

Victorious

Foundations of the Christian faith

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INTRODUCTION

This course was designed to give a foundation for a victorious and satisfying Christian life. In order to fully benefit from it, I recommend studying it together with an instructor over a period of six weeks. Following each lesson, the student will do well to review the material covered in class and look up the references in the bible.

I trust that this course will be helpful to you. It was first used in its original version by the Hungarian churches “Magyarorszagi Biblia Szol Egyhaz”. This booklet does not claim to be innovative, but rather a good working tool able to give the needed foundation to send us forward in a wonderful walk of faith with God.

Lesson One - FOUR STEPS TO FIND PEACE WITH GOD

1. GOD'S PLAN - *Peace and Life*

God loves you and wants you to experience His peace and life. The Bible says: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16).

2. MAN'S PROBLEM – *Separation*

Being at peace with God is not automatic because we are by nature separated from God. The Bible says: *“for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23). Man is not righteous (acceptable before God) and stands guilty as Romans 3:10 says, *“There is none righteous, no not one”* or Romans 6:23, *“for the wages of sin is death.”*

3. GOD'S REMEDY - *The Cross*

God made a way so that sinful men could come to a Holy God: When Jesus Christ died on the Cross and rose from the grave; He paid the penalty for our sins. The Bible says, *“who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we were healed.”* (1Peter 2:24).

The Bible says that Jesus is the way to God -- the only way – [Jesus said to him *“I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me”* John 14:6] and in Acts 4:12: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”*

4. MAN'S RESPONSE – *Receive Christ*

To have peace with God, to be saved once and forever and to know that when you die you will go to heaven depends on your decision to receive Christ.

The Bible says, *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name.”* (John 1:12) and *“for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:13).

QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED

What am I Saved From?

In time, we are saved from living our lives apart from God and under the power of sin. In eternity, we are saved from going to Hell. Hell is an eternal place of suffering where the devil and his demons as well as those that have rejected Christ will eventually go. The joy of Heaven can be contrasted with the horror of Hell. (Luke 16:23, Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:15, John 3:16).

Am I Saved?

Once we have decided to receive Christ as our Savior, the Bible will give us the understanding that we ARE saved! As we live by faith, we are called to understand and believe the teachings of the bible.

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (John 10:9).

“He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (John 5:12-13).

“My sheep hear my voice. And I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:27-29).

How Can I Receive Christ?

No one will start to look for a Savior unless he understands that he is lost. The four steps described above help us see that. Salvation is a free gift and our responsibility is to receive it.

Ephesians 2:8, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”*

In the action of receiving Christ, the four following points should be present:

- a. **ADMIT** your spiritual need. “I am a sinner.”
- b. **REPENT** and be willing to turn from your sin.
- c. **BELIEVE** that Jesus Christ died for you on the Cross.
- d. **RECEIVE**, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and life.

Lesson Two - THE BIBLE

The Bible is a very unique book, written by 40 authors over a period of 1600 years. In it there is unity (you can not find any contradictions in the Bible) and it constitutes a message from God to men. The first main division of the Bible is called the Old Testament. It starts with a very important book where we find the origin of fundamentals such as: the creation of the world and man, the origin of languages and races, the committing first sin and how it affected mankind. We also read in it some of the ways man attempted, both with and without success, to find his way to God. We also find the call of the nation of Israel, and how God has revealed Himself to them.

The rest of the Old Testament deals mostly with the history of that nation, its prophets, its laws, and its religious system. Books of wisdom and praise such as the books of Proverbs, Psalms, Job and Ecclesiastes, make up a good part of the Old Testament as well. The New Testament starts with the four gospels where we learn about the life of Christ and the birth of the Church. It also includes practical teachings for a blessed, happy victorious and fruitful Christian life. The New Testament brings forth the full revelation of God's salvation in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He is much more than the sacrifices of the Old Testament, because He is the fulfillment of its teachings.

1. The Bible is the word of God

The Bible was written by men; however, what they wrote was not their own message about God or history, but exactly the message that God intended for us to receive. This process is called inspiration.

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21)

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

2. Living by every word of God

Jesus said, *‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’* (Matthew 4:4).

To live by every word means that I should go to the Bible as a source of Truth to find answers to my questions: Who am I, where am I going, what is right or wrong, what is the purpose of my life, who and how is God, is there life after death? The Bible has answers. It is like a road map for the believer who wants to follow God while still on earth. Apart from the Word of God, man is left with his own thoughts trying to find his own way. It might seem right to himself, but God says: *“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.”* (Isaiah 55:8). Only the Word of God gives us objectivity that is in agreement with reality.

3. The Bible is spiritual food

To function properly, we need food for the soul, just like we need food for the body. A believer that would love to have an effective and fulfilling Christian life needs spiritual food. A good spiritual diet will include: hearing preaching from the Bible and regular reading. Consider some of the following promises:

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”. (Psalm 119:105).

