You are now part of God's family... the Royal Family of the Universe! Sons of the King! The Apostle Paul describes it like this:

“Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.

“What a foundation you stand on now: the apostles and the prophets; and the cornerstone of the building is Jesus Christ himself! We who believe are carefully joined together with Christ as parts of a beautiful, constantly growing temple for God. And you also are joined with him and with each other by the Spirit, and are part of this dwelling place of God” (Eph 2:19-22 tlb).

The Bible uses many illustrations to describe the new relationship we have with God and our new spiritual family. We are called *“living bricks being built into a spiritual house that God dwells in”* (1Pet 2:5), or *“soldiers in the army of the Lord”* (2Tim 2:3,4), but perhaps the main illustration God uses is that of a body.

“And God has put all things under his [Jesus] feet and made him the supreme head of the church — which is his body, filled with himself...” (Eph 1:22,23 tlb).

“Our bodies have many parts, but the many parts make up only one body when they are all put together. So it is with the ‘Body’ of Christ... All of you together are the one Body of Christ and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it” (1Cor 12:12,27 tlb).

You have now become part of a spiritual Body, and just as every part of your physical body is important to the rest of it, so are you important to the rest of the Body of Christ, and every other individual Christian is important to you.

8. A New Kind Of Joy

The joy you have experienced isn't the end in itself. It is a product of your new relationship with God through your faith in Jesus.

You realize that your salvation didn't come by anything you did, but it was a gift. God planned and initiated your experience of coming to know Him.

Just as you have learned that it is impossible to obtain salvation yourself, it is true also that it is impossible to live the Christian life without God's help.

As you are dependent on Him for the forgiveness of your sins, so you are dependent on Him to live in victory and joy day by day. Joy comes continually as a result of this

relationship of trust in the Holy Spirit's power within.

Christians in the past have lived under very difficult circumstances at times, but history and the Bible confirm that the believer experiences joy under all circumstances.

The Apostle Paul wrote in the New Testament of the Bible concerning this experience:

*“Since then it is by faith that we are justified, let us grasp the fact that we **have** peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

“Through him we have confidently entered into this new relationship of grace, and here we take our stand, in happy certainty of the glorious things he has for us in the future.

“This doesn't mean, of course, that we have only a hope of future joys — we can be full of joy here and now even in our trials and troubles.

“Taken in the right spirit, these very things will give us patient endurance; this, in turn, will develop a mature character, and a character of this sort produces a steady hope, a hope that will never disappoint us” (Rom 5:1-5).

9. There Will Be Temptations

Everyone is tempted, so you can expect it. You will be more aware than you were previously concerning the temptation of sin around you.

Even Jesus was tempted when He walked the earth 2000 years ago. He must have experienced the battle in the mind which temptation occasions.

But the Bible makes it clear that, while He was tempted, He never sinned. He blazed the trail ahead for us, so that we, who follow, can live in daily victory too.

Temptation is the devil's business. He wants always to discredit a person's experience with Jesus, if he can. The Apostle James made a startling statement when he said:

“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust or desire and enticed” (Jas 1:14).

There is an important difference between temptation and sin itself. We are all tempted, and the enemy usually picks our weakest area of life as the target.

However, temptation does not become sin unless we begin entertaining and receiving the wrong thoughts into our life. When an evil thought comes to mind, it is important to know that the initial thought is not your own, but is the enemy presenting a temptation hoping that you will receive it.

It is at this point that you make a choice — by rejecting the temptation in Jesus' Name. If you will do this, you will find the Holy Spirit will be there to help you and give you strength to resist evil.

There is a promise in James 4:7: *“So give yourselves humbly to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*

An important thing to keep in mind is to stay away from the obvious areas, places and people, which would cause the greatest temptation. You are courting danger to flirt with temptation.

God gives you a wonderful promise, and victory will always be yours, if you just live simply by His guidance:

“But remember this — the wrong desires that come into your life aren't anything new and different. Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you.

“And no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for he has promised this and will do what he says.

“He will show you how to escape temptation's power so that you can bear up patiently against it” (1Cor 10:13 tlb).

B. NOW — WALK WITH GOD

When you were converted you turned your life around. Now you must not stand still at that point, but begin to walk with God.

This means living day by day with Him and being led by Him. This is simple and exciting. The Lord Jesus Christ dwells in your heart by His Spirit, but He will control only that portion of your life which you yield to Him.

1. Surrender All To Him

The Apostle Paul wrote to Christians about this:

“And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy — the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?”

“Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you” (Rom 12:1, 2 tlb).

Because His Spirit now dwells in your body, the only way He can express His life and love is through a person totally committed to Him.

