1. Introduction on Christian Doctrine

Doctrine

When some hear the word "doctrine", they tend to have a negative response. Why is that?
They equate doctrine with dogma and dogmatic people; to debate and disagreement; to controversial matters that cause division. They equate doctrine to thoughts and concepts that are beyond the reach of the average person; ie, it's only for the highly intellectual.

Though some may have a negative view on doctrine, what actually is "doctrine"?
The word "doctrine" is derived from a Latin word which simply means "teaching". Therefore, Christian doctrine is Christian teaching. As Christians, we often use the term for a body of Christian teaching that describes what we believe the Bible says about key things. For example, creeds and statements of faith are doctrine, or doctrinal statements.

The Churches of Christ forefathers had a negative view of doctrine (especially creeds). They had a slogan: "no creed but Christ". What are the positives/negatives of such a slogan?
Positives – it emphasises that Christianity is not all about having right knowledge, and that right knowledge, on its own, doesn't save. It's Christ and a personal relationship with Him that saves.
Negatives – without a creed (or doctrinal statement) how can we be sure that we are speaking about the true Christ? For example, Mormons say they believe in Christ, but not the Christ of the Bible, for according to them, he is a brother of Satan. They have a differing doctrine on Christ. So, doctrine is important in helping us define what we hold to, or what we mean.

Creeds

In church history, creeds were important to keep Christ's church away from error. They were doctrinal statements that summarised the most important truths in the Bible. A famous creed is the Apostles' Creed. What important statements are made by this creed?
I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell [hades]; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead; I believe in the Holy Spirit; I believe in the holy catholic [universal] church: the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And life everlasting. Amen.

The Bible and Doctrine

The Bible speaks of doctrine. What do we learn from the following verses?
1 Tim 1:3-4 – false doctrines damage the church, which need to be countered with sound doctrine
1 Tim 4:15-16 – sound doctrine ensures our salvation and helps others to be saved
1 Tim 6:3-5 – false doctrines lead to ungodliness and strife; sound doctrines lead to godliness
2 Tim 4:3-4 – maintaining sound doctrine will always be a battle in a fallen world
Tit 1:7-9 – sound doctrine encourages believers in their faith, and it helps us to refute error
Tit 2:1 – we are called to speak that which is sound doctrine

The above verses from the pastoral letters, ought to help us see why it is important to do our best in maintaining and having sound doctrine. It ensures our salvation and is important in our sanctification.

In this home group series, we will be looking at various doctrines of the Christian faith. Can you think of some of the more important ones? (ie, ones you may find in a book on Christian doctrine?)
The attributes of God? The Trinity? Who is Christ? Who is the Holy Spirit? What is man? What is sin? What is the atonement? What is salvation? What is the church? etc.

What is the foundation for all sound Christian doctrine? (cf. 2 Tim 4:1-4)
The Word of God is the source and foundation of sound doctrine. It's not theologians, or popes, or any other person. We receive it when we submit ourselves to God's revealed truth (the Bible).

Next week we will look at our first doctrine - our doctrine on the Bible; or, what is the Bible? More correctly, what does the Bible say about the Bible?

Before we meet, consider your own beliefs on the Bible.

Summary: Sound doctrine is essential for ensuring our salvation and helping others to be saved.

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2. Our Doctrine on the Bible

Review: *What is Christian doctrine? Why is sound doctrine important? (1 Tim 1:3-4. 4:15-16)*
Christian doctrine is simply Christian teaching – in particular, it's biblical teaching on various topics, such as "who is God?", "who is Christ?", "what is sin?", "what is salvation?", etc. Sound doctrine is essential for refuting error, for helping us know God's will, and for ensuring our own salvation and that of others.

Discussion: The first doctrine we will look at is on the Bible. The Bible was written over a 2000-year period (2000BC to 95AD) by over 40 authors. But what is the Bible? Since all Christian doctrine is from it, we need to make sure we have a right view of it. Consider our church's Statement of Faith. It says:
"We believe that God has revealed all that is necessary to salvation and life in the sixty-six books of the Holy Scriptures, which are the Word of God. All Scripture is inspired of God, and is infallible and inerrant, and is the final arbiter [authority] in all disputes. Its authority is derived from its Author and not from the opinions of men."

What key points are mentioned in this statement? [discuss]

Forming a Doctrine on the Bible

Why do we need to have an accurate statement on the Bible?
The Bible is attacked by the world and even by those who profess Christianity, over its accuracy and authority. Attacks, left unchallenged, would see the Bible relegated to some outdated religious book. Contending for the faith (Jud 1:3-4) means contending for what the Bible is, as well as what it says.

One of the first declarations we make in regard to the Bible is that it is inspired (2 Tim 3:16-17). What do we mean by this? What don't we mean by this?
By inspired, we don't mean that the Bible just inspires us, or that its authors were inspired in the sense of how we would speak of a famous composer. Instead, we mean that God inspired people to write it. It's God-breathed. Because of this, we declare the Bible to be the Word of God (cf. 1 Thess 2:13).

In what way has God inspired its 40 or so authors to write the books of the Bible? (2 Pet 1:20-21)
Most of the Bible is not the "dictations of God". Instead, God has moved people to write, allowing them to use their personality and writing style. In essence, it's like the Bible has dual authorship – God and man – but with the primary author being God.

Another declaration we make is that the Bible is infallible and inerrant? What does that mean?
By infallible we mean that the Bible is completely trustworthy – it doesn't deceive. By inerrant, we mean that the Bible is not false or defective; it is free from error. Note 1): This doesn't mean we take a blind literal interpretation of the Bible. eg, we allow for figurative and poetic language. 2) We also only declare that the original manuscripts are infallible and inerrant, as translations may have minor errors.

How can a Christian claim the Bible to be inerrant/infallible when it contradicts science, or where there are discrepancies between various accounts? (eg, consider Matt 28:1-6; Luke 24:1-7)
The Bible isn't a science book, but we believe that when it touches on science, it speaks accurately. In regard to differences between various accounts, let us remember that this naturally occurs with eyewitness accounts. It's not that they are false. Eyewitnesses see things differently from each other.

What gives the Bible the right to be our final authority on various matters?
Because God is truth, knows all things, and is the author of the Bible, everything the Bible has to say on various matters is our final authority. Who knows about God and life more than God does? Therefore, our final authority is not a pastor or pope, or even what we think. The Bible is our final authority.

What is the Bible a final authority on? Everything? (cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17)
It's not the final authority on everything (eg, physics), but it is on all matters of faith/conduct.

Convinced of the Inspiration of the Bible

The Bible, internally, declares that it is inspired (2 Tim 3:16). But can we be sure and convinced? What helps convince you that the Bible is inspired, and that it is God's Word? [discuss]
- Fulfilled prophecies – eg, concerning Jesus (Isa 7:14, 9:1-7, 53:1-9), the present times (2 Tim 3:1-5)
- Jesus quoting the Bible – eg, Jesus often said "it is written" (Matt 4:3-10), confirming the OT
- Archeology – verifies the various places and people that the Bible speaks about
- History – other books give proof that what the Bible says did happen (eg, the writings of Josephus)
- Consistency – the Bible reads as one book – even though it is made up of 66 books.
- Accuracy – it accurately explains our human state (sin/death), and the solution (it is contemporary)

What do we learn about the Bible from Psa 119:160, Isa 40:7-8, Isa 55:10-11, Heb 4:12? Why?
It is truth, it endures forever (eternal), it is powerful and effective – all because it is inspired by God.

Summary: The Bible is God-inspired and our final authority on all matters of faith and conduct.

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3. Our Doctrine on God (the Character and Being of God) - Part 1

Review: *What is our doctrine on the Bible?*
The Bible is the Word of God, inspired by God and is infallible and inerrant.
What confidence can we have in the Bible, as a result of our doctrine?
It reveals God's truth, endures forever, it's powerful and effective, and our final authority on all matters of faith and conduct.

Discussion: Over the next few weeks, we will be exploring our doctrine on God; ie, what is God like? Our church's Statement of Faith says: *"We believe in the one true and living God, in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who is eternal, immortal, unchanging, sovereign, holy, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, dependent on none, righteous, just, faithful, truthful, good, loving, merciful, long-suffering, gracious, and personal."* In our doctrine on God we shall explore these words to describe God.

The Character & Being of God
Why is it important to know what God is like in His character (nature) and being?
There are lots of reasons we could give. One is that God made us to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. How can we glorify Him if we don't know what He's like? Or enjoy Him if we don't know who He is?
How do we know what God is like?
To know God, we need Him to reveal Himself to us (Matt 11:27). God has revealed some things through His creation (eg. His power, wisdom, greatness, etc) - Rom 1:18-20. However, God has revealed Himself most fully through His Word – the written word and the Living Word (John 1:18, Heb 1:3).
If you had to choose one attribute of God as the most foundational, what would that be?
There are many attributes we could choose. But it's hard to go past the one for which He is constantly worshipped in heaven – his holiness (Isa 6:1-3, Rev 4:8). His holiness encompasses His separateness, His uniqueness, His glory and His perfections.
One of the things that makes God "God" is His transcendence – He is infinite and transcends all natural limits. But what does Exod 33:11 & James 4:8 also tell us about God?
God is transcendent, but He is also personal and knowable. If you are in Christ, reconciled to God, do you take advantage of how we can know God? Do you pursue Him and desire to know Him more? (Phil 3:10).
We speak of God as being independent of creation. What do you think this means?
God's independence (or "aseity") means that God is not dependent on anyone or anything. He does not need us nor the rest of creation for anything. He is completely self-sufficient (Acts 17:24-25).
Did God create human beings or angels because He was lonely or needed fellowship?
Absolutely not! God doesn't need us – we need Him and depend on Him for everything. How amazing it is then that God cares for us and takes delight in us – Psalm 8:3-9. We are precious to God.
Read Psalm 102:25-27. What does this reveal about God?
Unlike the changing and decaying universe, God is unchangeable (or "immutable"). He is unchangeable in His being, perfections, purposes and promises (cf. Hebrews 13:8 & James 1:17).
Why is God's unchangeableness so important? [discuss]
What comfort and assurance does this give you? [discuss]
If God doesn't change, why does He seem to sometimes change His mind (eg Jonah 3:4, 3:10)?
God responds differently to different situations (in this case, people turning from their wickedness), but this is not a change in God's nature or being. God's response to the people of Ninevah, for example, is still entirely consistent with His unchanging compassion and mercy.
We sometimes speak of the "unity" or "simplicity" of God. What does this mean?
The "unity" (or "simplicity") of God is just a way of affirming that God cannot be divided or separated into parts – all of His attributes are all at work all of the time (eg. Exod 34:6-7).
What is one of the characteristics that makes God "God" according to Psa 90:1-2?
Unlike everyone and everything else, God is eternal - He has no beginning and has no end (Rev 1:8). His eternal being is one of the qualities for which He is worthy of worship (Rev 4:8).
What else do we discover about God in the following verses:
- John 4:24 – God is Spirit - He does not have a physical body or material existence
- 1 Tim 1:17, 6:15-16 – God is immortal and invisible (for He is Spirit)
- Psa 139:7-10 – God is present everywhere; you cannot escape God's presence
- Heb 4:13 – God knows everything and sees everything – nothing is hidden from Him

Summary: God is holy, independent, unchangeable, eternal – and worthy of our worship!

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4. Our Doctrine on God (the Character and Being of God) - Part 2

Review: *What are some attributes of God's being that, by definition, make Him "God"?*
He is all powerful, all present, all knowing, and is the Creator God, eternal, holy, independent and unchangeable. NB: These attributes of God are described as God's "transcendence" – above all.

Although God is transcendent, what is so amazing when it comes to God and man?
He is personal and can be known – and we can know Him because we have been made in God's image.

Intro: As we continue with our doctrine on God, we will consider more of God's attributes.

God's Sovereignty, Faithfulness & Truthfulness

When we declare God's sovereignty or omnipotence, what do we mean? (Psa 103:19; Jer 32:17)
God's sovereignty and omnipotence means that God is all-powerful, and that He rules over all things and is able to do all that He decides to do.

What do the following passages affirm about God's sovereignty?
- Isa 40:22-26 – God is sovereign over all creation.
- Psa 2:1-6 – God is sovereign over nations and not threatened by anyone.
- Dan 4:34-35 – God is sovereign over all, and no one can stop Him doing as He pleases.
- Gen 50:20 – God is sovereign over evil and even uses it for His purposes.

Charles Spurgeon once said: "There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's sovereignty". Why is God's sovereignty so special to us?
In a world of upheaval and wickedness, God's sovereignty (when combined with His love) should bring peace and rest to our life. God's purposes will prevail, and our hope is secure (Eph 1:11, 18-21).

God is not only sovereign, but also faithful. How would you explain God's faithfulness? (Psa 100:5)
God's faithfulness means He always does what He says and fulfils what He promises (Num 23:19). He can be relied upon and trusted. He also remains committed to His creation and to His people.

In what ways was God faithful to His old covenant people? (Josh 21:45)
God was faithful to every promise, not flooding the world again, delivering His people from Egypt, giving Canaan to His people, bringing back His people from exile (Jer 29:10-11), etc.

