

The United Church of Christ of California

NEXT STEPS

“Strengthening our faith in Christ.”



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This Book belongs to: _____



Table of Contents

The New Creation.....	Page 4
The Growing Christian Prays.....	Page 10
The Growing Christian Studies the Bible.....	Page 15
The Growing Christian Goes to Church.....	Page 19
The Growing Christian Remembers the Lord’s Death....	Page 23
The Growing Christian Wins Souls.....	Page 34
The Growing Christian Presses On.....	Page 37
The Growing Christian Knows His Church.....	Page 41
The Church.....	Page 45

The New Creation

Scripture Reading: John 3:1-21; Romans 6:1-11

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2nd Corinthians 5:17

“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Romans 6:4



The poetess, Louise Tarkington, expressed the longing of many hearts when she wrote, “I wish there were some beautiful place called the land of beginning again”. But there is such a place! Paul declared, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone; the new has come.”

Let us notice what has happened to this “new creation.”

I. The new creation has experienced a new birth

The new creation has been begotten again “by the Word of God”. (1 Peter 1:23) He has been born of water and Spirit; as he has been convicted by the Holy Spirit, baptized into Christ, and given the gift of the Spirit. (John 16:8; Acts 2:38) He is now a “babe in Christ”.

II. The new creation has experienced a complete change

- A. His heart has been changed. He has new desires and a new purpose in life. The things that he once loved, he now hates, and the things he once hated he now loves.
- B. His life has been changed. Having been buried with Christ through Christian baptism, he has been raised to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4)
- C. His allegiance has been changed. The old creature gave allegiance to the devil; the new creature gives allegiance to God.
- D. His state has been changed. The old creature was lost; the new creature is saved.

(Mark 16:16) The old creature was an alien to God; the new creature is a member of the household of God. (Colossians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 2:19) The old creature was dead in sin; the new creature is alive in Christ. (Ephesians 2:1)

III. The new creation has received a new power

The new creation has obeyed God and has been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38; 5:32) This power in the life of the new creature enables him to "mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13) to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) to be directed by God (Romans 8:14) and to have life given to his mortal body. (Romans 8:11)

How wonderful and how important it is to become a new creature in Christ!

"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation." Galatians 6:15

1. If anyone is "in Christ", what is he? (2 Corinthians 5:17)

2. Why do we need to become a new creation?

- a. (Jeremiah 17:9)

- b. (John 3:3)

- c. (John 3:5)

d. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

3. How many of us need to become new creatures? (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:23)

4. What must we do to become new creatures?

a. (Romans 6:3; Colossians 3:3)

b. (1 Peter 1:23)

c. (Romans 6:4)

5. What is it that changes man's heart? (Acts 15:9)

6. What is it that changes man's conduct? (Acts 3:19)

7. What is it that changes man's allegiance? (Romans 10:9)

8. What is it that changes man's relationship? (Galatians 3:27)

9. What two things are promised to those who repent and are baptized? (Acts 2:38)

10. What fruit will the new life bear? (Galatians 5:22, 23)

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| a. _____ | f. _____ |
| b. _____ | g. _____ |
| c. _____ | h. _____ |
| d. _____ | i. _____ |
| e. _____ | |

11. What are some of the new things that are given to the new creature?

a. (Isaiah 62:2)

b. What is this new name? (Acts 11:26, 1 Peter 4:16)

c. (John 13:34)

d. (Psalm 40:3)

e. (2 Peter 3:13)

12. Whom will the new creature love? (Mark 12:30-31)

13. What will the new creature think? (Philippians 4:8)

14. What will the new creature do? (James 1:22)

15. Where will the new creature walk? (Matthew 7:13-14)

16. Who can become a new creature in Christ? (2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 22:17)

The following is taken from a speech by Dale Evans:

After her introduction, Dale acknowledged the citation with well chosen words; then speaking in gracious humility, she began to tell the some two thousand young people in the audience the story of her life. I wish every youth and adult in America could have heard it.

First, she praised her godly parents who reared her in a Christian home. She recalled a sermon she heard when she was only ten years of age, which led her to make her first public declaration of faith. She confessed that there was a period in her life when she strayed from the Lord, but she expressed great confidence in Proverbs 22:6 — “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” She feels her life story is a demonstration of this text.

She continued her story by relating several incidents in her life that led her farther and farther from the Lord. Recalling her own unsuccessful teenage marriage; she pleaded with the youth not to make this mistake. She told of her desire to be a dancer and how this, along with other unholy passions, forced her to compromise her principles and reject the Lord.

With humor and pathos, she told how she finally broke into the movies and came to meet her husband to be, Roy Rogers. She told us how she promised God, when she married Roy, that she would establish a Christian home for her children and for his.

It was her son, by her first marriage, who led her back to the Lord and helped her to fulfill her promise to God. One Sunday evening when she was attending church with

him in Hollywood, he turned to her during the invitation hymn and asked her, "Mother, is everything alright between you and the Lord?" While she stumbled through several evasive answers, she said she knew the answer to his question was really, "No." He reminded her that, "Jesus is all you need." One week later she walked down the aisle asking God's forgiveness and saying to her Lord, "Take my life; break it; twist it; bend it; but, use it for Thy glory." In a few months, she was able to persuade Roy also to give his life to the Lord. She pointed out that although she and Roy had attained fame and had most any material possession they desired; there was a void in their lives, in their marriage, and in their home that was never filled until they gave their lives to the Lord.