Don't expect the Holy Spirit to transform your “heart-house”, if you refuse to let Him into all its rooms. I know you will want to be sure you have surrendered everything to Him, so here's a suggestion: Take a number of slips of paper and write down on each piece the money you possess, your car or any possessions, your loved ones and lastly yourself.

Have a short time of prayer in which you make a commitment to God. Give each of these over to Him — “Here, Lord, is my bank account, my T.V., my home. I surrender them to you.”

When you surrender to God, you surrender to life and joy and peace. This is what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus.

2. Communicate With Jesus

Your life will grow and develop as you communicate with Jesus. The Apostle Paul gives good advice in Philippians 4:6-8: *“Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers.*

“If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand.

“His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.”

a. Anytime, Anywhere. Prayer is simply talking to God. You can talk with God at any time... in the bus, train, car or anywhere. However, it's a great idea to have a special place and a special time of the day when you draw aside into a secret place with Him.

Just be quiet and listen. Bring your problems and requests into His presence. Here is an important promise God has given to encourage you:

“But when you pray, go away by yourself, all alone, and shut the door behind you and pray to your Father secretly, and your Father who knows your secrets, will reward you” (Matt 6:6 tlb).

b. Find A Prayer Partner. *“Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done of them of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt 18:19).

This is a special promise to any two people who will agree to pray in unity and faith together. In this way, you can encourage one another to believe and be positive in your faith. It adds extra power to your life.

There is unlimited scope in this kind of prayer. In the promise God says if you shall ask ANYTHING! What possibilities! God will do it from Heaven. What a great experience to join the forces of Heaven in seeing miracles in people's lives and circumstances.

In the Old Testament of the Bible there is a question asked:

“Is anything too hard for God?” (Jer 32:27).

The answer to that is, NO!

c. Join With Others. Also make sure you attend a prayer meeting and join with others in the family of God for prayer. Great things are being accomplished in the earth through the prayers of the Church. Be a part of it.

3. Obey The Holy Spirit

“Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about these things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about it” (Phil 4:8 tlb).

This is good advice. As you are daily looking to the Lord for guidance in your new life style, these things will happen. You will be conscious of God speaking through His Word as you read it.

An inner conviction will grow in your heart that a particular thing is right. Obey this conviction, for this is how you are learning to be led by His directions.

There are many voices in the world, but the Holy Spirit's voice will never ask you to do anything that is sinful or that would hurt anyone, and never anything that is contrary to what is written in the Bible.

You must expect that sometimes people will fail you, but don't be discouraged. God is always the same, and His character is absolutely reliable.

When faced with a decision or a choice between two ways of conduct, always choose the high road — the way which is better, purer, more generous and honest. If there is any doubt about something, it is probably wrong for you.

4. Read The Bible Every Day

The Bible is your most exciting book. It is the world's best-seller. Here in this one book (made up of 66 books) is the thinking of God about everything that matters. As you read God's Word, you will find you will be challenged to change. When you discover an area of your life that is contrary to God's way — then you will want to change.

This will add to the joy in your life. Reading the Bible will be like having a bath... it will bring with it a sense of cleansing and refreshing.

The Psalmist put it this way:

“I have thought much about your words, and stored them in my heart so that they would hold me back from sin” (Ps 119:11 tlb).

We share God's life through His words and we find strength and authority to challenge and defeat the temptations of Satan. In Ephesians 6:7 we are told that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.

Make up your mind you are going to read the Word of God every day. Start by reading the New Testament. Pray and ask God to speak to you as you read it.

It's good to have a notebook or diary to write down the important lessons and points you get as you read.

Also take note of those things God is asking you to do. There is great joy in obeying His instructions, for they are producing the very life and character of God within us.

5. Find A Spiritual Home

It is very important to find a spiritual home where you can receive instruction and

fellowship to help your growth and understanding.

You need to find a shepherd (who is sometimes called a pastor, an elder, or minister)... someone you can look up to and entrust your life, who will be your spiritual father.

Be loyal and faithful to that person and allow him to help guide you. If you find there are areas of your life that you have not been able to gain victory over alone, share with your shepherd.

His counsel and prayer will help you. Remember God wants you to be completely free.

Jesus said: *“If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed”* (John 8:36).

6. Support God's Work

God wants to prosper your life and meet all your needs.

One thing you will want to do now is to honor God by giving money and time to support the work of God. This is part of our worship and helps extend His Kingdom. In this way, others will have an opportunity, as you have had, to hear the good news (the gospel).

A good habit which is encouraged by God is this: Take a tenth of your income each payday and put it aside for God's work.

Take this to your spiritual home and offer it in worship to the Lord with all the other believers.

This is your way of expressing your love and thanks to God for all He has done for you.