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” (Joshua 1:8).

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” (1 Timothy 4:16).

4. The greatest Bible teacher

A great habit is to ask God to help us understand the Bible as we are getting ready to read some pages. God has provided every believer with the greatest teacher: the Holy Spirit. He lives inside of each believer from the day he has accepted Christ as his savior.

“But the comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26)

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”. (1Corinthians 2:12)

5. Other teachers

God has given to the local church a pastor who is to minister faithfully the Word of God.

“And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

In the local church, we also have the opportunity to encourage one another in God’s ways.

“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)

Lesson Three - Prayer, Devotional life and Meditation

These three things are inter-related and should be considered together. A devotional life or quiet time implies a time set apart to fellowship with God alone, in prayer, meditation and Bible reading. Thinking and walking with God is not natural as we live our lives in a world filled with stress and temptations. To practice the following exercises on a regular basis will make all the difference in the world!

1. Prayer

Prayer could be simply defined as: talking with God by faith and listening to the still small voice as described in I Kings 19: 12. On rare occasions, God would speak to someone in an audible way or through a vision, but usually God speaks to us as He brings back to our remembrance, relevant words from the Bible for our lives through His Spirit.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14: 26)

There are different kinds of prayer and here are a few examples:

THANKSGIVING: *“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving; and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.” (Psalm 100:4)*

CONFESSION: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9)*

CASTING OUR CARES: *“Casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you.” (I Peter 5:7)*

PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION: *“Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”* (Philippians 4:6)

INTERCESSORY AND PETITION: *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”* (I Timothy 2:1)

The reason why or the state we are in as we come to God is not that important. He simply reminds us that as His children we are to “come boldly to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16).

2. Meditation

To meditate is to think with appreciation on something that I understand from the scriptures. As we meditate, the truth of God becomes clearer and more alive to us. Purposing to meditate is the key to a disciplined mind. It is possible to decide what we will think about and to choose the thoughts of God.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are out of good report: if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”(Psalm 119:11)

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” (Psalm 1:2)

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; But thou shall meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for them thou shall make thy way prosperous, and then thou shall have good success.”(Joshua 1:8)

3. Quiet time

The Bible says that God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentation 3:23). To have a quiet time with God every day will give the believer a supernatural capacity to live a victorious and fulfilling Christian life even at times when our days are filled with hardships, difficulties and temptations.

A quiet time is a time to meet God and receive from Him. That time includes usually the following:

- Prayer and meditation
- Reading of scriptures
- Asking God to speak to you through the Bible
- Memorizing the scripture that we feel will be most helpful for the day.

For your devotional time, choose a time when you are "fresh", and try to eliminate all possible distractions.

Lesson Four - The new creation

Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, not only to bring about forgiveness and one day access to heaven, but also to give us a brand new life while we are still here on earth. This new life has more to it than the Christian giving up some bad habits and taking on some good ones. Through the Holy Spirit, he has received within himself the life of God.

“What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not you own?”
(2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Christian has become a new creation.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

1. A new birth

Jesus simply said to the religious man that was seeking for truth, *“You must be born again to see the kingdom of God.”* (John 3:3). At the moment we accept Christ as our personal savior, we are born of the Spirit and become a child of God.

“But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)

As children of God we are accepted for ever, and from that day on we can call God “Father”.

2. A new identity

As we study what *“victorious in Christ”* means, we need to understand that as God gives us a new nature, through the new birth, he leaves with us the old one (our old sin nature), from which we will be totally delivered only in heaven. That is why the believer still can sin and experience great struggles at times. Nevertheless, our identity can now be primarily in the new creation

because in God's eyes, this is what we have now become. To understand who I am in Christ, and to look at myself that way, will give me the power and authority to experience it.

3. To be "in Christ"

This is what we call positional truth: a special standing before God. God puts us "in Christ" the moment we believe.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."
(I Corinthians 1:30).

God will always look at us in identification with His Son.

4. Who am I in Christ? (In brief)

I AM ACCEPTED IN CHRIST:

1. **I am God's child-** *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."* (John 1:2)
2. **I am Christ's friend-** *"Henceforth, I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."* (John 15:15)
3. **I have been justified-** *"therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:1)
4. **I belong to God-** *"You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body; and in your spirit, which are God's."*
(I Corinthians 6:20)

5. **I am a saint-** *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 1:1)
6. **I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit-** *“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”* (Ephesians 2:18)
7. **I have been redeemed and forgiven-** *“In whom we have redemption through his blood; even the forgiveness of sins.”* (Colossians 1:14)
8. **I am complete in Christ-** *“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”* (Colossians 2:10)

I AM SECURE IN CHRIST:

