

Christianity Clarified Volume 11

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Date: 01 February 2019

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about? The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society.

At times, it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarified.

Actually Really Receiving Christ. The previous CD, number 10, focused upon the reality of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, God's Son, having been crucified, buried, and raised from the dead, all with the sole purpose of balancing the moral scales of the universe.

Christ died for our sins is precisely how the Apostle Paul states it in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15. And following that, in his second letter to the same audience, he stated that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

The task of the Christian is to inform others of this great truth called the gospel, or the good news, and that's what this segment is about. Forgiveness is available and already arranged for.

[1 : 11] God stands eagerly at the ready to forgive, cleanse, and impart eternal life to all who respond positively to that incomparable provision. They have but to receive it as a free gift of God's grace, and it cannot be paid for, because Christ already did that.

It can only be received as one would receive a gift. Receiving this free gift of God's grace is the only response that pleases God, and the only response resulting in the eternal life that Christ died to provide.

Having explained this to the Corinthian audience in his second letter, chapter 5, Paul then issues a fervent appeal to them. It is simply that they be personally, individually reconciled to God by a decision of one's own will.

What are you going to do about what God through Christ has done for you? And once we know the facts as God has revealed them throughout his word, how can we respond in any other way than through a grateful acceptance of Jesus Christ as our substitute?

But exactly how does one do that? Picture someone standing at the door of your house and knocking. What do they want? They want you to come to the door, open it, and invite them in.

[2 : 30] And with your will, you may choose to do that and welcome them, or you may choose to ignore them, reject them, and wait for them to leave. In receiving and welcoming Christ into your life as your Lord and Savior, there is no special religious way of doing that, no special eloquent prayers, no church or altar or special place one needs to do that.

There is no ritual, no magical formula, no mantra, no presence of a priest, preacher, or rabbi needed to do that. All that is required is one sinner. That's you.

And one Savior. That's Jesus Christ. And these are the only parties required to do business, the most important business you will ever be a part of. Like other business decisions, you exercise your will.

You sign on the dotted line. You thus, with your free volition, enter into a contract with Christ as your new Lord and Savior. You do the accepting and believing, and He does the saving, the forgiving, and the granting of eternal life.

A whole new life for you. Is this not rightly called the gospel? The good news? You can get your will in gear and settle this right now, right where you are, and you will never, ever regret it.

[3 : 49] We beseech you in the place of Christ. Be you reconciled to God. A New Christian and a Lot of Questions, Part 1 Here is a very logical and predictable question for one to have following their making a decision for Christ.

Is there a wrong way to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive His salvation? No. There is no wrong way to do this right thing. This is because God knows and reads the intent of your heart. No one can con God. No one can fool Him. And anyone who thinks they can come to Him with an insincere heart or motive simply doesn't know the God who knows them through and through. Yet, because one who has just trusted Christ is involved in a totally new, one-time experience, it's only natural to have questions, even doubts or fears about the decision they have made. You may be wondering, did I do it right? Did God actually forgive me and save me? Did it take? Am I supposed to feel something?

[4 : 59] How do I know this is really real? Does this mean I have to act religious now? If God has accepted me, will He kick me out if I don't?

Am I not allowed to do or say anything wrong now? And what happens if I do? Do I have to get re-saved? What am I supposed to do now? Do I have to join a church?

What happens if I don't? Will God be angry with me and kick me out if I don't? And there are so many churches I wouldn't know where to go even if I wanted to, and I'm not sure I even want to anyhow.

Is that wrong? Do I have to pray a lot in order to stay saved? How much? How long? And what if I don't even know how to pray? I have people I really love and care about, and I don't know what they would think about me becoming a Christian, or if they would even believe it.

What do I do about that? Should I even tell them what I did about trusting in Christ? And what if they laugh at me and won't even think I'm serious? And what about the Bible?

[6 : 06] I know what I believed about Christ and trusting in Him for salvation is all in the Bible, but I know almost nothing about it, and it's a big book. It's really hard for me to understand.

What do I do about that? These and a host of other like questions are very common questions for new believers. They were questions I had when I came to faith in Christ in 1956.

Relax. The answers will come in their good time and as you need them. God will see to that. He is more willing to provide the answers you need in a timely fashion than you are to receive them.

If you have recently trusted Christ as your Savior, you have His eternal life imparted to you. The Bible tells us in John 3, He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

One who has believed in Christ has Christ and His eternal life. Maybe following a checklist will help you to determine that what you did, assuming you did it, was real.

[7 : 19] That Christ really is yours and you are His. Stay with us. Your list is upcoming. A New Christian and a Lot of Questions, Part 2 This segment of Christianity Clarified addresses the many questions that are typical of new believers.

People who have recently received Christ and His salvation. We will consider several areas that not only will answer some of your questions, but aid you in your spiritual growth and development.

This is all assuming, of course, that you have received Christ, have been made a new creature in Him, and have eternal life. If not, you will want to revisit Track 1 on this CD.

Spiritual growth cannot be realized unless spiritual life has already been received. As a baby must be born before it can grow, a spiritual baby must be born again before he can grow.

Without spiritual life, the Bible says in Ephesians 2 that we are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Such an one first needs life imparted to them before their spiritual growth can occur.

[8 : 37] And as spiritual life is the most critical need for anyone unsaved, spiritual growth is the most critical need for anyone who is saved.

We will proceed on the assumption that you, the listener, have received Christ and is now prepared and eager for growth in that newfound Christian life.

Otherwise, as we said before, we refer you once again to Track 1 of this CD. For the new believer, then, often the first question that comes to mind relates to their decision itself.

Did I really do that? Did I actually connect with God? And how can I be sure of that? Or was it just emotion or merely feeling the need to do something religious?