7. Ministry-Gifts To Help You

God has given special ministry-gifts to the Church such as instructors and teachers. They are called by five different names: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers.

You will learn to recognize these as you participate in the life of the Christian Community. They are God's provision for your help. You can read about them in Ephesians 4: 11-13.

8. Tell Others About Jesus

Be sure to share your new life with others. This may bring misunderstanding or even persecution. But God will give you wisdom in how to share the gospel with people.

Remember, they need Jesus badly. Pray for them and realize that God's Spirit is using your words to work in their hearts — even when the evidence seems to indicate the opposite.

You are part of a mighty witnessing army of believers around the world. There are literally millions turning to Christ and He wants you to have the joy of winning someone to Him also.

What a fantastic life you now have! Enjoy it, and enjoy God.

God bless you, and welcome to the Family of God.

C. CONCLUSION

Remember:

- God loves you.
- He is living within you.
- He is there to help.

- Obey, when you feel the Holy Spirit is telling you to do something.
- Speak with God often in prayer.
- Read and study His Word.
- Tell others about Jesus.
- Fellowship often with others in the Family (Church) of God.

Chapter 2

Water Baptism — Part I

By Graham Truscott

Introduction

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16).

After repentance and receiving Christ as our Savior, the next step in our Christian life is water baptism. We should note carefully that water baptism is God's command: *“Be baptized”* (Acts 2:38).

Water baptism is not something about which we can please ourselves. It is essential for **every** believer in Christ to obey this command in the Word of God. And it is also essential to obey it **in the biblical way**. Jesus said: *“He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me”* (John 14:21).

The Bible tells us in 1 Samuel that King Saul wanted to please God with his animal sacrifices, but he had already disobeyed the command of God. The Lord spoke to him through His servant Samuel: *“And Samuel said, ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?’*

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1Sam 15:22).

These words come as a warning to us today. You may be willing to do much service for the Lord. You may be ready to do many other good works. You may be trying to serve God in so many ways, like Saul.

But if you are not ready to obey God's command to “Be baptized” in the Bible way, then the Lord will not accept your services and sacrifices.

We see the absolute necessity to obey the Lord's command to “Be baptized” in the biblical way when we see that Jesus *“became the source of eternal salvation to **all who obey him**”* (Heb 5:9).

In the light of this solemn warning, let us examine God's Word, and see what He has to say about water baptism.

There are five questions usually asked about water baptism:

- **WHO** should be baptized?
- **HOW** should we be baptized?
- **WHERE** should we be baptized?
- **WHY** should we be baptized?
- **WHEN** should we be baptized?

God's commands about water baptism are very different from the traditions of men.

So we must bear in mind the warning of the Lord Jesus against those who *“for the sake of your tradition [the rules handed down by your forefathers] ...have set aside the Word of God”* (Matt 15:6 amp).

A. WHO SHOULD BE WATER BAPTIZED?

Before He ascended to Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples:

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15,16).

Here we see that the command of the Lord Jesus is very simple and clear. Only those who have become genuine believers by putting their faith in Christ should be baptized. Obviously, then, those being baptized should be old enough to make their own personal decision for Christ.

Some children receive Christ at a very early age. If they have a valid faith in Christ, they are ready for baptism.

The Bible seems to refer to an “age of accountability.” This age comes when a child knows right from wrong. *“By the time this child is weaned and knows right from wrong...”* (Isa 7:16 niv). Until that age, children of believers are safe and secure by the faith of their parents.

“...Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy” (1Cor 7:14b niv).

Again, in Matthew 28:19,20, Jesus commissioned His disciples: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”*

Here also the wording is clear. Only those who have become disciples by choosing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and His teachings, are to be baptized.

Now Jesus said the conditions for becoming a disciple are as follows: “If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters [that is, in comparison with their love for Me], yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26,27 amp).

Thus we see that one who is to be baptized is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. A disciple is one who has chosen to make Christ the supreme love of his life. Anyone who has not done this *“cannot be my disciple,”* Jesus said.

And if they cannot be His disciple, they cannot be baptized. It is as simple as that.

“Be baptized”: Who? Those who have placed their personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have made their own choice to be His disciples and follow Him.

There is no authority in the Bible to baptize anyone except those who have repented from their sins, and made their personal decision to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior and follow Him.

We cannot obey the second commandment — *“Be baptized”* — until we have obeyed the first commandment — *“Repent.”* Even those born in a Christian home must truly repent, and hold their own living faith in Christ.

1. Biblical Examples

During the ministry of Christ's followers, only those who truly repented and believed and accepted Christ in their hearts, were baptized.

a. The Day Of Pentecost. *“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’*

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin...’”

“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:37, 38, 41).

