



**FIRST
STEPS**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the First Steps! We want to, firstly, say, “Congratulations!” on your decision to follow Jesus Christ. This is the most important decision that you could ever make! When you asked God to forgive you of your sins and received Jesus Christ into your life as your Lord and Saviour, you started a new life. Use this booklet along with the videos found online at www.therockchurch.com.au

The Bible says:

**“...if anyone is in Christ, he is a NEW CREATION, the OLD HAS GONE
and the NEW HAS COME.”**

2 Corinthians 5:17

The studies in this booklet are designed to help you to begin your new life with God by teaching you the basics concepts of building a relationship with God, since relationship is what we were created for!

Here are some important principles that we suggest you apply to help you with your new relationship with God:

1. READING YOUR BIBLE

If you responded to an invitation to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord while you were at The Rock church or through one of our online services, you would have received a New Christian’s Pack, which contained our free gift to you of a Bible. We highly encourage you to read your Bible every day, for at least five minutes.

Why is this important? It is important to make Bible reading a daily habit because reading your Bible is one of the ways that you will hear from God. You see, the Bible is a collection of moments in history where God has spoken to people and through people, and these people have recorded his words, which help us to know who God is and what His plan for our life looks like. In addition to this, God will speak to you regarding very specific of your life – so the more you read, the more He speaks!

You might be saying, “Well, the Bible is big book. Where do I start?” which is a great question. We suggest that begin reading the New Testament of the Bible – the second half of the Bible, and specifically, the Gospel of John. We also encourage you to put your name in your Bible and bring it to church every time you join us. As you hear the Bible teachings given at each Church Service, make notes and underline areas of the Bible that show you more about God and your relationship with Him. This will add to your learning and help you to remember what you have learnt.

2. TALK TO GOD EVERY DAY

Talk to God every day. We call this “prayer”. Like any good father, God loves to be close to His children; to hear from them and to speak to them. You are now a child of God and prayer is the avenue through which you communicate with your father. As you grow in your understanding of prayer, it will become the most exciting part of your relationship with Him.

What should prayer look like? The word “conversation” paints a great picture of what prayer should look like. Prayer is a dialogue. As you pray, talk to God about how you feel, about the good and the bad things in your life and tell Him your hopes and your dreams. Thank Him for things, ask Him for help and then, as is with any conversation, give Him opportunities to speak to you. Because when God talks to you, that’s when the answers come. When God talks to you, that’s when the strength comes. If you think about it, a really good time in prayer would be where God is doing most of the talking.

So, take your first steps towards a great prayer life and you will find that your time in prayer becomes your lifeline to the goodness of God.

3. ATTEND YOUR CONNECT GROUP REGULARLY

At The Rock church we find that life happens in circles. What does this mean? We believe that it is vital for every person who calls The Rock church their home to develop genuine relationships with their fellow Rock church members. It is in these relationships that you will find love and belonging.

And in addition to this, at the Rock church we passionately connect people to Jesus Christ. So, you can be confident that as we encourage you to be part of a Connect group family and to attend our weekend church services, that we are doing so because we know that these things will help you to strengthen your connection to Jesus.

So, we encourage you to do what you can, as quickly as you can to get connected to an amazing Rock church connect group.

HOW TO LOOK UP A BIBLE VERSE

The Bible is divided into two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Bible is also divided into books; each book is divided into chapters and each chapter into verses. When you need to look up a Bible verse you will be given the name of the book first, then the chapter number, then the verse number. E.g. John 3:16 – refers to the book of John, its third chapter and the sixteenth verse in that chapter.

When in doubt, the page of contents at the front of your Bible will help you with where each book can be found. In time and with regular reading of the Bible you will learn how to skillfully navigate your way around this life-changing book.





STUDY 1: SETTING A STRONG FOUNDATION

“But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die FOR US while we were still SINNERS. “

Romans 5:8

“But to all who BELIEVED HIM and ACCEPTED HIM, He gave the right to become CHILDREN OF GOD.”

John 1:12

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to study 1 of the First Steps course! Having taken your first step in the life that God has for you in Jesus Christ, it will be helpful for you to have a strong understanding of two things, firstly, what it is that you have done by giving your life to Jesus and, secondly, why there was such a great need for you to be saved from your sin.

In this study, we will look at four things that will help you to set a strong foundation regarding these two areas.

1. GOD LOVES YOU AND CREATED YOU TO HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

“For GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who BELIEVES IN HIM will not perish but HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”

John 3:16

The verse that you have just read should bring confidence to you that God loves you and desperately desires to have a personal relationship with you. You can also be confident that outside of relationship with God, a person will never find true fulfilment, since God created us to live in relationship with Him.

You are now in a relationship with God and as this relationship grows and as you move closer to all that He desires for you, you will find that God brings healing to the broken areas of your life, which brings freedom, and that God fills you with a sense of hope and purpose.