Did it take? Did I really become a new person with a new life and a new destiny? But how can I know? Am I supposed to feel something?

[9 : 39] A bolt out of the blue? A tingling sensation? A huge weight lifted from my shoulders? What? Well, it depends. People are wired different emotionally and a wide range of feelings from elation, tears of joy, profound thanksgiving, the sensation of a huge burden lifted, a feeling of

cleanness or cleansing like you just underwent an internal bath, all of the above or none of the above.

A lot depends on the circumstances of your coming to faith in Christ and the way you are emotionally constituted. Everyone needs to be warned that they are not to evaluate the genuineness of their salvation based on experiences other people have had.

Well-meaning Christians may tell a new believer, he should feel this way or that way, experience this or that emotion as they did, or your experience of salvation was not real.

It's nonsense. Human emotional experiences run the gamut of expression from ecstasy to very little emotion, and one can be as genuine as the other.

We need a more definite and stable gauge for knowing we are in the faith. And that's up next in Track 4. A New Christian and Assurance The first item on our checklist concerns the issue of did you really believe on Christ and did you really receive His forgiveness and eternal life?

[11:14] We warned against thinking your decision must be accompanied by feeling certain sensations or it wasn't real. And while we are emotional beings and feelings are wonderful, we dare not make them the authenticators of our faith, because emotions tend to be fickle and unreliable gauges of reality.

They ebb and flow with what is happening, and sometimes even with what we think is happening. A more certain, definite, solid confirmation is needed to authenticate an event so monumental as connecting with the God of the universe.

And we have just such a confirmation. It is from that God Himself, in His words, so wonderfully provided. We earlier referenced John 3.36, which says, He that hath the Son hath life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

There from the Word of God is the clear-cut distinction between possessing the life Christ gives versus the wrath of God that hangs over the head of the one who does not have Christ.

The decision is, do you have the Son? If you receive the Son because you open your heart to invite Him in, then you have the Son. And if you have the Son, you have the eternal spiritual life the Son gave you.

[12:37] How can you know that? Well, not because of a certain feeling, but because God who cannot lie says so in His Word. Whatever sensation you may have felt when you believe is fine.

Remember it and treasure it. But don't base your salvation on that feeling. Base it on what God has said in His Word. And you can couple John 3.36 with John 6.37 a few pages later.

Christ said, All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and he that comes to me I will never cast out. There again we have it in the Word of God.

Can we believe God, whose every word is tied to His integrity? Mere mortals may lie to you or simply be mistaken in what they tell you, but He, the God of creation and redemption, is the personification of truth and veracity.

This one is incapable of lying or misleading anyone, and He alone is the only one of whom that can be said. And don't be concerned about whether your faith was great enough.

[13:46] Faith is something that grows and matures with time logged as a believer. It is not how much faith you placed in Christ, but that you did so with however little faith you have.

The object of your faith, Christ Himself, is who saved you. Faith is simply trust, confidence, reliance, dependence, and Christ the Savior is the one in whom you placed whatever or however much faith you have.

And as you walk with Him, that faith which may have been meager will grow and increase into a greater faith. It's called growing in the grace and knowledge of God.

Having placed your faith in Christ, you are now ready to grow in Him. Welcome aboard, brother, sister. A New Christian is a Brand New Person Part 1 A typical result of one who has recently come to faith in Christ and received new and eternal life from Him is that they now have a host of questions about it all, and they haven't the slightest idea where to find the answers.

That they have all these questions is very normal. After all, they have actually entered an entirely new kind of life, a spiritual life that was previously foreign to them.

[15:03] It is so different, yet so real, that Christ Himself described it as being born again in John 3. How could anyone who has experienced this not have several questions?

Questions they would never have thought to ask before becoming a Christian. Far from having all the answers to the new Christians' questions, yet having been a believer since 1956 and pastoring

the same church since 1971, a few answers have been forthcoming.

We have already dealt with one's feelings and discovered that the assurance of our salvation is not based on our changeable emotions, but upon the unchangeable Word of God.

References were supplied in the previous track 4. Now that you are in Christ, be reminded that in conjunction with the new birth experienced spiritually, you are not really the same person you were before Christ came into your life.

No one can ever have a salvation experience with Jesus Christ and ever be the same again. This is why the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5, If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation.

[16:15] Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. Your old life is gone. You may look just the same outwardly, but you are not the same inwardly.

That's where the Spirit of Christ is, in you. And He is what makes the difference. Christ has regenerated you by His Spirit that now dwells in you.

We have no idea how He does that. But that He does do that is undeniable. To generate something means to begin it.

To regenerate means to begin it all over again. And the one who performed this regeneration is Christ, who is referred to as the last Adam, in 1 Corinthians 15, 45.

The text says, The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. He, Christ, the last Adam, became a life-giving spirit, and spiritual life is what He gave you when you believed on Him and invited Him into your life.

[17:29] He came in and brought this new life He has to give with Him. And with it He made you over. He spiritually made you alive toward God and spiritual things, whereas before you were spiritually dead toward God.

This is what happened to you on the inside, where only God can reach. That's what has changed you. It isn't that you have turned over a new leaf of self-reformation, but rather that Christ has regenerated you and made you an entirely new person on the inside.

A new Christian is a brand new person. Part 2 One of the first things that seem to affect all new believers is an unexplainable change that begins to take place in their thinking.

By that we mean they find themselves thinking about matters that hardly, if ever, occurred to them before they became a Christian. Some have even likened it to a revolution in their thinking.

For reasons they can't explain, they now are seeing a lot of issues differently. Without even making an effort to do so, they find their attitude undergoing a profound change.