Notice that those who received the word and obeyed the command to repent were baptized.

b. The New Christians At Samaria. *“When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, **both men and women** [no mention of children]” (Acts 8:12).*

When Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and demonstrated the miraculous power of God by healing signs and wonders, there was a multitude of men and women present. We read: *“when they believed... they were baptized, both men and women.”*

c. The Ethiopian Eunuch. *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture (Isa 53:7,8), he told him the good news of Jesus.*

“And as they went along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?’ And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he replied, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’

“And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:35-38).

Water baptism for believers is an essential part of the “good news of Jesus.” Otherwise, the eunuch would not have asked for baptism.

The evangelist Philip's words to the eunuch are so very clear: *“If you believe with all your heart, you may [be baptized].”* This condition has never changed.

d. Saul Of Tarsus (The Apostle Paul). *“So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’*

“And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized” (Acts 9:17,18).

We have already noticed how, on the Damascus Road, Saul repented of his sins, and called Jesus “*Lord.*” Ananias was described as “*a disciple*” (Acts 9:10). Ananias addressed Saul as “*Brother Saul,*” because through personal faith in Christ, Saul had become his brother in the Lord. So the one who was to become the great Apostle Paul was baptized in water as a believer.

e. Cornelius And His Company. *“‘Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47,48).*

As we saw in our study on repentance, Cornelius and his company first believed and repented (Acts 11:17, 18). Then they received the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice that those who received the Holy Spirit, just as the 120 disciples had in Acts 2, were baptized in water.

f. The Corinthians. *“Many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).*

There is no room for debate: **first**, they believed; **after that**, they were baptized.

g. The Disciples At Ephesus. *“Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples... they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:1,5).*

We saw that these disciples at Ephesus were true followers of the Lord Jesus. And their

example, like all the others, shows that biblical baptism in water comes **after** repentance and personal faith in Christ. There is no authority in the Bible for baptism of those who have neither repented of their sins nor received Jesus Christ into their lives.

“The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). In all of the above instances of water baptism, those being baptized first repented of sin and believed in Jesus Christ.

There are four more examples of water baptism in the Bible. We shall now show how these also teach that the Lord's command to *“Be baptized”* is to be obeyed by those who first repent and believe in Him.

2. Household Baptisms

There are four references in the Bible to household baptisms. We now deal with the subject of household baptism in the light of what the Bible says:

a. The Household Of Stephanas. *“I did baptize the household of Stephanas”* (1Cor 1:16). *“Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints”* (1Cor 16:15).

Reading these two verses together, we get the whole picture of the baptism of the household of Stephanas.

The first reference tells us only that Stephanas and his household were baptized by the Apostle Paul.

But from the second verse, we learn that all in the household were **“converts”** — meaning they had repented and turned to Christ. The words *“they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints”* reveal two things about this family:

- Stephenas and his household members experienced personal salvation through believing in Christ.
- They also dedicated their lives to the service of God's people.

Because they had all become devoted believers in Christ, Paul baptized them in water.

Scholars agree that the word “household” in the New Testament would in Bible days mean dependents and servants. Indeed, every example of those responding to the apostolic instructions — *“Repent,” “Be baptized,” “Receive the Holy Spirit”* — establishes this: All three of these experiences are for persons who receive instruction, understand the gospel, repent and have faith.

b. The Jailer And His Household. *“And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”*

“And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house.”

“And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family.”

“Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God” (Acts 16:31-34).

It is very clear that the whole family of the jailer rushed to the prison cell when they felt the earthquake which had set the prisoners free.

Paul and his companion, Silas, preached the gospel to them all — there in the prison cell. They all heard the Word of the Lord.

And because they all believed, they were all baptized. So all the members of the jailer's household heard and believed the Word of God.

Therefore, they were all baptized as believers, and all rejoiced in the joy of their newfound salvation.

Once again, then, we see that it was baptism for believers.

c. The Household Of Crispus. *“Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized”* (Acts 18:8).

This prominent man believed on the Lord together with all his family members. Therefore, all of them were entitled to experience believer's baptism. The other Corinthians who believed were similarly baptized in water.

d. The Household Of Lydia. *“One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshipper of God.*

“The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. And when she was baptized, with her household, she besought us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us” (Acts 16:14,15).

Lydia's heart was opened to the gospel and to the Lord Jesus. She became a faithful believer and was baptized.

On the strength and authority of the previous examples, plus Lydia herself, we conclude: Whether it is the household of Lydia or any other household, **every** member of the household must truly repent from sin, and believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel as a personal experience, before all the members of the household can be baptized.

We have now considered every instance of water baptism in the New Testament. The truth stands out from all eleven examples. The command to *“Be baptized”* is for those who have personal, living faith in the Good News of salvation through Christ, and have received Him as their Lord and Savior.