In what ways has God demonstrated His faithfulness to us who live under the new covenant?
He faithfully sent Jesus at the right time (Gal 4:4), He faithfully forgives us of our sins (1 John 1:9), He never leaves us nor forsakes us (Heb 13:5b-6), etc.

Related to God's faithfulness is His truthfulness. How would you describe this (Psa 31:5; Tit 1:1-3)?
God's truthfulness means He is completely truthful in all He says and does. He never lies. He is the final standard of truth, and we can take God at His word and confidently build our life upon Him.

Other Attributes of God

What else do we discover about God in Rom 16:27 and 11:33-36?
Although God knows everything and is all-powerful, He is also infinitely wise in the way He applies His knowledge and in the decisions He makes. He always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals in light of all the consequences of an action.

What is paramount in our salvation according to 1 Cor 1:18-25?
It is God's wisdom – the cross and Christ's death is God's solution to Him being true and gracious.

What is God praised for in Deut 32:4? What do the martyrs wait for in Rev 6:9-10?
Our God is a God of justice and righteousness. In the Bible, both terms stem from the same word. If we were to differentiate, God's justice ensures that wrongs will be dealt with rightly, and His righteousness means that God always does what is right. He is the final standard of what is right.

Why is God's righteousness & justice important for us to appreciate?
God is righteous and requires us to be righteous, and He is just, bringing judgment on the unrighteous. If this wasn't the case, then people could be as evil as they like, without any accountability to anyone.

In regard to justice and righteousness, what has God done in the cross of Christ? (Rom 3:21-26)
None are righteous (Rom 3:10-12). But God has dealt justly with our unrighteousness and has gifted us with His righteousness through faith in Christ. Justice and righteousness are central to the cross.

What attribute of God is mentioned in Rom 1:18 & Rev 6:16-17? How should we feel about His wrath?
God's wrath is connected to His holiness and justice. God loves what is good and right and hates evil. As a result, God's wrath towards all that is evil should not surprise us. It is even fitting, for evil and sin has destroyed His beautiful world and His glory.

What do you see in the cross of Christ in regard to God's wrath? (Eph 2:3-5; 1 Thess 1:9-10).
God's wrath was displayed at the cross against His own Son, who became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). Through faith in Jesus, we are spared God's wrath. Hallelujah!

Reflect on Deut 32:4 and discuss "His works are perfect and all His ways are just."

Summary: God is sovereign, faithful & true, wise, just and perfect. Praise be to our great God.

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5. Our Doctrine on God (the Character and Being of God) - Part 3

Review: *How does God's sovereignty and faithfulness (attributes of God we explored last week) bless your soul?*

God's sovereignty brings us comfort and peace, for He, in His goodness, rules over us and our world. And God's faithfulness means every promise is sure and true; including the promises of our salvation in Christ.

Intro: Next week we will consider the topic of the Trinity – ie what God is like in His being. This week, we will continue to explore more of what God is like in His character (or nature).

The Character & Being of God – Part 3

When God proclaimed His name to Moses in Exod 34:6-7, what attributes of His did He highlight? What attributes didn't He highlight? Why is this?

God proclaimed that He is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, loving, truthful, forgiving and just. He didn't mention other attributes like powerful, eternal, all-knowing. That's because our God wants us to know His heart toward us. Yes, He is almighty and eternal, but He is compassionate and gracious.

Let's consider God's love. What do the following verses reveal about God's love?

- 1 John 4:8: God is love. He's affectionate and loving in His nature, and thus acts in loving ways toward us.
- 1 John 4:9-10: The pinnacle of God's love for us is seen in the death of Jesus.
- John 17:24: Even before there was a creation to love, God's love was eternally expressed in Himself.
- Deut 7:7-8, Eph 1:4-6: God loves us not because we are lovely, but because He chose to love us.
- Rom 8:38-39: God's love is strong, unwavering and endures forever.

How should we respond to God's love? (Matt 22:37; 1 John 4:11)

God's love should melt us and move us to love God deeply, and to love one another.

A songwriter penned these words: "How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that He should give His only Son, to make a wretch His treasure". How is God's love described? [discuss] How should it make you feel towards God? [discuss]

What fundamental attribute of God does Peter refer to in 1 Peter 5:10? Describe this attribute.

God is the God of all grace! Grace is the expression of God's love and goodness towards people who deserve only His punishment and condemnation. It is the complete opposite of what we deserve.

Where do we see God's grace in the Bible? (John 1:14-17)

We see God's grace right throughout the Bible. In the OT, we primarily see God's grace in the way He dealt with His people who sinned against Him time and time again. We especially see God's grace in the NT through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus died in our place, bearing our sins to save us from what we deserve – God's judgment (Eph 2:1-5, 8-9).

We experience God's grace at salvation, but in what other ways? (2 Cor 12:8- 9, Heb 4:16).

We experience God's grace in helping us in our weaknesses and in helping us in our needs.

How should we respond to God's grace? (Titus 2:11-14).

We ought be humble ourselves – by definition, grace is undeserved, so we can't earn it. But then, God's grace should cause us to want to please God and live for Him.

God is also a God of mercy (Titus 3:3-6). How is mercy different to grace?

Grace is kindness towards the undeserving, while mercy is help for the helpless. When we speak of mercy (or compassion), we refer to how God has a heart to help us in our misery and distress. He has a great heart to rescue us because He knows we cannot rescue ourselves.

Reflect on God's mercy in the following passages:

- Eph 2:4 – God's mercy and love toward us have brought about our salvation in Christ
- 1 Peter 2:10 – God's mercy has enabled us to be the people of God.
- 1 Peter 1:3 – God's mercy is the reason why we have such a glorious and living hope.
- Rom 12:1 – God's mercy should be the primary reason we give ourselves to God as a living sacrifice.

Praise God that He is rich in mercy and has compassion toward us.

God is not only gracious and merciful, but very patient. In what ways has God shown His patience?

He was patient with His rebellious people of old (Neh 9:26-31), is patient with humanity now (2 Peter 3:8-9), and patient with us every day (we can be selfish, faithless, loveless and rebellious, and yet how patient God is with us!). We should be so thankful that God is far more patient and slow to anger than we are.

How does God's patience help you to relate in a godly way to others (cf. Eph 4:1-2)?

It should inspire us to be patient with others, bearing with them

What attribute of God is celebrated in Psa 34:8 and 106:1?

God is good. He's good to all (Psa 145:9) and gives good gifts – every good gift comes from Him (Jam 1:17).

In what ways do you see God's goodness in your life? [discuss]

Consider the saying: "God is good .... all the time! All the time... God is good!"

Summary: Love and adore our God who is loving, gracious, merciful, patient and good!

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6. Our Doctrine on God (the Character and Being of God) - Part 4

Review: *What are some attributes of God we explored last week that we love and adore Him for?*
God is deeply loving, amazingly gracious, incredibly merciful, abundantly good and very patient!

Intro: One of the most difficult Christian doctrines to understand is the "Trinity". It is a uniquely Christian belief. Our church's Statement of Faith expresses it like this: *"We believe in the one true and living God, in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit…"*

What parts of this statement are difficult to understand or explain? [Discuss]

The Trinity

Read Deut 6:4, Isa 45:5 and 1 Tim 2:5. What do these verses affirm? What do they imply?
There is one God – only one being who is God.

Where do we get the concept of the Trinity from? (cf. Matt 28:18-20)
In the NT, we particularly come across the names, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in reference to God. For example, when a person is baptized, they are not just baptized into the name of God, but into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the basis of the concept and doctrine of the Trinity.
Note: The word "Trinity" is short-hand for referring to One God who exists in Three Persons – Father, Son & Spirit. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the reality it describes is found throughout the Bible.

The Bible refers to the Father as God, but is Jesus really God too? (cf. John 1:1-4, Col 1:15-17, 2:9).
The Bible teaches that Jesus is fully divine – ie He is fully God! He created the world with the Father and is the author of life. He is exactly the same as the Father (John 14:8-9; Heb 1:3a)

What other things affirm to us Jesus' divinity?
His works also affirm His divinity - forgiving sins, exercising authority over nature & giving life to the dead are all prerogatives of God. He is also worshipped as God (John 20:27-28; Rev 5:11-13)

What does the Bible say about the Holy Spirit in Rom 8:11, 2 Cor 3:17, Heb 9:14?
The Spirit (together with the Father and Son) raised Jesus from the dead. Who can do this but God! He is referred to as "the Lord" – a unique title for God. He is eternal - only true of God. Like the Father and the Son, the Spirit is fully divine. He's even called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus – cf. Phil 1:19, 3:3.

Are we to consider the Holy Spirit as a force rather than a person? (Rom 8:26, Eph 4:30; Jam 4:4)
He is a person. He intercedes, He grieves, and we can provoke Him to jealousy. Just as the Father is Spirit and yet has a person and being, so is the Holy Spirit.

Are the Father, Son & Spirit just different names for the same person? (cf. Matt 3:16-17, Rev 1:4-5)
No. Several key passages help us see and understand that the Father, Son & Spirit are distinct persons.

If the Father, Son & Spirit are not the same person, do we worship three Gods?
No. As we have seen, God's Word affirms that there is only one God. But God has revealed that He exists in three persons, all of whom live and work in complete unity together.

What do the following verses reveal about how the Father, Son and Spirit relate and function?
• John 10:30, 14:11, 16:12-15 – there is perfect & complete unity in how they live, work and relate.
• John 3:17, 14:26, 15:26 – there is an order to their relationship. The Father sends the Son, and both the Father and the Son send the Spirit.
• 1 Cor 15:24-28 – there seems to be an eternal, harmonious order within the Godhead.

Are there any analogies from creation we can use to accurately explain the Trinity? [discuss]
Unfortunately, there are not. Here are several common ones people use – what problems can you see?
• "As water can be ice, water and vapour, so God is one and three." What's the problem? This teaches the heresy of Modalism – one God, who wears different masks depending on the situation.
• "As an egg is shell, white and yolk, so God is one and three." What's the problem? This teaches the heresy of Subordinationism – three persons, but they are not one (they have different characteristics).

It is impossible for our finite minds to fully understand the Trinity. What should we do? [discuss]
We don't need to be perplexed. The mystery of the Trinity should cause us to stand in awe of God. God is greater than anything else we know. He is uncreated, eternal, and therefore, different to His creation.
"He is One God, who exists eternally in three persons, each fully God and dwelling in perfect unity."

How important is the doctrine of the Trinity?
If Jesus is not God, He could not pay for our sins. We shouldn't call Him Lord or worship Him. If the Spirit is not God and one with God, we don't have God abiding in us (cf. John 14:16, 23).

What does the doctrine of the Trinity teach us about:
Relating to God? He is a personal and relational God, and can be known and enjoyed.
Relating to others? Submission or different roles should not be seen as inequality. Just as there is an order in the Godhead, so God has designed an order in creation (cf. 1 Cor 11:3).
Relating to other Christians? We are to live together in unity, reflecting the unity of God (John 17:22-23).

Summary: There is One God, in three persons, each fully God and all three exist in perfect unity.

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7. Our Doctrine on the Person of Jesus (fully God and fully man)

Review: *How are we to explain the Trinity?*
The Trinity is a mystery which can't be fully explained. But God has revealed that He is One God, in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – each of whom are fully God and exist in perfect unity.

Intro: Another mystery of the Christian faith is the incarnation of God the Son. We believe that Jesus is one person who is fully God and fully man. *What questions and difficulties does this raise? [discuss]*

The Person of Jesus

As part of our study of the Trinity, we saw that Jesus is fully divine (eg, John 1:1, Col 2:9). But unlike the Father and the Spirit, what has Jesus experienced? (John 1:14; Phil 2:6-7)
Although Jesus is and has always been divine, He took on our humanity when He came into our world. That is, Jesus became a human being and is referred to as a "man" (1 Tim 2:5).

What evidence from Jesus' life confirms that He really was human?
Jesus got hungry (Matt 21:18); He needed to sleep (Mark 4:38); He had to learn things as He grew up (Luke 2:52, Heb 5:8); He got tired (John 4:6); He was tempted (Heb 4:15); and He even died.

How does it help you knowing that Jesus was fully human? (Heb 2:17-18, 4:15-16)
We have One, our great High Priest, who can relate to us and who understands our weaknesses and the temptations we face. As a result, this encourages us to seek His help and to pray.

What parts of Jesus' humanity do you find hardest to understand, especially since He is also God?
Jesus' humanity seems to clash with God's attributes; eg, God is in need of nothing (food, etc), He never sleeps (Psa 121:4), He cannot be tempted (Jam 1:13), and He cannot die (He is eternal).

Discuss: The early church had to struggle with many heretical teachings trying to explain how Jesus was both human and divine. Consider the following teachings and reflect on what problems they give rise to.
• Docetism – taught that Jesus only appeared to have a human body (like an apparition), but He was only ever really God. This arose in response to questions like: Why would God stoop to take on a body? How can God allow Himself to suffer?
• Adoptionism – taught that Jesus was fully human, but not really God. The Father adopted Jesus into divinity at His baptism as a reward for fully obeying the law.
• Apollinarians – taught that Jesus had a human body, but not a human mind or soul (these were divine). The problem? He's not fully human. Our fallen minds and souls need redeeming too.
• Nestorianism – taught that there were two Jesus' within the one body – one human, and one God. The problem? The Bible always presents Jesus as one person, not two working together.
• Eutychianism – taught that Jesus' human nature was absorbed into the divine nature (like fresh water dropped into the sea). His nature is no longer divine or human, but a mixture of the two.