[18:41] Their priorities are mysteriously being rearranged, and their feelings about so many things, especially their attitude about people, begins to shift in a way that truly puzzles themselves and the people to whom they relate.

Some new believers reflect these radical changes in attitude overnight, very soon after their conversion experience in Christ. For others, the change is just as radical, but comes more gradually.

In either case, it soon becomes evident to others, especially to those who know you well, you're different. What's happened to you? I don't know what it is, they may say, but you seem like a different person.

You are. This is not only normal for a new believer, it's anticipated. Why? Because no one can have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, receive from Him His forgiveness and eternal life, and ever be the same.

You are not the same, and aren't supposed to be. Your very spirit, mind, and body have been entered by the person of Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit, and you will never be the same again.

[19:54] Christ did not come into your life to turn it upside down. He came in to turn it right side up. The classic verse describing this, 2 Corinthians 5.17, which says, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

Old things have passed away, and behold, all things are become new. You now have a new set of eyes you never had before, and they cause you to see reality as it really is, not as the blurred vision of unsaved eyes you saw with before Christ came in.

You see differently, act differently, and come across differently to others simply because you are different. Christ has made you different.

Be reminded, this difference is not your turning over a new leaf. It is Christ in you who has turned over a new life. Values, attitudes, actions, interests, agendas, the stuff everyday life and living is made up of, it's all changed.

Yet, while we have not been thoroughly changed in every area, our direction in all these areas and more has changed. While we have certainly not arrived at perfection, our direction, our course, has been radically altered, like an about face.

[21 : 13] Because our direction has been changed without the ultimate destination being reached, what happens between the beginning of a new direction and reaching the end where we are a finished product is called growth.

It's growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And your rate of growth is determined by your spiritual nourishment and exercise. That's upcoming.

A New Christian and an Old Problem A basic checklist for new believers continues with concern over this question. Now that I am a Christian, does this mean I can no longer say or do anything wrong?

No, of course not. There may be some self-deceived individuals who think that a true Christian simply can't do or say wrong things. That is utter nonsense.

When Christ saved you, He did not eliminate your will, the power to make choices, and yes, Christians can and do make wrong choices, and yes, we suffer the consequences of having made a wrong choice, just like non-Christians who make wrong choices.

[22 : 21] Being a Christian doesn't mean we are no longer able to sin. Of course we are. But being a Christian also means we do not have to sin. We who are in Christ have a supernatural capacity in the indwelling Holy Spirit that equips and fortifies us spiritually so that we can be pleasing to God and live a life that honors Him.

Yet, this resource is not imposed upon us as if we have no choice. When a believer sins and displeases God, his fellowship, his being on good terms with his heavenly Father, is suspended. The principle is the same as a son who displeases and disobeys his earthly father here. Their relationship is not ended. The father doesn't disown or disinherit his son.

But their connection is strained. Their fellowship and enjoyment of their company is awkward and stilted. An apology is in order. Forgiveness and restoration to full and comfortable fellowship is needed.

It is no different between the Christian and his heavenly Father. When we displease him, a distancing occurs in the fellowship. And only an acknowledgement of our sin called confession or admission and thanksgiving for his promised forgiveness restores the fellowship.

[23 : 50] And we confess our sin directly to him. It does not restore the relationship because it was never ended. But it does put the forgiven Christian back on good terms with his heavenly Father.

1 John 1.9 states this so clearly. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

How often should we do this? As many times and as often as you are aware that your actions or attitude has not been pleasing to God. And as often as we need to do it, he stands at the ready with his forgiveness.

Sometimes the believer may even be embarrassed with the frequency with which he shows up at God's door for forgiveness. Yet, he is faithful to forgive. That means he will always do it because the penalty for sin has already been cared for through the sacrifice of Christ, as spelled out a few verses later in 1 John 2.2.

So even though the believer is in Christ, he is not devoid of his ability to still do stupid and sinful things. He will also discover that since he is in Christ, he will be more sensitive and aware of those things that he hardly even thought about before he came to faith.

[25 : 10] Being a Christian is not an act. In pursuing the typical questions most new Christians have about their new life in Christ, one has to do with how they are now supposed to act, in particular, about how religious they should act.

The answer is, you are not to act religious at all. In fact, you are not to act as in performing. You are merely supposed to be yourself. But it is your new self that you will be.

And it won't be an act. It will be for real. Much misunderstanding surrounds the idea of religion. But religion is not what you have. Many speak of someone who came to Christ and now has a changed life as having gotten religion.

God forbid. If religion is all you got, you are not much better off than before. Maybe worse. You did not get religion. You entered a new relationship.

You now have a personal Savior who received you, forgave you, imparted a whole new life to you. Religion cannot do that. Religion can only provide a phony outward show of piety and goody-two-shoes stuff that real Christianity knows nothing of.

[26 : 27] The official ecclesiastical establishment that Christ faced daily in the three years he ministered on earth, they were religious. Christ said of them, These people honor God with their lips, but their heart is far from him.

That merely meant the religious crowd of priests, scribes, and Pharisees put up a good front outwardly. But inwardly, they were not honoring to God at all.

They were a sham, a legalistic, rigid, judgmental kind of crowd that Christ publicly exposed as hypocrites. He tangled with them on several occasions, and they were key players in his arrest, trial, and execution.

Religion is a generic kind of term that is broadly descriptive of anything and everything that relates to someone's concept of God, and not necessarily even the one true God.

In fact, biblically speaking, Christianity is the one faith radically different from all the major religions of the world. Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, they are properly classified as religions.

[27 : 42] Christianity is a relationship, not a religion, even though it is often addressed as such. Please don't be religious. Be relational to the God who loved you and saved you.

