

Dear brothers and sisters,

Over the last five months, the MMCC staff and teaching crew have prayed for wisdom and discussed the First Principles study series. Each region of the teaching committee edited a study and discussions were held on both content and presentation. We stressed that streamlining the first principles does not debunk what we have learned before, but the emphasis and biblical explanations will have to be refined. While we can never arrive at a "perfect" study series, we want to do our best to present the gospel along biblical lines. As we said before, only the Bible is infallible. This calls for greater effort from each Christian to learn to use the spiritual sword effectively.

We are grateful for the input we've received from the MMCC committee members and other disciples both from Manila and the provinces. Other ICOC churches have also been in contact with us.

Now we would like to present to you our results. We hope to hear from you as we teach and use this series. There will be a teaching evaluation at the end of the year. Please send your comments to teaching-crew@yahoogroups.com, rmonje@lycos.com or call Rolan Monje at 5324012 or Paris Murray at 746-0929. We also need volunteers for translation into Tagalog and other dialects.

Sincerely,
The MMCC Staff & Teaching Crew
teaching-crew@yahoogroups.com

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q. Who made the First Principles series?

A. The original study series was developed by Kip McKean. Obviously, many of the concepts come from the Restoration Movement. Since Kip's introduction of the FP, several similar versions have come out such as Guard the Gospel by Douglas Jacoby and Doug Arthur. Some have changed it slightly based on the needs in their area. Bangkok church, for example introduced a Jesus 1,2,3 series since Buddhists need a better background on Jesus.

Q. Why do we need to change the First Principles series? What's wrong with it?

There is nothing really "wrong" with the old study series, but through the years there has been a growing need to change some studies for better biblical explanation and emphasis. Also, there is a need for more flexibility in the studies, since different people have different orientations. We always want to find the best possible way to present the gospel and help people come to Christ. Also, many disciples wanted the series to cater more to the Filipino mind and culture.

Q. What if I want to use the old series?

That's fine. Like the new series, the essentials of the gospel message (faith, repentance, NT baptism) are in the old series and it can be used to convert someone. However, we encourage you to take note of the differences. Also, there are clearly some biblical passages that may need better explanations. We advise that as a church we try to familiarize ourselves with the new one as we compare.

What we also suggest is to take each study (Jesus, Word, Sin, etc) separately, so that you can evaluate how effective each study is. Also, it is fine to use a combination of the old FP studies and the new one. Those studying the Bible with people can use any number of supplemental studies and materials. Whatever works is what we want to do.

Q. What will be the focus of the new FP series?

The main purpose of the study is for conversion. The focus of the study series is Christ. By learning about Christ, the person studying can act on his/her faith.

Q. How will I learn to use the FP series?

The staff and teaching committee will discuss the best way of presenting the new series to people. We are open to suggestions. For now, we plan to teach it first to the Staff and provincial leaders, then Bible Talk leaders, then to everyone else.

OVERVIEW OF THE REVISED STUDY SERIES

1. The purpose of the Study Series is to offer a guide for a disciple to make other disciples. Its focus is the conversion process which God allows by grace.
2. The Study Series should show proper understanding and application of biblical texts.
3. The Study Series should present the essential truths of the gospel. It should contain the mind and heart changes necessary before baptism.
4. The Series should combine both simplicity and flexibility, catering to the different needs of the people we reach out to. At the same time, we kept in mind the average Filipino in the conversion process.
5. The Series will have the following features:

- Purpose: Purpose of the study; will also show the expectation for the one being taught
- Key verses: Texts to make the purpose of the study clear. The study leader may place this anywhere in the study.
- Points: Topics or themes for discussion. These are just starting points and the disciple should be able to develop their own convictions and express them in the study. The explanations will vary according to the maturity of the disciple and the needs of the person being taught. Sometimes guide questions are given.
- Optional verses: Verses that are not part of the suggested study but may help certain individuals' needs.
- Toolbox: A series of supplemental studies to facilitate understanding and for answering questions. These studies may be done before or after baptism.
- Follow-up studies: A series of studies designed for the student after being baptized. These studies are important but not part of the essentials for conversion. Even then, they can be used earlier if the student has questions about these topics *before* baptism.

BASIC STUDIES:

- Jesus: Cornerstone of Belief *
- Discipleship: Following Jesus by Faith
- Word: Scripture and Obedience
- Sin: Understanding man's sinful nature*
- Cross: God's response to sin*
- Repentance: Responding to God*
- Baptism: Principles and Practice*
- Church: Biblical Basis for Jesus' church
- Lordship: Surrendering all to the Master
- (* - core studies)

TOOLBOX STUDIES:

Fundamentals	Advanced
Seeking God	Miraculous Gifts of the HS
Reasons for belief in God	Philippine Church History
Reasons for believing the Bible	Once saved, always saved?
The Nature of God	Prophecy and end times
Church History	The Historicity of Christ
Repenting of specific sins	Catholicism
False doctrines about conversion	History of the Restoration Movement
Loving God	Heaven, Hell, and Judgment
History and Structure of MMCC	How the Bible came about
Prayer	The Spirit
Maturing in Christ	False Doctrines 1
True Worship	False Doctrines 2
Kingdom & Church	Righteous Stewardship
Falling Away & Restoration	

6. It should be noted that the basic gospel message is completely imbedded in 5 of the studies: Jesus, Sin, Cross, Repentance, and Baptism. Thus a person may be converted using only these four studies. However, we suggest that the other studies are also done since the average Filipino may have misconceptions regarding other important issues. We must understand that since the last apostle died at the end of the 1st century, so many misleading notions and false doctrines have evolved. The other 4 studies will help safeguard the future disciple from erring in both life and doctrine.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR STUDY LEADERS

Daniel 12:3 "...Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."