In the light of the above heretical teachings, how are we to understand that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine at the same time?
This is part of the mystery of God, which we cannot fully explain (like the Trinity), but are simply to marvel at. The best we can do is summarise what we see in the Bible: Jesus is both fully God and fully man (since His incarnation). He is one person, with two natures – divine and human. The two natures are without confusion, division or separation, but remain distinct, with each retaining its own properties.

Other Questions on the Person of Jesus: (also see the handout)

Did Jesus empty Himself of some of His divinity when He came to earth? (Phil 2:5-8)
Jesus did not give up any of His deity when He became a man, but He did take on humanity that was not His before. He "emptied" Himself (Phil 2:7 in some translations) by becoming a servant – ie He gave up His status in heaven to become a lowly servant, not lay aside His divine attributes. While on earth, He chose not to make use of some of His divine attributes, in order to fully experience our humanity.

What is at stake if we don't affirm that Jesus is both fully God and fully man?
Firstly, the truth is at stake. Secondly, salvation is at stake. If Jesus is not both God and human, He could not be our representative and earn righteousness for us (Rom 5:18-19); He could not be our substitute and take the penalty for our sin (Heb 2:14-17); He could not fully sympathize with us as our high priest (Heb 4:15-16); and He could not be the mediator who represents us to God and God to us (1 Tim 2:5-6).

Is Jesus still both divine and human now?
Jesus did not give up His human nature after His death and resurrection (Luke 24:36-40). He has taken on our humanity for all eternity. Jesus now has a glorified body, which we too will have one day; but without the wound marks of the cross.

Summary: Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person, and worthy of our praise.

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Handout for Study 7 - our Doctrine on the Person of Jesus

Some difficult questions arise when we try to understand how Jesus' divine and human natures operate together. The following is an attempt to ask some of those questions, and to provide suggested answers. We must remember, though, that God has not revealed everything about how Jesus' divine and human natures operate. It is important then not to speculate and go beyond what God has revealed in His Word. Some questions we simply cannot answer, because the incarnation (God becoming man) is a mystery.

How can Jesus, as God, uphold the world (Col 1:17) while asleep in a boat (Mark 4:38), or grow in wisdom (Luke 2:52) if He is the all-knowing God (1 John 3:20)?
This is one of those mysteries we cannot adequately explain. It might be helpful to see that Jesus' divine nature does things that His human nature cannot – for example, His human nature got tired, but His divine nature remained all-powerful. His human nature learned, but His divine nature was all knowing (John 16:29-30). But at the same time, we must also affirm that the two natures never operate independently of each other – they are inseparable and completely united in the one person.

How can Jesus die on the cross when God is immortal?
This may be a little easier to explain, because when we die, it is only our body that dies; not our Spirit. Our Spirit (or "inside" person) continues to live beyond our body. This is the case with us, and it was also the case with Jesus – after His death, He went to Hades and preached (1 Pet 3:18-19).

If no-one can see God and live (Exod 33:18-20), why could people look at Jesus and live?
Here is another mystery that the Bible doesn't fully answer. One answer (based on what we know) is that Jesus "veiled" His glory from us so that we could look upon Him and be present with Him. The hymn writer tries to capture this when he writes, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the Incarnate Deity". This is the best we can do to explain why we could look on Jesus. What we must reject is the idea that Jesus emptied Himself of, or put off, or laid aside, His divine qualities when He came to earth – this is not taught in the Bible, and would also mean that Jesus would cease to be fully God (Col 2:9).

In 451AD, church leaders adopted the following statement known as the Chalcedonian Definition in an attempt to reflect the Scriptural boundaries about the divinity and humanity of Jesus. It is a good summary of what the Bible reveals. Here is an extract from it.
"…our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man… in all things like us, without sin… to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of the natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in One Person… not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the Same Son…"

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8. Our Doctrine on Humanity (what is man?)

Review: *How do we explain the person of Jesus (after His incarnation)?*
The person of Jesus is a mystery which can't be fully explained. He is both fully God (Col 2:9) and fully man (1 Tim 2:5) at the same time; one person with two natures. The two natures are without confusion, division or separation, but remain distinct, with each retaining its own properties. Jesus also continues to be fully God and fully man, after taking on a glorified human body after His resurrection (Luke 24:36-40).
Intro: We shall consider the doctrine of humanity. Our fourth point in our church's statement of faith says *"We believe that God made our first father Adam in His image, and He made him perfect, holy and upright. We believe that Adam fell from his original righteousness into sin and brought upon himself and all his offspring death, condemnation and a sinful nature."* What key points are expressed? [discuss]

The Creation of Mankind

We declare that mankind is the crown of creation. Why? (Gen 1:26-27)
Man was made different to all other creatures – he was made in the image of God; in God's likeness. We were made male and female, with both genders coming from the image of God.

What do we mean when we say that mankind was made in the image of God?
It means that we resemble God. Although we cannot ever have the transcendence of God, we are moral, spiritual, can relate and communicate, think and feel, design and create Above all, we were made to relate to God. In Gen 2, God is able to communicate with Adam, and Adam can respond – Gen 2:16-17.

Adam and Eve were both made in the image of God, but they were also made different. What important truths flow from this? (cf. Gen 2:7, 2:18, 2:21-23, 1 Cor 11:7-9)
God made man first, from the dust. He was made for God and is the glory of God. God made woman from man's side. She was made for man and is the glory of man. This distinction is important in defining our purposes and roles. Although Adam and Eve both originate from God and are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and are equal before God (Gal 3:28), man is given the leadership.

What else do we learn about mankind from 1 Thess 5:23?
We are not just flesh and blood. We have a body, soul and spirit – we are triune. The body is a "tent" for our soul and spirit (2 Cor 5:1, 4); the soul is our "real" person – the seat of our human personality; and our spirit enables us to have life (Jam 2:26), and to have communion with God (John 4:24). However, soul and spirit tend to be used interchangeably in the NT (eg, John 12:27 and 13:21).

Why was man created?
Man wasn't created because God had a need – remember that He has need of nothing (Acts 17:24-25). Man was created to rule the earth on God's behalf (Gen 1:28), to have fellowship with God (Gen 2:15-17), to glorify God (1 Cor 10:31), and for us to know God personally (John 17:3).

The Fall of Mankind

God originally made man perfect, holy and upright, but what happened? (Gen 3:1-13)
Adam and Eve sinned against God by going against God's command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). The devil enticed Eve to sin by eating the forbidden fruit in the hope that she would become like God. Adam also ate – not listening to God but listening to Eve. From that moment on, Man became imperfect, unholy and no longer upright - right with God.

What was the consequence of their sin? (Gen 3:17-24)
Adam and Eve were evicted from the garden of Eden, and life was made difficult. Besides this, mankind died (as God had declared in Gen 2:17). Man began to die physically – through ageing. But above all, he died spiritually – he was separated from God; he was no longer in fellowship with God and right with God.

What effect has Adam & Eve's sin had on all of us? (Rom 5:18-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22; 1 Pet 1:17-18)
Adam and Eve's sin has totally affected us. We are not born inherently good but have inherited a sinful nature from our first parents (we are born sinners and cannot help but sin – Rom 3:23); because of sin, we are under condemnation (God's wrath), and face death – physical and spiritual death.

In this state, can we choose God and make ourselves right with God? (John 6:44)
We are not capable of choosing God and making ourselves right with God. On our own, we are in a state of helplessness and lostness, facing judgment and an eternity in hell.

Despite our sinfulness, what does the Bible say about how God sees us? (John 3:16; Titus 3:3-5)
We are dearly loved by God. He is compassionate toward us and has sought to rescue us from the consequences of our sins and to reconcile us to Himself through His Son and by the work of His Spirit.

Why are we precious to God; so precious, that He sent Jesus to save us through the cross?
We are precious, because we were made in God's image (Gen 1:26-27), and were fearfully & wonderfully made (Psa 139:13-14). The cross affirms our worth to God and what He was prepared to do to rescue us.

Summary: Mankind was made in the image of God, perfect holy and upright, and in fellowship with God, but through the Fall, mankind was separated from God and inherited a sinful nature.

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9. Our Doctrine on Sin

Review: *What important truths does the Bible declare about how and why we were made? (Gen 1:26-28)*
We were created by God, different to all other creatures, by being made in God's image. We were created to reflect His glory, to rule the earth on God's behalf, to have fellowship with God, and know Him.

Consider our society and world. Mankind is far from what he was intended to be. Why?
Adam and Eve sinned against God and plunged the whole human race into a state where we are not right with God. They also passed onto us a sinful nature. We are born sinners and therefore sin (Rom 5:19a).

Intro: In this study, we shall consider our doctrine on sin.
How would you define sin? Why is it important to have a right understanding of sin? [Discuss]

Original Sin

Consider the very first sin (Gen 3:1-6). What do we learn about sin, especially in vv.5-6?
The very first sin was about being like God (v.5). Instead of being under God, it was about being on par with God, and even independent of God. Sin is an act of insubordination and rebellion toward God's rule.

Consider how Eve sinned in Gen 3:6. What led to her rebellious act? What do we learn about sin?
Eve's sin wasn't because "the devil made me do it". She chose to sin because of desire. She desired the forbidden fruit and to be like God. She was not content under God's rule, but desired more. Sin is often driven by desire – lusting after what "I want", regardless of God's rule. Cf. Eve's actions to 1 John 2:16.

Consider how Adam sinned. What led to his rebellious act? (Gen 3:6, 17)
Adam sinned by choosing not to listen to God, but to his wife. He deliberately went against God's command. Such insubordination is an act of rebellion – this is what is at the heart of sin. It is rebellion.

The nature of sin

Consider Gen 4:1-8. What do we learn about sin in this passage?
God describes sin as "crouching at the door"; in other words, it is described like a lion seeking to seize us. This is because sin is a powerful force or principle within (Rom 8:1-2). It is fueled by desires that are seeking to rule and control us. God's challenge to Cain (and to us) is that we must master our desires.

Read Jam 1:13-15, 4:1-3; Eph 2:1-3? What do we learn about sin?
Evil desires from within cause us to sin and rebel against God's rule. The human heart is not intrinsically good, as philosophy teaches. It is fallen and is a source of evil desires. Cf. Jer 17:9 and Mark 7:20-23.

How is sin described in 1 John 3:4?
Sin is not just breaking God's law; it is lawlessness - rebellion and anarchy; where we oppose God's rule.

Read Rom 7:7-25. What do we learn about sin in this passage?
God's law not only reveals when we fall short of God's standard, but it reveals our sinful nature – a power within that seeks to be free from God's law and to intentionally break it. Our sinful nature is so rebellious.

What effect does sin have on us according to John 8:34, Rom 7:14 and Titus 3:3?
Sin enslaves us. As any sinner knows, it is not easy to break those chains of sin. Sin is addictive.

How does God view sin? (1 Sam 15:22-23; Rom 8:5-8; Col 3:5-6; Rom 1:18)
Sin is not just a "slip up". It's rebellion and arrogance. It's akin to witchcraft and idolatry. It's hostility to God. It opposes the rightful rule of God and His Son (cf. Psa 2:1-6). God's wrath is kindled because of sin.

The consequences of sin

Read Isa 59:2, Rom 3:23 and Rom 6:23. What are the consequences of sin?
Sin separates us from God. It causes us to fall short of the glory of God; ie, instead of reflecting God's glory through how we were made in God's image, sin mars the image of God. Sin brings death into the world (Rom 5:12). We die physically and suffer spiritual death – separation from God.

Do Christians sin? What effect does it have? How are we to view sin? (1 John 1:8-10; 2:1-2, 3:6)
We do sin! Even though we have been forgiven of all our sins through Christ, and are guaranteed entrance into heaven, sin breaks our fellowship with God. We should hate it, confess it, and turn from it.

Why is it important to have a right view of sin?
We will not understand the trouble we are in with God, and our great need for Christ to rescue us from the consequences of sin. We don't need inspiration to try and live a better life, but salvation from God's wrath through what Christ has done for us. Only a right view of sin helps us to see this.

Summary: Sin is rebellion against God. It separates us from God, it mars God's image, it enslaves us, and it brings death & eternal punishment. Only Jesus Christ can rescue us from the consequences of sin.

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10. Our Doctrine on the Atonement (Why Jesus died)

Review: *What is sin? (1 John 3:4)*
Sin is lawlessness or rebellion against God. It's breaking God's commands, including doing our own thing.
What does sin result in? (Isa 59:2, John 8:34, Rom 3:23, Rom 6:23)
Sin results in separation from God. Sin enslaves us, mars us, and brings death and eternal punishment.

Intro: *It's well known that Jesus died on a cross. Why did He? Discuss how non-Christians view it.*
Many think Jesus died simply as a martyr of a new religion; or that He died to give us an example of love and sacrifice; or that He died an untimely death (simply was at the wrong place at the wrong time).
Christ's death on the cross lies at the heart of the Christian faith. Why is this?
Jesus' death brought about us sinners being forgiven of our sins and being saved from God's judgment.