The concept of religion, used only a few times in the New Testament, relates to ceremonialism, ritual, or perfunctory obligation that one performs in a formal setting.

It may be honoring to God, at least in some settings, or it may be purely pagan and actually dishonoring to God. Religion may best be described as man's attempt to find God, but on man's terms.

Christianity is God making himself known to man by God coming to man on God's terms. This he has done by the revelation of himself through Jesus Christ.

Human religious effort is a curse on mankind. Don't be religious. Be relational. A new believer tells others.

[28 : 45] When someone comes to personal faith in Christ, the scriptures make it clear that such an one has undergone a profound change in their life. In fact, it is so profound that it took God himself to do it.

And that was the case for every individual who has come to faith. The likelihood of others, such as mates, friends, and even acquaintances, not noticing these differences in your new life is almost non-existent.

This is especially true if one is converted later in life as opposed to being saved as a young child. One who has been converted later in life already has an established reputation or persona well known to those who have observed him over the years.

And to these, the change is very noticeable and they often find it hard to believe that this person they have known for so long has undergone the obvious and dramatic change.

What does this new Christian tell them when they ask, What happened to you? Why are you so different? What's going on anyway? What do you tell them? You simply tell them the truth.

[29 : 58] You tell them how you came to faith and what it has meant to you. Of course, it may be difficult for you to put into words an explanation that they will understand. And don't be surprised if they think you went off the deep end or got religion or just going through some kind of phase like a religious midlife or late life crisis.

In fact, they do not have the necessary understanding to even appreciate what happened to you. In reality, neither do you. Your friends may tell themselves, Well, whatever happened to so-and-so won't last.

He'll be back to his old self before long. With all this likely being the case and their simply not understanding, should you even try to tell them? Yes, you should, by all means, despite the difficulty you will have in telling them and the difficulty they will have in understanding it.

You should tell them, however imperfectly you communicate it, for several reasons. First, you would be giving them a truthful answer and all inquiries deserve a truthful answer.

Second, we as Christians, all of us, are charged with the responsibility of sharing the gospel of Christ with others. This is the principal way the gospel gets around.

[31 : 19] One person hears the good news of salvation communicated in the gospel. They believe and tell someone else. Nearly everyone who has come to faith did so because someone who had come to Christ told them about it.

And, third, you should tell others about Christ and your coming to faith because you love people and you care about them. It's the only right thing to do about any good thing you have experienced. You want to share it with others so they can experience it also. It isn't merely important. It's life and death important. Even though they don't know that and perhaps they do not even believe that. But you do. And you should not withhold what you know personally to be the greatest good news ever delivered to man. It has been said that evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

Please, pass the bread. A New Christian and Prayer Part 1 Something that is usually very different for a new believer from his former life before coming to Christ is the subject of prayer.

[32 : 25] The likelihood is they didn't do much of it before they came to faith and they are curious about it as a new Christian. At the outset, let's just say that prayer is a privilege and it's nothing more than talking to God, expressing your thanks, asking Him for guidance and wisdom, nothing fancy, just a private communication with a loving Heavenly Father.

It has been said when we pray, we talk to God and when we read the Bible, God talks to us. You can't much improve on that. Prayer for a new believer or for one mature in the faith is a privilege and a right.

The right to have the nerve, if you will, to come before the Almighty was a right purchased for you in the substitutionary death of Christ. He not only created the right for us to approach God as His children, but to do so boldly, boldly or with confidence as related in Hebrews 10.

The Jewish people had three or four times a day designated as times of prayer. Muslims who pray to their God, Allah, while facing Mecca do so five times a day. And Christians are not told how often we are to pray or how long we are to pray.

Neither should any believer try to tell another how often or how long one should pray. It's a strictly private decision. It depends largely upon what's going on in your life and surroundings, what you feel constrained to pray about.

[33 : 56] And it depends on the needs and concerns of others who may ask you to pray on their behalf. The variables about prayer are endless, and each individual has their own private concerns that prompt their prayers.

Each time a Christian prays, he is automatically acknowledging two things, his own inability and God's ability, his own weakness and God's own strength in so many areas.

The distinction between God and us is truly great. Some suggest a daily time and place for prayer suits them best. Some pray only when the occasion prompts them to do so.

Some pray when others request them to. Let each person be fully persuaded in his own mind. Just remember, as a Christian, you have access to the throne of grace and the God of the universe.

Take advantage of your being on praying ground that Christ purchased for you. Come before Him in prayer. You may or may not kneel. You may or may not close your eyes.

[35 : 03] You may or may not pray aloud. You may pray in private or in public. All Christians ought to pray, but Christians ought not to engage in saying prayers.

There is no benefit in merely mouthing repetitious prayers over and over again with the mistaken notion that when you've prayed the magic number, God starts to listen and consider your prayers.

In fact, Christ roundly condemned the verbatim prayers offered by the religious crowd of His day in Matthew 6. He scolded them for repeating prayers word for word, but they still do it, even today.

Prayer is a privilege. All believers should exercise it. Pray without ceasing. A New Christian in Prayer, Part 2 Prior to one's coming into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, prayer was usually reduced to crying out to God to do something because one is in a real jam.

For most unbelievers, prayer is a last-ditch effort when everything else we have tried is failed. God is a kind of last-ditch effort, like the proverbial football desperation passed to the end zone in the waning seconds of the game, and the prayer is that someone on the right team will haul it in amidst the crowd of players competing for it.

[36 : 23] The past play is referred to as throwing up a Hail Mary. Non-Christians do pray. Anybody can pray. But the issue of their prayers being answered, well, that's another matter.