We know that ultimately it is God who converts someone. For many however, reminders and tips are always helpful. As a Christian matures, more and more skills of relationship and instruction are learned. When we are open to learning, we can turn many more to righteousness.

Setting up a Bible study

1. Friendship is important for most people. It helps to have at least the beginnings of a good relationship before you start studying.
2. Some people want to spend time with disciples or observe first, but for others the study can be set up as soon as possible. As much as possible, a person studying should be comfortable about the concept of seeking God or at least growing spiritually.
3. Any study in the series can be used as a first study, but it is usually most helpful to start with Jesus, Discipleship, or Word.
4. Before starting the study, it is helpful to find out as much as you can about their family background and religious background. More can be found out also as the studies progress.
5. For someone who is obviously religious, it is often helpful to make a timeline of the religious events in their life, (e.g. infant baptism, accepting Christ, confirmation, etc.) even to write this down on paper.

Seeing that people are different

1. The length of the studies and which studies to use will depend a lot on the person we're studying with. People vary in beliefs and upbringing. Here are just a few biblical examples:
 - a. Ethiopian-types are those that are wonderfully open.
 - b. Nicodemus-types are those that are religious and have honest questions.
 - c. Apollos-types are those that are religious and are vocal about their faith.
2. We need to pray for wisdom to discern different kinds of people.
3. Be patient when it comes to answering questions. Different people will have different questions at varying points of the study. It may be helpful to discuss with the Bible Talk which toolbox studies to use with a person.
4. Whoever we are studying the Bible with, it's important to remember that the essential gospel truths are in the Jesus, Sin, Repentance, and Baptism studies. As long as there is a growing understanding of the principles in these four studies, then they are on the right track.
5. A study does not have to be finished in 1 session. Some people may need more time to absorb things or to discuss details. See comments at the end of the series.

Keeping the focus

1. Jesus is the focus of the study series.

Jn 3:14-15 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

Jn 12:32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

2. We are only ambassadors. We convert people not to ourselves, but to God.

2 Co 5:18-20 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

JESUS: The Cornerstone of Belief

Purpose: To reveal the basic truths about Christ
To encourage someone to consider a saving relationship with Christ

Note: In this series, the recommended first study is Jesus, Word, or Discipleship, depending on the study leader. For others, a seeking God talk or life talk is helpful. We want to keep the series flexible. In any case, it is important to keep Jesus as the focus of the series.

Key Verse: John 20:30-31 Many people are religious. Many call themselves Christians.
But we must think again. For thought: Do you know the biblical Jesus?

John 1:1,14 Jesus is God who became man. Jesus and God are the same in nature.

John 8:31-32 What did Jesus expect from his disciples?
Note that this obedience is more than just head knowledge or an intellectual kind of belief.

John 14:6 Jesus is the way. The only way to God is *through* God – through Jesus.

John 20:30-31 The Bible expects us to come to a saving faith in Jesus.

1 Jn 2:4-6 What should we show in our lives? What do you think God expects from you?

Challenge: Over the next few days/weeks, we will study about the gospel of Jesus – who Jesus is and what he expects.
The Bible will make these clear. Will you take this challenge?

Optional verses:

John 5:30	to show that Jesus sought to please God
John 7:17	to show that doing God's will brings personal conviction
John 1:1, Heb 1:3, 2 Pet 1:1	to show that Jesus is God
John 1:18, 14:9	to show that Jesus makes God known
John 11:25	to show that Jesus promised eternal life to his believers
John 20:29	to show that belief is important to Jesus
Heb 4:15-16	to show that Jesus is a sympathetic savior
Heb 11:6	to show that faith is required to please God

Discipleship: Following Jesus by Faith

Purpose: To show a person what it means to follow Jesus.
To challenge a person to follow Jesus the way the Bible says.
[Opening question] What do you think a disciple is according to the Bible?

Key verse: Mk 12:28-31 & Mt 28:18-20

Concept of discipleship

Mk 1:14-20 What did Jesus call these men to do? What were they to become?
A disciple is a follower or learner. Several known men had disciples (Ac 5:36-37).
Even John the Baptist had his disciples (John 1:35, 4:1-2).
How did they respond when Jesus called them to follow?

Acts 11:25-26 Jesus' disciples were called "Christians" later in the first century.
What does it mean to be called a Christian today?

