

"Basic Discipleship"

0. "Introduction to the Series and Prior Knowledge of God"

If we are genuinely expecting a mighty move of God's Spirit in our Borough, with thousands of new Christians being born in a relatively short space of time, then we need to address the question of how all these new believers are to be discipled and taught the basics of the Christian faith. The Lord has told us, prophetically, '*...to prepare the nursery in advance of new births*'; we therefore need to prepare the biblical topics and content of what we intend to teach these people.

The aim of this series of twelve weeks of teaching is twofold:

3. To give our existing TCF members confidence in understanding the basics of our faith; and
4. To give them the materials to then teach new believers these same basics.

2 Timothy 2:2 NLT. "*You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others*".

I have been seeking God for a while about the topics in such a discipleship programme and it has been confirmed to me that the list of activities at the end of Acts Chapter 2 is a good summary on which to base this series. The debate on what should be 'in' and what should be 'out' will probably continue for ever, but one must draw the line somewhere. In any case, discipleship is a process that continues our entire lives!

Acts 2:38-47 NIV. Peter replied, "*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." ⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "*Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.*" ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Biblical Content

Here is the list of eleven topics, taken *mainly* from the above, that I thought essential for new believers, to help them grow:

1. Repent and Believe
2. Baptism in Water
3. The Gift of the Holy Spirit / Baptism in the Holy Spirit
4. The Apostles' Teaching (The Bible)
5. Fellowship (meeting together as the Body of Christ, incl. exercising spiritual gifts)
6. The Breaking of Bread (also known as 'Communion' - together and daily at home)

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7. **Prayer and Worship (including Fasting and Praying in Tongues)**
8. **Generous Financial Giving to the Church**
9. **Spreading the Good News about Jesus**
10. **Becoming like Jesus (the fruit of the Holy Spirit within us)**
11. **The Return of Christ and the End of the World (as we know it).**

The plan then, is for various people within the Fellowship to teach these topics on a Sunday – as a teaching series – and for us then to refine and collate the notes to form a **‘Basic Discipleship’** pack. This can then be copied whenever a new believer arrives, and it can form the basis of discussions between him/her and their mentor within the Fellowship.

The format of the Sunday teaching and the notes on each topic should be along the lines of:

- a) ***Biblical doctrine (based around some key passages)***
- b) ***Questions or anticipated questions***
- c) ***Actions to be taken***
- d) ***A Prayer***

The **Questions** will be aimed at giving greater understanding of the topic, and ironing out potential errors or misunderstandings. **Actions** to be taken are all about putting this teaching into practice in the disciple's life – and they will apply to everyone on a Sunday, but they can be added to and customised when dealing with a particular individual in a one-to-one situation. Finally, let's each craft a **Prayer** to call on the power of God to plant this teaching into the hearts of all the listeners. This can be written down in the notes in advance – it doesn't need to be spontaneous.

Prior Knowledge of God

I read an article in the Evangelical Times by its editor, Mike Judge. The article referred to the so-called 'Quiet Revival' in churchgoing, particularly amongst young men in the UK. However, it also quoted a survey of these new attendees in evangelical churches, reporting that 71% thought that God accepts the worship of all religions, and 57% thought that the bible was not literally true! Most of these newcomers are not yet Christians, but on a journey to Christ; all of them need solid teaching from the bible. We cannot assume that they have a grasp of even the most basic of doctrines. But they are certainly asking questions, which is great. Mike Judge recommends that **“Everyone considering becoming a Christian is given an understanding of the following truths:”**

- a. **Who God is**
- b. **Who Jesus Christ is**
- c. **Why his death and resurrection matter**
- d. **What sin is**
- e. **Why salvation is necessary**
- f. **Why Christ alone is the Saviour**
- g. They need to discover that: **Christianity is *not* simply a set of spiritual insights or moral values but a *revealed truth* about God and his saving work in history.**

Let's quickly go through this list together:

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Finding Out About God

We cannot use our own intelligence and know-how to research about God and to understand His ways. We require Him to **reveal** everything to us. He uses three methods:

1. **God's Creation** (*don't call it 'Nature'*): *Romans 1:20 NIV. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. Psalm 19:1-2 NIV. The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.*
2. **The Scriptures and Prophecies:** *2 Timothy 3:16 NIV. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness... 2 Peter 1:21 NIV. 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.*
3. **Jesus:** *Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV. In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Colossians 1:15 NIV. The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. John 14:9 NIV. Jesus answered: "...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father".*

a. Who God Is

- **The Creator of everything – including Mankind in His image** (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 45:20; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11; Genesis 1:27; Genesis 9:6; James 3:7)
- **God is love** (1 John 4:8; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-5; Romans 5:8)
- **Omnipotent** (Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; Romans 1:20; Job 42:2)
- **Omnipresent** (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:24; Matthew 28:20; 1 Kings 8:27)
- **Omniscient** (Psalm 139:1-2; Proverbs 15:3; Hebrews 4:13; Isaiah 46:10)
- **Eternal** (Psalm 90:2; Revelation 1:8; 22:13; 1 Timothy 1:17; Psalm 102:25-27)
- **Sovereign** (Psalm 103:19; Romans 8:28; Isaiah 14:24; Ephesians 1:11; Proverbs 19:21)
- **Immutable** (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 102:25-27; 1 Samuel 15:29)
- **Gracious** (Ephesians 2:8-9; Exodus 34:5-7; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 4:16; Romans 3:24)
- **Holy** (Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 1:6; Revelation 15:4; Exodus 15:11; Psalm 30:4)
- **Judge** (Hebrews 12:23; Romans 2:16; Revelation 20:11-12; Psalm 96:13; Daniel 7:9-10)
- **Three Persons in One Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit** (Matthew 28:19; John 1:1; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Colossians 2:9; John 10:30; 1 Peter 1:2; Matthew 3:16-17)

b. Who Jesus Christ is

- **God – and a Person in the Trinity** (John 1:1; John 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8)
- **Son of God** (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 16:16; John 1:14; Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:2-3)
- **Eternal** (Hebrews 13:8; Colossians 1:16-17; John 1:1-2; 2:24-25; Matthew 28:20; Isaiah 9:6)
- **Fully God and fully man** (Colossians 2:9; John 1:1,14; Philippians 2:7-8; Hebrews 1:8; 2:14)

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- **Messiah** (Matthew 16:16; John 4:25-26; Luke 2:11; Acts 5:42; Luke 4:18)
- **Saviour of Mankind** (John 3:16; Romans 10:9; John 4:39-42; Titus 2:13; 1 John 4:14)
- **Descended from King David / Born of a Virgin** (Matthew 1:1; Matthew 1:18,23; Romans 1:3; Revelation 22:16; 2 Timothy 2:8)

c. Why His Death and Resurrection Matter

- **His death on the cross fully paid to God the price for our sins** – “Our safe place is where the fire has already burned” (2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 1:5; Colossians 1:20; Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24)
- **His resurrection proves that He has conquered death, that He is the Son of God and that He is now alive to give us salvation and to intercede for us at God’s Throne in heaven** (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 10:9; 1 Peter 1:3; Romans 1:4; Romans 8:34)

d. What Sin is

- **Rebellion against God** (1 John 3:4-5)
- **Failing to do good things that we know we should do** (James 4:17)
- **Something that every human does or did** (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8)
- **We are sinful from birth** (Psalm 51:5)
- **Separates us from God** (Isaiah 59:2)
- **Leads to spiritual and eternal death** (Romans 5:13; 6:23)
- **It enslaves us** (John 8:34)

e. Why Salvation is necessary

- **No-one can be good enough on their own** (Romans 3:10; James 2:10)
- **Our sins cause us to ‘fall short’ of God’s glory and acceptance** (Romans 3:23)
- **Even our best ‘good deeds’ are insufficient to gain God’s approval** (Isaiah 64:6)
- **Without it we are excluded from The Book of Life** (Revelation 20:11-15)

f. Why Christ alone is the Saviour

- **No-one else has paid the price for our sins** (Colossians 2:13; Romans 5:8)
- **No-one else is both God and man – our Mediator** (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15; 12:24)
- **The Bible tells us so** (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:12; John 3:36; John 8:24)

g. Christianity is *not*... simply a set of spiritual insights or moral values but a *revealed truth* about God and his saving work *in history*. (Luke 2:1-2; 3:1-2). There is abundant archaeological proof.

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Creeds

Once Christianity was declared legal in the Roman empire under Emperor Constantine in 313 AD, Christians were able to get together across towns, cities and countries. There was a need to unify the different beliefs about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and salvation that had sprung up during the time that the church had been persecuted and was 'underground'. Heresies had also sprung up and needed opposing and doctrine correcting. Creeds were agreed statements of the faith drawn from the Bible.

The Nicene Creed (from the Council of Nicaea, Northern Turkey, in AD 325)

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

**the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic (= *universal*) and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.**

Amen.