“Buried with him in baptism” (Col 2:12).

B. HOW SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

We have now established from the Bible the answer to the question “WHO should be baptized?” God answers us loud and clear from His Word. The candidate for water baptism must have repented, and have experienced personal salvation through Christ.

The next question is “HOW should we be baptized?” If we sincerely desire to build a good, firm foundation for our Christian lives, it is essential we find the correct answer.

In the Greek language in which the New Testament was written, the word for baptism is *baptizo*, which comes from *bapto*, meaning “to dip,” “to plunge under,” “to immerse.”

For example, the word *bapto* was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment. When a piece of cloth was to be dyed, it was plunged under the colored liquid until changed into the color of the dye.

Another example of the use of this word was the drawing of water by dipping one vessel into another. The vessel being used to draw water was immersed beneath the water in the larger vessel.

It is of great significance that the Greek Orthodox Church has retained the word “Baptizo” in its liturgical language from the beginning, and has always understood it to mean nothing else but immersion in the water.

To this day, the Greek Church baptizes in water by immersion. We may be sure that the Greeks understand the meaning of their own language!

1. The Biblical Method Of Baptism

Because the Bible word means “to dip,” “to plunge under,” “to immerse,” we should expect to find this to be the baptism practiced in the Bible. This is exactly what we do find.

a. John The Baptist. *“Then went out to him [John the Baptist] Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, and they were baptized by him **in the River Jordan**, confessing their sins” (Matt 3:5,6).*

The Bible could not make it any clearer. They were baptized — in the waters of the River Jordan.

Indeed, the Bible teaches that both John the Baptist **and** our Lord Jesus Himself chose a place where there was much water, to do their baptizing: *“After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and baptized. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, **because there was much water there**; and people came and were baptized” (John 3:22, 23).*

Aenon means “fountains” or “springs.” You can go there today and still see the abundant springs of water. Another rendering of John 3:23 is *“because there were many pools and streams there”* (Weymouth's translation). “Much water” was essential, because they were baptizing by immersion of the candidate in the water.

b. Christ's Baptism. *“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John **in the Jordan**. And when **he came up out of the water**, immediately he saw the heavens opened...” (Mark 1:9,10).*

Our Lord Jesus was baptized in the water, and came up out of the water. He came *“leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps”* (1Pet 2:21). Have you followed His example? Have you been baptized **in** the water, and come **up out of the water**?

c. The Ethiopian Eunuch. *“And he commanded the chariot to stop, and **they both went down into the water**, Philip and the eunuch, **and he baptized him**. And when **they came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38,39).*

Why does the Bible say *“they came up out of the water”*? Because the word “baptize” means to dip under, and the New Testament speaks of no other way of baptism.

2. A Burial And Resurrection

The Bible teaches that baptism is a burial. The candidate is completely buried in water:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death” (Rom 6:3,4).

“You were buried with him in baptism” (Col 2:12).

We shall discuss the spiritual significance of this soon. Here we note that all who have been baptized were buried in water, just as Christ was buried in the earth. The Bible also teaches that baptism is a resurrection to a new life:

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

“...baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12).

“You have been raised with Christ” (Col 3:1).

In water baptism, after the candidate is buried, he is raised up from under the water. Water baptism is a **burial** and a **resurrection**.

“HOW should we be baptized?” There is only one way: in water. The Bible teaches us no other way.

C. WHERE SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

From our study of “HOW should we be baptized?” the answer to our third question is obvious. “WHERE should we be baptized?”

The Bible says they baptized **in** water where there is **much water**. Baptize in the sea, in rivers, in streams, pools, fountains and tanks. Where possible, baptize outdoors as in the Bible, as a public testimony.

However, some churches have a deep tank, or “baptistery,” inside the building. To follow the Bible pattern, it is recommended that it take place where you can be buried and raised up — a place where there is much water.

Chapter 3

Water Baptism — Part II

“It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15).

A. WHY SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

WHY should we be baptized? Because the Lord Jesus commanded it. Because it is the second step in the apostles' instructions upon which we are to build our lives as believers.

Furthermore, there is a deep spiritual meaning in water baptism. Whole books could be written about the spiritual meaning of baptism. We have space only to briefly consider the most important aspects.

1. A Clear Conscience

“God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.

“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal [answer] to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pet 3:20,21 smf).

It is an historical and biblical fact that because of the sinfulness of mankind, God covered the whole earth with a flood of water, saving only Noah and his family in the ark. The earth was completely covered with water. Here the Bible says baptism “corresponds to this.”