Expectations of discipleship

Lk 9:23-26,57-62 No double standard in Christianity. What does Jesus expect from his followers?
What does it mean to deny self? To take up cross daily?
Do you consider yourself as someone who would follow Jesus even when it's hard?

Mk 12:28-31 The Great Commandment and Christian Purpose: What is most important to Jesus?
What is the motivation for all that we do?

Mt 28:18-20 The Great Commission and Christian Mission: What did Jesus want all men to become?
What does it mean to make disciples? (Remember Mark 1:14-18)
Being baptized and being taught to obey are part of discipleship.

Lk 14:25-33 What should we do before following Jesus?
What does it mean to "give up" everything?

Guide questions for deeper discussion:
Is it clear to you what a disciple is?
Have you ever made a decision to be a disciple?
Are you living the life/lifestyle of a disciple now?
Do you want to be a disciple?
How can you start fulfilling the Great Commandment and Great Commission?

Ro 15:5-6 Who gives us endurance and encouragement to follow Jesus?

Optional verses:

Mk 16:16	to show that baptism and belief go hand-in-hand
1 Pet 2:21, 1Cor 11:1	to show that people were called to follow Christ in two specific instances
Rev 17:14	to show faithfulness is needed to keep following Christ
Luke 11:1-4	to show the need to develop a prayer life among disciples
Jn 13:34-35	to show how that love among disciples is a distinguishing mark
1 Jn 5:3+	to show the result of loving God

Word: Scripture and Obedience

Purpose: To understand that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and that we should use it as the standard for our lives

Key verse: 2 Tim 3:16-17

2 Tim 3:16-17 Where does Scripture come from?

The term “inspired” is used to describe the divine nature of biblical text.

Why is the Bible useful?

These are the ways the Bible can be used:

- Teaching (Gk: *didaskalian*)- instruction; shows us what is right
- Rebuking (*elegmon*) - reprimand/stronger correction; shows us what is wrong
- Correcting (*epanorthōsin*)- helps turn the wrong into right
- Training in righteousness (*paideian tēn en dikaiosunē*) - establishes a discipline and a habit

Heb 4:12-13 What do you think living and active means?

What does the Bible do to the heart and mind?

Are you willing to believe and follow the Bible even when it hurts?

1 Tim 4:16 Life and doctrine are inseparable [use analogies]

Why do we need to persevere?

Mk 7:1-13 Traditions are not the way to be right with God

Jam 1:22-25 What should we do with the Bible?

Why is it important to obey?

John 12:47-48 The word will judge and determine one’s eternal destiny

Acts 17:10-11 Who was called noble in this chapter? Why?

How can you be a “Berean”?

Challenge: Do you believe the Bible is the word of God?

Will you take the challenges of the Bible even when it’s hard?

Develop a reliance on the Bible. [Give suggested reading.]

Optional verses:

1 Sam 15:22-23 to show what is better than sacrifice

Ps 19:7-11 to show how the Bible can be a great benefit

Ps 119:9-11 to show that the Bible helps keep us pure

Ps 119:105 to show an attitude of reliance on the Word for direction

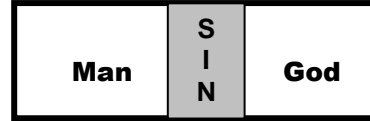
Jn 5:39-40 to show what is more important than just study

2 Chron 34:27 to show the kind of response God wants (background is in vs 14-21)

Sin: Understanding Man's Sinful Nature

Purpose: [For the students] To see themselves the way God sees them: sinful
To understand the impact of sin on an individual's life

Key verse: Is 59:1-2
Is 59:1-2 What does sin do to us?
Why should we be serious about sin?



Rom 3:23 Who has sinned? Do you really believe this?
What does it mean to fall short? [various illustrations]
Point is that no one is good enough to make it to heaven on his own or a good moral life does not save you.

Gal 5:19-21 Sinful acts are obvious; sin of commission
Notes:

1. The list is written in sets: sensual or sexual sins first, then sins of religion or worship, followed by social or temperament sins, and lastly sins of revelry.
2. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. God hates sin of all kinds, even the "and the like" sins at the end of the passage.

Definitions:

Sexual immorality: sexual acts outside of lawful marriage (e.g. adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexuality)

Impurity: covers all kinds of sexual defilement (e.g. lust, pornography, masturbation, filthy jokes)

Debauchery: denotes a sensual boldness, lewdness, or lack of self-control

Idolatry: devotion to idols or false gods; practically, putting something or someone above God

Witchcraft: dealing with ungodly powers or sorcery, includes occult, palm reading, and astrology

Hatred: hating in a sense of hidden; includes holding grudges

Discord: hating which is more open; resulting in dispute

Jealousy: unrighteous desire/deep selfishness; result of egotistic motives or hurt pride

Fits of rage: unrighteous, uncontrollable or meaningless anger

Selfish ambition: wanting things or persons only for self; includes rivalry and intrigues

Dissensions: causing division or ill will

Factions: creating or supporting division, discrimination, or prejudice

Envy: related to jealousy, always bad; similar to coveting; not happy for others good fortune

Drunkenness: intoxication or being dependent on wine; refers to both the act and the habit

Orgies: ungodly, wild, or destructive pleasures

and the like: others like the above; in any form or degree

Rev 21:8 Sin results in spiritual death. God is serious about sin.