QUESTION:

1. What are some things that people do in order to feel fulfilled in life?

(Once you have finished answering the question, please continue with the video)

2. WITHOUT CHRIST MANKIND IS SINFUL AND IS SEPARATED FROM GOD

God made us to live in relationship with Him, but there is a problem. There is something that gets in the way of us being able to have this relationship.

QUESTIONS:

What do the following verses teach us?

2. Romans 3:23

3. Romans 6:23

4. What is sin?

5. What does 'death' mean?

(Once you have finished answering the questions, please continue with the video)

Everyone has sinned. No one is exempt and a person who has sin in their life is (and you can write these down in your booklet):

Put the following a power point and show on screen as I say them

- Separated from God
- Dead in their sin
- Deserving of punishment for their sin.

A person's sin not only separates them from God during their life on Earth, but when they physically die, leaving this life, their sin will eternally separate them from God who is holy and sinless. Instead of being with God for eternity they will go to the place of continuous torment: Hell.

And this is why the message that we, as Christians bring to the world, is a very urgent one. We don't want people to spend eternity in Hell. We want them to live eternally with God, which is only possible through Jesus Christ.

3. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE SAVED

You would have seen earlier, in Romans 6:23 that the wages, or the punishment that our sin deserves is death. God has always made it known that the only way for a person to escape this punishment is for something, or *someone* to die on behalf of a person with sin in their life.

In the past, animals were killed, and their death made it possible for a person to be right with God, but when that person sinned again, another animal needed to be killed – making this a messy process. God had something better in mind. To do away with the sin problem once and for all, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to Earth, and Jesus, as the Lamb of God died on our behalf and removed all sin for all people.

“But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die FOR US while we were still SINNERS. “

Romans 5:8

No longer is there a need to sacrifice animals in order to bridge the gap between God and us. Through Jesus' death on the cross, which was the punishment we all deserve for our sin, a way was made for us to be free from our sin and right with God.

Instead of death, our faith in Jesus brings us the life of God. Instead of separation from God, our faith in Jesus brings us close to God.

“For God was in Christ, RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF, no longer counting people’s sins against them...”

2 Corinthians 5:19a

Many try to bridge the gap between themselves and God through good works and religion, but if a person really understands what Jesus accomplished on the cross, and why that was so important, they will come to know that it is only through Him that God accepts us.

There is only One who has taken the consequences of our sin. There is only one who has made relationship with God possible. Any other way of making ourselves right with God is empty; powerless.

“There is salvation in NO ONE ELSE! God has given NO OTHER NAME under heaven by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:12

“But He was wounded and crushed FOR OUR SINS. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped and we were healed! All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on Him THE GUILT AND SINS OF US ALL.”

Isaiah 53:5-6

I’m hoping that with us you recognise just how important Jesus Christ is and how grateful we should be to God for sending His Son.

Now, go ahead and answer questions 6 and 7.

QUESTIONS:

6. What does John 14:6 say about the way to God?

7. According to John 1:29 and 1 Peter 2:24, why did Jesus die?

(Once you have finished answering the questions, please continue with the video)

4. ACCEPTING JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOUR

What does a person need to do to access all that God offers through Jesus Christ? Does Jesus' work on the cross mean that everybody experiences freedom from sin and relationship with God by default, or are there steps that need to be taken in order to benefit from the work of the cross?

Well, let's say that transferred a \$10,000,000 into your bank account (wouldn't that be nice!). What would you need to do to use that money? Does the money being in your account immediately mean that you have a nicer house and a more expensive car? As I'm sure you will agree, for you to benefit from the money in your bank account, you would need to do something to access that money.

In the same way, Jesus has done all that is necessary for every single person to be saved from their sin, but just like there are steps they need to take to benefit from the \$10,000,000 in their bank account, there are steps we need to take to access what God has made available to us through Jesus Christ.

What are those steps? Well, have a look at question 8 for help with this.

QUESTION:

8. What does Romans 10:9-10 say is necessary for a person to be saved?

(Once you have finished answering the questions, please continue with the video)

With the understanding that every single human being has sinned against God and is separated from God because of their sin, we hope that you understand, more than ever, just how important and urgent it is that every person be made right with God through Jesus Christ.

If you haven't already made Jesus Christ your Lord and Saviour, we lovingly urge you to do this and to be forgiven of your sin so that you can start living the life that God wants for you.

Or, if you aren't sure whether you are right with God, please speak to the person who is doing this study with you about it.

If need be, they may lead you in a prayer that looks something like this:

Dear Jesus,

I'm praying to you now because I want to be a Christian. Please forgive me for all my sins, for everything I've ever done wrong and for living my life without you. I turn away from my sins and choose to follow You. Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, that You died on the cross for my sins and that You rose again. Come into my life today. I receive you as my Lord and Saviour.

Amen

This is the end of Study 1. Let me say again, that God is for you and He wants to see your life be strong in Him. I'll see you in the next study.



STUDY 2: THE NEW BIRTH

“Jesus replied, ‘I assure you, UNLESS YOU ARE BORN AGAIN, you can never see the Kingdom of God!’

John 3:3

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Study 2 of our First Steps course! We hope that this course is helping you to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a Christian; a follower of Jesus Christ, and that your relationship with Him is growing.