No doubt many non-Christians who have prayed in the past might insist that God did answer their prayer. Yet, it may well be, and likely was, that God had nothing to do with that answer. Just because things worked out in the way an unbeliever prays, they would, doesn't prove God did the working out. The same kind of thing might work out when neither you nor anyone else prayed. This is because one who is not a believer isn't really on praying ground. We base this on 1 Timothy 2.5 in the Bible. It says, There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

A mediator is a go-between, a liaison who seeks to bring two sides together by mediating or negotiating between the two parties. If one does not know Christ and receive new life from Him, Christ is not His mediator.

[37 : 36] He has none. Prayer is to be addressed to God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. An unbeliever simply has no go-between, no mediator, no advocate, as mentioned in 1 John 2.

And even for one who is a believer and has a mediator in the person of Christ, this does not mean your prayers are automatically answered simply because you have a mediator.

Sometimes, not knowing any better, we can pray for some downright foolish things that God isn't about to grant. We may see them as very needful and reasonable, but God knows our needs far better than we do.

He may realize that to grant some of the prayers we pray could be the very worst thing for us. We ought to pray in all things that God will use His prerogative and answer our prayers in accord with what's the best thing.

God has a perspective that we know not of. Our perspective is very limited, but His isn't. Even Christ concluded His prayer to His Father with, Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

[38 : 51] There is no better way to pray than that. Bear in mind, prayer is simply communicating to God. We talk to God, and when we read the Bible, God talks to us.

We speak to Him through our words, and He speaks to us through His word. Prayer is a privilege, exercise between two friends, the creature and the Creator. God wants to hear from you.

Just talk to Him. We call it prayer. A New Christian and Church, Part 1 Another logical and rather predictable question, usually arising in the mind of one who is a new Christian, has to do with church.

This is only natural since the concept of church and Christianity are so intertwined. In fact, many think the terms are nearly interchangeable. Anyone who is a believer in Christ is already and automatically a member of the church that really matters.

This is the spiritual church of which Christ is the head, and the spiritual body is made up of all who are believers in Christ worldwide. The concept is found in Ephesians 1, verses 22 and 23.

[40 : 03] The text reads that God the Father put all things in subjection under Christ's feet and gave Christ as head over all things to the church, which is His body, that is, Christ's body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Later in Ephesians 5, Paul continues by comparing marriage to the union of believers with the person of Christ. Paul stated, No man ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.

The spiritual body concept is found again in Colossians 1, where Christ is referred to as the spiritual head of the spiritual body who are believers in Christ.

And again, in 1 Corinthians 12, we are told, For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. This too refers to all believers as comprising one spiritual body of which Christ is the head.

We realize this concept is completely foreign to anyone new to the faith. But for now, you need only know that you are already a member of this church which is the spiritual body of Christ.

[41 : 23] You became a member when you believed on the Lord Jesus and were united to Him by faith. There are no true believers anywhere who are not a member of this church, the spiritual body of Christ, whether they realize it or not.

Adding to this is the very term spiritual body, and it sounds like an oxymoron, a contradictory concept. Spiritual body? If it's spiritual, how can it be a body?

If it's a body, how can it be spiritual? We associate a body with the physical and spirit with non-physical. Christ had and has a physical body comprised of flesh and blood like ours.

That is His own physical person which He assumed when He was delivered by the Virgin Mary. And it was this body that was crucified, raised from the dead, and ascended back to heaven in Acts 1. Albeit in a glorified physical body. Analogous to that, there is an aggregate, a group, an entity, a composition made up of all who have placed their faith in Christ who are viewed in their commonality as a body.

[42 : 35] It is not a physical body, but it is made up of people who have or have had a physical body from the first century to the present. These believers are referred to as the spiritual body of Christ.

New Christian and the Church Part 2 The previous track referred to the church as being the spiritual body of Christ and Christ as being the head of that body.

One cannot be a believer in Jesus Christ and not be a member of His body. And being a member of His body means you are a believer. No one can become a member of the body of Christ and not be a believer.

No one consciously joined the church, but all who have believed in Christ were placed into that body by God the Father at the time the person became a believer.

Membership in this church is absolutely critical, for outside the spiritual body of Christ there is no salvation. This is sometimes called the universal church and sometimes the invisible church.

[43 : 42] It is both, and Christ is its head. But when the word church is used, this is not what most have in mind. To them, the church is a religious institution, a physical building down on the corner where people go to worship on Sunday mornings.

Far and away, this is what most mean when they speak of church. So now that one is a Christian, as a new believer, do I have to attend or join a church such as one on the corner?

Must I do so in order to maintain my salvation? Absolutely not. And any church or pastor of any church who tells you that you must be on their membership role or attend their church in order to secure or maintain your salvation is a church from which you need to flee as far as possible.

Church membership or attendance have absolutely nothing to do with your being in Christ and a member of the church which is his body. Does this then mean the church on the corner is of no consequence?

No, not at all. If it is the kind of church it ought to be, and not all churches are, it can and will play a vital role in the life of all believers.

[45 : 02] The church, both the spiritual body of Christ and the local church on the corner, are concepts instituted by God himself. The former is spiritual and the latter is physical, attended by people on a Sunday morning.

It would be a big mistake to ignore the local church. It exists for the benefit and growth of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. You are already related to them spiritually as a brother or sister in Christ.

It would also be a big mistake to think since they are all referred to as a church or churches, they are all the same. To assume that would be a very big mistake.

Could you assume that all places where you can get a meal and are called restaurants that all restaurants are the same? Is there not a wide distinction between upscale fine dining with a gourmet menu and a first-class chef in the kitchen and a greasy spoon diner?

Believe me, there is as wide and varied distinction between churches. In an ideal world, this would not be so, but we do not live in such a world. Nonetheless, every believer should give serious thought and investigation into the local assembly of believers.