Jam 4:13-17 Sin of omission. What kind of attitude does God want from us?
[Study teacher can share about their own examples]

Rom 6:23 What can we expect as a result of sin? Do you understand where you stand before God?

1 John 1:5-10 We should be willing to admit our sin and walk in the light
HW: Read other NT 'sin lists' in Rom 1:14-32, Col 3:5-10, Eph 5:3-14, 2 Tim 3:1-5
Read Mark 7:14-23 and 1 Jn 1:5-10. Read Medical Account (Passion of Jesus).
Are you willing to talk about your past and your sinful nature?
Pray for humility and direction in talking about sin issues

Optional verses

Mark 7:14-23 To show that we are responsible for our own sin & the state of our hearts

Lev 5:5, 16:21 To show that the concept of confession starts with admitting the specific wrong one has done

Ezek 18:18-20 To show that there is no "original sin" and that we are each personally responsible

2 Cor 6:14-7:1 To show that to be holy, we need to avoid ungodly influence

Cross: The Sacrifice of Christ

Purpose: To help the student appreciate fully the meaning of the cross
Read or discuss Medical account. (Previous homework)

1 Pe 2:22-24 Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? So we could die to sin and live for righteousness!

The Purpose of the Cross: By Jesus' wounds we are healed

Rom 3:23-25 Our sins deserve punishment (Rom6:23). Jesus sacrificed himself to atone for our sins.

Isa 53:4-6 On the cross, Jesus although he was innocent took the punishment for your sins.
(This is an OT prophecy about Christ dated around 700 BC)

The Pain of the Cross: Emotional, physical and spiritual torture of Jesus

Matt 26:36-46 How do you think Jesus felt about dying on the cross?
Do you think it was easy for Jesus to decide? Why?
[Discuss Jesus' emotional pain –anxiety, friends deserting him, thoughts of suffering, etc.]

Jn 19:1-3,16-18 What did Jesus endure? [Explain flogging and crucifixion as described in medical account]

Mk 15:33-34 Why did Jesus say that? In taking on our sins Jesus was separated from God.
(review Isa59:1-2 if necessary)
Sin hurts God so much!

Has anyone suffered this much for you?

The Response to the Cross: Live for Jesus

Rom 6:6-7 What should your response be in relation to sin? (see vv11-14)
We need to die to our sin (crucify old self).

2 Cor 5:14-15 What should motivate you as a Christian? How should you live from now on?
[Study leader shares about personal decision to become a disciple.]

Challenge: Read the medical account (if not done yet).
How can you live a life motivated by the cross? What decisions are you willing to make?

Homework:

1. Read the following verses: Col 1:21-22,2:13-15; Rom 8:3-4; 1 Cor 1:18, 15:3; Heb 10:24.

Q: How should one respond to the cross?

2. Take some time (e.g. one or two hours) within the next few days just to meditate on the Cross.

(and/or) Write letter to God expressing how you feel about Christ's sacrifice.

Optional verses: (on godly responses) Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:14-21; Luke 3:7-14; Phil 2:5-13

Repentance: Responding to God

Purpose: To teach the meaning of biblical repentance
To explain the plan of salvation in view of repentance

Note: This is one of the most important studies. This will help people get the right attitude and make them face God in their decision. Also, it lessens the unnecessary emphasis on baptism for most religious people. Further, baptism will usually follow with less problems when people get the right heart from this.

Definition *Metanoia* (pronounced me-TAH-noi-ah), means “change of mind”. Generally, this is the Greek root translated as “repentance” in most English Bible.

Key verse: 2 Cor 7:10-11

2 Cor 7:10-11 What was the response of the Corinthians?
Compare worldly and godly sorrow. Remember, we all hurt Jesus!

Acts 26:19-21 What did Paul expect from people?
The word repentance means a change of heart and mind. It is a decision followed by deeds (that’s why people were challenged by Jesus to estimate the cost before following in Luke 14). This decision can be made quickly, though the commitment is for a lifetime.

Matt 5:29-30 What kind of attitude does Jesus want when it comes to sin?
Repentance is not perfection, but a way of life resulting in become more like Christ.

Self-assessment questions:

1. What are the significant changes in your mindset and behavior? Why?
2. Do you think you have godly sorrow or worldly sorrow? Why?
3. How can you imitate God’s attitude toward sin?

Examples of responding to the Gospel

Acts 2:22-42 The Jews at Pentecost
Acts 8:26-40 The Ethiopian Eunuch
Acts 9:1-20 Saul
Acts 16:25-34 The Philippian Jailer

What do we see in these conversions?

1. HEARING THE WORD. They heard the word of God being preached to them. (Rom 10:17)
2. BELIEVING THE MESSAGE. They believed or accepted the message. (Jn 1:12-13)
3. ATTITUDE OF REPENTANCE. They responded with a change of mind and heart. (Ac 3:19, 17:30)
4. CONFESSION OF SURRENDER. They verbalized their decision for Christ. (Rom 10:9, 1 Tim 6:12)
5. BAPTISM IN WATER. They were immersed in water. (Ac 2:38)

What was the central message? What was their response? They all responded to the grace of God in the same way!

