

Getting Started

Essential Foundations for new Christians.

The Christian life can be compared to a table with 4 legs. These legs represent

- 1) Salvation
- 2) Baptism in Water
- 3) Baptism in the Holy Spirit
- 4) Discipleship.

If salvation is missing you have no table at all. If any of the other legs are missing you have a rather wobbly, unbalanced table. These 4 aspects are essential foundations for Christians to experience and understand.

1) Salvation

The term 'born again' was used by Jesus to indicate the spiritual change that needs to take place in order for a person to enter a personal relationship with God, and to live forever in His Kingdom. Jesus said:

I tell you the truth, no-one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again **John 3:3**

The bible teaches that man is separated from God because of sin. No-one needs to teach a child to be naughty, it comes naturally. Sin is a big problem causing deeply regrettable separation from God.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God **Romans 3:23**

The only way to end the separation and find relationship with God is to be born again. No matter how hard we try to do good things we can't cancel our sin. We need the gift of God's forgiveness.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God **Ephesians 2:8**

If you go to a football match with a cinema ticket you will be rejected. Similarly if you go the gates of heaven with a "I was a good person" ticket you will be rejected. The bible teaches that the only way to enter heaven is to be "Born Again". Jesus made many references to hell as a horrible place for those who do not have their sin dealt with. He said:

Unless you repent, you will all perish **Luke 13:3**

How are we born again?

Jesus took the punishment that we deserve by dying on a cross so that we can be forgiven and come into relationship with God. The bible says:

Jesus has appeared once for all .. to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself **Hebrews 9:26**

The most famous verse in the bible is:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in Him shall not die but have everlasting life **John 3:16**

This verse is known by Christians all over the world because they have realised that the 'whoever' in this verse means them - and also you. It tells us that God dearly wants to come into relationship with you.

If you would like to be born again you need to turn away from 'all that is wrong in your life' and ask Jesus to become your Lord. Praying a simple, personal prayer turning away from sin and asking God to come into your heart will be the most important thing you have ever done. When you are ready to commit your life to God pray a prayer like this:

Lord Jesus I thank you for dying on the cross for me. Please forgive me for all the things that I have done wrong. I ask you to come and be Lord of my life, to help me live the life that I should live.

If you have prayed this with sincerity you are born again - you have entered the Kingdom of God.

Realise that you now have eternal life. You will go to heaven. Read John 3:16 again.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in Him shall not die but have everlasting life

The sacrifice of Jesus is so amazing, powerful and complete that all sins are completely forgiven and forgotten.

He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west **Psalms 103:12**

I will remember their sins no more **Hebrews 8:12**

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus **Romans 8:1**

Note down the date of the start of your new life

Now it is very important to belong to a family of believers which will help you to grow in your faith. These people will be like a spiritual home for you so look for genuine people that teach the bible and live holy lives.

2) Baptism in Water

As soon as you have received salvation you should be baptised in water.

Baptism is a physical demonstration to heaven and earth that you have turned from your sin and accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. It is an important act of obedience, a commitment to God which Jesus Himself told us to do. Jesus said:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. **Matt 28:19**

Baptism has strong symbolic meaning in the bible.

It is a total identification with the death of Jesus as you go down under the water.

All of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death **Rom 6:3**

It is also a total identification with the resurrection of Jesus as you come up out of the water.

Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life. **Rom 6:4**

Putting on '**Christ like a garment**' is another symbolic meaning

For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ like a garment. **Gal 3:27**

Note from this verse that you are not baptised into the church but **into Christ**.

Conditions for Baptism

1. Teaching - *Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* **Mat 28:19**

You must have an understanding of who Jesus is, why he died and how we are to live our lives.

2. Repentance - *Peter said, "Repent and be baptised, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins"* **Acts 2:38**

Repentance is not just saying sorry to God for the things you have done wrong but consciously deciding *not* to do wrong. It is about turning away from lying, cheating, stealing, sex out of marriage, drunkenness, hatreds, immorality etc

When we turn to Christ He helps us to clean up our lives.

3. Believe - *Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.* **Mark 16:16**

You must believe that Jesus died to save you from your sins.

4. Pledge of a good conscience - *Baptism saves you (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* **1 Pet 3:21**

We do not want to do anything that would offend our heavenly Father.

Motives

You should be baptised:

- Not because your friends are being baptised
- Not because everyone else expects you to
- Because it's a fun thing to do
- Because it's a command - Jesus tells you to and you want to demonstrate your commitment to Him

Some practicalities

When you are being baptised don't forget to have a towel handy for when you come out. Avoid clothing with worldly text or images on it. You may need to be prepared to briefly explain why you want to be baptised.

When you are standing in the water those baptising you may pray for you either before or after you are baptised. You will be asked a few questions such as: do you renounce the Devil and all his works and do you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?

You will then be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus commanded. You will be lowered backwards into the water and when you are fully immersed, brought back up. You may like to hold your nose to stop water going up it. If you would prefer to be baptised - by being lowered straight down - let those baptising you know.

What if you were baptised as a baby?

If you look at the scriptural conditions for being baptised - 4 given above, a baby cannot meet any of them. Infant baptism is a wrong teaching that has led many to believe that as they were 'done as a baby' they will be going to heaven! This is a huge error - Jesus wants a personal relationship with us and no one can repent on our behalf. If you have been baptised as a baby regard it as a dedication to God. Be baptised when you understand what you are doing, with your will involved - believers baptism.

Why are we baptised by immersion?

The Greek word for baptise - baptizein means to immerse.

Matthew records how Jesus was baptised.

