

A Christian's First Steps

This series of studies is for those who want to know how to begin the Christian way of life.

John 14:6 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Jesus claims to be the way to really live to the full.

John 10:10 [NIV] *“... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

The scriptural promise is in the context of Jesus describing Himself as the “*good shepherd*” who would lay down His life for us, His sheep.

Even if you think you are already a Christian it will be very helpful to work through this series to make sure that you clearly understand your total commitment to Jesus Christ, and that this commitment is on solid ground.

Some people who have been Christians for many years may not have been properly disciplined or may not have a solid foundation, so they have not matured in their Christian lives.

Some may have gaps in their understanding of the Christian way of life and have not had anyone to guide them through the essential first steps of walking with Jesus.

I hope that as a result of your studying this series of articles you will discover that walking and then working with Jesus is the most wonderful life-changing experience you will ever have.

What is missing in your life?

Deep down beneath the surface of our lives, when we pause from our busy-ness, we have to acknowledge that something is not right.

There must be more to life than what I am experiencing.

We are born into the human race, we grow up, get educated, work for a living, raise a family, accumulate physical possessions and then die.

There are moments in life when we are confronted with the terminal illness of a fellow human being, that we experience a deep uneasiness that perhaps the most important reason for living has been overlooked.

We are missing something in our lives that material possessions, education and even religion has **not** been able to fill.

We look at humanity and start to ask questions.

Why do so many people look so unhappy?

Why is this world filled with so much trouble?

Why do people treat each other in the way that they do?

Why is there so much fighting, unrest, suffering?

Surely this is not the way society is meant to be?

The Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, is the only place we can find the answer to these perplexing questions.

This little known Handbook For Life takes us to the very root of all the problems that society faces today and has experienced down through the history of the human race.

A God-shaped emptiness

Pascal, the French scientist, said *“There is a God-shaped emptiness within the heart of every person which cannot be filled by any other created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”*

The Christian Bible tells us that our deepest need is spiritual.

Above everything else we need to know, by having an intimate relationship, the God who made us and sustains the life within us.

If we go through life without seeking this relationship, as the majority of people do, we have missed the very purpose of life and continue to experience this inner emptiness that only God can fill.

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

The Greek word translated “know” is “ginōskō”, an intimate relationship.

Luke 1:34 [King James] *“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing **I know** not a man?”*

The same Greek word is used here, referring to the intimate sexual relationship between a man and a woman.

1 John 5:11 [NIV] *“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”*

God offers us this relationship now through Jesus Christ.

How life was meant to be

The Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, takes us back to the beginning of human life.

Genesis 1:26 [NIV] *“Then God said, **“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”***

God’s desire and plan for human beings was, and still is, **twofold**, for us to be in His image and likeness.

Genesis 1:27 [NIV] *“So God created man in his own **image**, in the **image** of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

Note that in the beginning God created human beings, both male and female, **only** in His image.

Why was this?

What essential truth is revealed in these two scriptures?

To understand this essential truth we need to look at the use and meaning of the two different Hebrew words that the Holy Spirit of God inspired to be written.

“Image” – Hebrew *“tselem”* – meaning **shadow** or resemblance, **not** the real thing.

Often we can recognise an object or person by their **shadow** but we know it is **not** the real object or person.

All human beings have been created by God in this way, we are all created in the image of God, but **not** all as yet in His likeness.

John 4:24 [NIV] *“God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

God is spirit, therefore to be made in His image and likeness, something spiritual has to be involved.

“Likeness” – Hebrew *“demûwth”* – resemblance, **manner, son [two for one]** – this is talking about character.

Character is something that is *“spiritual”* [you cannot experience it through the physical senses].

Character is **not** created instantly but is the result of a lengthy relationship with another person whose character you desire to emulate.

We now have the simple and basic reason for our being created as human beings and being given a certain number of years in a physical body that also has a spiritual element to it.

Job 32:8 [NIV] *“But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.”*

It is the spirit in every human being that enables us to plan our life and make choices in life.

Original humans had a close relationship with their Creator

The indication of a close relationship between the Creator God and the first human beings is found in the first two chapters of **Genesis**.

Genesis means *“beginnings”* or *“origins”*.

What went wrong?

Into this perfect world came something that changed everything.

The Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, tells us that God created a beautiful spirit being called **Lucifer**, meaning a shining light, or morning star.