In today’s study, we are looking at “The New Birth” and what the Bible has to say about the need for us to be born a second time, or a term that you may have heard before; the need for us to be “born again”.

In 1 Corinthians 15, we read the following:

“Just as EVERYONE DIES because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given NEW LIFE.”

1 Corinthians 15:22

Every person is born with a sinful nature, or in other words, we are all born with an inherent desire to disobey God. In our previous study, we saw that it is because of this sin nature and the ungodly fruit it produces in our lives that we are separated from God and deserving of punishment (i.e. eternal death).

We can be freed from the nature of sin that we were born with because of Jesus Christ’s work on the cross. For this to happen, we must be born a second time, or “born again”. When we are “born again” by the Holy Spirit, our spirit is recreated so that the sin nature that once ruled our spirits is removed and we instead have within our ourselves the nature of Jesus Christ’ a nature that is in right-standing with God.

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become A NEW PERSON. The old life is gone; A NEW LIFE has begun!”

2 Corinthians 5:17

You are a spirit, who lives in your body. It is important to be aware of this because this aspect of who you are is what will live on long past this life and what will connect you to God the best. The world is often unaware of who they are as spiritual-beings within their bodies or mistaken in their application of who they are as spiritual-beings, and for this reason they often miss God and His ways.

People have looked for solutions to connecting with God as well as solutions to humanity’s problems by making change to areas of themselves that do not address the real problem (e.g. mind renewal, change

of worldview, etc.). If we are spiritually dead because of sin and therefore separated from God - far from living our true purpose - then it is only by changing the condition of our spirit that we will see our problems solved. This can only be achieved through Jesus Christ. Once the spiritual problem has been solved, every other aspect of a person's life can follow.

“Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to SPIRITUAL LIFE”
John 3:6.

If you have made Jesus Christ your Lord, you were born again, which means that your spirit was recreated by the Holy Spirit. You were changed from being sinful and disconnected from God to right with God and alive to His ways.

In this study, we will look at why the new birth is absolutely necessary, as well as the results and advantages of the new birth.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think you have experienced the new birth? Why?

2. Is there any one apart from Jesus who hasn't sinned? (Refer to Proverbs 20:9 and Romans 3:23.)

3. What did Jesus say needs to happen in order for a person to see the Kingdom of God? (Refer to John 3:3.)

(Once you have finished answering the questions, please continue with the video)

In John 3:3, Jesus was talking to a religious man, Nicodemus, and assuring him of his need to be born again before he could enter God's Kingdom. He wasn't talking to people who were known for being sinful, such as a thief or a prostitute. Nicodemus was a teacher of the Jewish religious law who prayed two hours a day, fasted twice a week and was very religious by the standards of the society he lived in.

If Jesus had been talking with what most considered to be a sinful person, we would easily understand why Jesus said that being born again was required for them to enter Heaven. But Nicodemus was a religious man. He had ticked all the religious boxes as far as society was concerned. Jesus showed Nicodemus that there was no human standard that could be met to make him right with God. The new birth is not a religious or an intellectual event. It is a spiritual miracle.

Jesus' words help us to see that we are all sinful, no matter how much good we believe we have done, and that we cannot enter heaven on our own merit. We all need to experience the new birth.

QUESTIONS

4. According to John 6:63 who brings about the new birth?

5. When we are born again God gives us the Holy Spirit to say that we belong to Him. What does Ephesians 1:13-14 teach us?

6. Read Ezekiel 36:26-27. What new things does God give us?

7. How does this help us to live the way God wants us to?

(Once you have finished answering the questions, please continue with the video)

The apostle James wrote:

“He chose to GIVE BIRTH TO US by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his PRIZED POSSESSION.”

James 1:18

There is power in the Word of God (the Bible). It has power to renew and to give life. It has power to resurrect and bring about deep and real changes in the life of man.

8. According to John 1:1-4, 14, who is the Word of God?

(Once you have finished answering the question, please continue with the video)

When we experience the new birth, we receive Jesus, who is the Word of God, into our lives.

“Then Christ will MAKE HIS HOME IN YOUR HEARTS as you trust in him.”

Ephesians 3:17a

ADVANTAGES OF THE NEW BIRTH

Only the spiritual person can see the kingdom of God. The spiritual eyes of person who has been born again are opened and they can perceive the things that are hidden to the natural person.

Paul said:

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” But it was to us that God revealed these things BY HIS SPIRIT. For his Spirit searches out everything and SHOWS US GOD’S DEEP SECRETS.”

1 Corinthians 2:9 – 10

The advantages of the new birth are:

1. Our spiritual eyes are opened.

Sin blinds the eyes, but when we accept Jesus our spiritual eyes are opened to spiritual things (e.g. God's kingdom).

2. We move from darkness into light.

Sin takes us down dark paths. Salvation causes us to turn our backs on darkness and to direct our steps into a new way: the path of light.