[46 : 19] They are vital to all believers. A New Christian and Church Part 3 A typical question posed by a new believer in Christ is, do I have to attend or join a church?

The answer is no. You do not have to. But you get to. And you should. You should mainly because that's where you'll find a congregation of other Christians with whom you now have so much in common.

However, there are some things you should know before you begin your search for a church home. And here are just a few caveats. Number one, don't think that all buildings that have church in their name are alike.

They may be as different from one another as night and day and often are. Two, don't think that all churches preach and teach pretty much the same doctrines or beliefs.

This too can be as different as day and night. For instance, while all churches that call themselves a church should preach and teach the Bible and promote personal salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, sad to say, some do not.

[47 : 30] Three, don't think that all people in any given church you may attend are Christians or they wouldn't be there. This is not true. There are churches whose membership is comprised of few or maybe even no Christians at all, yet they are still called a church.

Some are better described as churchianity rather than Christianity. For some, church attendance is a mere social function with religious overtones.

They attend solely to establish or maintain a certain image of respectability in their community. It is also true, thankfully, that there are many churches where most who attend are true believers and are there for the right reasons.

In all churches, there is usually a small number, at least, who are not true believers and they may not even realize it. Four, don't think that all pastors who are leading churches are the same.

While most pastors seriously believe they are called of God and they delight in their commitment to Christ and the church, there are some pastors who consider their responsibilities as just a profession, not a special calling.

[48 : 49] This, of course, will be reflected in his attitude and the content of his sermons. It will also be reflected in the atmosphere of the congregation. For these reasons and others, great care should be taken in selecting a church home where you can be ministered to with God's Word and God's people.

It will also be a church where you, with your presence, can be of encouragement to others. It would be wise to begin your search for a church home soon after you have come to faith in Christ.

They can help you to grow and mature in your newfound faith. Make it a matter of prayer for guidance as to where you should locate in a church home and don't be reluctant to tell anyone in a church that you are just visiting.

There is a church home that will be a good fit for you and it may take several visits and several weeks in attendance at several churches. It will definitely be worth the search.

Proceed with caution, but proceed. They will be good for you and you will be good for them. The New Christian and Spiritual Growth When a newborn baby enters the world and comes home from the hospital with its new family, the immediate concern is for the health, growth, and development of this little one.

[50 : 09] It already has life, but now the need is for that life to thrive. A chief concern is for the diet of the newborn. It is the same in the spiritual realm.

Once one has been born again and now possesses spiritual life, their greatest need is for the spiritual growth and maturity of the new believer. This need is largely realized through the spiritual truth and nourishment taken in by the new Christian.

Peter well expressed this in his first letter. Chapter 2 says, Like newborn babes, Long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.

This means in the same way a newborn baby begins life with a diet of mother's milk, the new Christian grows in his spiritual life by reading and taking in a diet of the more basic and simple truths of God's word, revealed only in the Bible.

Don't worry about the difficult passages that seem very confusing at times. Just take in and appreciate the things you can grasp as you read them. You are starting out with spiritual milk and you will progress to a diet of more solid food.

[51 : 26] The more you read God's word and seek understanding, the more clear things will become. Soon you will find yourself beginning to make connections and it will increasingly come together more and more.

This is your diet spiritually. God's word comes into your being and begins spreading its light all around where there was nothing but darkness prior to Christ, the light of the world entering the scene.

Don't become discouraged by what you do not understand. Just focus on and be thankful for what you do understand. More will come. The more you take in God's word, the more you will have to understand with.

That will lead to a greater understanding and the more you understand, the more profoundly your thanksgiving and appreciation toward God will increase. You will learn things that will be hard to

keep to yourself, so don't keep them to yourself.

Let others know what you have learned. There is nothing so exhilarating and satisfying to the human spirit than the ongoing discovery of the very truths of God revealed in the Bible.

[52 : 36] This is also one of the key areas where a good church can be of immeasurable help. A principal purpose for the church is to aid and encourage Christians in their spiritual growth and development.

A good, Bible-believing church can accelerate the rate of growth in the life of a Christian, especially a new believer. While many churches have little to offer in this area, many churches do.

And that's the kind of church you will want to seek out. A new Christian will have honest questions about all kinds of issues since coming to faith in Christ. The only truly authoritative answers are found in the Bible itself, straight from the author.

Good reading. Get into the book and it will get into you. The New Christian and the Bible The New Christian's intake of the truths found only in the Bible is supremely important.

It's supremely important for old Christians, too. This is because it is due to the message of the Bible that you came into the new life you now have as a Christian.

[53 : 46] It is not merely one source among many that communicate the truth of God himself. It's the only source that does that, to the exclusion of all others. Most non-Christians do not believe that to be true, but the Christian knows it to be true.

And our claiming that for the Bible does not make it true, but compelling evidence to support this claim can be referred to on earlier CDs of Christianity Clarified, particularly CDs 1, 2, and 3.

It's not unusual for a new Christian to have an intense interest in the Bible because he knows this new life he is experiencing all stems from the Bible. It's only natural he will want to understand more about it.

In fact, one could almost call it unnatural if he didn't have an intense interest. But for all the interest and questions the new believer has about his new life and what God is really all about, many are intimidated by the Bible itself.

It's a big book, a holy book, a mysterious and deep book that is way over my head. And all this is true for every new believer.

[54 : 59] But you must know that it's way over the head of old believers, too. No Christian, however long he has been a Christian, and no matter how much he reads and studies the Bible, it will always be way over the head of everyone.

This is due to its origin as being inspired by God, which of necessity involves its inexhaustibility. Those who have studied longest and deepest readily admit they have scarcely scratched the surface of this magnificent volume.