Over and over, Dale emphasized how much the Lord meant to her and Roy. She praised Him openly for blessings to them, and she expressed sincere appreciation for His help in their hours of trial and sorrow. She repeated a part of what she and Roy call their creed, "We have both accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. We love Him, try to follow Him in our daily lives, and are bringing our children up under His guidance. To us, Jesus Christ is truly, 'the light of the world.'"

Will you allow your life to be such a testimony for God?



"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." 1 Timothy 2:8

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6

The Growing Christian Prays

“Lord, teach us to pray.” -Luke 11:1

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:36-46; 6: 5-15

One of the finest spiritual foods, by which the new creature can “grow unto salvation”, is prayer.

Our example, Jesus Christ, although He was the perfect Son of God, devoted much time to prayer. If the pure and holy Son of God needed this communion with the Father, how much more do we?

Let us study the prayer life of the growing Christian, remembering that, “He who kneels down to God, can stand up to anything.”

I. Why the growing Christian prays

The growing Christian prays out of a sense of gratitude. He realizes that the Lord has done much for him, and he desires to say “thank you”. (Philippians 4:6)

He prays because he recognizes his need. As a child of God, he needs forgiveness, strength, and guidance: so He comes to God with his petition; realizing that God’s promises are always broader than our prayers.

He is concerned over others; hence, he comes in prayer to intercede for them. (James 5:16)

He has come to love his Lord, and He desires to spend as much time as possible in His presence.

II. When the growing Christian prays

The growing Christian strives to be in constant communion with his heavenly Father. He remembers that the Christian is to “pray continually”. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

To develop the prayer habit, he also sets aside a definite time each day for prayer and communion with his Lord.

He prays in times of sorrow, joy, need, and temptation.

“He who does not pray when the sun shines does not know how to pray when

the clouds arise.”

III. How the growing Christian prays

The growing Christian strives to follow the example of his Lord in praying (Matthew 26:36-46); hence, he prays humbly, earnestly, persistently, unselfishly, with a forgiving spirit, and with his will surrendered to the will of God.

The growing Christian approaches maturity when he can go with Christ to Gethsemane and pray, “Not my will, but Your will be done.”

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need”. (Hebrews 4:16)
May we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ through availing ourselves of this precious privilege of prayer.

1. What did the disciples ask Jesus to teach them? (Luke 11:1)

2. Has God promised to answer our prayers? (Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 7:7)

3. For what reason will God answer our prayers?

a. (John 14:13)

b. (John 16:24)

4. Will God hear us if we have sin in our hearts? (Psalm 66:18; Hebrews 10:26)

5. Will God grant our petitions if we ask selfishly? (James 4:3)

6. When is a Christian to pray? (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

7. To whom are our prayers to be addressed? (Matthew 6:9)

8. In whose name are our prayers to be offered? (John 16:23-24)

9. Why does a Christian need to pray?

a. (Matthew 26:41) _____

b. (Hebrews 4:16) _____

10. What did Jesus teach His disciples to ask for when they prayed? (Matthew 6:9-13)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

11. Must our prayers be long to be effective? (Matthew 6: 7-8)

12. What are some of the conditions of effective prayer?

a. (John 14:13-14)

b. (John 15:7)

c. (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24)

d. (1 John 3:22) _____

e. (James 5:16)

f. (Luke 18:9-14) _____

g. (Mark 11:25) _____

h. (Matthew 18:19, 20)

i. (1 John 5:14)

13. What are we guilty of when we fail to pray for others? (1 Samuel 12:23)

14. What two reasons do James give for Christians not having the blessings that might be theirs? (James 4:2-3)

15. What is the dictionary definition of the following words?

a. Sin _____

b. Intercession _____

c. Petition _____

Jesus taught His disciples to pray...

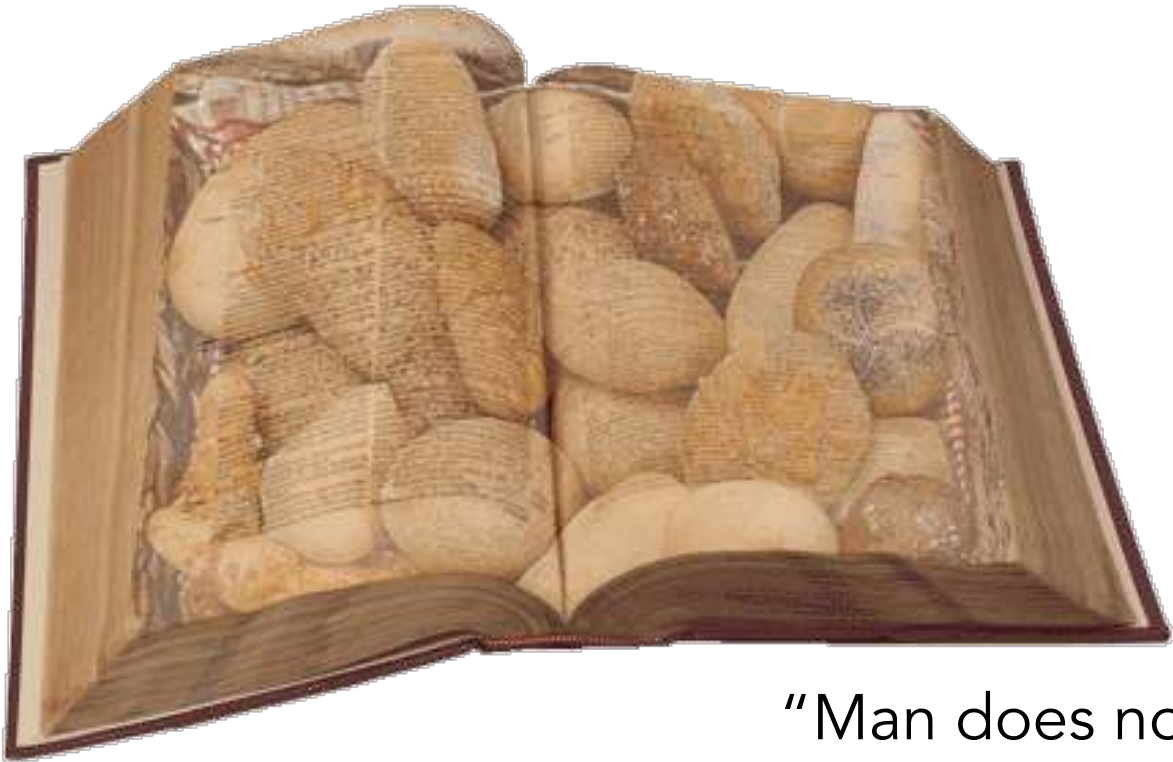
One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray say, Father, hallowed be Your name Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation..."