1. **I am free from condemnation forever** – *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* (Romans 8:1-2)
2. **I am free from condemning judgments** – *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”* (Romans 8:33-34)
3. **I can not be separated from God’s love** – *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:35-39)

4. **I am confident that God will complete His good work in me** – *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6)
5. **I am a citizen of heaven** - *“Our conversation is in heaven. From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*(Philippians 3:20)
6. **I have been given the spirit power, not fear** – *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.”* (2Timothy 1:7)
7. **I can always find grace and mercy** – *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:16)
8. **I am born of God; evil cannot touch me** – *“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that the wicked one toucheth him not.”* (1 John 5:18)

I AM SIGNIFICANT IN CHRIST:

1. **I am the salt and light of the earth** – *“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men? Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”* (Matthew 5:13-14)
2. **I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit** – *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit. And that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”* (John 15:16)
3. **I am a personal witness of Christ** – *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8)

4. **I am God's co-worker** – *“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”*
(2 Corinthians 6:1)
5. **I am seated above with Christ in heavenly places** – *“And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2:6)
6. **I am God's workmanship** – *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10)
7. **I can do all things through Christ** – *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* (Philippians 4:13)

Lesson five - Victorious in Christ

Freedom: It can be found in Christ and it is part of our inheritance as believers. *“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”* (Galatians 5:1).

True freedom is not having the ability or the power to do what I want but rather the desire and capacity to do what God is expecting of me.

1. Conflict in view

Every person is a sinner by birth and in himself cannot please God. By being born again he becomes a new creation and acquires a new nature. He has now in himself two natures: One sinful and one that is after God.

Often, as one struggles to do what is right, he will experience failure. This conflict is seen in Romans 7:14-25. The only victory in the conflict is not through trying harder but by receiving the power of the Spirit to live free (Romans 8:2).

2. Freedom from sin and bad habits

God sets people free through the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2). We can stay free as we receive the filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), and hide the Word of God in our hearts.

Freedom can at times be a process in our experience. Even when the believer sins he has a possibility to get up and go on, forgetting the past because our gracious God forgives and does not condemn us (1John 1:9, Romans 8:1).

3. Our Three Enemies

THE WORLD:

Not the people in it, but the order of things; the system that is under the power of Satan.

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.”

(1John 5:19).

When we understand God’s thoughts and his order of things, we overcome the world.

“For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

(1 John 5:4)

THE FLESH:

We were all born with a sinful nature inside of us.

“For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not”(Romans 7:18).

Through walking in the spirit, we are free from the dominion of the flesh.

“But this I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). (See also Roman 6:6, 11:14).

THE DEVIL:

God has an enemy; he is the prince of this world, the devil.

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2).

This enemy seeks our destruction:

“The thief cometh not, but to steal and to kill and to destroy” (John 10:10).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”
(1 Peter 5:8).

He does this through his organized kingdom and army of demons:

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” (Revelation 12:9).

Our victory is that Christ in us is stronger than Satan and his army:

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”(John 4:4)

5. How to handle temptation

Temptation to sin can come from within, our own sinful nature, or from without. The devil, through his demons and the world system, does tempt believers to live outside of God’s will. When we yield to temptation, we sin, and the result is spiritual death.

“Let no man say when he is tempted I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”
(James 1:13-15)

Spiritual death, for the believer, is the loss of peace and fellowship with God. We can be restored through confession and forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”(1 John 1:9).

Temptation is not sin, and we are promised that they will not be beyond what we can bear, and also that God will provide a way out.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In temptation we must learn to say “no”, yield to God and walk away from any tempting situation.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto god.” (Romans 6:13).

“Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:14).

Jesus Christ will surely help us to see our deliverance.

“For ye have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Lesson Six - THE CHURCH

The church is referred to as the Body of Christ -- The community of the redeemed, of which Christ is the head.

“And he is the head of the body; the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” (Colossians 1:18).

Universal church:

Includes all believers, from all times, and is not limited by any human organization.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18).

The church was started after the resurrection, when Jesus gave the Spirit (Acts 2:1-11). In the visible church today, we see both the truly redeemed and many that are not. In a parable of Jesus they are referred to as the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:25-40).

Local church:

When someone becomes a believer, he is encouraged in the scripture to join a “local” church, which is a local expression of the universal church.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25).

Pastors:

Every local church has one “leading” pastor and his ministry is to teach the Bible and help the believers grow in their faith.

“And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers.” (Ephesians 4:11)

Paul’s teaching on this office of a pastor, is that *“not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.”* (2 Corinthians 1:24).

Church life:

In the New Testament, believers joined local churches such as in Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi and others. The main day of worship was on Sunday, in remembrance of the resurrection. However, they also gathered on other days, when they could, for teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship; and in breaking of bread and in prayer.” (Acts 2:42).

Baptism, for the new believer, is an opportunity to testify of his faith and also to identify with a local church.