Challenge: Discuss further the self-assessment questions. Discuss specific repentance on certain sins or weaknesses. [Leader may use toolbox studies before the next study]

Optional verses:

1 John 5:3-4 to show that obeying God shows we love him; obedience is not a burden
Luke 13:3-5 to show that there are generally 2 kinds of people: those who repent and those who don’t
2 Pet 3:8-12 to show that there will be a judgment; we must be serious about change
Acts 3:19 to show that repentance brings refreshing
Gal 1:6-9 to show that there is only one gospel

Baptism: Principles and Practices

Purpose: To teach the meaning and importance of baptism

Note: We recommend this study for those who have done the repentance study and show willingness to repent. For a religious nation like the Philippines, we should avoid making baptism the issue because it is not. The central study is actually the repentance study, and baptism should be seen only as part of a person's response to the gospel.

For religious people, we also suggest making a timeline of the religious events in their life. This will aid in explaining the point or moment when a person is saved. For other issues, use toolbox studies.

Introduction:

Different parts of the Bible have different time perspectives about conversion.

OT:	Has <i>foreshadows</i> of conversion (faith, repentance, and baptism).
Gospels:	Look <i>forward</i> to conversion. John the Baptist's ministry showed baptism as a response to the message. Jesus points to his death as the central theme for salvation.
Acts:	Shows conversions happening in the <i>present</i> .
Epistles:	Look <i>backward</i> at Christian conversion.

For this study we will focus on baptism as essential to a NT conversion. Definition: Gk 'baptisma' primarily means dipping or immersion, from the verb 'baptidzo'.

Key verses: Acts 2:36-39, Eph 4:4-6
Acts 2:36-39 First "Christian sermon" at Pentecost where non-Christian audience responds.
What was Peter's direction to them?
Repentance + baptism = forgiveness of sins and gift of the Spirit
Remember, the two things that are important are the forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Both of these happen simultaneously at baptism.

Baptism is the way prescribed by God to receive forgiveness and the Spirit. This is the importance of baptism.

Eph 4:4-6 This passage defines the basic areas of doctrine. Baptism is one of them. Baptism is essential and there is only one!

Rom 6:3-4 Paul looks back at conversion. He was reminding the Roman disciples of their baptism. What happens at baptism? Baptism is a participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This is the meaning of baptism. [illustration of death, burial, resurrection]

1 Peter 3:21 Peter looks back at conversion. He states that floodwater symbolizes baptism (not viceversa!). Baptism is an *appeal* (RSV, more literal translation of the Greek) towards God.

Col 2:12 Faith is essential in baptism.

Ac 2:46, 8:39, 16:34 How did they feel after being baptized? Why do you think?

Optional verses:

Mark 16:16 To show how belief and baptism go hand in hand

Luke 3:7-14 To show the importance of repentance *before* baptism

Ac 8:26-38 To show that baptism is part of the good news; to show baptism as immersion "into" water

Ac 22:16 To show urgency in baptism

Ac 16:31-33 To show that aside from belief, hearing the word and baptism are essential

John 3:1-5 To show how being born again involves water and spirit

2 Ki 5:1-14 An apparent OT foreshadow of baptism, to show how obedience is needed to gain the blessing

Church: Biblical Basis for Jesus' Church

- Purpose: To show the biblical foundation and practices of the church, and to show the disciple's role within the church
- Definition *Ekklesia* – (pronounced ek-lay-SI-ah), literally “those called out” (from Matt 16:18), an assembly
in classical Greek: a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place
in Christian sense: an assembly of those called out by God
- Key verse: Col 1:15-18

Foundation of the church

- Col 1:15-18 Jesus is the head of the church. The church is his body [may use the man stick figure].
The church is the body of Christ.
- Eph 2:19-21 The church is not a building, but is compared to one because it is God dwelling in a family.
The church is a family. You must be born into it.
Jesus is the chief cornerstone, the basis for measurement.
Why is being part of the church special?
- Eph 4:4-6 There is only one church. That one church has only one faith and one baptism.
What about other “faiths”? Only those who have the right faith are part of Christ's church.
- Matt 7:13-23 The gate to “life” (meaning salvation) is narrow. Many religious people will not be saved.
How are we to recognize false prophets? Why is it important to do the will of God?
[Discussion on false doctrines here or at the end of study.]

Optional verses:

- Gal 1:6-9 to show that the church should believe only one gospel
- 1 Co 1:10 to show the roots of ‘denominations’
- 1 Tim 4:16 to show that persons and churches can fail in life and doctrine

Practices of the church

- Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves...The Greek root word (*proskartereo*) means to “be continuous, to be steadfast, or to wait on”. What was the early church devoted to?
- Heb 3:12-13, 10:24-25 Each member is responsible for others, to keep their heart from straying.
What was a good “habit” for the early disciples?
Chall: To be committed to the meetings of the body of Christ
What does it mean to spur one another on?
In what way can you spur others toward love and good deeds?
- 1 Cor 12:13 What was something all the Corinthian disciples went through?
How does a person enter the body of Christ?
- Gal 3:26-27 When is a person considered a son of God or part of the family of God?
- 1 Cor 12:14-27 Analogy: church = human body. How are the members of the body supposed to treat each other? Can the church ever be perfect?
What can *you* do to keep the unity of the church?
HW: Find at least two “one another” or “each other” verses, to be discussed before next study.