Praise God, and give Him glory... Establish that His will for your life is more important than your plans... We are to declare our dependence upon God for life. I know I can't make it without You, God. I need You in my life...

We declare our dependence upon God for the pardon of sin we receive through the sacrifice of Your Son Jesus...God, I know how much You gave for my sins, and I thank You for loving me even when I didn't know You.

Help me, Father, to forgive others, "we also forgive everyone who sins against us."

Help me to learn, from Your mercy and grace, how I should forgive other people, even those who have hurt me and my family...God, I'm so weak in this area, so I must rely on You.



"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every WORD that comes from the mouth of God." -

Matthew 4:4

The Growing Christian Studies the Bible

“Your Word is a lamp to my feet.” -Psalm 119:105

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:10-17; John 20:30,31

Someone has observed that going to heaven is like riding a bicycle: we must either go or get off. There can be no standstill in Christianity! We are interested in the provisions that God has made; by which, we can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the most helpful of these provisions is the Bible. The growing Christian studies the Bible because he loves its author, and because he has found the value of meditating upon His Word. Let us see what the growing Christian finds as he studies the Bible.

I. Guidance

The psalmist declared, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105) The Bible shows us the way to heaven and the way to eternal life with God.

II. Wisdom

In Psalm 119:104 we read, “I gain understanding through your precepts.” No one is completely educated without a knowledge of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

III. Faith

John tells us that “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” (John 20:30-31) It is not the student of God’s Word who loses faith in Christ.

IV. Strength

In Psalm 119:11, the writer declares, “I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” One who knows the Scriptures can meet temptation, as did his Lord: “It is written.”

V. Comfort and Hope

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4) Untold thousands have found comfort and hope in its pages. Let us study the

Bible carefully, prayerfully, frequently, and intelligently. By knowing the Book, we will come to know its Author.

1. Who is the Author of the Bible? (2 Peter 1:21)

2. What are some figures of speech used to describe God's Word?

a. (Psalm 119:105) _____

b. (Ephesians 6:17) _____

3. Can a Christian be complete without the Scripture? (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)

4. What are the Scriptures able to do for us? (2 Timothy 3:15)

5. For what are the Scriptures profitable? (2 Timothy 3:16)

6. Of whom do the Old Testament Scriptures bear witness? (John 5:39)

7. What is the source of faith? (Romans 10:17)

8. For what reason were the miracles of Jesus recorded in the New Testament? (John 20:30,31)

9. Is knowledge of the Bible an aid in keeping us from sin? (Psalm 119:11)

10. How does knowledge of the Bible help us in times of temptation? (Matthew 4:1-11)

11. What does Paul say that we are when we learn to handle the Word of Truth?
(2 Timothy 2:15)

12. What is the man like who meditates on the law of Jehovah? (Psalm 1:1-3)

13. In what way were the Bereans nobler than those in Thessalonica? (Acts 17:11)

14. How often did these Bereans search the Scriptures? (Acts 17:11)

15. How are we to receive God's Word? (James 1:21)

16. What does Hebrews 4:12, say about the Word of God?

17. Is God's Will accomplished through God's Word? (Isaiah 55:11)

18. What is the penalty of misuse of the Scriptures? (Proverbs 13:13; 2 Peter 3:16)

19. How often do you think a Christian should read the Bible?

**“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the day approaching.”
- Hebrews 10:25**



Those who insist, “I can be just as good a man (or woman) without going to church” forget the words of Jesus when He said, “I am the vine, and you are the branches.”

His message was clear and unmistakable. The branches have life only so long as they continue to draw life from the vine. When they are cut off, they die and are cast into the furnace.

Jesus never cuts anyone from Himself. We ourselves hold the severing knife and, to this extent, our future. God’s people want to be in His house on His day.

The Growing Christian Goes to Church

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:19-31

The devil gets some people to murder, some to steal, some to drink, and some to just stay away from church. The church is a divine provision for man's ultimate salvation. There can be no successful rival and no adequate substitute for the Lord's church. The two-fold mission of the church in the world is to save sinners and strengthen the saints. The Christian who desires to grow will attend every service of the church that he possibly can. Why does the growing Christian go to church? To connect with God and others.

I. To obey God

The writing of the Hebrew letter gives us the divine command to forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, but to encourage one another as we see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:25)

II. To worship God

Having come to love God, the new Christian has experienced the need of worship and the desire to pay homage to his God.