3. We move from Satan's dominion to God's dominion.

Before we are born again sin enslaves us, keeping us under Satan's dominion. When we are converted to Christ we come under the government of God.

4. Through faith in Jesus we receive pardon for sin.

Our sins deserve punishment, but Jesus carried them for us on His body on the cross.

5. We receive an inheritance with the saints both here and in Heaven.

"May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has ENABLED you to SHARE in the inheritance that belongs to HIS PEOPLE, who live in the light."

Colossian 1:11b – 12

"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay."

1 Peter 1:3 – 4

CONCLUSION

Our moral state does not make us right with God. It is only by being born again that we are able to connect with God's will for our lives. We cannot change ourselves. The new birth is produced by the Word and by the Holy Spirit. Only through the new birth can a person receive their spiritual sight, moving from darkness to light and from sin to holiness.

“What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If GOD IS FOR US, who can ever be against us? Since God did not spare even His own Son but GAVE HIM UP FOR US ALL, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us EVERYTHING ELSE?”

Romans 8:31-32

STUDY 3: THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

OK, here is a bit of a surprise test to see how you are going with the course so far. Question 1:

1. Why is Jesus Christ the only way to access God and Heaven?
2. Supposing you arrive at the gates of heaven, what would you say to God if He asked you: *“Why should I let you in?”*

And the answers are:

1. Jesus Christ is the only way because He is the only one who has paid the penalty for the sins you have committed against God.
2. God would let you into Heaven because you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour and your sins have been removed.

“For GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who BELIEVES IN HIM will not perish but HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”

John 3:16

The aim of this study is for you to solidify the idea that through the work of Jesus on the cross you are saved from Hell, your sins are forgiven, you are in relationship with God and you will go to heaven when you die.

Why are we doing this? Shouldn't we move forward from this concept? When starting this new life with Jesus Christ, there can be a lot of things that attempt to persuade you that you are not right with God. Some of those things could be that you still feel guilt and shame, or you have doubts about Jesus being the only way to God, and of course, the lies of Satan. The Bible tells us that one of the things that Satan will try to do in your life is steal God's word when you have received it.

“The sower sows the word. These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, IMMEDIATELY SATAN COMES AND TAKES AWAY THE WORD which has been sown in them.”

Mark 4:14-15

What does this look like? This doesn't necessarily mean that a being with a forked tail and horns comes to you in the night to persuade you that God isn't real or that Jesus Christ isn't the answer. That isn't how Satan works, and besides, something as supernatural as a being appearing in your bedroom to tell you not to serve Jesus Christ, would most likely convince you that you need to serve Jesus Christ!

Satan deceives mainly through thoughts. In fact, without you realizing it, you have been deceived by him already. The Bible says that you were once part of the world and that as a member of the world and

the ways it is running, your god was Satan.

Look at what he does in the lives of those who serve him:

“...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

2 Corinthians 4:4

There was once a point in your life where you denied who Jesus Christ is and didn't embrace the gospel that you now hold to be true. Why? The Bible says that you were blinded by Satan.

What is the solution to this? The simple answer is that we are set free from Satan's deception when we embrace God's words to us in the Bible. You have been set free from Satan's grip as god over your life because Jesus Christ is now your Lord, and as you walk with Him, embracing everything that HE brings you, you will find your life being set free from Satan's lies every area of who you are. God wants you to experience freedom and the peace and hope that brings you!

God's plan for salvation has the following aspects: justification, regeneration, sanctification, and redemption. We will look at each of these in turn.

JUSTIFICATION

Justification means to “declare right”. This is the act through which God declares that the sinner who believes in Jesus and confesses his faith in Him and in His work, is right and acceptable in His sight. When God justifies you, you can say, “It is just-as-if-I never sinned”!

QUESTION

1. What does Romans 3:24 tell us?

(Once you have finished answering the question, please continue with the video)

SANCTIFICATION

To be sanctified means to be “holy” (standing apart from sin and evil) and set apart for God - belonging to Him. A person becomes holy through grace (the undeserved favour of God, where God forgives us of our sins when we confess them and ask His forgiveness). A person who is sanctified by God is set apart both morally and spiritually from those who are still in sin.

QUESTION

2. Who makes you holy according to 1 Thessalonians 5:23?

(Once you have finished answering the question, please continue with the video)

REGENERATION

When there is biblical regeneration in our lives there is a change in our perspective in relation to sin (that is, we recognize and hate what is sinful) and our spirit becomes open to everything relating to God. It is the Holy Spirit who brings about this regeneration.

QUESTIONS

Read 1 Corinthians 2:14.

3. Can people who aren't Christians understand God's truths?

4. How do God's truths sound to them?

5. Who helps us understand God's truths?

(Once you have finished answering the question, please continue with the video)

REDEMPTION

Salvation from sin is directly associated with the redemption of humanity. To say that humanity has been redeemed by God is to say that God has gained possession of humanity in exchange for payment, like someone paying a ransom for a slave in order to set that slave free. To "redeem" is to buy back. God bought us back from the kingdom of darkness.