Ezekiel 28:14-17 [NIV] *“You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.”*

Lucifer was a high ranking angel at the very throne of God, perfect in every way except one, that of godlike character.

Isaiah 14:12 [NIV] *“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!”*

Pride was the downfall of this perfectly created spirit being.

This rebellious attitude caused God to change this spirit being’s name to Satan, which means “adversary”.

Genesis 3:1-5 [NIV] *“Now **the serpent** was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “**Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?**” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “**You will not surely die,**” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**”*

The **serpent** referred to here is **Satan** [see **Revelation 12:9** where the different names for Satan are listed.]

Satan’s first attack of Eve was to **put doubt into her mind** about what her Creator had said.

Satan’s second attack was **to lie**.

Satan’s third attack was to **appeal to Eve’s pride and vanity**, with a misuse of what God had said was His reason for their existence, to be like God in character.

Genesis 3:6-8 [NIV] *“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and **pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked;** so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and **they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.**”*

Genesis 3:9-10 [NIV] *“But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”*

“Where are you?” This was God bringing to their attention as to where their rebellion had left them, cut off from God and spiritually dead.

After sinning, Adam and Eve felt guilt and embarrassment over their nakedness.

Their guilty feelings made them try to hide from God.

A guilty conscience is a warning signal God placed inside every human being that goes off when we have done wrong.

The worst step we can take is to eliminate the guilty feelings without eliminating the cause.

Be glad these guilty feelings are there to make us aware of sin.

Genesis 3:11-13 [NIV] *“And he said, “**Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?**” The man said, “The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

Adam and Eve did **not** use this sin alarm bell to repent but tried to “*pass the buck*”, to avoid being blamed for what they had done.

Adam and Eve thought they could act independently of God and live without Him, but came under control of Satan instead.

All humanity has followed Adam and Eve’s example ever since.

Revelation 12:9 [NIV] “... *the great dragon ... that ancient serpent, called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray...*”

In one terrible moment the close relationship that humanity had with God was broken.

Humanity became separated from God, their life source, and died spiritually and began to die physically.

The children of Adam and Eve inherited this rebellious nature and this sin has flowed like a poisoned river down through the ages.

Romans 3:23 [NIV] “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*”

Death, both physical and spiritual, has come to all humans, because all have sinned.

Psalms 51:5 [NIV] “*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*”

This means that even before our birth we had inherited this spiritual emptiness.

This is where all our problems starts as it did for Adam and Eve.

What are the consequences of this rebellious sin?

Genesis 3:16 [NIV] “*To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your **pains** in childbearing; with **pain** you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.*”

Pain entered human life.

Genesis 3:17 [NIV] “*To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “**Cursed is the ground** because of you; **through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.**”*

A curse was placed on all human existence.

Genesis 3:18-19 [NIV] “*It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.*”

Life would become a time of toil and sweat until we died.

Genesis 3:24 [NIV] “*After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a **flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.**”*

Humans were cut off from God and had no way of obtaining eternal life.

What happens when we are cut off from the influence of our Creator God in our lives?

Romans 1:18-20 [NIV] *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, **since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**”*

In spite of all the physical creation clearly needing a Creator God, people prefer to believe a fantasy called evolution which is only a man-made theory, not factual.

Why?

If we admitted the existence of a supreme Sovereign God we would have to accept being subject to His authority over our lives.

Romans 1:21-23 [NIV] *“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but **their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.** Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”*

Most people have made gods out of things that are **not** God.

Their physical body, their home, their car, drugs, entertainment, television, sports, etc.

What is God’s response to this attitude of mind?

Romans 1:24-25 [NIV] *“**Therefore God gave them over** in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator, who is for ever praised. Amen.”*

What a horrific statement *“therefore God gave them over”*.

God is allowing humans to experience just where such a godless life will lead them.

Romans 1:26-32 [NIV] *“Because of this, **God gave them over to shameful lusts.** Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worth while to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practise them.”*

A constant downward spiral into moral decay.

The only time the possibility of a Creator Sovereign God comes into the minds of such people is when they are faced with physical death.

They then realise that all they have accomplished and done will come to an end.

Naked they came into the world of human beings and naked they leave it, you **cannot** take anything physical with you past death.

Memory verse:

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

In the next study we will answer the question: *‘Is religion the answer to humanity’s problems?’*