III. To remember Jesus Christ

One of the last requests our Lord ever made was: He blessed the loaf and cup, saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

The growing Christian remembers Jesus Christ at the communion table.

IV. To have fellowship with the family

The Christian has become a member of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:19)
He loves the Father; and thus, he loves the family and desires their fellowship.

V. To receive help for daily living

Here he listens to the preaching of the gospel, which builds his faith. Here, he engages in quiet meditation and prayer, which gives him the calmness and serenity of soul for the new week. Here, he fellowships with the saints of God, and his faith and courage are renewed that he may go out to live and serve as a child of God.

1. Who owns the Church? (Matthew 16:18)

2. What was the purchase price paid for the Church? (Acts 20:28)

3. To what extent did Christ love the Church? (Ephesians 5:25)

4. What did Jesus promise when two or three people gather together in His name?
(Matthew 18:20)

5. Where did the early Church assemble? (Acts 2:46; 1Corinthians 16:19)

6. What were the four elements of worship in the early Church? (Acts 2:42)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

7. What is the dictionary definition of worship?

8. What did the early Church do when they assembled on the first day of the week?
(Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16: 1,2)

9. In what other way can Christians teach and admonish one another?(Colossians 3:16)

10. Is the form of worship acceptable to God if the spirit of the worshiper is not right?
(Amos 5:21-24)

11. What conditions did Jesus give for effective worship of God?

a. (John 4:23) _____

b. (Luke 18: 9-14) _____

c. (Matthew 5:23-24) _____

12. On what day of the week did Jesus arise from the dead? (Mark 16:9)

13. On what day of the week did the early Church assemble? (Acts 20:7)

14. What is the first day of the week called in Revelation 1:10?

15. What did John say he was doing on the Lord's Day? (Revelation 1:10)

16. What are Christians guilty of if they fall away from the faith? (Hebrews 6:4-6)

17. Do you think we can worship God as well at home or in the mountains as we can in a church service? Why or why not?

18. List your reasons for believing that Christians should attend church regularly?

The Growing Christian Remembers the Lord's Death

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." 1 Corinthians 11:26

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14: 22-25; Luke 22:14-20; John 6:53-58; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

Of all the aids to Christian growth given by the loving God, none is more important or sacred than the Communion service. The growing Christian comes faithfully to the table of the Lord.

I. Why the Christian comes to the Lord's table

- a. Because his Lord has requested his presence there. One of the last requests Jesus made of His followers was, "Do this in remembrance of Me."
- b. Because he loves his Lord and desires the fellowship with Him at His table. (Matthew 26:29)
- c. Because he loves his brethren and desires their fellowship.
- d. Because he recognizes his need of this communion. (1 Corinthians 10:16)

II. How the Christian comes to the Lord's Table

- a. Regularly. He remembers that the early Christians, "continued steadfastly in breaking of bread." (Acts 2:42)
- b. Humbly. He recognizes his own unworthiness and need of pardon.
- c. Penitently. Here, before the emblems of the body and blood, given for remission of sins, the Christian acknowledges his sin and offers his petition for cleansing.
- d. Thoughtfully. He remembers the warning of the apostle, "For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on his self". (1 Corinthians 11:29)

III. What the Christian finds at the Lord's Table

- a. Cleansing. In the institution of this memorial feast, the Master declared, "This is my blood...shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:28) Where could there be a better place for the Christian to ask for pardon than before this table of remembrance, as he "participates in" the blood of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16)
- b. Strength. Here, the Christian participates in the body of his Lord (1 Corinthians 10:16) and he finds the strength, which enables him to meet life as a disciple of the Lord.

One who would grow in the Christian life must come faithfully to the Lord's table, where he "proclaims the Lord's death till He comes."

1. Who instituted the Lord's Supper? (Matthew 26:26-29)

2. When was the Lord's Supper instituted? (Matthew 26:17-28)

3. What two elements are to be used in the Lord's Supper? (Matthew 26:26-27)

4. What does the bread represent? (Matthew 26:26)

5. What does the cup represent? (Matthew 26:26-27)

6. Who should partake of the Lord's Supper? (Acts 2:41, 42)

7. What was the primary purpose of the assembling of the early Christians? (Acts 20:7)

8. When did the early church observe the Lord's Supper? (Acts 20:7)

9. In the tabernacle, how often was the table of bread changed? (Leviticus 24:8)

10. What was placed upon the loaves of bread? (Leviticus 24:7)

11. Of what was incense a type? (Revelation 5:8)

12. What does this tell us of the manner in which we should partake of the Lord's Supper?

13. For how long is the Lord's Supper to be observed? (1 Corinthians 11:26)

14. What do we do when we eat the bread and drink the cup?

a. (1 Corinthians 10:16)

b. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

15. What are we guilty of when we partake in an unworthy manner? (1 Corinthians 11:27)

16. What is an unworthy manner of partaking of the Lord's Supper? (1 Corinthians 11:29)

17. What is the result of partaking in an unworthy manner? (1 Corinthians 11:30)

18. Who has a right to decide as to who should participate in the Lord's Supper?
(1 Corinthians 11:28)

19. Do Christians sin? (1 John 1:8)

20. What is it that cleanses us from all sin? (1 John 1:7)

21. Do you think there is any relationship between the Lord's Supper and the forgiveness of the Christian's sin? (Matthew 26:27-28; 1 Corinthians 10:16)

22. What is the dictionary definition of "proclaim"?

23. What is the dictionary definition of "covenant"?

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Jesus, our only Savior, says it is exceedingly important. His Word should be sufficient for us. The apostle Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16)

To constantly neglect the Lord's Supper is a serious offense. No Christian can expect to grow spiritually when he overlooks one of the sources of spiritual life. To habitually neglect the table of the Lord is to bring about spiritual weakness; and ultimately, spiritual death.