Optional verses:

- Matt 18:15-17 To show the proper attitude when someone sins against you
- Ac 20:28 To show that the church has leaders and shepherds (also 1 Co 12:28 and Eph 4:11-12)
- Ro 16:5 To show that “church” can mean any group of disciples
- 1 Co 1:2 To show that God has called the church to be holy
- 1 Co 5:12 To show that the church can exercise discipline over its members

Lordship: Surrendering all to the Master

Purpose: To deeply understand and faithfully surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Opening question: How would you express the qualities of: a lord, ruler, or master?

Definition: Gk: *kurios* – translated “Lord” in the NT; Greek for master or owner, originally a slavery term
A slave or bond-servant (Gk: *doulos*) would surrender everything to his owner

JESUS: Lord of Heaven and Earth

Col 1:15-20 How would you describe Jesus’ relationship to the rest of Creation?
What should be Jesus’ relationship to you?

Phil 2:9-11 Describe what happened when God exalted Jesus “to the highest place”.
In what ways would your life change with Jesus as your Lord?

Rev 5:11-14 Describe the response of all creation towards Jesus, “the Lamb of God” in heaven?
What should be your response?

JESUS: Lord of your life

Jesus should be Lord of our whole life.

Question: What will be your most difficult sin or challenge to overcome?

Rom 12:1-2 What is meant by “your spiritual act of worship”? How is a Christian “transformed”?
Explain: How is Jesus to be Lord of your time? your conduct? future? love life/
dating? career? material resources?

Are there any areas where surrender can be hard for you? [Discuss details.]

Rom 14:7-12 What is God’s expectation of you from now on?
What will happen when you stand before “God’s judgment seat”?

Rom 10:9-13 Are you willing to faithfully declare Jesus as your Lord?
This public declaration will occur at your baptism, where you will be “buried with
Christ” as you are immersed and raised with him through your faith.

Challenge: Make specific plans for areas of weakness or temptation. Challenge to read extra verses.

Optional verses:

Mark 10: 17-23 to show that the man had to surrender what was hardest

Rev 1:12-16 to show the glorified Christ to whom we surrender all

Comments on the Jesus study:

This study was added to emphasize the focus of the gospel: faith in Jesus. The title “Cornerstone of Belief” is based on Eph 2:20 and 1 Pet 2:6.

After the study, a person should be made interested or at least curious in having a relationship with Christ. People may vary in their religious background, but at least this study sets the stage for the other studies to follow. Some toolbox studies may be done after the Jesus study if needed, but for most, the concept of the discipleship should be presented early in the studies.

Comments on the Discipleship study:

General:

This is to be done not just to “break people” of their religious pride, but more to present the standards of following Jesus in the first century. In showing these standards, a person can assess if he is truly a follower. Also, the student can prepare himself to become a follower in the future.

The study can be hard-line without necessarily showing self- righteousness. The study teacher should focus on the kind of heart that Jesus desired, more than the actions of those who actually followed. At the same time, true religion must not be shown as mere ritualism.

A person should be encouraged that perfection is not required to be a disciple, but since it is a *decision*, there must be thought and effort. The length of time and details will depend on the maturity of the student. Some character studies may be added to the Toolbox in the future.

Doctrinal:

On Mark 1:14-18. During Bible times, to be a disciple of someone meant being closely identified with that person.

On Acts 11:25-26. This verse shows that disciples were called Christians to associate them with Christ. It is fine to say that Christians=disciples in this sense. It is also fair to challenge the student that to be called a Christian, one should be a disciple and learn what that means. However, if we talk about salvation *immediately* after this verse we do not have enough scriptures yet to back up our teaching.

We removed the equation disciple=Christian=saved (even though the equation is true) because there is a difference between the call to discipleship and the call to salvation. In order to avoid placing undue emphasis on discipleship *as a prerequisite* to salvation we suggest that we do not use the equation altogether. If not explained well, it could present a gospel of works. (Not that works are unimportant). We just want to be careful with our exegesis. So, if the study leader is able to explain this well, then it is safe to use the equation. Otherwise, just focus on the given purpose of the discipleship study.

While discipleship and salvation are related, discipleship in the sense of following Jesus (in person) would end with Jesus' resurrection. The focus becomes “holding to the teachings of Jesus” (Jn 8:31-32 cf 1 Tim 4:6). Note: The followers of Jesus were not called “disciples” anymore in the Epistles. This is understandable because the terms “brothers”, “believers”, and “saints” emphasize family.

On Luke 11 and John 13. These characteristics of a disciple as taught in the old study give a higher calling for disciples, but they are not a prerequisite for salvation. The NT teaches that faith, repentance and baptism are the prerequisites of salvation.

