

# The Basics of Our Spiritual Lives

By Nathan Wilson Ferrell +

Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, in the same way there are spiritual principles which govern each person's relationship with God.

## **Principle #1: God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.**

### ***God's Love***

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life" (John 3:16).

### ***God's Plan***

[Christ speaking] "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" [that it might be full and joyful and meaningful] (John 10:10).

### ***FACT***

There is nothing that you can EVER do to change God's mind about you. God does not change.

### ***BUT...WHY?***

If all of this is true, then why do most people not experience this abundant life?

### ***BECAUSE...***

## **Principle #2: Human beings have lost our way because of selfishness.**

The Bible calls this "sin". Because of ego and pride and self-interest, we cut ourselves off from God's power and energy. We have lost our way.

### ***Humans are Sinful***

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

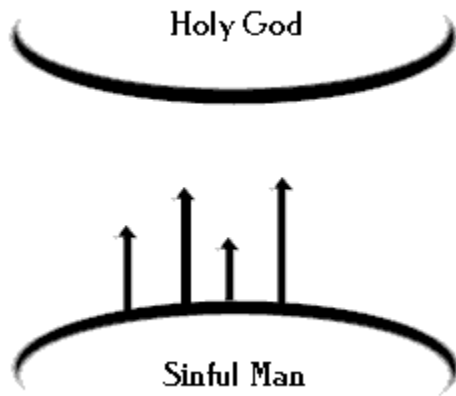
We were created to have fellowship with God; but, because of our own stubborn self-will, we chose to go our own way and our connection with God was broken.

This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

### ***Humans are Separated***

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Rather than God's abundant life, humanity experiences death and anger and frustration.



*This illustrates that God is holy and humanity is sinful. A separation has formed. The arrows illustrate that we are continually trying to reach God and the abundant life through our own efforts, such as being good, doing good, or some philosophy, - but we inevitably fail. We cannot make our own way back home.*

How do we reconnect with God and the power of divine life?

**Principle #3: God became what we are by nature so that we might become what God is by grace. Except for sin, Jesus became like us in every way and opened the door for us to God's eternal life.**

### ***He Died In Our Place***

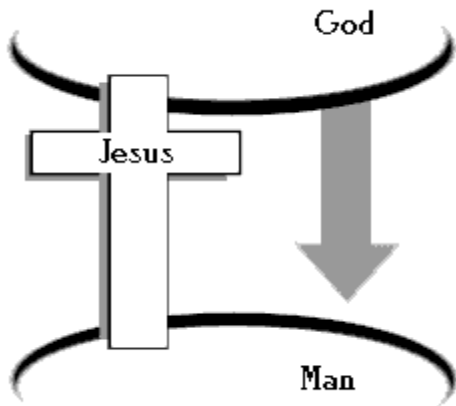
"God demonstrates his own love toward us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

### ***He Rose from the Dead***

"Christ died for our sins... He was buried... He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures... He appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

### ***He Is the Way to God***

"Jesus said to Thomas, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6).



*This illustrates how God bridged the gulf that separated us both by becoming human in Jesus Christ and even dying on the cross for us.*

But it is not enough just to know these things in your mind...

### **Principle #4: We must each make a choice to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Master; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.**

#### ***We Must Receive Christ***

"To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12).

#### ***We Receive Christ Through Faith***

"By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as result of works so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

#### ***When We Receive Christ, We Experience a New Birth***

"God saved us because of his mercy, not because of righteous things we had done. He did it through the washing of new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

## ***We Receive Christ Through Divine Invitation***

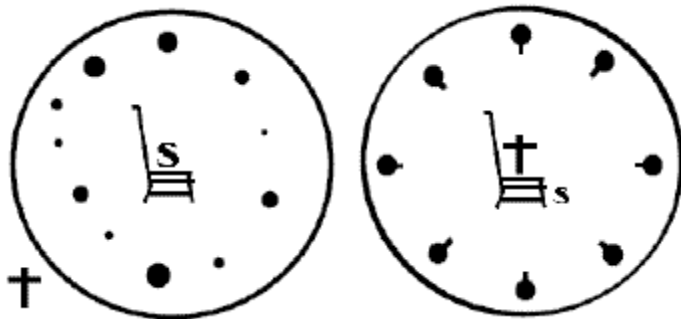
[Christ speaking] "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us, to heal us, to give us a fresh start, and to lead us on the path of life.

Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience.

We receive Jesus Christ by a decision of trust, as an act of the will.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives. Which one best represents your life?



### Self-Directed Life

S-Self is on the throne

+ - Christ is outside your life

-decisions are directed by self, often resulting in chaos and frustration

### Christ-Directed Life

+ - Christ is in the center of your life

S- Self is yielding to Christ,

-decisions are directed by Christ, resulting in harmony with God, self and others

Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

### How do we make this change?

Each person can receive Christ right now by faith through prayer (prayer is talking with God). God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank you for loving me and dying on the cross for me.

I open the door of my life and receive you as the one who saves me and guides me.

Thank you for forgiving me and for showing me the way to full and abundant life.

Take control of my life now. Make me the person you created me to be. Amen.

If you have never taken this step, and this prayer expresses the desire of your heart for a new life and a new beginning, then pray it right now, and Christ will come into your life, as he promised and as he has done for thousands of years.

After we have received Christ, what comes next?

## The Importance of Baptism

### ***Repentance and Baptism***

“Now when they heard the message about Christ, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:37-39).

### **Baptism:**

- Is our first act of faith after our repentance and acceptance of Christ
- Includes the gift of the Holy Spirit, God’s power and presence in our lives
- Is for all of us who trust Christ and for our children
- Brings us into a new way of life and into a new sacred community

In Holy Baptism, we make vows before God and the gathered community to follow a particular pattern of life, and to guide our children into this way of life.

### ***The Community of the Baptized***

“So those who welcomed Peter’s message were baptized, and ... they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:41-42).

### ***The Christ-centered life of the Baptized***

- The apostles’ teaching – creating a daily practice of reading and studying the Scriptures and the teaching of the saints
- Fellowship – meeting regularly with other Christians to care for one another, to encourage one another, and to meet the needs of the poor
- The breaking of bread – gathering to share in the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and
- The prayers – praying privately and with others for those in need, and for the healing of the world, eventually even learning to “pray without ceasing”