Because there was no one on earth able to pay the price to ransom (redeem) humanity from our sins (because no one is perfect) ...

“...God was in Christ, RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF, no longer counting people’s sins against them...”
2 Corinthians 5:19a

QUESTION

6. What did God purchase us back with according to Ephesians 1:7?

(Once you have finished answering the question, please continue with the video)

GOD’S PROMISES FOR YOU

Read each verse to see God’s promises for you:

“I assure you, anyone who believes in me already has ETERNAL LIFE. Yes, I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. However, the bread from heaven, gives eternal life to everyone who eats it. I am THE LIVING BREAD that came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will LIVE FOREVER; this bread is My flesh, offered so the world MAY LIVE.”
John 6:47-51

“If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we CONFESS OUR SINS TO HIM, He is faithful and just to FORGIVE US and to CLEANSE US from EVERY WRONG. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that His Word has no place in our hearts.”
1 John 1:8-10

“But to all who BELIEVED Him and ACCEPTED Him, He gave the right to become CHILDREN OF GOD.”
John 1:12

“Now if we are CHILDREN, then we are HEIRS — heirs of God and co-heirs WITH CHRIST, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory”.

Romans 8:17

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW REGARDING:

The new nature

“What this means is that those who become CHRISTIANS become NEW PERSONS. They are not the same anymore, for the OLD LIFE IS GONE. A NEW LIFE HAS BEGUN.”

2 Corinthians 5:17

The relationship with God

“So you should not be like COWERING, FEARFUL slaves. You should behave instead like God’s VERY OWN CHILDREN, ADOPTED INTO HIS FAMILY - calling Him “FATHER, DEAR FATHER.”

Romans 8:15-16.

What your life should consist of

“You must CRAVE PURE SPIRITUAL MILK so that you can GROW into the FULLNESS of your salvation. CRY OUT for this NOURISHMENT as a baby cries for milk”

1 Peter 2:2

“But now you must be HOLY in EVERYTHING YOU DO, just as God - who chose you to be His children - is holy. For He Himself has said, ‘YOU MUST BE HOLY BECAUSE I AM HOLY’”.

1 Peter 1:15-16

“If we LOVE our CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS, it proves that we have passed from death to ETERNAL LIFE. But a person who has NO LOVE is still DEAD.”

1 John 3:14

“We cannot stop TELLING ABOUT the WONDERFUL THINGS we have seen and heard.”

Acts 4:20

APPLICATION

I encourage to take another step in embracing all that God has for you by examining your life to see if there is any area that doesn't line up with what He has asked you to do – things that you know in your heart do not please God. Repent of it and ask to God to cleanse and heal you from that sin, then experience the joy that comes with forgiveness.

STUDY 4: THE POWER OF THE SCRIPTURES

“All Scripture is INSPIRED BY GOD and is useful to TEACH US what is true and to make us realize WHAT IS WRONG in our lives. It STRAIGHTENS US OUT and TEACHES US to do what is RIGHT. It is God’s way of PREPARING US in every way, FULLY EQUIPPED for every GOOD THING God wants us to do.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

VERSE TO MEMORIZE:

“But everyone who HEARS THESE WORDS OF MINE and does not PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE is like a FOOLISH MAN who BUILT HIS HOUSE on SAND. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and IT FELL with a great crash”.

Matthew 7:26-27

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the Word of God. The word “Bible” comes from Koine Greek phrase τὰ biblía, which means “*the books*”. The Bible was written over sixteen centuries by over forty human authors, as they were inspired by God. That means that God was with each of them as they wrote and guided them in what to write.

We should love the Word and follow its instructions just like the captain of a ship adheres to his compass. We do this because the Bible, or Word of God, is a great treasure containing the answers to all our questions.

It is our desire for you to experience the power of God’s Word, to have His Word in your heart and to be able to put God’s instructions into practice in your life.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you HOLD TO MY TEACHING, you are really MY DISCIPLES. Then you will KNOW THE TRUTH, and the truth will SET YOU FREE.”

John 8:31-32

IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE

1. The Bible is God's Word and it reveals Jesus to us

What does 2 Timothy 3:16 say about God's Word?

2. The Bible contains divine laws for us to live by

What does Deuteronomy 28:1-2 promise for the person who lives God's way?

“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the Lord. ‘I will PUT MY LAWS in their MINDS and I will WRITE THEM on their HEARTS. I will be THEIR GOD, and they will be MY PEOPLE. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their family, saying, “You should know the Lord.” For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will already KNOW ME, ‘says the Lord. ‘For I will FORGIVE their wickedness and will never again remember their SINS.”

Jeremiah 31:33-34.

THE BIBLE'S CONTENT

The Bible contains 66 books, written by over 40 authors over thousands of years.

3. What do the following verses tell us about God's Word: Matthew 24:35 and Isaiah 40:8?

(Once you have finished answering the question, please continue with the video)

HOW TO GROW THROUGH READING THE BIBLE/GOD'S WORD

- Read the Bible every day.
- Read with a right attitude and an open heart.
- Meditate on it (set your mind on what it says by undertaking detailed study).
- Put its commands into practice.
- Communicate and confess it.