Sacrifice of Christ

Centuries before Jesus came, God revealed through the prophets what the promised Messiah, God's Son, would come to do. What is that? (Isa 53:5-6, 10)
God prophesied, 700 years before Jesus came, that He would bear our sins, and be pierced, crushed and punished for them. He would be our "guilt offering".
What news did the angels declare at the time of Jesus' birth? (Matt 1:21; Luke 2:11)
They proclaimed that Jesus would save (rescue) us from our sins and be our Saviour.
What did John the Baptist declare about Jesus, before He commenced His ministry? (John 1:29)
John declared Jesus to be the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"; that is, Jesus was God's sacrifice on our behalf in order for our sins to be taken away (dealt with).
What did Jesus Himself declare about His death? (Mark 10:45)
He had come to give His life up in order to ransom us; ie, He came to lay down His life in order to free us.
The Bible affirms that Jesus died as our sacrifice for sin. What does Heb 10:11-14 declare?
Jesus died once; for all time, for all sin, for all people, to save those who turn from sin and turn to Him.
Why did Jesus die on the cross according to Matt 26:27-28; Rom 3:21-26; 1 Pet 3:18?
He died so that we could be forgiven of our sins, so that we might be justified (made right) with God, and be reconciled (brought near) to God. We have, through His selfless love and sacrifice, been saved.

Special Words in Relation to Christ's Sacrifice

REDEMPTION:
Jesus died to bring about redemption (Rom 3:23-24; Eph 1:7-8). What does this mean?
Redemption means freeing people caught in bondage. For example, Israel was redeemed/freed from Egypt when they were in bondage to the Egyptians. In a far greater way, we have been redeemed from our bondage to the guilt of sin, the penalty of sin, and the power of sin (John 8:34) and Satan (Col 1:13-14).
PROPITIATION:
Jesus died to bring about propitiation (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:1-2). What does this mean?
Jesus died to avert the anger and wrath of God from us because of the sins we had committed against God. He died to cover/protect/atone from what we deserved, by bearing the penalty Himself.
SUBSTITUTE:
Jesus died as our substitute (1 Peter 2:24). What does this mean?
This means that Jesus died on the cross in our place and bore the penalty for our sins. Cf. a lamb in the Old Testament was sacrificed as a substitute for the person who had sinned, so they wouldn't have to die.
REPRESENTATIVE:
Jesus died as our representative (2 Cor 5:14,21; Rom 5:15-19). What does this mean?
Jesus died as mankind's representative. He died for all, so that all may be saved through faith in Him.

Concluding questions

Is there any other way for us to be saved from our sins and to be made right with God? (John 14:6)
There is no other way. Jesus even asked if there was another way (Mark 14:35-36). It's only through Jesus.
We often stress that a perfect sacrifice was needed to atone for sin. Could, then, an angel save us?
No! Even though they're perfect, they're not able to. Cf. a lamb is perfect, but they can't save (Heb 10:4).
Why was only Jesus able to save us by His death on the cross?
Jesus is the only one because He is both fully God and fully man. Being fully man, He could represent us (1 Tim 2:5-6). Being fully God, He could be our substitute and save us by His blood (Col 1:19-20).
Cf: If Jesus was just a perfect human, He, at best, could only save Himself. But being God, the Judge Himself not only had the right, but the ability, to be our substitute and save all who believe.

Summary: Christ died for our sins so that through faith in Him, we can be forgiven and be saved; **saved from** the consequences of our sins, and **saved to** know God and be with Him forever.

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11. Our Doctrine on the Resurrection

Review: *Why did Jesus die? (Matt 26:27-28; Rom 3:21-26; 1 Peter 3:18)*
He died to rescue us from our sins, to make us righteous, and to reconcile us to God.
Why is only Jesus able to save us from our sins? (1 Tim 2:5-6; Col 1:19-20)
Only Jesus is fully man (and perfect) to represent us, and fully God to adequately deal with our sin.

Intro:
The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been furiously attacked by opponents of Christianity. Why?
They know that if they can show that Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then Christianity collapses.
Why should we contend for the resurrection? (1 Cor 15:14-19)
If Christ wasn't resurrected, it means that we are still in our sins and are heading for judgment, condemnation and eternal death. It also means that we have no hope, and those who have died in Christ have perished. Consider also that we have "wasted" our lives in holy living, and we have also been deceived, and have become deceivers by falsely testifying of Christ.

The resurrection accounts
All four gospels declare that Jesus rose from the dead. What's so convincing about the accounts?
The resurrection accounts are from eyewitnesses, and that's why they even vary slightly. Matthew and John were the eyewitnesses themselves, and Mark and Luke knew of eyewitnesses. The accounts also reveal that it was no made-up story - the resurrection was the last thing Jesus' disciples expected.
Read Luke 24:1-7, 36, 49. Why should we believe that Jesus rose from the dead?
Three reasons: there was no body in the tomb, Jesus appeared to believers, and the empowering of the church to declare the resurrection to be true, even in the face of death.
Since no body was in the tomb, what does that imply about the resurrection? (Luke 24:36-43)
Jesus was not just raised spiritually – His body was raised to life. As a result, the disciples could touch Him and He could even eat food with them. He was no spirit or ghost. He was raised bodily.
Some argue that Jesus was resuscitated or reincarnated. What are we to make of this?
Jesus was not resuscitated – He didn't come to life and live a few more years on earth. He also was not reincarnated, where a soul passes from one body to another one; proven by the tomb being empty.
Some argue that the disciples of Jesus made up the story or were hallucinating. Why should we not accept this position? (Acts 1:1-3; 1 Cor 15:3-8)
The disciples weren't hallucinating – they were extremely rational, doubting Christ had risen because it was humanly impossible. That's why Jesus had to give them many convincing proofs, revealing Himself to one person or many people, on a mountain or room or a beach, at morning or evening, many times over.
Why also should we believe in the resurrection? (Luke 24:25-27, 45-46; Acts 2:23-31)
The resurrection was prophesied; Jesus showed this to His disciples. Peter even quotes from Psalm 16 in Acts 2, to help people know that the resurrection was foretold by God. Consider also Isa 53:10-11.

Implications of the resurrection
What does the resurrection declare about Jesus? (Rom 1:4; Acts 2:36)
Jesus is God's Son, as well as Lord and Christ – all His life showed this, but especially His resurrection.
What does the resurrection mean in regard to our salvation? (Rom 4:25; Heb 7:25; 1 Peter 1:3)
The resurrection is our justification; ie, it affirms that Christ's atoning death on our behalf was acceptable to God. We also have a living Saviour who continues to live and justify us before God forever. Also, we have a living hope. Thus, the resurrection means our salvation is sure and secure.
What else has the resurrection accomplished for us? (John 11:25-26; 1 Cor 6:14, 2 Cor 4:14)
Death has been defeated. If we are in Christ, we will not remain dead, and one day at His return, our body will be raised to life (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-57). We will have a new body like His glorious body (Phil 3:20-21).
What else has the resurrection resulted in, for believers? (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:7-8)
The resurrection has enabled believers to be clothed with power by the Holy Spirit and to be His witnesses. We also have "resurrection" power to live out our lives for Christ (cf. Rom 8:11).
Through the resurrection, what has happened to Jesus, and what is to come? (Acts 2:32-33, 1:11)
Jesus has been exalted to the Father's right hand (Phil 2:9-11), where He rules and reigns. One day He'll come back in great power to receive us to Himself (John 14:1-3), and to judge the world (Acts 17:30-31).
How does the resurrection fit in with sharing the Gospel–Christ and Him crucified? (Acts 3:11-16)
It is absolutely essential. In the book of Acts, the apostles mentioned the resurrection of Christ as they preached the Gospel. Without the resurrection there is no Gospel, and there is no Saviour to call on.

Summary: Jesus rose from the dead. He is God's Son, our salvation is sure, and death is defeated.

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12. Our Doctrine on Salvation (what must we do to be saved?)

Review: *Why should we believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ? [discuss]*
Authenticity of the Gospels; the tomb was empty; Jesus' many convincing proofs; fulfilment of prophecy.
What are the main implications of the resurrection? (Rom 1:4; Rom 4:25; John 11:25-26)
Jesus is God's Son; we are justified (the resurrection affirms the atoning work of Christ on the cross); death has been defeated, resulting in us having life and hope beyond the grave.

Intro: *We are all in desperate need of being saved; saved from what? [discuss]*
We are in great need of being saved from the consequences of our sins - from God's judgment, and from being cast into eternal hell. Our greatest need is to be forgiven of our sins so that we can be saved.
In this study, we will consider our doctrine on salvation (what must we do to be saved).

The necessary response of humans

In the light of Christ's atoning death for us and His resurrection from the dead, what must we do to be saved from the consequences of our sins? (Acts 16:30-31, 17:30-31, 20:21)
We must repent toward God and put our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are like the two hinges on the door of salvation.
What is repentance toward God? (Acts 19:18-19; 1 Thess 1:9-10)
Repentance is where we turn away from our own way (cf Isa 53:6a), which is sinful and selfish, and where we turn to God and His way. It involves a change of direction; a change of mind; a change of heart.
Is repentance where I never sin again?
The repentance we are called to do to be saved is all about a change of heart and mind, rather than a changed life. We cannot change in such a way where we never sin again (cf. 1 John 1:8-2:1). God simply calls us to turn –to turn from sin and self, and where we turn to Him. It's all about a turn – a u-turn.
Is repentance a one-off activity by which I am saved?
Repentance is not a "one-off activity". From our first repentance to be saved, we will need to repent often of our sins, not to keep being saved, but to keep in fellowship with God. Repentance is ongoing, but we are saved forever the moment we turn to Jesus and trust in Him.
What does it mean to have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? (cf. Jam 2:18-20)
It does not just mean acknowledging the facts about who Jesus is and what He has done for us, nor just accepting the facts to be true. True saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ means acting upon those facts. It is where we personally trust in (rely on) Jesus to save us because of who He is and what He's done for us.
In order to understand what true saving faith looks like, what do we learn from Romans 10:8-13?
Besides believing in our heart about the facts of Jesus, true saving faith requires us to confess Christ; ie, we don't keep it a secret. It also requires us to call out to the Lord Jesus to rescue us. We must put our knowledge of Christ into action. If He alone can save us, then we need to ask Him to do it (Luke 18:13).
What are the opposites to repentance and faith? (Luke 18:9-14)
The opposite of repentance is to do things our way and even to come to God on our terms; it's about self and pride. True repentance, on the other hand, involves brokenness and humility (cf. Psa 51:16-17).
The opposite to faith is not just unbelief, but putting our faith in other things – especially in good works or religious rituals. Our good works will never be able to save us (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16).

The necessary work of God

Some argue that we are saved by our works – the works of repentance and faith. Yet, what does Eph 2:8-9 say? How should we view repentance and faith? (cf. John 6:44-45, 2 Tim 2:24-26)
Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus should not be considered as "our work" that saves us. By God's grace, He enables us to have faith in Jesus and grants us the ability to repent.
What do we learn from the following verses that help us see that repentance and faith do not just naturally spring up from the human heart? (Rom 3:10-11; Eph 2:1-3, 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Cor 2:14)
No one seeks for the true God; we are spiritually dead; we are spiritually blind; we are spiritually ignorant. Left to ourselves, no one is able to turn to God and trust in Jesus (cf. Matt 19:25-26).
So how does a person come to repent and put their faith in Christ? (John 6:44,65; Titus 3:5)
It is through God working in us by His Spirit – we call this regeneration. It is God's Spirit that convicts us of our sin (John 16:8), who opens our spiritual eyes (2 Cor 4:6) and who draws us to Christ. Repentance and faith are simply the response we have as God graciously works in our life. It's all of grace!
In the book of Acts who is acknowledged for people being saved? (Acts 2:47; 11:18; 16:14)
Not only did God give us Jesus through whom we are saved, but He brings us to repentance and faith through the work of His Spirit. Indeed, regeneration must come first before salvation (or conversion).

Summary: We are saved by repentance toward God and faith in Christ; and this by God's gracious work in us. All of salvation is of God, and thus, we should boast in Him (1 Cor 1:30-31).

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13. Our Doctrine of Election (why are some saved and others not?)

Review: *What must we do to be saved and be made right with God? (Acts 16:31, 17:30-31, 20:21)*
We must repent of (turn from) our sins and put our faith in Jesus Christ (as our Saviour and Lord).
What must God do so that we can repent and put our faith in Christ? (John 6:44, 16:8; Titus 3:5)
God must show us our sin and our need for Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit (regeneration).

Intro: In our last study we saw how we cannot turn to Christ and trust in Him without the work of God's Spirit. This leads us to the doctrine of election (or predestination) which states that God chooses people to be saved. This teaching has caused some controversy in Christ's church. Why? [Discuss]

Is the doctrine of election in the Bible?

