



For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Who is God?

Why does He love me?

Who is His Son?

What can I believe in?

What happens after I die?

What is The Bible all about?

What is Christianity?

A small booklet for the big questions.

What is Christianity?

An Overview of the Holy Bible

What is Christianity?

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Christianity's Foundation

Christian beliefs **are based in faith on the Holy Bible**, a collection of ancient books, songs, letters, and other Scriptures written by people of God. The Bible begins with *The Old Testament* (a *Covenant or Promise*) which tells of who God is, His Law, and how He interacted with individuals and nations. This first Covenant was established over **generations of His chosen people and their laws**. In the second part of the Bible, called *The New Testament*, God fulfills His Law and extends His promise to all people through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Alone, this statement can bring up many questions. The following pages can guide you to the truths found within the Holy Bible, the inspired Word of God **given** to all men. This booklet is intended not as a replacement for the Bible, rather as an introduction to our beliefs and to the gift of God's hope and love available to everyone. We believe each person has an eternal soul, beginning with life on this earth, continuing after physical death either in Heaven (with God) or in Hell (without God). Where and how the soul's eternity is spent depends on the person's **knowledge awareness introduction** and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.



Three in One

We believe there is only one true God, **made up** of *The Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit*. God our Heavenly Father is the loving Creator and holy Lord of all. Jesus the Son is God, physically born on earth, sent as the Messiah (or *Christ, "Anointed One"*), to save mankind from the punishment of our sin. The Holy Spirit is God's felt presence on earth and within the hearts of His people.

Although it may appear these roles are separate beings, they are, in fact, each equally and eternally One Being. We find evidence of the Trinity as One in the following verses:

John 1:1-4 – In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

Revelation 1:8 – Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Romans 8:9 – The Apostle Paul said to the early Christians: "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

The Creation of All Things

The Bible tells us that God created the heavens and the earth and all living things. His order of creation is described at the start of the first book of the Bible, *Genesis*.

1. God created light and separated the light from the darkness.
2. God created the sky to separate water under the **expanse** and above it.
3. God created seed-bearing land to produce fruit and other vegetation.
4. God created the moon and stars and the sun to separate day from night and season from season.
5. God created the living creatures in the sea and the birds of the air.
6. God created living creatures on land, and then man in His own image to rule over the creatures and care for the earth.
7. God rested from all His work and made the seventh day of the week a holy Sabbath day of rest.

Genesis 1:31 – God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

Genesis 2:7 – ...the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Hebrews 11:3 – By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Fall of Mankind

In Genesis 3 we learn of the man, Adam, and the woman, Eve, whom God had placed in the perfect Garden of Eden. God enjoyed their company and provided for all their needs. He allowed them to eat anything from the Garden, except for the fruit from the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*.

Satan, an angel banished from Heaven for rebelling against God, had set out to deceive mankind about the love and wisdom of the Lord. Satan tempted Eve to eat from the Tree, even though she knew God had said not to. She herself then gave the fruit to Adam, who in turn also tasted of it.

Since both the man and woman had disobeyed God's command, they were sent out of the Garden. This introduction of sin resulted in hardship for life on earth. More significantly, it separated the relationship between God and all of mankind. Sin would now have to be removed in order to bring man back to God. As Satan continued to entice man's selfish nature, God continued to reach out to man to repair the relationship. He did this by His Spirit, by His written commands, and by those who spoke His messages. Ultimately, God would come to earth as a man Himself, as our Savior, Christ Jesus.

Revelation 2:7 – He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches... I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Leaders of Faith

The New Testament book of Hebrews, in Chapter 11, refers to various people of the Old Testament who had great faith to carry out God's will. Among the many faithful ones mentioned are ones through whom the Lord delivered His promises, His commands, and His kingdom.

Abraham – Genesis gives us the story of God's Covenant being made through Abraham and his descendents. Abraham was directed by God to move to a new land and he suffered much trouble, yet remained dedicated to the Lord. At an old age, his wife Sarah conceived her first son, Isaac, who had been promised to them by the Lord. Isaac later fathered Jacob, called Israel, and their descendents were called Hebrews. The Hebrews were looked down upon by other nations, and eventually they were enslaved in Egypt.

Moses – *Exodus* describes how God used Moses to lead His people out of slavery and back to the Promised Land of Abraham, the land of Israel. God also gave "The Ten Commandments" and the rest of His Law to the Hebrews through Moses. Followers of the Law were later called Jews, and they worshiped God in a temple in Jerusalem.

Others – After the Law was established, the Old Testament details times of local leaders, judges and kings who ruled the people. King David, "a man after God's own heart," wrote many musical and poetic *Psalms*. His Son, King Solomon, is credited for many *Proverbs* as well as *Ecclesiastes* and *Song of Songs*.

Law of Moses

God's commands to Moses were written in *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. These laws detailed ways to honor the Lord, with celebrations and feasts among methods of cleanliness and sacrifice. Jews were to give a set portion of the best they had – crops, animals, money, etc. Only their priests were allowed to determine cleanliness and to present the people's sacrifices directly before God. The first laws, "The Ten Commandments," summarize God's desire for our behavior.

Exodus 20:1-17 - And God spoke all these words:

1. "You shall have no other gods before or besides me.
2. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.
3. "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
4. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
5. "Honor your father and your mother.
6. "You shall not murder.
7. "You shall not commit adultery.
8. "You shall not steal.
9. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. "You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Jesus would later quote two other commands as "the greatest," saying, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these." (Matthew 22:35-40) *Deuteronomy 6:5 - Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.* And *Leviticus 19:18 - ... love your neighbor as yourself.*

The Birth and Life of Jesus Christ

Prophets in the Old Testament were those who voiced God's messages about the need for repentance, warnings of suffering, and the joy of salvation. Many prophecies told of the Messiah who would be the Savior of all mankind. God would give this greatest sacrifice, His Son Jesus, to be born a man, to take the punishment of our sins, and give us eternal life.