Don't be intimidated by its size or content. Think of the Bible as God's love letter to the human race. It contains the disclosures God wants us to know about himself, yourself, and the world he has created.

Begin by taking little bites of its content. Begin by reading the Gospel of John while asking God to help you understand who Christ is revealed to be therein.

And when you have read John, go to the book of Acts, which historically continues where John left off. You will note that John ends with the ascension of Christ that followed 40 days after his resurrection, and the book of Acts begins with his ascension back to heaven.

[56 : 16] The historical perspective is important to the understanding of the content. You may refer back to Christianity Clarified CD number 3, for a highly condensed but helpful explanation about the Old and New Testaments, as well as other information about the Bible.

Remember, your Bible is your principal source of spiritual growth. It is your spiritual food. The better your spiritual diet from the Word of God, the greater your spiritual growth and understanding of your new life in Christ.

Good reading. The Bible awaits you for its examination. The New Christian and Fellowship Part 1 There is another important reason why a new believer should search out a good church and align himself with an assembly of believers, and that is for the friendships to be developed with others in that congregation.

Christians usually refer to these connections as fellowship. As a new Christian, you have more in common with the people in a Bible-believing church than with any other group of people on the planet.

You have deep spiritual ties with every other person who is a member of the body of Christ. Each local church that is comprised of true Christians is merely one more congregation that is a part of that spiritual body of Christ.

[57 : 45] They may be somewhat separated as to denominational ties and organizational differences, but regardless of the name of the church, assuming it is comprised of true believers, they are members of the church which is Christ's spiritual body.

You automatically are in union with them, whether you attend the same church or not, because you have Christ in common. And he is really the only true basis Christians have for their unity. They all have Christ in common. They may be very different as to certain doctrines, practices, procedures, and traditions, but it is the person of Christ that constitutes the glue that binds all believers together.

Each member of the church, whether the local church or the larger organism that constitutes the entire Christian community, has the responsibility to edify one another.

This means Christians are responsible for the building up of one another, and that cannot be done unless we make ourselves available to one another. The easiest and most natural way to do that is to be where believers are when they are there, and that scene is best fulfilled by meeting together in a common setting we usually designate as a church.

[59 : 04] While we often call the physical building where the coming together takes place the church, and everyone understands what we mean, the building where the meeting is held is, in reality, just a physical building.

It's true, this particular building is looked upon as special, dedicated. The real church consists of the believers who are in it. When the building is empty, the true church is not there, only an empty building.

God does not live in the church building. God is in the building only when a believer is in the building, because God dwells in the person of every believer through his Holy Spirit.

The Bible says what? Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have of God, and that you are not your own?

For you have been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6.19 One way we can glorify God in our body is to take it to church, to be with other believers of like faith.

[60 : 16] You need them, and they need you. Thus, you are able to minister one to another with encouragement just by your mere presence. Showing up is 75% of ministry.

The New Christian and Fellowship, Part 2. A verse found in the book of Proverbs, chapter 27, says, Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

The principle? One man is good for another man. We are designed by God to need one another. It is a mutual thing of interdependence. A Christian is not to be a hermit, a recluse that separates himself from other Christians.

While many may have an admirable trait of being independent and they thrive on self-sufficiency, and that too is admirable to a point, yet Christians need to recognize the need to be available one to another.

God wants it that way, and he has made it clear that he does. We are told in Hebrews 10 that we are to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, and not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the habit of some.

[61 : 32] The phrase, as is the habit of some, simply means some have made a habit of forsaking the assembling of themselves with others. Don't do that, says the Bible.

Rather, we are to make the assembling of ourselves together a habit. Believers should be able to count on one another's availability when time for the church services arise.

This should be the highlight of the week for every true believer. Getting together with fellow Christians ought to be anticipated and looked forward to all week long.

Church is supposed to be enjoyable, uplifting, and spiritually energizing for all who attend. Church isn't something we do because we have to, but because we want to, we get to.

It's an ongoing opportunity not only to learn more about our faith and the God who is behind it all, but we can establish deep and abiding friendships with other believers that may span decades of enjoyment and fellowship.

[62 : 37] Someone has said the fellowship means two fellows in the same ship. That's it. We are all in Christ and in the same boat. Being accessible to one another, we are able to rejoice with those

who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

That's fellowship, and it is a priceless commodity and byproduct of one's faith in Christ. People who profess to have a relationship with Christ and say they love the Lord and the Lord's people, but can manage being in church only for Christmas and Easter, ought to really examine themselves as to whether they are in the faith.

That admonition is found in 2 Corinthians 13. Most Christians never think of themselves as being a minister. minister. They think only the pastor is a minister.

That isn't true. Every believer is a minister in that we all minister to or serve one another and are served by others. All true believers are ministers even if they never stand behind a pulpit in the official capacity as pastor.

Someone has said 75% of ministry is just showing up. This is because if you don't show up, you minister to no one and no one ministers to you. So let's show up, and in doing so, your very presence is an encouragement to them and theirs is an encouragement to you.

[64 : 03] The New Christians' Worldview and Church Every person has a personal worldview. A worldview is, as its name suggests, one's way of viewing the world.

We all have a pair of eyes that observe and a mind that processes and interprets what we observe. On that basis, we then develop a conclusion, and out of our conclusions, we develop a plan of action.

Everybody does that, and we do it rather automatically without even realizing that we do it. And the consequences that issue forth from our actions are largely responsible for the present state in which we find ourselves, whether good or bad.

If our worldview, that is, the way we see the world is faulty or sadly incorrect, our perception is wrong, then our processed conclusion is wrong.