What do we discover in the following passages?
Acts 13:48 God has "appointed" certain people to eternal life; that's why they believe.
Eph 1:4-6 God chose and pre-destined (decided beforehand) who would be saved.
Rev 13:8 The names of believers were written in the book of life before the foundation of world – implying God chose or elected people even before they were born.
What are Christians called in the following passages? (Matt 24:22-24, Col 3:12; Tit 1:1; Rev 17:14)
Jesus called us the "elect" (elected by God), and we are called the "chosen" ones (chosen of God).
Read John 6:37-39. How does Jesus describe those who come to Him and trust in Him?
They are those whom the "Father gives" to Him; not all would come, but only those the Father had given.
In 1 Peter 1:1-2, what do we learn about those who are "chosen"?
They were chosen according to God's foreknowledge (ie, before we even lived, God appointed people to believe), and those who are chosen come to Christ by the sanctifying work of God's Spirit.
What is the basis of God choosing us? (2 Tim 1:8-9)
God did not choose us because of how good we are, or because of our good works, but because of His own purpose and grace. It had nothing to do with us – it was according to His sovereign choice.

What is the purpose of the doctrine of election?

Why has God revealed to us that we were chosen or elected? (1 Cor 1:26-31)
God revealed this to us so that we might be humble and give all the glory to Him. Without this teaching, we can boast about how we found God, and how we saved ourselves through our faith.
This doctrine is often mentioned when Christians are being persecuted (1 Peter 1:1-6). Why?
It brings great comfort to our soul. It assures us that God will save us, right to the end, no matter what we have to endure, because He has appointed us to salvation. What a reassuring truth this is.
Read Romans 8:28-30. What comforting truths do you read in this passage?
For those who have responded to God's call to trust in Christ, everything is well with our soul. That calling was part of God choosing us and predestining us to salvation. Not only have we been justified (made right with God), but we will be glorified (ie, be with Christ in glory). What assurance!
How should this doctrine affect the way we evangelise? (2 Tim 2:10)
Instead of abandoning evangelism and saying "God will save who He wants", we ought to be like Paul who did everything he could for all to hear (1 Cor 9:22), so that the chosen might hear and be saved. This doctrine should encourage us to evangelise, for God has predestined people to respond and believe.

What's wrong with the doctrine of election?

Why don't some Christians like the doctrine of election? (Rom 9:14-21)
• We don't think God is being fair by choosing some and not others. But what is fair? The fallen angels perished (2 Pet 2:4). We should all perish too, and we would have, if God had not chosen people to be saved. Praise God that He has chosen many (Rev 7:9). The reality is God is sovereign. He is sovereign over creation, but He's also sovereign over salvation. He has the right to do as He pleases.
• Some like to think that "I deserved" being saved. But we didn't. Nothing in us commends us to God. He saved us according to His own purpose and grace.
What are some dangers if we misunderstand this doctrine?
• We can glory in how we have been chosen and look down upon others as rejects.
• We can dismiss our responsibility before God. God calls all people to repent and be saved (Acts 17:30). So, on the one hand God chooses, but He also holds us accountable with our choices. It's a mystery.

Consider and discuss this salvation picture from Charles Spurgeon:
As we approach the door of salvation (Jesus) we read on the door "whosoever will may come". But once we have entered, we look back and we read on the door "chosen before the foundation of the world".

Summary: Every true believer of Christ was chosen by God – therefore, all glory be to Him.

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14. Our Doctrine on Justification

Review: *God has chosen people to be saved (Acts 13:48). What if He hadn't? Who would be saved?*
No one! Being spiritually dead and blind, we aren't able to turn to Christ by our own strength and ability.

How should God choosing us affect us? (1 Cor 1:26-31)
We should be humble and profoundly thankful for His choice of us. We are unworthy to be chosen.

How should God choosing people affect evangelism? (2 Tim 2:10)
We should have a positive view of evangelism, knowing that as we faithfully declare the Gospel, there will be people who respond. Paul lived in the light of this, and as a result, was willing to suffer for Christ.

Intro: During the 16th century Reformation, the battle between Roman Catholics and Protestants was mainly over the doctrine of justification. We shall consider this doctrine, which the reformer Martin Luther called "the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine". What do you think of this statement? [discuss]

What is Justification?

In the Christian faith, what do we mean by the term "justification"? (Rom 5:16-18)
Justification is a judicial act of God by which, instead of condemning us for our sins, He pardons our sins and declares us to be righteous. It's "just as if I have never sinned". In other words, justification is God's act of declaring a sinner righteous. It is the very opposite act to God condemning us for our sins.

How is a person justified before God (this debate raged in the Reformation)? (Rom 3:21-24)
As Luther rightly declared from God's word, a person is justified before God through faith alone in our Lord Jesus Christ. We don't deserve to be justified (declared righteous) as we have all sinned, but by God's grace we are justified freely (we receive the gift of God's righteousness) by faith alone in Christ.

What were the opponents to Luther (the Roman Catholics) arguing in relation to how a person is justified before God (Paul argues against this in Rom 3:19-20 and Gal 2:15-16)?
They believed that faith alone (in Christ) was not sufficient to justify a person. They believed a person was justified by faith and by what they called the "means of grace" – ie, a person needed to be baptised, confirmed, and do penance, which interestingly included donating money to the church. In other words, justification was based on charity and good deeds – the very thing the Bible opposes.

Why is faith alone (in Christ) sufficient for us to be justified before God? (Rom 3:23-26)
It's all because of what Christ has done for us. In Christ we have redemption – ie, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins so that we are no longer in debt to God for them (Col 2:13-14). Christ also is our "sacrifice of atonement"; ie, through His sacrifice and the shedding of His blood, He has spared us (covered us) from what we deserved, God's wrath and condemnation, for He Himself bore this for us. As a result, God can be just in justifying us, for He has dealt with our sins by dealing with them in Christ – our sin bearer.

When is a person justified before God? (Luke 18:13-14)
A person is justified before God the moment they repent of their sins and trust in Christ. It's not something given with spiritual maturity. NB: Roman Catholic theology states that a person is never fully justified until they have died and been purged of their sins in purgatory (something the Bible never says.

Reflect on what we enjoy by being justified by faith according to the following passages: Rom 4:3-5, 5:1; 5:9; Gal 3:6-9; Tit 3:4-7)
We have righteousness, peace with God, are saved from God's wrath, are blessed, and have eternal life.

Sin, Works and Justification

Does sin affect our state of being justified? Why or why not? (Rom 8:31-34; 1 John 2:1-2)
No! The moment we turned to Christ, we were justified and we remain justified forever. That's because Christ paid the full penalty for all our sins – past, present and future. Justification does not depend on our "track record" but on what Christ has done for us. However, sin does affect our fellowship with God.

James declares that a person is justified by works (Jam 2:18-26). Does this contradict Paul?
When James says that a person is justified by works (Jam 2:21, 24, 25) he is not contradicting Paul, but he is using "justified" in a different sense. He is not meaning "declared righteous by God", but "shown to be righteous before others"; ie, outward evidence that a person has faith. It has been put this way: "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone".

How important is the truth that we are justified by faith and not works? (Gal 2:21, 5:4)
It is extremely important. If we don't hold to this truth, then we spurn God's grace, are declaring that Christ died needlessly, and we are alienated from Christ. Indeed, the law was not given so that by keeping it we might be justified before God, but rather, the law leads us to put our faith in Christ (Gal 3:24).

Summary: Justification: It is God's judicial act of declaring a sinner righteous. It's by God's grace to all who put their faith in Christ; and all because of what Christ did for us (Rom 4:25).

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15. Our Doctrine on Sanctification (why have we been saved?)

Review: *How can a "sinner" be justified before God (be made right with God)? (Rom 3:21-24)*
We are justified by **faith** in Jesus Christ and through God's **grace** (it's God's gift). It is not by works!
How can God, the righteous judge, be just in justifying us sinners? (Rom 3:25-26)
God can be just because Jesus paid the full penalty for our sins (in Him we have redemption, atonement).

Intro: *Why have we been saved (is it just so that we can live forever in glory)? [discuss]*

Sanctification - what does God want us to become
Why did God choose us and save us in Christ? (Eph 1:3-4; 11-12)
God chose us and saved us in Christ so that we might be holy and blameless; ie, so that we might walk in God's ways, obeying Him. This then results in us being for the praise of His glory.
Read 1 Thess 4:1-7. As Christians, how are we to live our life?
We are to please God by living a holy (sanctified) life. This is God's will. This involves turning from sinful desires and being controlled; ie, where we don't continue to do our own thing and please ourselves.
Justification is an instantaneous and permanent state we enjoy the moment we turn to Jesus and trust in Him (Luke 18:13-14). What about sanctification? (2 Cor 3:18)
Sanctification is a lifelong process that starts the moment we are justified or saved.
What is the end result of this process of sanctification? (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18)
It is for us to be like Christ – obedient and pleasing to the Father in every way (Matt 3:17).

Sanctification – whose work is it?
Who is primarily responsible for this work of sanctification in our life? (Phil 1:6; 1 Thess 5:23)
Sanctification is primarily God's work. Just as He worked to save us, He graciously works to sanctify us.
How does God perform His work of sanctification in us? (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Peter 1:1-2)
God does this work by His Holy Spirit, whom we receive the moment we turn to Christ (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of holiness (Rom 1:4). As He lives in us, He produces holiness in us.
What does the Holy Spirit do to help us be sanctified? (Ezek 36:26-27; John 16:8; Gal 5:22-23)
Ezekiel records that God (under the New Covenant) would give us the Spirit so that we could walk in God's ways and know His law (cf. also Jer 31:33). It is the Spirit that convicts us of sin, so that we might repent of it, and who helps us produce the fruit of the Spirit (which is the character of Christ).
Do we have a part to play in being sanctified? (Phil 2:12-15)
We do have a part to play. We are to "work out" our salvation. This means obeying God's commands, such as not complaining or arguing (v.14).
NB: We are not to "work for" our salvation (ie, to earn it, for we can't), but to "work out" our salvation.
Practically, what does it mean for us to "work out" our salvation, according to Col 3:5-10?
We are to "put off" our old sinful nature (put it to death through the Spirit – Rom 8:13) and "put on" Christ.
Romans 6 describes our part in the process of sanctification. What do we learn in vv. 11-14?
We are to die to sin and be alive in Christ. This includes making our body an instrument of righteousness.

Sanctification – will we ever get there?
The work of sanctification enables us to be like Christ – to be perfect. Will we ever get there?
Yes and no! We will never be perfect in this life. That's why we will need to continue to ask for forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9). But one day we will be perfect - when we see Jesus (1 John 3:2)
What can we do to help ourselves be more sanctified?
Read God's word as the truth sanctifies us (John 17:17); look to Christ (Heb 12:2) and His return (1 John 3:2-3); remain in Christ and His word (John 15:5-8); wrestle and pray for God to help us (Matt 26:41).
Consider Paul's words in Phil 3:12-14. What hasn't he attained, but what does he do?
Paul knew he hadn't arrived at perfection yet, and so that made him strive all the more for this goal of being like Christ. Note that Paul forgot what lay behind him; ie, failures of the past that can discourage us, or successes of the past that can puff us up with pride – things that will hinder our sanctification.
Consider the Puritan phrase "No holiness; no heaven". Is this true? Why or why not? (Heb 12:14)
Yes, it is true! Without sanctification (holiness) there is no evidence that God's Spirit lives in us, and without the Spirit we have no part with Christ (Rom 8:9-10).
What's key to the Christian life according to 2 Peter 3:18?
It is not arriving at perfection but continuing to grow in Christ – in particular, to grow in His grace and His knowledge (especially the knowledge of His love – Eph 3:17-19).

Summary: By God's grace, His Spirit is at work in us to sanctify us – to make us like Christ.

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16. Our Doctrine on the Perseverance of the Saints (will we make it?)

Review: *Why did God choose us and save us? (Eph 1:3-4, 11-12; Rom 8:29)*
We were saved so that we might be holy and blameless, and be like Christ for the praise of His glory.
Who is responsible for helping us be holy (sanctified)? (Phil 1:6; 2:12-13, 3:12-14)
God is, through the work of His Spirit; but so are we by "working out" our salvation and seeking Christ.

Intro: *We are to grow in holiness (sanctification) through the work of the Holy Spirit. But what if that work in us ends? Does that mean we are no longer a Christian? Will we be saved? [discuss]*

Perseverance – is it important?

Christians are called to persevere. What does it mean to persevere or endure? (Rev 13:10; 14:12)
It means that we continue to hold onto Jesus no matter what we may endure; even to the end. It means being faithful to Christ, and this includes having a heart to follow Him and to obey God's commands.
Why is it important that we persevere (endure) to the end? (Matt 10:21-22; 24:12-13)
Jesus taught us that we will not be saved unless we persevere ("stand firm") to the end. This includes persevering through testings and trials and persecution.
Jesus gave important concluding words to all seven churches in Revelation? (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21-22). What were they all commanded to do in order to share in the blessings of salvation?
They had to overcome; ie, they had to prevail over trials and temptations and remain faithful to Jesus. In other words, Jesus stipulates that persevering to the end (being an overcomer) is essential to salvation.
What did Paul teach in regard to endurance and salvation? (Col 1:22-23; 1 Tim 4:16, 2 Tim 2:12)
Like the Lord Jesus, he taught the need to continue in the faith, to persevere in sound doctrine, and to endure, so that we might not be disowned by Jesus, but saved. Perseverance is essential (cf. Heb 3:14).
In the parable of the sower what distinguished the true believer from the others? (Luke 8:11-15)
The true believer heard the gospel (the good seed), and retained it, and by perseverance continued in it, producing the fruit of salvation (ie, righteousness). The other hearers (false believers) didn't persevere in the gospel – they either rejected it instantly, or during tribulation, or for the things of this world.
Read Hebrews 10:35-39. What do we learn from this passage?
If we shrink back we will perish; if we persevere in Jesus we will be saved. We must persevere!