OTHER KEYS TO STUDYING THE BIBLE/GOD'S WORD

- Find an appropriate time and place free from distractions to read the Bible in.
- Make studying the Bible a habit.
- Keep a daily devotional in which you write:
 - Messages from God for you.
 - God's promises for your life.
 - Commands to obey.
 - Personal application.
 - Scripture verses to memorize.

“Oh, the JOYS of those who do not follow the ADVICE of the WICKED, or STAND around with SINNERS, or JOIN in with SCOFFERS. But they DELIGHT IN DOING everything THE LORD WANTS; DAY AND NIGHT THEY THINK ABOUT HIS WORD. They are like TREES PLANTED along the riverbank, BEARING FRUIT each season WITHOUT FAIL. Their leaves NEVER WITHER, and in all they do, THEY PROSPER.”

Psalm 1:1-3

BENEFITS OF DRAWING NEAR TO THE WORD

- It teaches doctrine (Christian beliefs)
- It convicts (makes us aware of our shortcomings)
- It corrects (leads us to the right path)
- It instructs (shapes our character)

HOW DO I SEE GOD'S POWER IN MY LIFE?

Set apart fifteen minutes a day to do the following:

- Five minutes: Speak with God (pray).
- Five minutes: Read the Bible (starting with the Gospel of John and working your way to the end of Revelation).
- Five minutes: Meditate on (think about and apply to your life) what you have read.

If we discover the secret of living in communion with God, we will find life and life more abundant!

Question to ask yourself about how long to spend time with God.....In this time with you, God, did I get what I needed from you and did you get what you needed from me?

APPLICATION

Determine to maintain a genuine and ever-growing relationship with God through regular Bible study. Commit to memory the verses that God speaks to you through so that you can make what He says your new default in life.

Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise. Like a person who builds his house on solid rock.
Matthew 7:24

STUDY 5: THE CONDITION OF A SINNER

Since the creation of humanity, people have ignored and disobeyed God, getting involved in all kinds of evil that have brought consequences. These consequences include the fact that our enemy (the devil) has opportunity to work in people's lives to oppress and enslave them. Sin not only separated humanity from God, but because of sin, Satan has the legal right to rule humanity and enslave them.

1. According to John 8:34 what happens to everyone who sins?

The ways of the world, with all its deceit and destructive values, leaves a great emptiness in the soul of man.

“For the world offers only the lust for PHYSICAL PLEASURE, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are NOT FROM THE FATHER. They are from THIS EVIL WORLD. And this world is FADING AWAY, along with everything it CRAVES. But if you do the WILL OF GOD, you will LIVE FOREVER.”

1 John 2:16-17

The pleasures that we experience when we follow the sinful nature, not only corrupt our mind, but also weaken our well-being. Death is the ultimate result of following the sin nature, whether that is death of the body, or living in a constant state of separation from the life that God provides.

For the WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, but the free gift of God is ETERNAL LIFE through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

The death that results from following the sin nature can take the form of all types of disorders, malfunctions and sicknesses, and in the end, cut our life short. God did not create our minds and bodies to partake in the desires of the sinful nature, so He has graciously warned us of the consequences of doing so.

2. According to Galatians 5:19-21 what are some things our lives produce when we follow the desires of our sinful nature?

3. According to Galatians 5:24 what has happened to those who belong to Christ?

When a child of God follows their sin nature rather than God’s instructions, the devil gains access to their life, and he will use the opportunity he is given to do as much as he can to limit the purposes of God in their life.

“So now we can tell who are CHILDREN OF GOD and who are CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL. Anyone who DOES NOT OBEY God’s commands and DOES NOT LOVE other Christians DOES NOT BELONG to God.”

1 John 3:10

4. What does John 8:44 tell us about the devil?

Our enemy (Satan and his demons) will attempt to control, dominate and enslave us in the following ways:

1. By blinding/hindering our soul

Satan prevents people from knowing the truth regarding God and themselves by blinding them to the truth (that is, by feeding them lies and in some cases by literally blinding them to God). There are many, many people in this world who have fallen prey to Satan’s deception.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4.

5. Whose minds has the devil blinded?

6. What is the result of their minds being blinded?

The worst wounds that humanity suffers are inflicted in the soul (mind, emotions, and will), one of their main causes being rejection. Jesus suffered rejection on the cross so that God would accept us through Him. Only through God's word and the power of Jesus Christ can the human soul's wounds be healed.

2. By attacking and burdening our body

God created the Earth to be perfect and physical sickness, malfunction and deformities were not part of His creation. These things came into the world as a result of Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden.

Satan's armies work together with the fallen state of this earth to increase the burden of sin on, not only our souls, but also our bodies. Their attack on some people's lives is not only on their minds to blind them from God's truth, but also on their bodies, limiting them from their true potential. Without the power of Jesus Christ many are left hopeless as they endure a life of disease and dysfunction.