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” -2 Corinthians 9:7

Scriptures Concerning Giving

I. Tithing in the Old Testament:

(Just a few instances — there are many more!)

“And blessed be the most high God, who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” (Genesis 14:20)

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy unto the Lord.” (Leviticus 27:30)

“There bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. Then to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name - there you are to bring everything I command you; your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the Lord.” (Deuteronomy 12:6,11)

“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.” But you ask, “How do we rob you?” “In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse — the whole nation of you — because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me on this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” (Malachi 3:8-10)

Also refer to the Old Testament — “This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means ‘king of righteousness’; then also, ‘king of Salem’ means ‘king of peace. Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people — that

is, their brothers — even though their brothers are descended from Abraham.”
(Hebrews 7:1-2,5)

II. Stewardship in the New Testament

The people in Jesus’ time tithed (Jewish people, scribes, and Pharisees, etc.) as is recorded throughout the Old Testament. Jesus says in Matthew 5:20, “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Mark 12:14-17)

(Also, parallel Matthew 22:17-21, and Luke 20:22-25)

They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know You are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the Truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?” But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. They brought the coin, and He asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then Jesus said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” And they were amazed at Him.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:38)

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted

me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I know that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So, I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matthew 25:14-30, also, read Luke 19:12-27)

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income." (1 Corinthians 16:2)

"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grief's."
(1 Timothy 6:10)

The gift to God is to come first—not last!

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things will be given to you as well."

The Growing Christian Shares

"Give, and it shall be given unto you." Luke 6:38

Scripture Reading: Malachi 3:8-10

"He who ceases to give ceases to live." Money talks. It tells what you are. It represents your time, your talent, and your life. It is a sacred thing. Its use may be a gift to God or stand in the way of God many blessings. The growing Christian will desire to share the possessions that God has entrusted to Him.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2, although written of a special offering taken for the saints at Jerusalem, this passage provides the growing Christian with some wisdom for his material giving.

I. When should we give? "Upon the first day of the week." When could be a better time to bring an offering to the Lord than upon the day that we assemble to remember His death and resurrection! Our giving should be regular and systematic, i.e. on every first day of the week.

II. Who should give? "Each one of you." Peter tells us, "Each one should use whatever gifts he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:10). The widow had but two mites, and they were given to God. Our giving is not measured so much by the amount of the gift, as by the spirit in which it is given and by the amount we have left. (Mark 12:41-44)

III. How much should we give? "As he may prosper." This indicates proportionate giving and a definite businesslike agreement with God. The only "portion" the Bible ever mentions as being owed to the Lord or "belonging" uniquely to Him is the first tenth: the Lord's tithe. (Leviticus 27:30) Abraham and Jacob, long before the Mosaic law was given on Mt. Sinai, brought their tithes. Those living under the Mosaic dispensation were compelled to bring the first tenth, plus special tithes and offerings. (Deuteronomy 12:5-7; 14:22, 23, 28, 29) How can the Christian do less? The tithe should be "the beginning place".

IV. Why should we give? "That no collections be made when I come." The faithful sharing of those who love God fills the "wants of the saints" (2 Corinthians 9:12), and bears, "I am looking for what may be credited to your account." (Philippians 4:17) "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Luke 16:11)

1. Who owns the earth? (Psalm 24:1)

2. Who owns the beasts and the cattle? (Psalm 50:10)

3. Who owns the silver and the gold? (Haggai 2:8)

4. If man is not owner of the things of this world, what is he? (1 Peter 4:10)

5. What is the dictionary definition of steward?

6. What portion was said to belong to Jehovah under the Mosaic law? (Leviticus 27:30-33)

7. Were the Israelites of the Old Testament required to give more than a tenth? (Deuteronomy 12: 5-7;14:22, 23, 28, 29)

8. Was tithing limited to the Jewish dispensation? (Genesis 14:17-20; 28:20-22; Hebrews 7:4-10)

9. How did the Israelites rob God? (Malachi 3:8)

10. What did God promise Israel if they would bring the whole tithe into the storehouse? (Malachi 3:10-12)

11. Is the support of the gospel ministry an "ordinance"? (1 Corinthians 9:14)

12. Who ordained the support of the gospel ministry? (1 Corinthians 9:14)

13. How has the Lord ordained that those who proclaim the gospel be supported? (1 Corinthians 9:13-14)

14. How were the Levitical priests supported? (Numbers 18:21)

15. What gift must we present to God first? (Romans 6:13; 2 Corinthians 8:5)

16. What is the result of giving "sparingly"? (2 Corinthians 9:6)

17. What is the result of giving "bountifully"? (2 Corinthians 9:6)

18. What kind of giver does God love? (2 Corinthians 9:7)

19. When should we “lay up in store”? (1 Corinthians 16:2)

20. Should every Christian give something for the Lord’s work? (1 Corinthians 16:2)

21. What was the reward for those who were faithful in using the talents their Lord had given them? (Matthew 25:14-30)

22. What was the penalty for the one who failed to use the talents his Lord had given him?



“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.”
Matthew 28:19-20

The Growing Christian Wins Souls

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30

Scripture Reading: Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 4:31-38

The last expressed desire of Jesus was that His followers should go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. In John 20:21, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." Now the question is, "Who are the 'you'?" When the persecution arose against the early church, they were all scattered abroad except the apostles, and "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. (Act 8:4) It is our Lord's desire that every Christian reach out and share the Good News about Jesus.