And having been baptised, Jesus went up immediately from the water... **Matt 3:16**

He went up from the water so He must have gone down into the water - full immersion.

3) Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a total infilling of the Holy Spirit which enables the believer to move in the power of God. God is supernatural, we can not fully know Him unless we move into the realm of His Spirit.

When we are 'born again' we receive the Holy Spirit. The disciples received the Holy Spirit soon after Jesus was resurrected.

He breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit. **John 20:22**

At this point they were *united* with the Holy Spirit. They were 'born again' but they had not been baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Later Jesus commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. He said that, in not many days, they would be **baptised in the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 1:5) This happened on the day of Pentecost which is described in Acts 2.

How to be baptised in the Holy Spirit

This experience is an amazing good gift from the Lord. Jesus said:

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" **Luke 11:13**

John 7:37 is an important scripture for the baptism, Jesus said

"If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him." **He said this about the Spirit.** **John 7:37**

Firstly the believer must be 'thirsty' - must want to be filled with the Spirit. There are many things that might stop us. Is there any barrier which needs to be removed? Secondly the believer must come to Jesus and pray for the experience. Some believers find it helpful to have hands laid on them by those that already have the gift. Some receive in a place of worship others alone at home. A new heavenly language called tongues is received.

Tongues is a spiritual language inspired by the Holy Spirit where our normal voice is used, but the conscious mind plays no part, except the will to speak it.

Trust the Holy Spirit with a child-like trust and start to speak words that are not a language you know. They may be simple one syllable words to start with. Say the words that He is giving you. Jesus said:

the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. **Luke 6:45**

In yielding your tongue you no longer seek to understand intellectually what God asks of you. You unreservedly hand over control of your tongue and allow God to build you up with a new spiritual language. The yielding of your tongue to the Spirit marks the climax of surrender and complete obedience. It is by this you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Yielding your tongue is especially important in view of **James 3:8** *No man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

Tongues are given to build us up: *He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.* **1 Cor 14:4**. Once you have received the gift you should speak in tongues every day. When you first receive it can be an emotional experience. Later when there is no emotion it becomes a discipline which needs to be exercised.

For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no-one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. **1 Cor 14:2**

Only God can understand your heavenly language. It can be understood by humans if someone has a gift of interpretation. Sometimes people are given a human tongue so they are able to speak a language they have not learnt, as on the day of Pentecost.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Once you have received the Baptism in the Spirit you should eagerly desire other gifts of the Holy Spirit.. These are outlined in 1 Cor 12 and are important for enabling you to be an effective witness for Jesus.

The gift of prophecy is the ability to speak out in your natural language what God is saying. This could be a warning for the future, words of correction, or of comfort, anything that the Spirit is saying.

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. **2 Peter 1:21**

The gift of wisdom is typically given when we face a difficult situation. A woman was caught in adultery and the Jews wanted to stone her to death. They asked Jesus what they should do and he said, *'he who is without sin should cast the first stone'*. (John 8:7). They all left, throwing no stones. This is a good example.

A gift of knowledge is given when facts about a situation are given by the Holy Spirit. Once Jesus was speaking to a woman he had never met before. He told her that she had 5 previous husbands. This was information supernaturally given which helped change her life. (John 4:7)

The gift of faith is given when you know something is going to happen. It removes fear and concern for a situation.

The gift of healing is given to enable supernatural healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit.

The gift of miracles is given when things need to happen. The most common examples are the supernatural provision of food and finance.

Sometimes we need a gift to be able to tell if an evil spirit is at work. This is an important subject which requires teaching but a young believer does have authority over evil spirits and can command them to go.

The gift of interpretation of tongues is important because a tongue given in a meeting tends to release faith for what God is saying. The tongue focuses the interpreters attention.

The gifts of the Spirit are powerful gifts and you need wisdom on how to use them. For example you need to discern the right time to give a prophetic word.

4) Discipleship

The 4th leg of the table consists of learning all that Jesus has taught. In order to grow in our faith we need to **read the bible** and **pray** every day, listen to **good biblical teaching** in our home fellowship, **regularly find fellowship** with other Christians and **act** on all that we learn. But firstly we need to know who God is. We need a biblical understanding to avoid believing in a "God of our imagination".

Who is God?

He is the incredible creator of the whole universe. A person who has shown the most intense love for people through Jesus dying on the cross.

The bible speaks of God being 3 persons in one. If you imagine an object - a pyramid with a triangle base - it has four sides. On one side you see God on another the Father on another Jesus on another the Holy Spirit - all one God. God is a loving heavenly Father who knows what is best for us. Jesus has revealed right teaching from the Father and the Holy Spirit is given to us to help and guide us and enable us to move in the power of God.

God is full of wisdom, knowledge, understanding and holiness. He wants you to understand many things so He has given us the bible to help us.

Read the bible

Each day you should spend some time reading the bible so you can get to know his ways. Read as much as you feel comfortable with. Think about some verses. Ask questions and God will help you find the answers. You will probably need help with some of the ideas so listen carefully to teaching given in your church fellowship.

Prayer Spend time in prayer, talk to God as you would a most respected friend. When you are saved your glass is 90% full. The devil will try to convince you it is 90% empty. If we spend time in thanksgiving it will help us to realise all the blessings we have. Pray for family and friends standing with them in their trials. As God has forgiven you your sins it is very important that you forgive everyone that has hurt you. You can do this in prayer naming people that you need to forgive. Unforgiveness is illegal in His kingdom.

There are many teachings that need to be understood and your church fellowship will help you. As you learn you will move to a place of freedom and understanding and knowing who you are in His kingdom.