How does baptism in water “answer to God for a clear conscience”? It means that God is asking us if our conscience is clear. The Bible says, *“How much more shall the blood of Christ... purify your conscience”* (Heb 9:14).

If your sinful conscience has been washed in the blood of Christ and purified, you no longer feel guilty and ashamed to come into the presence of God. Your conscience is clear. Therefore, in baptism you are affirming to God that your conscience has been purified by the blood of Christ and is now clear. Praise the Lord!

2. A Public Testimony

“Baptized into his death” (Rom 6:3).

Each time someone is baptized in the biblical way, they are testifying to the world that God's Son (Jesus Christ) was crucified on the cross, and shed His blood and died for their sins.

His dead body was placed in the grave. But He did not stay there. After three days He

rose from the tomb, victorious over sin and death.

Each time a believer is baptized, confessing faith in Him, public testimony is given to this glorious fact:

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

3. Burying The “Old Man”

It has often been said that “Baptism is an outward testimony of an inward experience.” It is. But it is much more than this!

Baptism is an experience too! From a study of Romans 6 and Colossians 2, we see that there is a deep and precious identification of the believer with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection, when water baptism takes place:

“We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. For sin shall have no dominion over you” (Rom 6:6,7,14).

“Buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12).

What tongue can tell the blessed deliverance we have in the Cross of Christ! Freed from struggling! Freed from sin! Freed from condemnation, guilt and fear. Sin nailed to the Cross. Old man buried. We ourselves risen in newness of life. This is the inward experience of those who follow their Lord through the waters of baptism.

4. Declaration Of Victory

“Buried with him in baptism . . .

“He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him” (Col 2:12,15).

In biblical water baptism, the believer is certainly laying a good and firm foundation! Baptism testifies before Satan together with all his devils, that the Lord Jesus has triumphed over them all in His cross. Baptism declares that Jesus has delivered the believer from their kingdom and powers. Hallelujah!

5. Acknowledgement Of Faith

“Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 10:32,33).

The New Testament teaches that the first way a new believer is to acknowledge his newfound faith in Christ is by being publicly baptized in water.

We have already seen, in the New Testament, examples that baptism was no secret thing, but an open, bold testimony before others. This public acknowledgement and testimony strengthens our faith and determination to follow Christ!

The Lord does not want secret, weak, fearful disciples. This is one reason why He has commanded believers to *“Be baptized”* — to acknowledge Him before men.

6. Affirm Our Oneness In Christ

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:27,28).

The believer being baptized testifies that he or she is equal and one with all other believers in Christ.

By the shedding of His blood on the Cross, the Lord Jesus has made all believers in

Him “...one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Eph 2:14 kjv).

In Jesus Christ there is no Jewish Christian, English Christian, African Christian, Indian Christian, no rich or poor Christians, no educated or uneducated Christians, no servants or masters, no black or white, no male or female, no denomination or mission — “...for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

So the believer, by being baptized, is acknowledging this equality. The new believer is affirming oneness in Christ with all other Christians in the world. He is joining the family of all who have trusted in Christ and been baptized in the Bible way.

Any baptized believer still holding in his or her mind any kind of class consciousness, racial prejudice, denominational feeling, or attitude of superiority over other Christians, is living contrary to the truth and testimony of baptism. Such a person needs to repent and be cleansed afresh in the blood of Christ.

7. Accepting God's Purpose

“But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him” (Luke 7:30).

Although this verse is speaking of baptism by John the Baptist, the spiritual lesson here and in believer's baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ are the same.

We acknowledge in water baptism our willingness to accept God's purpose for our lives. God has a purpose — a plan — for each one of us. But, if we will not obey His command to “*Be baptized,*” we reject His purpose for us. I am sure that God's purposes are best, aren't you?

8. Separation From The Old Life

“*I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea*” (1Cor 10:1,2).

The only other Old Testament incident given to us as a picture of water baptism is the baptism of the Israelites in the Red Sea.

Even though the level of the water was well above their heads, and the water was “...a wall to them on their right hand and on their left, the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea” (Exo 14:29).

They had been saved from the judgment of God through the blood of the lamb on their doors. They were set free from bondage and slavery to the Egyptians.

But their “*baptism into Moses*” meant full and final separation from Egypt, Pharaoh King of Egypt, and the Egyptians. Pharaoh and the Egyptian chariots and horsemen were thrown into the sea, and destroyed under the waters which God brought upon them (Exo 15:19,21).

In the same way, believers who have followed their Lord through the waters of baptism (and those intending to be baptized) should live lives of complete separation from bad habits and the sinful ways of the world (Egypt).

9. Fulfills All Righteousness

“*Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'*”

“*But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he consented. And... Jesus was baptized*” (Matt 3:13-16).