I. Why Every Christian Should Reach

- A. Because Jesus commanded it. (Matthew 28:18-20) If we love Him, we will keep His commandments. (John 14:15)
- B. Because of the state of a soul without the Savior. (Luke 19:10)
- C. Because of the condition of the world. (Matthew 9:36)
- D. Because of the Christian's own needs. Soul winning helps us to become like Jesus. In saving others, we save ourselves.

II. How Every Christian Can Reach

- A. By preparing for it. He who would win souls must study the Bible, spend much time in prayer, live a godly life, and have a passion for souls.
- B. By example. Man took knowledge of the early disciples; that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13) The most unanswerable argument for Christianity is a life in which men can see Jesus. "A pint of example is worth a gallon of advice."
- C. By testimony. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20)

III. The Reward of Reaching out

- A. To those who are won: eternal life.
- B. To the Church: the strengthening of numbers.
- C. To the soul-winner: personal satisfaction, the enrichment of life, and an eternal reward.

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

1. What is the most valuable thing that God ever made? (Matthew 16:26)

2. Then what is the greatest work in the world? (James 5:20)

3. What does Daniel say will happen to those who turn many to righteousness? (Daniel 12:3)

4. What will wise people do? (Proverbs 11:30)

5. For what purpose did Jesus say He had chosen the disciples? (John 15:16)

6. What did Jesus promise men if they would follow Him? (Mark 1:17)

7. What was the last thing that Jesus asked His disciples to do? (Matthew 28:18-20)

8. What will we do if we love Jesus? (John 14:15)

9. What encouragement do we have in winning others to Jesus? (Matthew 28:20)

10. Who brought Simon Peter to Jesus? (John 1:40-42)

11. Who brought Nathaniel to Jesus? (John 1:43-47)

12. Who did the preaching when the persecution fell upon the early church? (Acts 8:4)

13. What did these early Christians preach? (Acts 8:35)

14. What is the state of a soul without the Savior? (Luke 19:10)

15. What two things do we do when we convert a sinner? (James 5:19-20)

a. _____

b. _____

16. What are some of the greatest obstacles to evangelism?

a. (Romans 2:24) _____

b. (John 17:20-21) _____

c. (Romans 10:14-15) _____

d. (Acts 9:10-14) _____

17. What is the dictionary definition of "evangelism"?

The Growing Christian Presses On

“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.” Hebrews 6:1

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 6:1-3; Philippians 3:7-21

In Arizona, there is a wide and shallow river, which has a bed of quicksand, but it is possible to wade the river if one keeps moving. Thus, it is with the Christian life; we must keep moving. As we “go on to maturity”. The apostle Paul was a growing Christian, and in his letter to the church at Philippi he revealed the secret: “One thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14). If we will follow this divine formula, we, too, shall “press toward the goal”.

I. Concentrated Energy: “One thing I do”

As Christians, our energy must be concentrated for Christ. We must “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness”, and trust that the necessary things of life will be added. (Matthew 6:19-34)

II. Forgetting the Past: “Forgetting Those Things which are Behind”

It is obviously impossible to forget the past, in the sense of obliterating it from memory, but we must lose sight of both past accomplishments and past defeats as we catch the vision of the future.

III. Looking Ahead: “Straining Toward What Is Ahead”

This implies effort (straining) and vision (those things which are before). To the Christian the future is as bright as the promises of God. The future belongs to the believer, for “without faith it is impossible to please God”. (Hebrews 11:6)

IV. Exerting Effort to Attain: “I Press Toward The Goal”

Anything worthwhile in life calls for our best efforts. The Christian’s goal is “the prize for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”. As Paul finished his course, he could say, “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8)

Will you be able to say this? We are not to be of those who “shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.” (Hebrews 10:39)

1. What should a Christian do after he has learned the first principles of Christ?
(Hebrews 6:1)

2. What does the Bible say about perfection in this life? (Philippians 3:12; 1John 1:8)

3. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “Be perfect; therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect?” (Matthew 5:48; Colossians 1:28)

4. What is the goal toward which the Christian presses? (Philippians 3:14)

5. What three reasons did Jesus give for failure to grow? (Matthew 13:3-7, 18-22)

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

6. Is it possible to fall away from grace? (Galatians 5:4)

7. Did Paul believe that because he had been saved there was no danger of his being lost?

(1 Corinthians 9:27) _____

8. Is it possible to fall so far away from the faith that it is impossible to return? (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26,27) _____

9. What do backsliders do to Jesus? (Hebrews 6:6) _____

10. Is it better to be a non-Christian or a backslider? (2 Peter 2:20-22) _____

11. What should a backslider do about his sin?

a. Acts
8:22 _____

b. 1 John 1:7-
9 _____

12. What virtues should the growing Christian add to his life? (2 Peter 1:5-7) _____

13. What is the reward to the one who possesses these Christian graces?
(2 Peter 1:10-11)

14. Personal Evaluation: What do you feel is the Next Step in your life as you grow in
the grace and knowledge of the Jesus Christ?

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize..." Phil. 3:14

Jesus' Church



THE GROWING CHRISTIAN KNOWS HIS CHURCH

(The Church Jesus Built)

Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:13-19; Acts 2:1-47

When, in the region near Caesarea Philippi, Peter made the inspired confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus declared, "Upon this rock I will build my church." Let us study the church Jesus built.