Perseverance – is it all up to us?

It may appear that it's all up to us to persevere. What encouragement do we get from Rom 15:4-5?
God gives us endurance and encouragement so that we can persevere to the end. He does this by strengthening the inner man through His Spirit (Eph 3:14-17a) and through His Scriptures (Rom 15:4).
Consider the words of Jesus in John 6:38-40 and John 10:27-29. What does Jesus promise us?
He promises to not lose one of us, and to never let anyone snatch us from His hand, as long as we have looked to Him and believed in Him (6:40), and are a true "sheep" listening to & following Him (10:27).
How should we view perseverance? As a work we must do to be saved? (Eph 2:8-9)
We are not saved by works – any works. Even when it comes to perseverance, we need to understand that it is not a work we must do to be saved, but rather, the proof that God is in us by His Spirit (Eph 1:13-14) and that we are saved. Therefore, all true Christians will persevere, because God's Spirit is in them.
What do you make of the statement "Once saved, always saved"?
This statement is true, as long as we are truly saved (born again); and we will show it by persevering.

Perseverance – what if a person doesn't persevere?

What does it show if we don't persevere to the end but fall away? (cf. Matt 24:24)
It shows that we were never truly saved and born of God's Spirit. NB: This doesn't mean a true Christian never "slips up" or "falls away" for a time. However, they will return to the Lord because of the Spirit.
Read Heb 6:4-9. This is a challenging passage. What solemn warning should we heed from it?
This can be a difficult passage to understand, but is not the person being described here, nothing more than the faulty hearers in the parable of the sower (who heard the Gospel and tasted of the Lord's goodness)? They were not truly saved, and therefore they fell away. This is a solemn warning to us all.
What can we do to help us not fall away but persevere to the end?
We can read the Bible (Rom 15:4); heed the warning of falling away (Heb 6:4ff); encourage one another (Heb 10:24-25); look forward to our reward (Jam 1:12); and fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:1-3).

Summary: All true Christians will persevere, and only those who persevere are true Christians.

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17. Our Doctrine on Assurance (how can we be sure we are saved?)

Review: *According to the Lord Jesus, what must we do to be saved? (Matt 10:22 and 24:13)*
We must persevere (endure or stand firm) to the end to be saved. Cf. also what Paul says in Col 1:22-23.
In the light of our need to persevere, what comfort do we find in Rom 15:4-6 and John 6:38-40?
God will help us persevere, and Christ guarantees it.

Intro: *Can a Christian be sure he/she is saved, or is that being presumptuous? [discuss]*
Does God want us to be sure (consider 1 John 5:13)? Why? [discuss]

Christian Assurance – what is its basis?
Many have the hope and the assurance they will go to heaven one day, but they won't be. What are some common wrong assumptions when it comes to having an assurance of making it to heaven?
Living a good life; doing more good things than bad things; being baptised as an infant (some denominations teach that infants enter God's kingdom when they are baptised); "going forward" at a Christian meeting; getting baptised as an adult; attending church, etc.
The people Jesus spoke of in Matt 7:21-23 would have thought they were saved. Why?
They knew Jesus was the Lord and called Him "Lord". They also did amazing things in His name.
But why wouldn't these people, who looked like Christians, be saved? (v.23)
They didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus, and they were not under His rule (but lawless).
Consider Jesus' words either side of Matt 7:21-23 (Matt 7:15-20; 24-27). How can we tell that we know Jesus personally and are under His rule, and that we will not be turned away, but saved?
We can be sure if we bear "good fruit" (ie, practice righteousness), and if we don't just hear Christ's words, but put them into practice; ie, we seek to be a doer of the word (cf. James 1:22-25).
In the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-46), Jesus separates people into two groups. The sheep will enjoy eternal life. The goats will suffer eternal torment. Who are the sheep and goats?
The sheep represent true believers; the goats represent non-believers.
What's the key difference between the sheep and the goats?
In the Middle East, sheep and goats look similar, but their character is very different. In the parable, the sheep did selfless acts, and the goats were selfish. As the song writer Keith Green put it, in a song based on this parable, "the difference between the sheep and the goats is what they did and didn't do".
It may appear that the Bible verses we have considered are telling us that we are saved by good works. How are we to understand "works" in relation to salvation? (Eph 2:8-10)
We are saved by God's grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, but we show this reality by the good works we do. Indeed, we have been saved to do good works. Good works, then, **SHOW** that we know Jesus and are under His rule. Therefore, it's our works that assure us that we are a genuine Christian.

Christian Assurance – the evidence of the Spirit
Read 2 Cor 13:5. What are we encouraged to do? How can we be sure we are saved?
We are to examine ourselves to see if we are a genuine Christian. Such self-examination is not showing a lack of faith but showing that we take serious our salvation. To be sure we're saved, we need to see the evidence that Christ lives in us – ie, that we have been born again by Christ's Spirit (John 3:3; Rom 8:9).
If the Spirit of Christ lives in us, what will be evident? (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 5:22-23; Rom 8:15-16)
We will have experienced a change in our life (which is ongoing – 2 Cor 3:18), we will be bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and we will have the testimony of God's Spirit within our spirit that we are God's child. This is especially expressed by the heartfelt prayer from the depths of our heart "Abba Father".
NB: No amount of activity nor having amazing spiritual experiences can ever give us assurance. <discuss>
Read 2 Peter 1:5-10. How can we make sure (assure ourselves) that we are saved?
We do this by bearing godly characteristics, which come from the Spirit's work in our life. One quality that was mentioned in last week's study is perseverance. Persevering to the end shows that we are saved.
In 1 John, false and true believers are distinguished. What's the difference? (1 John 2:4-6, 2:9-11)
True believers seek to obey Jesus' commands (come under His rule), and they love God's children.
Read 2 Thess 1:3-5. Why was Paul sure the Thessalonians were saved?
They had a growing faith and a growing love for each other, and they persevered in their faith in Christ, despite the trials; in other words, their lives showed that they were genuine Christians. Does yours?

Summary: Christian assurance comes from good deeds that are the result of Christ living in us by His Spirit; ie, assurance comes from affirming that we have been born again.

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18. Our Doctrine on the Holy Spirit (what is the Spirit all about?)

Review: *Can a Christian be sure they are saved, or is that being presumptuous? (2 Tim 1:12; 1 John 5:13)*
We can be sure and are to be sure; God wants us to be sure.

How can we be sure that we are a genuine Christian? (Matt 7:15-20; Gal 5:22-23; Matt 7:24-27)
We can be sure by bearing the fruit of the Spirit, obeying Christ's commands and doing good deeds.

Intro: In this study we shall consider the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. When we looked at the Trinity, we considered the Holy Spirit to be divine and to be a person. We have also considered His work in bringing us to Christ.

What did the Holy Spirit do to bring us to Christ? (John 16:8; Tit 3:5)
He convicted us of sin, and has regenerated us so that, though we were spiritually dead (Eph 2:1-3), we were enabled to trust in Christ.

The Spirit – prophesied, promised and His coming in power

In the Old Testament, God's Spirit only came on certain individuals. He would come and go. Yet, what was prophesied many years before Jesus came? (Ezek 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29)
God spoke about what would happen under the new covenant in Jesus. His people would all have the Spirit. As a result, they would know God and be able to walk in His ways (cf. also Jer 31:31-34).

What did Jesus promise to His disciples and to us who also believe? (John 14:16-24)
He promised to not leave us as orphans, but to send the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. He would be just like Jesus ("another Counsellor"), and to have Him in us equates to the Father and Jesus being in us.
NB: Jesus taught that it was even better for Him to go so that the Spirit may be in us (John 16:5-7).

When did the followers of Jesus first receive the promised Holy Spirit? (John 7:37-39)
The Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified – ie, after He was raised to life and ascended on high.

In Acts 2:1-4 we read when the Holy Spirit first came. How would you describe it?
He came with power upon the disciples and they became changed men. For example, in Acts 2, we read of Peter preaching with great courage, even though earlier he had denied the Lord three times.

How can we be sure that we also receive the Spirit, just like the disciples? (Acts 2:37-39)
The Bible promises that everyone who repents and turns to Jesus will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, without the Holy Spirit, we have no part with Christ (Rom 8:9).

The Spirit – His work in the believer

By the Spirit, we have a living relationship with God the Father, and have His very presence dwelling within us. The Spirit also enables us, in every way, to live for Christ. What does He do in us?
(look up the following verses and discover the work of the Spirit in our lives)

John 16:13-14	He guides us in the truth, for He is the Spirit of truth (cf. also John 14:26), and He glorifies Christ, and proclaims Christ as Lord (1 Cor 12:3).
1 Jn 2:26-27	He keeps us from deception and error, because of how He teaches us the truth.
1 Cor 2:10-12	He reveals the things of God to us and gives us the mind of Christ.
2 Cor 3:17-18	He transforms us so that we become like Christ (cf. also Rom 8:29).
Rom 8:12-13	He helps us put to death our old sinful nature (cf. also Gal 5:16-18).
John 16:8-11	He convicts us of sin, not just at conversion, but throughout our life, so that we may repent.
Gal 5:22-23	He produces in us the fruit of the Spirit (the character of Christ).
Rom 8:14-16	He affirms that we are God's children, and that God is our Father (cf. also Gal 4:6-7).
1 Cor 12:4-11	He blesses us with spiritual gifts so that we may help build up Christ's body – the church.
Rom 8:26-27	He helps us to pray, by interceding for us.
Eph 3:14-16	He empowers us to live for Christ, by strengthening us.
Acts 1:8	He enables us to be witnesses for Christ, giving us boldness to speak (cf. also Acts 4:31).
Eph 1:13-14	He assures us of our future inheritance (our future hope in Christ) – cf. also 2 Cor 5:4-5.

Because of the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in us, how should we view ourselves? (1 Cor 6:19-20)
Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit – therefore, we are not our own, and are not to do as we please.

In the light of the Spirit's work, what are we commanded to do? (Eph 5:18)
We are commanded to be filled (keep on being filled) with the Spirit. This is not about getting more of the Spirit, as we already have the Spirit, but having Him completely control us.

In the light of how precious the work of the Spirit is, what are we not to do? (Eph 5:18, 1 Thess 5:19)
We are not to grieve the Spirit through sin, or quench the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19-20) by not listening to His word. Another warning is in James 4:4-5 – don't provoke the Spirit to jealousy by loving this world.

Praise God, in His grace, that we have been given the Spirit, and we have Him forever (John 14:16).

Summary: Be filled with the Spirit, so that we may be like Christ and be an effective witness for Christ.

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19. Our Doctrine on Spiritual Warfare (why is there a battle?)

Review: *The Holy Spirit brought us to Christ, and now as a believer, what does the Holy Spirit do for us?*
He enables us to have a living relationship with God as He lives in us; He transforms us into the likeness of Christ; He teaches us and guides us into all the truth; He convicts us of sin and enables us to put to death our sinful nature; He blesses us with spiritual gifts; He empowers us to be witnesses for Christ.

Since the Spirit is instrumental in helping us live as a Christian, what are we to do? (Eph 5:18)
We are to be filled (keep on being filled) with the Spirit. We do that by yielding to and obeying God.

Intro: *We are blessed with the Spirit indwelling us. Yet, is the Christian life "a piece of cake"? Why not?*
We are engaged in a spiritual battle. We battle the desires of our sinful nature (Gal 5:17), and the world that lures us away from doing God's will (1 John 2:15-16), and we are under attack from Satan (1 Pet 5:8).

This study will consider our enemy, Satan, and the spiritual warfare we are engaged in.

Knowing Your Enemy

Who is our enemy? (Gen 3:1; Rev 12:9, 17; Eph 6:12)
Our enemy, from of old, has been Satan. He is also called the serpent and the devil. Together with his demons (fallen angels) they wage war against Christ's followers.

What characterises our enemy? (1 John 3:8; Gen 3:1; John 8:44; Eph 2:1-2)
He's been a sinner from the beginning and he tempts us to sin and to be in rebellion to God – like he is. He is also a liar and a murderer, and the prince of this fallen world – ruling over the disobedient.

What is Satan's ultimate aim? (Matt 4:8-9; Rev 13:8; Rev 12:12, 17)
He longs to be worshipped. Indeed, He sought to usurp God in order to be worshipped. He also desires to get back at God by making us turn and rebel against God.