The first four books of the New Testament – *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* – are known as the *Gospels*, meaning "Good News." They tell of our Savior born to a virgin named Mary. After learning from an angel that she would carry the Messiah in her womb, she was given in marriage to Joseph, a direct descendent of King David. During a visit to Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary had no room to stay except in a stable, and there Jesus was born. To announce the Child's arrival, angels appeared to shepherds, who ran into the streets to spread the news. Wise Men from eastern lands followed a foretelling star to find this young Anointed One and gave Him gifts. Luke 2:52 states that Jesus "grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men."

Jesus began His ministry at about the age of 30, teaching crowds, healing many, and performing other miracles. He called several specific men to join Him, and they became known as The Twelve Disciples. Many others also followed Him and came to know Jesus Christ personally during His travels throughout Israel.

Words of Jesus Christ

The Gospels record many of the words and actions of Jesus during his three-year ministry. In John 10:10, Jesus said, "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." He emphasized that righteous living involves the condition of your heart, not the actions by themselves.

Love – Love the Lord and your fellow man.

§ *Mark 12:30-31* " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ...'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

§ *Luke 6:27, 31* – "...Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you... Do to others as you would have them do to you. "

Forgiveness – Forgive others freely as God forgives us.

§ *Mark 11:25* "...if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Humility – Serve God and others just as Jesus did.

§ *Luke 22:26-27* – "...the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves... I am among you as one who serves."

Faith – Believe and trust in God.

§ *Matthew 17:20* – "...I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed... Nothing will be impossible for you."

Holiness – Realize no person is sinless except Christ Jesus.

§ *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."

Salvation – Accept Jesus Christ as the only way to God.

§ *John 14:6* – "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

§ *Matthew 10:32* – "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."

Prayer – Fellowship with God directly.

§ *Matthew 26:41* – "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

§ *Luke 5:16* – Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Peace – Depend on God for all your needs.

§ *Matthew 6:25, 33* – "...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

§ *Matthew 11:29* – "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Resurrection of Jesus Christ

All four Gospels also record that Jesus was arrested after **claiming** to be the Son of God and was sentenced to be publicly crucified, nailed to a wooden cross. The third day after Jesus' death, His tomb was found empty by a woman named Mary Magdalene, and then by other disciples. An angel proclaimed that the Messiah had risen from the dead as He had said He would. Jesus soon appeared in flesh and bone to The Disciples and many others before returning to His Father in heaven. **(Acts 1:3)** The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ conquered sin, giving people freedom to obey God and to do good through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 – For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Hebrews 2:14-18 – Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death... For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

The Return of Jesus Christ

It is written in *Revelation* and other New Testament Scriptures that Jesus Christ will return to earth, restoring creation to its full glory, destroying Satan and **all the powers of evil** forever.

Acts 1:11 – “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Each person will come to a Judgment Day **()**, where all will be accountable for everything they have done with their life on earth. Jesus Christ, as one who is fully God and fully man, will be our Judge. Those who have chosen to believe in Christ will escape eternal condemnation and live forever with God. Jesus Christ being the only way to unending peace is central to Christianity.

Romans 3:22-25 – This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood...

Ephesians 2:8-9: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

After Jesus ascended into Heaven, the disciples preached the Gospel to Jews from many nations who had gathered in Jerusalem. Then, as *Acts* and other New Testament books and letters document, the Gospel was spread throughout the world.

Colossians 1:27 – To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles [non-Jews] the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Believers in Christ eventually became known as Christians, meeting frequently to worship the Lord and to provide for each other. Today, church groups worship God in numerous ways – varying with their culture, their needs, and their abilities. In many worship services, “The Apostle’s Creed” is repeated to state the essentials of the Church’s faith:

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic[] Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”*

*[*All Christian denominations unified world-wide as the Body of Christ.]*

A Prayer of Salvation

God desires a deeply personal relationship with you. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Revelation 3:20 – Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

I John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Where ever you are, you can pray to accept Christ! God knows your heart and will hear you. Here is a prayer example:

Lord Jesus, I need You. I open my heart and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins. Take control of my life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be. In Jesus’ Name, Amen

I John 5:11-13 – And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

II Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!



of Discipleship

We want to encourage you with ways you can begin your daily walk as a Christian:

Pray to God

§ *John 15:7 – Jesus said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

§ *Philippians 4:6 – “... in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”*

Study the Bible

§ *Acts 17:11 – “...they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”*

§ *II Timothy 3:14-16 – “...continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of... All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...”*

Follow God

§ *John 14:21 – Jesus said, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me...”*

§ *Hebrews 13:5 – “...be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’*

Trust in God

§ *I Peter 5:7 – “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”*

§ *I Thessalonians 5:17-18 – “...pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances...”*

Grow in the Holy Spirit

§ *Acts 1:8 – “... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...”*

§ *Galatians 5:16, 22 – “...live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...”*

Assemble with Christians

§ *Matthew 18:20 – Jesus said, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”*

§ *Hebrews 10:25 – “Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...”*

Witness for Christ

§ *Matthew 4:19 – “ ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ ”*

§ *John 15:8 – “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

Should you want further guidance, e-mail us at booklet@gramlingumc.org, or fill out one of the contact cards found in the back of this booklet (see *printed version*). We hope this information leads you to prayer, Bible study and a close relationship to the God we as Christians worship, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.