I. Its Beginning

The church Jesus built came into existence in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following the crucifixion of our Lord. Before Acts 2, the church is always referred to as being future; after Acts 2, the church is always referred to as in existence. The church was composed of repentant, baptized believers, added by the Lord upon their obedience to His word. (Acts 2:37-41)

II. Its Organization

Christ alone is Head of His church. All authority has been given to Him. (Matthew 28:18) Serving under this divine head were evangelists (Ephesians 4:11), elders, bishops or overseers" (Acts 20:17, 28), who were to oversee and feed the flock, and deacons (1 Timothy 3:8) who were to have oversight of the material ministry.(Acts 6:1-6)

III. Its Names

Christ not only built a church, but He also gave names for His church and for the individual members. We shall notice in the questions at the end of this lesson these divinely given names and their significance. We are to glorify God in the names we wear. (1 Peter 4:16).

IV. Its Ordinances

An ordinance is defined as "A rule or practice, ordained or established by authority". Our authority, Jesus Christ, has ordained certain practices for His church. The early church immersed, in water the bodies of penitent believers for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:37-41). The early church met together on the first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper. (Acts 20:7) The early church supported the gospel ministry as the Lord had ordained. (1 Corinthians 9:13,14)

May we understand the pattern of the church Jesus built and then strive to “make all things according to the pattern” (Hebrews 8:5) so that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. (Matthew 16:18)

1. Who is the head of the Church? (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18)

2. Who owns the Church? (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28)

3. What is the foundation of the Church? (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 3:19-20)

4. How many Churches did Jesus build? (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4-6)

5. When was the Church established? (Acts 2:1, 41)

6. Where was the Church established? (Isaiah 2:3; Acts 2)

7. What did men do to become members of the Church Jesus built? (Acts 2:37 -41)

8. What are the Scriptural names for the Church?

a. 1 Corinthians 1:2_____

b. Hebrews 12:23_____

c. 1 Corinthians 12:27_____

d. Romans 16:16 _____

e. 1 Timothy 3:15 _____

f. Romans 16:4 _____

g. Acts 8:1,3;15:3,4;18:22 _____

9. What are the Scriptural names for members of the Church?

a. Acts 6:1; 9:19 _____

b. Acts 6:3; Philippians 1:12 _____

c. Acts 9:13; Philippians 1:1 _____

d. Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16 _____

10. What leaders did the Lord place in His Church? (Ephesians 4:11) _____

11. What other Scriptural offices are there in the Church?

a. Acts 14:23;20:17,28 _____

b. Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1 and 8 _____

12. Who selected the leaders in the New Testament Church? (Acts 6: 2-6)

13. What kinds of men were chosen as leaders of the Church? (1 Timothy 3:1-13)

14. What are the duties of the elders? (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5: 1-3)

15. What is the dictionary definition of "ordinance"?

16. What ordinances are to be administered by the Church?

a. 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 _____

b. Matthew 28:19 _____

c. 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 _____

17. Is division in the Church a sin? 1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 3:3 _____

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation by water and the Word;
From Heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.

Elect from every nation, yet one over all the earth,
Her charter of salvation, One lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.

'Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation of peace for-ever-more;
Till, with the vision glorious, her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union, with God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion, with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us trace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee.

THE CHURCH

(Departures, Reformation and Restoration)

In previous chapter, we studied the Church Jesus built. The blueprint of this Church is revealed in the New Testament. Jesus not only built a church, but placed inspired men in the Church to guide and direct it. After these uniquely inspired men passed away, men began to substitute human ideas for the divine pattern. Let us study some of the major departures from the New Testament pattern and efforts toward reformation.

I. Departures

a. In Organization.

The Church Jesus built had a simple pattern of organization: Christ, the Head; evangelists, to proclaim the good tidings; elders or bishops, to oversee the body of believers; deacons, to minister to things material. Although, the office of elder or bishop was originally one and the same; by the middle of the second century the office of bishop was considered higher than that of elder; and bishops were given oversight of a number of churches. By A. D. 200, these elevated "bishops" were called "priests", and by A. D. 300, many wrongly considered them to have the right to forgive sin.

In the fourth century A. D. came the union of Church and state under Emperor Constantine, and the organization of the Church was patterned after the organization of the state. A hierarchy was developed as city bishops were placed over country bishops. The bishops of the centers of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome were the most influential, and in the year 533, Emperor Justinian conferred the title: "Lord of the Whole Church", upon the bishop of Rome.

The title "papa" or "pope", which was first used in the fourth century, was applied exclusively to the bishop of Rome in the sixth century and was bestowed upon bishop Gregory, who became the first "pope" in the year 590. Thus, the simple pattern of organization of the Church Jesus built was obscured by human innovation: bishops over districts, archbishops over bishops, cardinals over archbishops, and a pope over all.

b. In Name.

Jesus built a Church and gave names to the Church and its members. In the year 1053, the division between the Eastern and Western Churches was consummated. The Eastern Church, with its center in Constantinople, became the Greek Orthodox or Greek Catholic Church; the Western Church, centering in Rome, became the Roman Catholic Church. The official title accepted by the Eastern Church was "The Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Eastern (or Oriental) Church"; the title of the Western Church, "The Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church".

We shall see in Section II how the names of Reformation leaders were adopted by their followers. Denominational churches accepted the names of these Reformation leaders, or of practices, which distinguished them from other followers of Christ.

c. In Ordinances.