Knowing the Strategies of Your Enemy

Look up the following verses and discover what strategies Satan uses:

Gen 3:1-5 He tempts us to sin by twisting God's truth and encouraging us to satisfy our desires.
Matt 4:1-4 He tempts us to sin by going against God's will and command.
2 Cor 4:3-4 He blinds our mind to the truth; especially to the truth of the Gospel and the glory of Jesus.
Eph 4:27 He's an opportunist – we are urged not to give him a foothold by which he can "trip" us up.
2 Cor 11:13-14 He comes as an angel of light to deceive us. He seeks to counterfeit all that is to do with God (Gal 1:8 – a counterfeit Gospel; 2 Cor 11:14-15 – counterfeit ministries; 1 Tim 4:1 – counterfeit doctrine; 2 Thess 2:8-10, Matt 24:24 – counterfeit Christ, counterfeit saviours, and counterfeit signs and wonders)
2 Cor 11:3 He is crafty, seeking to lead us away from Christ and the Gospel.
Rev 12:10 He falsely accuses us in order to wear us down and make us give up.
1 Peter 5:8 He seeks to intimidate us into submission to obey him.
Eph 6:10-12 He schemes against us so that he might cause us to fall and to bring disgrace to God.

In summary, he is opposed to God, His Son, God's work, and God's children (us).

Knowing Victory over Your Enemy

Look at the following verses to learn how we can have victory over Satan.

Col 1:13, 2:15 Christ defeated Satan at the cross. We're no longer under Satan's rule and in his kingdom, but under Christ's rule and in His kingdom.
1 John 4:4 Because Christ lives in us by His Spirit, and because He is far greater than Satan, we have victory over Satan – but only through Christ.
1 John 5:18 Christ protects us from the evil one.
Matt 4:4 We are to use God's word to overcome Satan.
Jam 4:7 We have victory as we submit to God, and resist the devil.
2 Cor 2:10-11 We are to be aware of Satan's schemes.
1 Pet 5:8-9 We are to be alert about Satan's tactics and we are to resist him.
Eph 6:14-18 We are to stand firm by putting on the armour of God.

When we do yield to temptation, we can still experience victory. How? (1 John 1:9, 2:1-2)
We can experience full forgiveness through Christ. Christ's precious blood goes on cleansing us of our sins and making us right with God, no matter how much the devil accuses us.

Summary: We cannot overcome Satan by ourselves, but we can through Christ. Amen!

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20. Our Doctrine on Ecclesiology (what is the church?) – Part 1

Review: *As a Christian, we are under attack from Satan. What is he seeking to do? (1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:17)*
He is seeking to devour and destroy us through temptation and unbelief - turning us away from Christ.

How can we overcome Satan? (Jam 4:7; Eph 6:12-13)
We can overcome him by submitting to God, resisting Satan, using God's word, being alert and aware of his schemes, and standing firm with God's armour on.

Intro: *What is church? A Sunday service, a building, or something else? [discuss]*

What is Church?

How is the word "church" used in the NT? (1 Cor 1:1-2)
It is used to refer to the assembly of people who have been saved and sanctified through our Lord Jesus Christ. "Church" refers, not to a building or a service, but to God's people.

Look up Rom 16:5, Acts 8:1, Acts 9:31. How is the word "church" used?
It's used to describe different types of groups of believers – a house church, the church of an entire city, the church in an entire region, and the church throughout the whole world. But though "church" may refer to different types of groups of believers, we all have one thing in common: we are followers of Christ.

The Greek word for church, ekklesia, means "called out ones". Why is this fitting? (1 Pet 2:9-10)
Christians have been called by God, out of this fallen world and out of Satan's kingdom, to be part of Christ's glorious kingdom (Col 1:13). We have been rescued out of this present evil age (Gal 1:3-5).

What is the Church likened to?

How is the church described in 1 Tim 3:14-15. What does this imply?
The church is God's family – God's household. Thus, we are to view other believers as brothers and sisters, and God as our Father, and Jesus as our elder brother (Heb 2:11-12) – though He also is our King and Redeemer. Consider Jesus' words in Mark 3:32-35 ("mother" is referring to spiritual leaders).

In 2 Cor 11:2 and Rev 19:7-9, what is God's church referred to? What does this mean?
God's church is referred to as a bride; Christ's bride. We are married to Christ, and as His bride, we are to be submissive and faithful to Him. Jesus, on His part, loves us and will nurture and care for us - forever.

In 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27 and Eph 4:12, 15-16 how does Paul describe the church? Why?
We are the body of Christ. Just as our natural body has various members, so in Christ, we are different from each other, as we have different spiritual gifts and have different abilities and responsibilities. But we are members of Christ's body, and together we make up His body – with Jesus being the head.

Consider 1 Peter 2:4-5. What are we and what is the church, according to this passage?
Every Christian is a "living stone", founded on Christ the cornerstone, and together we have been put together with other believers to form a spiritual house (a temple). So, the church is God's temple, which He dwells in, and collectively, we are called to offer sacrifices of praise and to minister to our God.

What should Church look like?

When did the church start? What was significant on the day the church was born? (Acts 2:1-4)
The church started on the Day of Pentecost – some 50 days after Christ's resurrection. Every follower of Jesus was filled with His Spirit and was instantly enabled to live for Him and to be His witnesses. Ever since that day, new believers have been given the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) upon repenting and trusting in Jesus. As a result, the church is a group of believers who are blessed with the indwelling Spirit of God.

What characterised the New Testament church, according to Acts 2:42-47?
They were devoted to the apostles' teaching (which is now the New Testament), to fellowship (encouraging one another in Christ), to breaking of bread (remembering Jesus through communion) and to prayer. They met together regularly to worship God and to encourage and care for each other.

What do we also learn about the church in Acts 4:32-35?
There was unity (cf. Eph 4:3-6). This showed in the way they shared their belongings with each other, and made sure no one was in need. They were also abounding in grace. This is what church should look like.

Because of the importance of "church" what are we commanded to do in Heb 10:24-25?
We are not to stop meeting together, but come together and encourage one another.

Summary: The church is God's people in Christ, who have been called out of this world, filled with His Spirit and who meet together for mutual encouragement and edification.

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21. Our Doctrine on Ecclesiology (what is the church's purpose?) – Part 2

Review: *What is the church? (1 Cor 1:1-2; 12:27)*
The church is God's people who follow Christ. We are also the body of Christ.
What should the church look like? (Acts 2:42-47)
As God's people we are to be devoted to His word, to fellowship, to breaking bread (communion) and to prayer, as well as to being loving and caring of each other, and doing our best to maintain unity (Eph 4:3).

Intro: *What's the purpose of the church?*
To help the poor? To maintain morality in society? To guard the path to heaven? [discuss]
In this study we shall consider the three main purposes of God's church in Christ.

To minister to God

According to 1 Peter 2:9-10, what purpose does God have for His church?
God desires us to be "declaring His praises"; ie, we are to be worshippers of our God. We have been made to worship and saved to worship. God seeks such worshippers (John 4:23-24).
In 1 Pet 2:4-5 a picture is given of the church. What does this picture declare about our purpose?
We are to be like a spiritual house (a temple), where each person is a holy priest offering sacrifices to God. Under the New Covenant, such sacrifices are not animal sacrifices, but offering ourselves as a living sacrifice to God (cf. Rom 12:1). So, worship isn't just praising God, but giving ourselves to His service.
What do we also see in Eph 1:11-12?
God chose us and predestined us to salvation in Christ so that we might be for "the praise of His glory". This passage highlights how worship is a major purpose for His church and individual Christians.
Eph 3:15-17 highlights how a worshipping church should be. What do we observe?
We are to be peaceful, united, on the truth, and thankful to God. We are to sing songs with gratitude to God, and we are to do acts of service for the glory of God. Are we fulfilling our purpose?

To minister to God's people

Not only are we to minister to God, but according to Heb 10:24-25, who else are we to minister to?
We are to minister to each other by encouraging one another and spurring one another on. This means that we need to be meeting together. We can't do this ministry if we are independent of each other.
Read Eph 4:11-13. What's the reason why we even have spiritual gifts in the church?
God has given us spiritual gifts so that we can equip each other for works of service, and help each other in our faith and knowledge of God, and thereby enable one another to become mature in Christ.
Read Eph 4:29-32. What do we learn from this passage in regard to our purpose?
Even our very behaviour and our talk is to be such that we build each other up and help one another.
What other ways can we minister to each other? (2 Tim 3:1; 1 John 3:16-18; John 13:34-35)
We can pray for each other, and help one other, and above all, we can love each other with Christ's love.
God has called us to minister to each other, but who are we really ministering to? (Matt 25:34-40)
When we minister to fellow believers, we are ministering to Christ Himself, for He lives in them.

To minister to God's world

What's our purpose in relation to God's world? (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)
We have the purpose of helping non-believers become followers of Christ. We are to "make disciples", baptising them and teaching them Christ's way, and we are to be Christ's witnesses.
As we fulfil the Great Commission, what two things must we maintain according to Phil 2:14-16?
We must seek to live holy lives in the midst of a perverted world, and we must hold out the "word of life"; ie, the Gospel. Holiness is needed to commend the Gospel to others, and the Gospel is needed so that people can believe in Christ and be saved. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation (Rom 1:16).
Read 1 Tim 3:14-15. What is the church? How does this tie into our purpose in the world?
We are the pillar and support of the truth. We have been entrusted with God's revelation and Gospel. This we must keep and preserve, so that we can accurately declare God's truth to others (cf. 1 Tim 4:15-16).
Even if not many respond to the Gospel, what must we always do? (Acts 2:40; Ezek 3:17-19)
We must warn people of the coming judgment and the need to be saved. Like Christ, we must warn them.
How are we to fulfil this purpose God has given His church? (Phil 3:3; Eph 4:29-30; Acts 1:8)
We are to do it by the Spirit. He enables us to worship, to minister to believers, and to be witnesses.

Summary: The church is to worship God, to equip and encourage God's people, and to be witnesses of the Gospel of Christ to God's world so that people might be saved.

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22. Our Doctrine on Ecclesiology (how is church to be governed?) – Part 3

Review: *What is the threefold purpose of the church? (1 Pet 2:9, Eph 4:11-13, Acts 1:8)*
The church, and each individual in her, is to minister to God, minister to fellow believers and minister to unbelievers; or to glorify God, to build up and encourage the saints and to reach the lost with the Gospel.
Intro: *What is the church and how should it be governed? Is it a business run by a CEO? Is it an organization that is to be governed by a pope or archbishop? [discuss]*
In this study we shall consider how the church is to be governed and run.

The Lord

Who is the head of the local church; the bishop, the senior pastor, the eldership? (Eph 1:22-23)
The head of every local church is Jesus Christ the Lord. He is to be the head of every Christian and every church; our cry is "Jesus is Lord" (Phil 2:11).

How is each church and individual Christian to have Jesus Christ rule them? (Matt 7:24, Rev 2:11)
Jesus is to rule over us by His Word and by His Spirit. We need to follow His truth, especially as revealed in the New Testament, and we are to listen to His Spirit.

What is the serious problem facing the modern church today, do you think? (Matt 24:10-11, 24-25)
Our danger is to lose connection with our Head and His Word, and to look to leaders to guide us and to lead us. In the last days, Jesus said that there would be many false leaders that would lead people astray.

Elders

Although Jesus is Lord of His church, He appointed apostles to lay the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20). Under the direction of Christ, what did the apostles do? (Acts 14:21-23)
They appointed elders in every church; godly, mature men to lead each local church.

With Jesus as Lord, what is the role of an elder? (1 Pet 5:1-4)
The elders are to shepherd God's people under the rule and direction of the Chief Shepherd. They are not to "lord it over" others, but to be humble and to lead by example.

Who can be an elder (or overseer)? (1 Tim 3:1-7)
Only men who are spiritually mature, with good character and good heart, and who are able to teach; and they manage their own households well. Assumed, of course, is that they are saved men, who seek to be filled with the Spirit, and have Jesus shepherding them.

Can a woman be an elder? (1 Tim 2:12-14)
Nowhere in the NT is a woman appointed an elder. Through the apostles, God chose select men to be elders in each church. Because an elder is given the authority by Christ to lead the church and to preach, a woman is not permitted to be an elder. This rule in the NT was not according to culture, but according to God's rule that He established before the Fall (cf. 1 Tim 2:12-14).

What spiritual gifts, do you think, would be important for an elder to have? (Eph 4:11b)
They are to have the gift of teaching and pastoral care, and it is most helpful if they also have discernment and wisdom in dealing with issues that arise.

Do you think a pastor of a church should be above the eldership (like a CEO in a business)?
No! Pastors are to be viewed as a fellow elder. The difference for a pastor, is that he has been set aside by the church to be a full-time elder; compared to an elder who has secular work. The church is not a business, having a CEO, but is God's household, having shepherds to lead His people.

What attitude are we to have toward the elders in a church? (1 Pet 5:5; 1 Tim 5:17-19)
We are to respect them and submit to them, as they submit to Christ. And we should pray for them.

Deacons

The only other official appointment in a local church, where they are given authority to lead is what we call "the Deacon". What do we learn about the first deacons appointed in Acts 6:1-6?
They were godly men, full of faith and the Holy Spirit. They were appointed to deal with matters of administration so that the apostles (and then later, the elders) could be free to shepherd God's people.

As for elders, we have teaching on who can be an deacon. What do we learn in 1 Tim 3:8-13?
They are to be godly men who lead their own households well.

Can a woman be a deacon? (Rom 16:1)
In 1 Tim 3:8-13, only men are to be appointed as deacons. V.11, according to the Greek, should be translated as "Wives"; ie, deacons' wives. But in another sense, as we see in Rom 16:1, all Christians, men and women, are to deacons, as the word deacon means "servant". We are all to serve one another.