On Mt 28:18-20. If questioned, the study leader should explain that the word “disciple” has two senses. One is that of a learner being taught about Christ. In this case “disciple” is a generic term for a follower. The second sense is that of one who has been baptized already. “Disciple” can refer to both. There should be no confusion. It's just like saying from Mark 16:16 that someone who is baptized should be a believer first. After they are baptized they are still called a believer, but in a different sense. The term “believer” also has two senses.

However, it has been common to say that ‘The candidate for baptism is a disciple’. Although this is not theologically wrong since the term disciple has two senses, it would be better to avoid the confusion altogether. This can be done by saying ‘The candidate for baptism is one who has the heart of a disciple or one who is willing to continue being “discipled”’.

Comments on the Word study

We removed 2 Peter 1 because the context refers more to biblical prophecy than biblical interpretation. There are other verses which stress interpretation better.

The leader should take time also to inspire the student with personal bible reading.

Comments on the Cross study

We wanted to have more verses to explain the heart.

On Matt 26, stress that Jesus had a choice, but made the painful choice for us.

Possible discussions: Comparing Jesus' big decision with the big decision to become a Christian.
 Comparing Peter's response with Judas' response.
 Seeing the resurrection as a positive and needed ending.

Comments on the Sin study

General:

1. It would be good to have a study more focused on the issue – sin. This is also more in line with conversions in Acts. Sin and repentance were preached. We also suggested discussing sin of commission first since this is the more obvious sin.
2. We included scriptures and a discussion on consequences of sin; questions on self-evaluation -- person studying should really see that he/she is really sinful before God and is in the darkness
3. Since sin is a highly personal discussion, we suggest that the study teacher be a mature disciple or a BT leader. It is tempting to go to one of two extremes in handling the sin study; too severe or too lenient. For sure it must convict the person spiritually (John 16:8) but it must not become an interrogation chamber (2 Tim 2:24 cf Col 4:6). We must show grace but not condone sin in any way.
4. We also suggest care in making people write sin lists. Major sins should be dealt with, but it should not be necessary to confess all sins before baptism. At the same time, it is concerning for the student to deliberately hide sin. A good sign is for the student to be fairly open once learning about the nature of sin. A person should be aware of his/her weaknesses or sinful nature and show willingness to get help.
5. After the sin study, a person may or may not want to talk about sin issues. But the friendship level with the study teacher is important. We also suggest a HW the next portion (e.g. reading NT sin lists and Matt 26-28 ahead of time).

Doctrinal:

1. Gal 5:19-21 is part of a bigger section on Christian freedom, where Paul compares "works of the flesh" (5:19-21, "acts of the sinful nature" in the NIV) with "fruits of the Spirit" (5:22-23). A more literal translation of Gal 5:19 is "The works of the flesh are..." The Greek word for sinful nature is *sarx*, usually translated flesh. Other forms are *sarkikos* and *sarkinos* meaning "fleshy" or "wordlly".
2. The list is written in sets: sensual or sexual sins first, then sins of religion or worship, followed by social or temperament sins, and lastly sins of revelry. Here is a short explanation of each term:

Sexual immorality (Gk: *moicheia/porneia*) – The first term (found in most Greek versions) has to do with sex outside of marriage or having sexual relations with a person who is married to another. The second is a more general word that can refer to all illicit sexual activity. It is clear from Jesus' statement in Matt. 5:28 that this begins in the heart and is manifest in various lusts.

Impurity (*akatharsia*) – Also translated "uncleanness". Apparently, this word was used medically to refer to an infected or oozing wound. Spiritually, it speaks of moral uncleanness (see it used by Jesus in Matt. 23:27). In Scripture it is used of any impurity that prevents a person from approaching God.

Debauchery (*aselgeia*) – Also translated as “indulging” or “lewdness”. This refers to a lack of restraint - often in the area of sexual indulgence. It is translated “indecent” in the NEB and “sensuality” in the PME. It describes a person liking all pleasure with no restraints; one who has no shame. (See Rom. 13:13 and 1 Peter 4:3-5). It also denotes “licentiousness”. When used in other Greek literature, it refers to shamelessness.

Idolatry (*eidololatreia*) - This is a compound word meaning idol worship or idol service. Idolatry always begins in the heart when someone imagines God to be something other than He is in truth. (Ezek. 14:3-8; Col. 3:5; Ps. 24:4; Jer. 2:13) This helps us to understand how the N.T. can equate other people, or possessions or such intangible things as careers with idolatry.

Witchcraft (*pharmakeia*) – Originally, this has to do with medicines, drugs, and/or magical use of herbs. The actions implied the use of magic, particularly by means of drug-induced euphoria. It is translated “sorcery” or “witchcraft” because drug and potion use was big in occult practices. So this potion and drug use became synonymous with witchcraft and black magic. It is rendered “sorcery” in the RSV and “spiritism” in the LB.