“They that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”
(Acts 2:41).

Baptism does not save but it is an important step in our Christian life. See also: Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38.

The church is a...:

Place of fellowship: It is a place where we can go and meet with others who have understood the gospel. As a child of God, we also have a new spiritual family.

Place of service: As we grow spiritually, when we are in a local church, we discover our spiritual gift -- a God --given capacity to do something special for God.

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10)

Place of learning: A disciple is someone that carefully studies the Bible. The knowledge of the truth will set him free.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32).

Place of blessing: God commands a blessing in the church when there is a unity caused by the truth (Psalm 133).

Place to be faithful: God wants us to be faithful to what he wants from us.

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:2)

To faithfully attend a church is very important for spiritual growth and blessing (Hebrews 10:25).

APPENDIX

This material is not included as a separate lesson, but as an answer to certain questions often asked. For the following subject along with many others, your instructor could recommend some good books to deepen your understanding. In Christianity, starting with the apostolic church fathers until today, there is a wealth of books written for our edification and instruction, from which we do well to draw from. You can find them at some good Christian bookstores.

CULTS AND RELIGIONS

During His incarnation, Jesus stood apart from the established religion of the Jews and of the Pagans. In the epistles we find warnings against false teachers and much material is devoted at exposing error and stating the truth.

The abundance of cults and religions is due to the fact of man's ability to seek and find his own way, and of the work of Satan in blinding men less they understand the gospel and be saved (Isaiah 53:6, John 8:34, 10:10, 2 Corinthians 4:4).

What is religion?

Religion signifies a relationship, the binding relationship between God and men. It also includes the observation of the signs of divine communication. Most people have some sort of religious affiliation, but only have a shallow understanding of other religions or even of their own. Acceptable worship to God is to be in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) "Truth" is defined in the Word of God, and this is where we have to turn in order to find an objective source in the evaluation of any religion.

What is a cult?

A cult is a perversion or distortion of Biblical Christianity. We are warned against them. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) It is much easier to recognize a cult by what they don't believe than by what they believe. A sound and clear

knowledge of what is good Christian teaching is more important than to know about all what cults believe. Cults often prosper because they try to provide answers and work hard at making a good impression. They often will come up with new truth, new interpretation of the Bible, non biblical sources of authorities, changing theology, another Jesus and so on (2 Corinthians 11:4).

What is a Christian?

A Christian is someone who believes in the fundamentals of the faith and has a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. If someone would deny this foundation then he would not be a Christian and therefore has no right to claim having eternal life. (2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 2:22, 23, Jude 3, 4). We should not associate with them and their error (2 John 10, 11), but share the truth with them as to unbelievers (2 Timothy 2:24, 25).

What are some of the elements of the foundation of the Christian faith?

1. Scriptures alone is the final authority on all matters of faith and practice (2 timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21).
2. There are three persons in the God head: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, the same substance, equal in power and glory.
3. Jesus Christ is the only savior of the world, fully God and fully man (John 14:6, Acts 4:12).
4. The blood of Christ was shed as a just substitute for the sins of the whole world (John 2:2, 1 Peter 2:24).
5. Salvation is by grace through faith and not by works (Ephesians 2:8, 9).
6. Apart from Christ, man stands guilty before God (Romans 3:10, 23).

7. The resurrection of Christ as well as the resurrection of all men (1 Corinthians 15, Daniel 12:2).
8. There is a literal heaven and a literal hell (Revelation 21:1, Luke 16:23-29, Matthew 25:41).

Most cults and non Christian religion will deny at least the deity of Christ (That Christ is God), and salvation by grace. Any religious group that would deny one of the 8 points listed above should not be considered as Christian in the Biblical sense of the term.

EXAMPLES OF POPULAR CULTS, AND DOCTRINES THEY DENY

Jehovah's Witnesses: They reject the trinity, the divinity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, eternal punishment of the wicked, salvation by grace...

Mormons: They claim to be the restoration of true Christianity; they believe in many gods, they deny the deity of Christ and the teaching on Hell.

Cults claiming to be non religious: Transcendental meditation, Silva mind control...

Other cults: Scientology, Christian Science, The Unification Church, Hare Krishnas...

CONCLUSION

We have not touched the world of occultism and all the non Christian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam. It is important to see that sincerity, devotion and loyalty to a cause or a group has nothing to do with the truth. Satan is at work with His lies and men are not able from within themselves to discern truth from error.

The born again believer is not narrow minded or proud as he claims to know the truth, because he has the seal of approval resting on his faith: mainly the resurrection of Christ.

True freedom of religion does not tend to recognize that all faiths are equally valuable but that all men have the freedom to choose and exercise the religion of their choice. With love and respect, The Christian is called to reason with men, presenting the claims of Christ and the assurance of eternal life.