7. What do Isaiah 53:5 and 1 Peter 2:24 say regarding God's provision for freedom from sickness?

THE PROVISION OF GOD FOR OUR FREEDOM

We are freed by the power of the cross.

8. What does Galatians 3:13 tell us?

On the cross Jesus took on Himself sin and all of its consequences, enabling us to live free from their effects on our life. Because of God's plan through Jesus Christ's death, the cross became the mortal weapon used against Satan where all our debts were cancelled. All of Satan's wrath and anger were crushed by the power of Jesus Christ. The cross alone can set man free from slavery to sin, Satan's oppression and the consequences of sin. The cross sets man free and enables him to walk the path of freedom.

Paul said:

“I know very well how foolish the message of THE CROSS sounds to those who are on the road to destruction. But we who are BEING SAVED recognize this message as the very POWER OF GOD”

1 Corinthians 1:18

THE CROSS DELIVERS US FROM:

Sin

“For the WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, but the free gift of God is ETERNAL LIFE through CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.”

Romans 6:23

Demonic Bondage

“... And no doubt you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL, for God was with Him.”

Acts 10:38

Affliction

“In all their suffering HE ALSO SUFFERED, and He personally RESCUED THEM. In His love and mercy HE REDEEMED THEM. He LIFTED THEM UP and CARRIED THEM through all the years.”

Isaiah 63:9

PREPARING FOR FREEDOM FROM THE ENEMY’S ATTACK

A. Recognize that freedom is available for you.

God has delivered us from everything that sin would burden us with, and through Jesus Christ, He has given us all that we need to walk in victory and freedom in every area of our lives. However, for us to see that victory we must become confident in what God says regarding any area where we are experiencing lack, dysfunction, disease or attack, and receive what God provides while commanding any presence of the enemy to leave our life, in Jesus’ Name.

9. What does Jesus promise us in Matthew 11:28-30?

B. Identify the causes for the bondages.

Are there sins from the past or in your previous generations that have not been presented to God? Now that you understand the power that sin in your life gives to the devil, freedom can only come when we confess our sins to God and give Him the power to remove its consequences from our life.

10. What is the writer asking God to do in Psalm 139:23-24?

C. Repent and confess your sins.

Asking God to forgive you must be accompanied by repentance. Because of sin, Satan has legal rights. Those legal rights will only be made void by repentance, when a person renounces their sinful life.

“...and you will also PERISH unless you TURN FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS and TURN TO GOD.”
Luke 13:3

D. Have faith.

God requires that people have faith for them to see Him move in their life.

11. What does Hebrews 11:6 tell us?

Faith is not merely believing in God or even believing that He is capable of doing something, although these things do play a small part in what the Bible calls “faith”. If faith was just about believing that God is capable of fixing our problems, many millions of people around the world who believe this would be experiencing the freedom that comes through Jesus Christ’s work on the cross. But this is not the case, which means that faith must be more than just believing in God.

Faith is an attitude of your heart – a heart that has meditated on God’s promises and acted on them as

they are led by the Holy Spirit. This is why it is vital that you meditate on Scripture so that it not only infiltrates every aspect of who you are, but so that it also positions you to receive all that Jesus Christ paid for you to walk in!

E. Take hold of the truth.

Replace the lies of the devil with the truth of God’s Word.

12. What does John 8:36 tell us?

F. Prayer and fasting.

The disciples had trouble casting out some demons from a person. Jesus said to them:

“But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

Matthew 17:21

To battle in the spiritual realm, one needs to be in tune with the spiritual realm. Praying and fasting is one way to starve the areas of our life that are preventing us from being sensitive to God and other spirits, and feeding the areas of our life that will help us to be more aware of God and other spirits. By fasting (abstaining from something for a predetermined length of time) we free ourselves from distractions and give ourselves more time to devote to spiritual disciplines such as praying and reading of the Bible.

PLEASE NOTE: Fasting does not force God’s hand to answer your prayers, however, along with increasing your spiritual sensitivity, fasting can position you to grow in your faith to receive from God.

Also, wisdom should be applied regarding how long your fast will last. The Bible refers to two people (Moses and Jesus) fasting for as long as forty days. It is helpful to understand that those two instances were very irregular and quite supernatural. If you find that there is a need in your life to fast, please use of the many Biblical resources available on how to effectively fast.

APPLICATION

Pray with your Connect Group leader using the steps given above. Jesus wants to set you free.

Freedom is complete when a person feels that oppression no longer holds him, when strongholds do not dominate him, when there is deliverance from the sins of their forefathers and when they feel that God’s peace and presence is flowing freely through their life.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We hope that the First Steps course has effectively helped you to begin a journey that you will be on for the rest of your life – the journey of discovering God and your purposes in Him.

SHARE YOUR LIFE WITH OTHERS

One of the things that we encourage you to do next is help others to recognize the hope in Jesus that you now have. You have been given a gift: eternal life. You have been awakened to the reality of where you were going and the tragedy that awaited you without Christ.

As Christians, we all have a responsibility to not only grow as followers of Jesus Christ but to also do what He did. While He was on Earth He shared the way to be reconciled back to God.