What can others do who aren't elders and deacons?
We have spiritual gifts to serve each other with. Even some women have the spiritual gift to teach, teaching younger women (Tit 2:3-5), young people. God has a part, in His church, for each of us to serve.

Summary: The church is to governed by a team of elders who seek to shepherd the flock under the great shepherd – Jesus Christ. We also have deacons to look after the administration of the church.

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23. Our Doctrine on Baptism

Review: *How should the church be governed? (Eph 1:22-23; 1 Peter 5:1-4)*
The church is to come under the Lordship of Christ. The church is His body. Jesus has also appointed elders to govern His church under His rule. Elders are to shepherd under the Chief Shepherd Jesus.

What attitude are we to have toward the elders in a church? (1 Pet 5:5; 1 Tim 5:17-19)
We are to respect them and submit to them, as they submit to Christ. And we should pray for them.

Intro: *This study will look at the Christian practice of baptism. We refer to this (and the Lord's Supper) as an "ordinance" rather than a "sacrament" (as other denominations do). Why? [discuss]*
An ordinance is a term used to indicate that a particular Christian practice, like baptism, is an outward expression of faith. We do not use the term "sacrament", as it indicates that a certain practice is done to receive God's grace. We believe that God's grace comes to us only through faith in Christ.

Why baptise?

Why do Christians baptise? (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-41)
Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples (followers of Christ), and then to baptise them. As soon as the church was born, this practice immediately began, as we see in the book of Acts.

John the Baptist baptised. Are Christians simply following John's practice? (Acts 19:1-5)
No! John's baptism was in the context of calling people to repentance; it was a public act to declare that a person was repenting of their sins. Christian baptism is different. It's a public act to declare that we belong to Christ. That's why we baptise people "in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19), or baptise them "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).

According to Acts 2:38, do we get baptised to be saved? (cf. also 1 Cor 1:14)
Even though baptism is mentioned in Acts 2:38 as something Peter called the people to do, baptism is not a condition of salvation. Paul was preaching the Gospel and people were being saved, but he didn't baptise people (except for a few). If baptism saves us, Paul would also have had to baptise people.

How can we be sure that baptism isn't essential for salvation? (John 3:16; Rom 10:8-13)
There is no mention of baptism in many key texts that tell us what we must do to be saved. If baptism was essential, then it would have to be mentioned each time. (cf. also Luke 23:42-43 – the repentant thief).

What must we always emphasise in regard to how a person is saved? (Eph 2:8-9)
We are saved by God's grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not of works, which means it's not through baptism or anything else, otherwise that would be a work we must do to be saved.

Consider Acts 16:29-34. What do we learn from this story in regard to salvation and baptism?
Salvation is purely based on faith in Christ – not baptism (v. 31). But we are baptised, not to be saved, but to express our faith, and that's why the jailer was baptised that very night.

Who should be baptised and how should it be done?

Who should be baptised? (Acts 10:44-48; 16:14-15)
In the New Testament only people who believe in Jesus were baptised. That's why we often refer to it as "believers' baptism". Faith must precede baptism. Therefore, it is not for unbelievers or infants.
NB: Although there are some references to households being baptised, that does not mean children were baptised. Households included parents and servants. All those who believed would have been baptised.

How should we baptise? (Acts 8:36-39)
The Greek word for baptism means to immerse. There is no hint in the New Testament that it is to be done by sprinkling or pouring. This practice was wrongly introduced over time. People were baptised in rivers and lakes, and it was important for a person to be immersed, due to what baptism symbolises.

What's the point of baptism?

Baptism may be a strange act to unbelievers but it's full of meaning for us. Why? (Rom 6:1-4)
Baptism signifies what happened the moment we trusted in Jesus. When we go under the water it symbolises how we died to self. When we come up out of the water, it symbolises how we have new life through Christ's Spirit. Baptism itself is not when this happens – this occurs when we trust in Christ.

What else does baptism symbolise according to 1 Peter 3:21-22?
Baptism symbolises us being washed clean of our sins – again, this doesn't happen when we are baptised but when we appeal to God through Christ for mercy and forgiveness. Because baptism is so closely connected in meaning to our salvation, that's why baptism can appear in such texts as this one.

Above all, what is the main point of baptism? (Matt 28:19)
It is being obedient to Jesus Christ who has saved us. It is identifying ourselves with Christ as we are baptised into His name. It is also God's way for us to publicly declare our faith in Christ to others.

Have you been baptised? Why did you? Or Why haven't you?

Summary: Baptism is for believers. It shows that we belong to Christ and it's a picture of our new life in Him.

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24. Our Doctrine on the Lord's Supper (Communion)

Review: *Why should a person be baptised? (Matt 28:18-20)*
Christ commanded His followers to be baptised; it is Christ's way for us to publicly declare our faith.
Do we need to be baptised to be saved? (Acts 16:30-34)
We are saved by faith in Christ (Eph 2:8-9); but we ought to be baptised to show our faith.

Intro: This study will look at another Christian practice known as the Lord's Supper. It is also known as Communion and the Eucharist. What do these various terms indicate? <discuss>
The term "the Lord's Supper" reminds us where this meal came from; "Communion" indicates that we commune with Christ as we remember His death; "Eucharist" means giving thanks for Christ.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper came out of the Jewish Passover feast (Luke 22:14-16). What are the links between the Lord's Supper and the Passover? (Exod 12:1-13)
The first Passover was a meal eaten just before God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt. An unblemished lamb was killed and its blood sprinkled on the door to deliver the firstborn from death. The Lord's judgment passed over because of the blood. Likewise, the first Lord's Supper was a meal eaten just before Christ delivered us from sin and Satan. He, the unblemished Lamb of God (John 1:29), would shed His blood so that we could be delivered from eternal death and have God's judgment pass over us.
What significant things do we learn about the Lord's Supper from Luke 22:19-20?
Two items were taken from the Passover feast and given special meaning as the disciples shared in them. A piece of unleavened bread was taken and broken, by which Jesus asked His disciples to remember how His body was given for them. A cup (of red wine) was taken, by which Jesus asked His disciples to remember how the New Covenant was made possible through His blood.
In Luke 22:19, the word "given" is used. Why? (Matt 26:51-54; John 10:18; 18:4-8)
Jesus truly gave His body to be crucified for us. His life was not taken from Him by force. He laid it down.
In Luke 22:20, the words "poured out" are used. Why? (cf. Phil 2:17)
Like the drink offering in the Old Testament, Jesus' blood was poured out to atone for sin.
What has Jesus' blood achieved for us? (Luke 22:20; Heb 9:11-15)
Through pouring out His blood and atoning for our sins, Jesus has brought in the New Covenant. In the New Covenant we are forgiven of our sins and made right with God through faith in Christ.
In 1 Cor 11:23-34 we have the most extensive teaching on the Lord's Supper – all because of how the Corinthian church had been abusing it. What does Paul remind us of in vv. 23-26?
He reminds us that the Lord's Supper is tied to an historic event (the last night Jesus was with His disciples – the night He was betrayed when He had the Last Supper), and that it is about remembering Christ's death. The Lord's Supper is not the time to remember Christ's birth, life, resurrection or return. It's specifically about remembering Jesus' death for us. This is what we proclaim as we partake.
In 1 Cor 11 and in the Gospels, Jesus says "remember Me". What's meant by this?
We are to specifically remember as we eat the bread of how Christ gave His body for us. We are to specifically remember as we take the cup that Christ poured out His blood for us – He did this to save us.
What is so special about communion? Are we just remembering Jesus' death?
We are not just remembering Jesus' death. Jesus is not a dead Saviour, but the living One. As a result, we remember what He did for us in His presence, communing with Him, praying to Him, and thanking Him.
How long are we to take the Lord's Supper and how often? (1 Cor 11:26; Acts 20:7)
We are to celebrate the Lord's Supper until Jesus returns. In regard to how often, it was the New Testament practice to do it as often as they met (which ended up being the first day of the week).
What warnings do we have in 1 Cor 11 about the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor 11:17-22, 27-34)
The Lord's Supper is to be done as a church family; without divisions. We are to be right with each other. We are also to discern that the bread and the cup are not just food to nourish our body, but emblems that point us to Christ. It's sacred, and God may discipline us if we abuse the Lord's Supper.
Catholics and some other denominations believe that the bread turns into the real body of Christ, and that the juice turns into the real blood of Christ through the special words a priest utters. They use John 6:52-58 to justify their theology. What are we to make of this?
We don't believe the bread and the grape juice turn into the body and blood of Christ. Jesus' words in John 6:52-58 were spiritual words (John 6:63), and are not to be taken literally. In John 6, Jesus was emphasising the need we have, by faith, to take Jesus into our being to be saved and to have life. When Paul wrote about communion in 1 Cor 11, he didn't reference John 6, but the Last Supper accounts in the Gospels (1 Cor 11:23). It is a remembrance time, in the presence of the risen Lord and other believers.

Summary: In the Lord's Supper we remember Jesus giving His body and pouring out His blood for us.

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25. Our Doctrine on Death (What happens when a person dies?)

Review: *What is to be THE FOCUS when we partake of the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor 11:23-26)*
We are to remember: Jesus gave His body and shed His blood for us – we are to remember His death.
What warnings are we given in regard to partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20-22, 27-29)
We are to share together (in harmony) and we are to rightly understand what communion is about.

Intro: *There are many views in society in regard to what happens after death. What are they? [discuss]*
Some common views: There is nothing after death (it's "game over"); we live life again in another form (reincarnation); the body perishes but the spirit is free to wander through the universe (new age).

Death is not the end

What did Jesus teach in Luke 16:19-24 in regard to what happens after we die?
Death is not the end. The rich man, after his death, went to hell and was suffering in great agony. Lazarus, after his death, went to "Abraham's side" (paradise or heaven) and was enjoying this blessed state. There are but two places we go to after death: heaven or hell.
What do we learn in Luke 16:25-26 about our state after death?
Where we go to is determined by the way we lived. Although not spelt out here, it's not that all the rich go to hell and all the poor go to heaven, but those who trust in Jesus go to heaven (John 3:16) – and the way we live shows this. Also, where we end up is fixed after death. We cannot change our eternal state.
What can we glean from Luke 16:27-31?
Most people, in this life, either dismiss or do not take seriously the prospect of one day being in heaven or hell. If we did, we would do everything to ensure we made it to heaven, as well as those around us.

The Day of Judgment

When will it be determined where we go after death? (Matt 11:20-24; Rom 2:3-6; Heb 9:27)
The Bible speaks about the Day of Judgment. After death, we will be judged.
Jesus spoke of the Day of Judgment. What do we learn from Matt 25:31-33?
Jesus will be the One who judges (John 5:22, 26-27; Acts 17:31) at the end of the age. All people will be assembled before Him, and He will separate everyone into two groups – the "sheep" and the "goats".
What happens to the "sheep" and who are they? (Matt 25:34-40)
The sheep will be welcomed into the kingdom and will enjoy eternal glory. This is because they were found to be righteous. NB: They stand for those who trusted in Jesus and were therefore made righteous (Rom 3:21-22), and they show this by living a righteous life through the help of the Spirit.
What happens to the "goats" and who are they? (Matt 25:41-46)
The goats will be turned away and suffer hell. This is because they weren't righteous. They hadn't trusted in Jesus and weren't following Him, but living for themselves in rebellion to God.
Another key passage on the Day of Judgment is Rev 20:11-15. What do we learn from this?
The Day of Judgment will be absolutely frightening. Imagine standing before the throne when earth and sky flee. Also, we read here of books. There is the book of life. All those who have trusted in Jesus are in this book. They will be spared judgment. But the rest will have books opened that contain the record of all the wrongs they have done. They will be judged for their sins and sent to the lake of fire (hell).
Why won't Christians (whose names are in the book of life) be judged? (John 5:24; Rom 8:1)
We will not be judged because another took our judgment. On the cross, Jesus was punished for our sins so that we could be spared being judged and condemned on the Day of Judgment (Isa 53:5-6).

Until that day

Until the Day of Judgment, what happens to a non-believer who dies? (Rev 20:13)
They go to a place called Hades – the abode of the dead (in the Old Testament, this place was referred to as Sheol (Gen 37:35); Sheol and Hades are one and the same place). Here, the unrepentant wait for the Day of Judgment (2 Peter 2:9).
NB: Since the resurrection of Jesus, all those, without exception, who go to Hades, will be judged and cast into hell.
Until the Day of Judgment, what happens to a follower of Christ who dies? (2 Cor 5:6-9)
The moment we die, we do not go to Hades, but our soul and spirit goes to be with the Lord. Indeed, when Jesus returns, those who have died with Christ will be returning with Him (1 Thess 4:13-14).
Paul uses the term "sleep" to refer to Christians who have died. Why? (1 Cor 15:50-53)
The soul is not asleep, but is very with it in heaven (cf. Rev 6:9-11). However, our body "sleeps", because it's not the end for it. One day Jesus will raise it up and our soul will be clothed with a new glorious body.

Summary: Death is not the end – there is a Day of Judgment, and there is a heaven and a hell.

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