Hatred (*echthra*) - This refers to enmity or opposition. It is a hateful attitude (against God and men). See Rom. 8:7 and John 15:18-19. May be better translated as “hatefulness”. It is translated “enmity” in the RSV and “strife” in PME.

Discord (*eris*) - This refers to strife or contentions - being quick to debate and contend against another. Worldly men are not content. They are quickly offended and their ego sets them to arguing against everything they disagree with. Being contentious is having a fondness of quarreling and debate. The spirit and attitude of quarreling about everything

Jealousies (*zelos*) - The root of this word means to seethe or bubble over with heat. In the evil sense in which it is used here, it means to be eaten up with a bitter envy. It speaks of not being satisfied and having a hateful, angry resentment of another or of what belongs to another. (See Acts 5:17 and James 3:14). It could also mean “contentious rivalry”.

Fits of rage (*thumos*) - This is pretty self-explanatory. It is a fierce or violent anger - an unbridled temper, outbursts of wrath. The fleshly man can manifest sudden and unrestrained hostility even when there is little or no provocation or justification. (See Luke 4:28 and Acts 19:28)

Selfish ambitions (*eritheia*) – Also called self-centeredness. This is a self-promoting, self-serving, and self-seeking manifestation. In many ways this is an opposite of Jesus’ attitude in Phil. 2:3-8. It conveys the idea of “office seeking” which we might call “self-promotion and self-service” as opposed to serving selflessly unto the Lord

Dissensions (*dichostasia*) - This refers to a division (often a fighting or dividing against authority - whether that be in a family, a church or beyond). It is to stand apart and even cause others to go with them.

Factions (*haireisis*) - This similar to dissensions, although this seems to imply more the result of dissensions. It denotes tearing oneself away from the main body. It can refer to error in a fundamental truth and a separation from the body as a result. It also denotes a form of prejudice. (See Acts 5:17 and 1 Cor. 11:19)

Envy (*phthonos*) - This is displeasure at witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of another (Matt. 27:18; 1 Tim. 6:3-5). May be outwardly expressed or kept in the heart.

Drunkenness (*methe*) - This refers to intoxication. See Eph. 5:18 and Luke 21:34.

Orgies (*komos*) - This probably comes from "Comus", the Greek god of feasting and reveling and partying. It refers to the kind of wild, boisterous, partying. It was also used of any rowdy and crude behavior. In any case there is a disregard for others. See Rom. 13:13 and 1 Peter 4:3.

A Christian should feel free to share feelings or images, maybe even personal expressions regarding the terms above. The above definitions simply help us understand what Paul was possibly thinking in his choice of words.

"...and the like..." and the like (*kai ta homoia toutois*) By this clause (or "*such things*") in verse 21, we clearly see that these are just examples, not an exhaustive list. This list is representative and Paul writes as if he could go on and on. He probably stop because the disgusts him, or because he supposes that the reader or hearer has gotten the point. Surely there are so many ways for evil to manifest itself.

3. Paul had warned before "*that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God*" (v. 21). Notice that the words “live like this” denotes a "*practice*" or way of life. The word construction (present active) indicate ongoing action and was meant as a strong warning. It is the continual practice of such things that marks out a worldly and ungodly life - a sensual life void of the Spirit (cf Jude 19).

Comments on L&D2:

The former title was somewhat misleading and indirect. Also the steps were made more specific.

Because our previous “Plan of Salvation”, with hardly a mention of God’s Grace, is often perceived to be works-oriented. Here’s the cynic’s view of our “systematic, step by step process”— **I heard, I believed, I repented, I confessed, I got baptized, I am saved...** Without recognizing **God’s Grace**, it kind of sounds like you saved yourself.

Toolbox study on grace may be given as homework.

Comments on the Lordship study:

It appears the two main scriptures introducing the Concept of Lordship have been taken out of context. In the previous version of the Lordship Bible study, the following scriptures were employed to introduce THE CONCEPT OF LORDSHIP—

1 Corinthians 1:2-9 is cited due to its use of the term “Lord” six times. Thus it was somehow reasoned that the passage’s frequent use of “Lord”, which is defined “ruler, master, controller” in the original study, makes it an appropriate illustration of Jesus as our “Lord”. However, a careful reading reveals the intent of Paul’s greeting to be quite different—awesome to be sure (encouragement, enrichment by spiritual gifts, faithfulness of God)—but little to do with Jesus’ role as “ruler, master, controller”.

2 Peter 3:18 is cited to illustrate that “Lord” and “Savior” are “eternally connected in the mind of God.” In principle, we wholeheartedly agree. But to scripturally support this principle, is this the best we can do? Even a cursory reading of verse 18 and the preceding discourse on “the last days” leaves us wondering if the “eternal connection of Lord and Savior” is truly Peter’s point. Again, it seems we’ve disregarded the intent of the author.

Why not utilize awesome, easy to understand, conviction-building scriptures which clearly illuminate the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Our hope is to employ thought provoking questions, to be answered by a clear and inspiring scripture, which leads to thought provoking questions, and so on.

Some guide questions from the old Lordship study can still be used to deal with specific issues. We encourage that certain issues be dealt with as soon as the Sin study is done.

[end of First Principles]