Each of us is surrounded by people, friends and family who are far from God's will for their lives. Be encouraged, along with your Christian family at The Rock church, to commit to being the kind of person that powerfully shares the hope of eternal life in heaven that Jesus Christ has made available to all people.

Together, we can make the most important difference to this world!

WATER BAPTISM

Water baptism (baptism means is a foundational characteristic of the Christian life. Jesus said:

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, BAPTISM THEM in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Matthew 28:19

If you have been applying the principles in First Steps then you are in the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. Well done! According to Jesus' instructions, your next step as His disciple (if you haven't already taken this step) is to be water baptized.

Practically, this looks like you being prayed for and then dunked under some water for a few short moments (with sufficient warning, of course!). Spiritually, the significance of this very simple procedure,

is huge. Water baptism is less about being saved from sin, since that happened the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ's work on the cross and were born again. Water baptism and more about identifying with Jesus' death and resurrection, and affirming your relationship with Him.

Baptism can be summed up by one word: IDENTIFICATION.

Through water baptism you will be making a very deliberate announcement to those around you and to the world (both natural and spiritual) that you have died to your old sinful life. By being water baptized you are boldly declaring that you have not only been buried with Christ in His death (symbolized by your "burial" in water) but that you have been raised to a new life with Him (symbolized by you coming up out of the water).

...when we were joined with Christ Jesus IN BAPTISM, we joined him in his death... For WE DIED AND WERE BURIED with Christ BY BAPTISM. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may LIVE NEW LIVES.

Romans 6:3-4

The Rock Church holds group baptisms once every few months. If you would like to make this powerful statement to the world alongside other Christians who are doing the same, we would love to help you with this!

You can find out when our next group baptism will take place at The Rock Church or through the person who has facilitated your First Steps course.

FIND A CONNECT GROUP

In the introduction to this series of studies, we briefly mentioned the purpose and benefits of attending a Connect Group at The Rock Church. If you haven't already started attending a Connect Group, we again encourage you to make this a priority.

The people that you will meet in your Connect Group will strengthen you and help you to move forward in all that God has for you.

The person who has led you through the First Steps course will be able to give you all the information you need on this subject.

We look forward to seeing you find your place in one of our many life-filled Connect Groups!

ADDITIONAL COURSES

At The Rock Church we facilitate several courses that assist our church members, as well as members of other local churches, with growing as followers of Jesus, and with impacting the world for Him.

These courses are:

ALPHA

Along with the First Steps course, we have the Alpha course, a course that further explores the basic beliefs held by Christians, although Alpha is different from First Steps in that Alpha is group discussion-based. Each week in Alpha you will have the opportunity to talk through Christian concepts that you are being presented alongside others who are on a similar discovery of Christianity.

One of the benefits of studying Christianity in a group setting is that questions may be asked by others that you hadn't thought of or didn't know could be asked. Another benefit is the life-changing friendships that you can make!

We expect that our Alpha students will walk away from this learning experience having been challenged and having found some key principles to the meaning of life.

Alpha happens once a week for fifteen weeks. Please ask about when the next Alpha course starts, and we will do our best to plug you in.

GROWTH TRACK

Growth Track is a three-week course held after our Sunday morning services. At Growth Track (where lunch is provided!) we take you through:

1. Who we are as The Rock church.
2. Where we are going as a church.
3. The part that you play in God's kingdom.

Growth Track is about you discovering what God has called The Rock church to do in the area of Port Stephens and what God has called and equipped you to do, whether that be as you link arms with us, or as you take your place in God's Kingdom.

You can find out the starting date of our next Growth Track course at The Rock church or by asking the person who has facilitated your First Steps course.

(Please note that completion of Growth Track is a requirement for any person who wishes to serve in our church.)

BORN FOR MORE: THE LIFESTYLE OF A SPIRITUALLY MATURE CHRISTIAN

Grow is a ten-week course held between 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. each Wednesday night during school terms. As you gather weekly with the other Grow students, you will be strengthened in what the Bible says about who you are as a person made in God's image, who God is in you and what your life can look like in light of this reality.

To enhance your learning experience, you will have the opportunity between each lesson to practice the principles that make up the lifestyle of a spiritually mature Christian, and when you return for the next lesson, there will be group discussion regarding the findings of the week: both the challenges and the victories.

Grow is about molding you into a disciple of Jesus Christ whose life shines brightly for the glory of God. If you are in need of a jump start in your journey with God or are looking to take your life in Jesus Christ to the next level, this course is for you!

BIBLE COLLEGE

At The Rock Church we offer the opportunity to study the word of God a nationally accredited level. This can be a Diploma, Degree or Masters. This is where you can dedicate the time to delve deeply into theological study. For further information contact the church office (02) 4981 1852

CONCLUSION

We aren't meant to do the Christian journey alone, so please carefully consider every opportunity that we are presenting you, whether that be something like water baptism or a course to help you grow further.

We love you and are so excited for what your life in Christ holds for you!

Your Family at The Rock Church.