If the sinless, spotless Son of God, the Lord Jesus, had to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness, then who are we to say we do not need to be baptized in water as He

was? Believers, in their baptism, show that like their Lord, they are willing to fulfill all righteousness.

10. Brings Rejoicing

“And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

*“And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way **rejoicing**” (Acts 8:38,39).*

*“He was baptized at once, with all his family... and he **rejoiced** with all his household that he had believed in God” (Acts 16:33,34).*

The eunuch returned to Ethiopia rejoicing, and planted the seeds of the Church of Jesus Christ there. The results are still evident today, nearly 2,000 years later.

The jailer, naturally speaking, had nothing to be happy about. His prisoners were free. The prison was damaged. But the joy of salvation and baptism so filled his heart, he rejoiced with all his household.

Today, many seek for joy in ways that are not pleasing to God. There is no lasting joy apart from God. *“Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fullness of joy” (Ps 16:11).*

As you follow His path, which leads to baptism, you too will be rejoicing. For there is a direct connection in the Bible between water baptism and joy — a deep, spiritual, lasting joy as a result of obeying God.

Many more reasons why we should be baptized could be listed. But these show the emphasis God has placed on baptism. Notice again that all the experiences of water baptism are for those who accept and experience for themselves the grace and blessing of God.

11. Circumcision Of Heart

“Nor is true circumcision something external and physical... real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal” (Rom 2:28,29).

Paul teaches that those *“are the true circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3).*

The outward rite of circumcision has been replaced by the inward experience of the cutting off of the power of sin and fleshly desires, by the burying and raising again of true believers in baptism: *“You have come to fullness of life in him [Christ], who is the head of all rule and authority.*

“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ: And you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:10-13).

The matter is settled. Baptism is for those who have accepted Christ, and the fullness of His life. These put off the body of fleshly sins and desires, by their spiritual experience of being buried with Him in water baptism.

According to the Bible, baptism is for those who have repented, and have personal saving faith in Jesus Christ. If you have not been baptized since you repented from your sins and accepted Christ as your Savior, then your next step should be to obey God's command to fulfill all righteousness by receiving water baptism.

12. God's Command

“WHY should we be baptized?”

Because of the glorious testimony and blessed experience of water baptism. Because it is an essential step in God's plan for our lives.

Above all, God has commanded us to be baptized. Even if we do not understand all the reasons and spiritual meanings of water baptism, this one fact should compel us to obey the Lord: it is His command.

He said: *“He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21).

The real proof of our love for Christ is not our words, not all the many things we do for Him, not our prayers, not our Bible reading, not our going to church, although all these things have their place. The real proof is this: do we **keep** His commandments? *“I hasten and do not delay to keep thy commandments”* (Ps 119:60). Are you hastening to keep His commandment to *“Be baptized every one of you”*? God's Word says: *“He - commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ”* (Acts 10:48).

B. WHEN SHOULD WE BE WATER BAPTIZED?

“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized” (Acts 22:16).

From the answers found in the Bible to our previous questions, the answer to our last question is obvious.

“WHEN should we be water baptized?” Just as soon as we repent from our sins, and believe the gospel, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts.

The word to act on in repentance and salvation is “now!” *“God... now commands all men everywhere to repent”* (Acts 17:30). *“Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation”* (2Cor 6:2).

In exactly the same way, the word to act on in water baptism is “now.” *“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized”* (Acts 22:16).

The Bible knows nothing of “instruction classes,” “three-month trial periods,” “seeing if it will last,” “getting ready,” “waiting for the next baptismal service,” or any other such waiting or delay. God's command is “now.” On the Day of Pentecost, the three thousand who repented from their sins *“were baptized... that day”* (Acts 2:41). There was no delay.

The Samaritans were baptized in water *“...when they believed”* (Acts 8:12).

The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized immediately after he believed in Christ, even though this was the very first gospel sermon he had ever heard (Acts 8:35-38).

The Apostle Paul was immediately baptized by the first Christian disciple who came to him (Acts 9:17,18).

Cornelius and his company were baptized immediately after they believed (Acts 10:48).

The jailer and his household were baptized the same night they believed in Christ (Acts 16:30-34).

As soon as they heard of the baptism of Jesus, the Ephesian believers were baptized by Paul (Acts 19:4,5).

We find no delay in any example given in the Bible.

How many are being robbed of the great blessings of baptism by saying, “I'm preparing my heart. As soon as I am ready, I will obey the command to be water baptized.” The only conditions laid down in the Bible for water baptism are repentance from sin, personal faith in Jesus Christ, and total commitment to be His disciple.