This transmits to our action plan being wrong, and our actions that inevitably produce consequences is, guess what? Negative.

[65 : 08] Bad consequences. Hurtful and painful consequences, often filled with regret. We would like a do-over, but it isn't available. What's done is done.

It has been said we can all choose what we will or will not do, but we cannot choose the consequences that result. We live in a cause-and-effect world, and it works the same for Christians as it does for non-Christians.

So what's the key? The key is in the beginning, our worldview. If our way of seeing and interpreting the world is correct, then we are dealing with a reality that is true and not wrongly perceived.

This sets the stage for making good decisions that produce favorable consequences. The expression seeing the world through rose-tinted glasses comes into play here.

It merely means we are not seeing the world and its parts as it really is, but with a view that is unreal. The decisions we then make from thinking the world is other than it is can be catastrophic.

[66 : 14] Here is another valuable lesson to be learned from church. A church that teaches the truths of Scripture is constantly coming from a biblical worldview. In teaching the Bible, a church imparts to its members a biblical worldview as opposed to a secular or worldly worldview.

This is the true reality. The Bible accurately describes, from God's viewpoint, the way the world actually is, the way you are, the way others are, the way the world works, the whole mix of it all. The Bible knows man and the world through and through and reveals it to be what it actually is. The Bible and it alone tells it like it really is.

This allows one who adopts the biblical worldview to design his action plan accordingly to better realize the positive consequences. This is because your action plan was based on what is the real truth of a matter and not the false impressions put forth by a faulty worldview.

The best place to get a steady diet of a truthful view of the world is the church. It's an ongoing specialty of each congregation that has and teaches a biblical worldview.

[67 : 34] A recap for the new Christian. On this particular compact disc number 11, we have sought to provide a convenient and we hope helpful kind of believers checklist.

It contains important areas of concern that will greatly benefit every new Christian that embraces them. They can also be a helpful reminder to Christians who are older in the faith and may have come to Christ years ago.

We addressed areas vital to the growth and development of one who more recently has come to faith in Christ. They included the actual beginning of one's personal salvation that was activated by

exercising faith or trust in Christ alone.

We then followed with subjects critical to sustained spiritual growth for the new believer. Among them is the basis for our assurance resting upon what God has said in His Word regardless of our emotions whether they are positive or negative.

We briefly related how common and predictable it is for the new Christian to have many questions that have never entered their mind before coming to Christ. And we tried to allay fears one might have about now having to act religious and we trust we thoroughly debunked the idea and why and further debunked the mistaken notion that becoming a Christian means that now you never say or do anything wrong.

[68 : 58] That nonsense really needs debunking. We spoke about what happened to you when you came to Christ and the dynamics involved with the radical change of life inwardly where only God could reach and the difference in your life and attitude that may well be noticed and questioned by others.

How you respond to their inquiries was addressed briefly in addition to your apprehension about trying to explain what happened to you when you know you don't fully understand it yourself. And the path to a restoration of fellowship with God was discussed when we know we have displeased Him with some non-Christian act or attitude and our repentance or change of mind and direction always elicits God's forgiveness and our restoration.

Not restoration to salvation so as to be saved again but restoration to our fellowship and communion with Him. Every believer no exceptions is joined in vital union with Christ so that we are one with Him.

That makes us members of His true church an invisible organism not organization but organism a body of believers comprised of all born again Christians everywhere and referred to in Ephesians and Colossians as the church which is Christ's spiritual body of which He Himself is the spiritual head.

[70 : 25] This is the church one must be a member of in order to go to heaven. Another church most are more familiar with is called the local church. It's one of thousands of local assemblies existing to meet the needs of all believers in Christ.

It provides corporate worship and teaching to edify believers and evangelize those who do not know Christ. The local church will enable you to derive the most from your study of the Bible and encourage you in your prayer life.

You need the local church God directs you to and the church needs you. Make every effort to find the church where you fit. It may take a while but the effort will be richly rewarded.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. A preview of upcoming CD number 12.

It's going to cover some unusual content. It will consist of the answers given by people who have not put their faith in Christ and the explanations they have given for not having done so.

[71 : 32] Don't be surprised to find yourself in the list giving. The likelihood is you are somewhere among them. We all are. So look for yourself. We are doing this in an effort to aid in understanding where people are coming from.

Their objections to Christianity or to the church or to Christians themselves. And again, be reminded that you will see yourself and whatever obstacles kept you from coming to faith in Christ in the lineup that will be provided and explained.

There probably isn't a believer anywhere who hasn't asked himself why he didn't come to Christ earlier than he did. And those who especially ask themselves this are those who do not become believers until later in life.

Many even regard those earlier years without Christ as wasted. But this is not true and we will explore and explain why it isn't. All kinds of obstacles are put before people that keep them from making the most important decision in their life.

We need to recognize them, understand them, and be able to help them overcome those obstacles, thus paving and preparing the way for them to come to faith. It's not only an important decision for them to make, it's the most important decision anyone can make ever.

[72 : 56] So we shall revisit why this is and the reasons given by those who have yet to decide for Christ. It promises to be very revealing and insightful for all who hear it.

If you are missing any of the ten CDs of Christianity Clarified prior to this CD number 11 and you wish to receive any of them, you may do so by writing to Grace Bible Church 1500 Group Road Springfield, Ohio 45504 That's Grace Bible Church 1500 Group Road G-R-O-O-P Road Springfield, Ohio 45504 Or you may telephone us at 937-322-3113 There is no charge for what you request and it will be sent to you along with a listing of other Christianity Clarified CDs that you may also request free for yourself and your friends.

These are all provided through the courtesy and generosity of the Barbara Wiseman Memorial Fund. Thank you so much for listening. Thank you so much