In the Church Jesus built, baptism was the immersion in water of the body of a penitent believer for remission of sins. As early as the third century, the immersion of infants was begun. In the year 753, Pope Stephen II permitted his monks in Brittany to pour water on the heads of infants when they deemed it necessary. In 1311, the Roman Catholic council of Ravenna passed a decree declaring sprinkling or pouring to be indifferent. Thus the beautiful symbolism of death, burial and resurrection was replaced by the "pope's baptism".

The Church Jesus built observed the Lord's Supper each first day of the week in memory of Him. The Roman Church introduced the doctrine of transubstantiation, i.e. the emblems becoming the literal body and blood of Jesus; and the sacrifice of Christ being re-enacted in the fruit of the vine taken only by the priest.

d. In Life.

The early Christians considered their lives to be holy and dedicated to God. As departures came and men recognized the priest as mediator, the ritual and the following of the priest's instruction came to be considered more important than the manner of life. Such practices as the confessional, penance, and the selling of indulgences were not conducive to spiritual living. The Bible was kept from the common people; the Dark Ages came and Christ's Church was corrupted; and reformation was needed!

II. Reformation

"The Palmist wrote, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119:130)

The Bible, which had been a hidden book to the common man for many centuries, was restored to the people, and Reformation was begun. John Wycliffe (1320-1384), "morning star of the Reformation" ,paved the way for the Reformation by translating the Scriptures into the English language.

The invention of the printing press (approximately 1450) enabled the Reformers to scatter their teachings abroad and they placed the printed Word in the hands of many.

a. Forerunners of the Reformation

There were many forerunners before the time of Martin Luther, who were, acting upon what light they had. They were pleading and working for reform in the church. The Albigenses and the Waldenses, among others, were striving to base their teachings upon the Bible. John Huss of Bohemia, who preached that the Bible is the only authority in religion, was burned at the stake in 1415.

Jerome of Prague paid for his opposition to the Roman Church by being burned in 1416.

Savonarola attacked the tyranny and immorality of the clergy and the pope, and he was burned at the stake in 1498. Others who contributed to the rise and growth of the Reformation were such men as Erasmus: Melancthon, Zwinglie, John Calvin, and John Knox.

b. The Lutheran Reformation

Martin Luther, born in Eisleben, Germany, in 1483, is recognized as the leading spirit of the Reformation. Educated for law, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1507. Through his study of the Scriptures, he discovered the doctrine of "justification by faith". Luther was aroused by the selling of indulgences, and on October 31, 1517, he nailed his ninety-five theses to the church door in Wittenberg. Martin Luther had the courage to oppose the pope and the whole Church. He translated the Bible into the German vernacular, and he led a reform based on the open Book.

c. The English Reformation. (The Church Coming to America)

Henry VIII, King of England, was a member of the Roman Catholic Church; but, for personal and political reasons he broke with the Roman Church. Henry was

made head of the church by Parliament and he was declared by them to be higher than the pope. Bishop Cranmer was appointed to prepare a creed, and the Anglican Church or Church of England was born ("Episcopal Church" in America). From the English Reformation, came several other religious groups, such as the Puritans.

d. The Wesleyan Reformation.

John Wesley was born in Epworth, England, in 1703. Wesley became an outstanding and devout scholar, and while as student at Oxford became the leader of a society of young men called "Methodists", because of their methodical lives and study. John and his brother, Charles, revolted against the formalism and lack of spiritual depth of the Church of England, and they earnestly endeavored to lead the church in a spiritual revival. Wesley lived and died in the Church of England, but his followers formed the nucleus for the "Methodist Episcopal Church".

e. The Purpose of the Reformation Leaders.

These great and godly leaders of the Reformation did not intend to organize other Churches, but they intended to "reform" apostasies of the Roman Church. Almost, without exception, they pleaded with people not to follow them or to wear their names. They were discovering Bible truths, which had been hidden through the centuries; and as these truths were taught, largely to the exclusion of other Bible truths, groups crystallized about these teachings and the leading denominations of Christendom were begun. Had the church continued through the centuries as it began, instead of confusion and division, we could have Christian unity today, and there would be no such thing as Catholicism or denominationalism.

III. United Church of Christ History

The United Church of Christ of California, MO is a member congregation of the United Church of Christ. Our denomination began in 1957 through the process of combining two: the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Both denominations wanted freedom of worship, a respect for diversity, while remaining committed to a covenant, and spiritual guidance to engage in the community, our country and around the world. Our congregation was formerly a member of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

UCC churches respect the ability of each congregation to make their own decisions and are not bound by hierarchical control. The covenant we share with other member

UCC congregations allows individual churches to be “informed, but not instructed.” Each local church is autonomous in its leadership, calls its own Pastor, manages its own resources, and creates its own liturgical practices.

In the UCC, we emphasize personal faith, guided by the Holy Spirit and scripture, in addition to the social responsibility that comes from Jesus’s teaching that we are to minister to others.

1. Is the Scripture sufficient to make the Christian complete? (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

2. Did Jesus desire unity among His followers? (John 17:20-21)_____

3. What results when Christian people are united? (John 17:21; Acts 2:44-47)

4. What is the sevenfold basis of unity in Ephesians 4:4-6?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

5. What happened to the early church beginning about 200 A.D?

6. Who was the world ruler at this time? What is this period called in the history books?

7. Who was the first pope? _____

When? _____

8. List some of the leaders of the Reformation movement?

9. What was the purpose of these Reformation leaders? _____

10. What Churches were started by these men? _____