Right now, the Lord is speaking to your heart from His Own Word about baptism. You feel you should follow your Lord's command to *“Be baptized.”*

Act at once! Arise. Go to a church, a pastor or a disciple who is living according to the

Bible. Do not delay; for God commands you: “*And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name*” (Acts 22:16).

If you have repented, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, and know in your heart you are His child, then obey the commandment of God. Act upon His Word. “*Rise and be baptized,*” right now!

Chapter 4

Standards Of Sexual Morality

By Zac Poonen

Hebrews 13:4 says, “*Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*”

A. GOD CALLS US TO PURITY

Believers, first and foremost, must be morally and sexually pure (cf. 2Cor 11:2; Titus 2:5; 1Pet 3:2).

The word “pure” or “chaste” (*Gk hagnos*) means to be free from all taint of that which is lewd. It suggests refraining from all acts and thoughts that incite desire not in accordance with one's virginity or one's marriage vows.

It stresses restraint and avoidance of all sexual actions and excitements that would defile, debase or cheapen one's purity before God.

It includes controlling one's own body “*in sanctification and honor*” (1Ths 4:4), and not in “lust” (4:5). This instruction of Scripture is for both those who are single and those married.

With regard to the biblical teaching concerning sexual morality, note the following:

1. Sexual Intimacy Reserved For Marriage

Sexual intimacy is reserved for the marriage relationship and is approved and blessed by God only in that state. Through marriage, the husband and wife become one flesh according to God's will. The physical and emotional pleasures resulting from a faithful - marriage relationship are ordained by God and held in honor by Him (Heb 13:4).

2. Sexual Sins Are Severely Condemned

Adultery, fornication, homosexuality, sensuality, impure desire and degrading passions are considered grave sins in the sight of God. They are a transgression of the law of love and a defiling of the marriage relationship. Such sins are severely condemned in Scripture. Making a practice of these sins places one outside the Kingdom of God (Rom 1:24-32; 1Cor 6:9,10; Gal 5:19-21).

3. Sexual Sins Occur Outside Marriage

Sexual immorality and impurity are defined as sexual intercourse or consummated acts outside marriage. Any act of sexual gratification with another person other than one's marriage partner is immoral. Uncovering or exploring the nakedness of anyone other than your spouse invites God's judgment.

Some contemporary teachers say any sexual intimacy among “committed” unmarried

youth and adults is acceptable, if it stops short of full sexual union. This idea is contrary to the holiness of God and the biblical standard of purity. God explicitly prohibits the “uncovering of the nakedness” or “seeing the nakedness” of anyone who is not a lawful wife or husband (Lev 18:6-30; 20:11,17,19-21).

4. Believers Must Exercise Self-Control

The believer must exercise self-control and steadfast restraint with reference to all sexual matters before marriage. To justify premarital intimacy on the grounds of a real or a felt “commitment” to another — flagrantly compromises God's holy standards. The world's impure ways justify immorality. As believers, we dare not.

After marriage, sexual intimacy must be confined to one's marriage partner. The Bible names self-control as an aspect of the Spirit's fruit. This evidences itself in our life by the positive and pure behavior that is in contrast to immoral sexual acts. Gratification, fornication, adultery and impurity must never be acceptable among believers. One's commitment to God's will opens the way to receive this gift of self-control (Gal 5:22-24).

5. Biblical Terms For Sexual Immorality

Biblical terms used for sexual immorality, describing the breadth of its evil, are as follows:

a. Fornication (Gk *porneia*) describes a wide variety of sexual activities before or outside of marriage. Any intimate sexual activity or play outside the marriage relationship, including the touching of the intimate parts of the body or viewing the nakedness of another person, is included in this term and is clearly a transgression of God's moral standards for His people (see Leviticus 18:6-30; 20:11,12,17,19- 21; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

b. Lasciviousness (Gk *aselgeia*) denotes the absence of clear moral principles; specifically, disregard of sexual reserve and restraint that maintains pure and chaste behavior (1Tim 2:9). It includes the inclination toward indulging in or arousing sinful lust, and thus may lead one to participate in unbiblical conduct (Gal 5:1; Eph 4:19; 1Pet 4:3; 2Pet 2:2,18).

c. Defraud (Gk *pleonekteo*) means to deprive another of the moral purity and chastity that God desires for that person in order to satisfy one's own self-centered desires. To arouse sexual desires in someone which cannot be righteously fulfilled is defrauding that person (1Ths 4:6; cf. Eph 4:19).

d. Lust (Gk *epithumia*) is having an immoral desire, which one would fulfill if the opportunity arose (see Matthew 5:28; note: Ephesians 4:19,22; 1 Peter 4:3; 2 Peter 2:18).

True morality is maintaining righteous standards when no one but God will know what we are doing.