

## Christian Basics

### Session 6: Spiritual Growth

#### Facilitator's Guide

#### Ask:

1. How has the past week been for you?
2. Do you have any questions from what we chatted about last week?

**Important - Please Note:** During your meeting, only look up and read the Bible passages that are contained within the boxes. The Bible passage references contained within the body of the information or following the "See Also" text should not be covered during your meeting as it will make the meeting very long. Encourage the participant to look up the passages later and ask any questions they may have at a future catch-up.

#### Introduction

This is the last session of the 'Christian Basics' program. Throughout the last five sessions we have discovered Jesus and His death for our sins and subsequent resurrection is the answer to the problem of sin that separates all humans from God. Jesus has enabled us to receive forgiveness for our sins and to be welcomed into God's eternal presence. Jesus also gives the gift of the Holy Spirit to live in every believer, empowering and enabling them to live for Him and share Him with those who don't yet know Him. The Holy Spirit also helps us to grow in intimacy in our relationship with God and to become more like Jesus. Our own role in our spiritual growth is to pursue and prioritise the activities and structures that God has made available for us to develop in our faith and relationship with Him.

#### 1. God's gift not our works

It is very important to keep remembering that we are completely dependent on Jesus' death on the cross alone for our salvation.

#### **Ephesians 2:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.

(See also: John 1:12; 3:16; Romans 5:15, 6:23, 10:13; 2 Cor 9:15; Titus 2:11 )

The natural outflow of putting our trust in Jesus and having the Holy Spirit live in us, is that we will naturally want to do good to others, because God is good. However, we can fall into the trap of thinking that we can earn God's love by our good deeds which is not true. No good work can earn God's love for us. God loves us because He loves us and sent His Son Jesus to die for us. Our good works should flow from thankfulness for what God has done for us and love for Him. As we allow God to do good in and through us, we grow in our relationship with Him and others.

## 2. Speaking to God

The best way to grow a relationship with someone else is to communicate regularly with them. To grow in your relationship with God, it is important to spend time speaking with Him daily. Speaking to God is commonly known as praying. The Psalms show us that you can speak to God about anything and everything – your highs and lows, your ups and downs.

When Jesus walked the earth, His disciples asked him to teach them to pray and He gave them a model of prayer which is commonly referred to as the Lord's prayer.

### Matthew 6:9-13

<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name,

<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.'

(See also: Luke 11:1-4)

**Ask:** What do you notice about the order of statements and requests in the prayer?

Rather than saying the above prayer by rote, it is best to use it as model, speaking first to God about the things of God's kingdom, then asking for daily needs, forgiveness and protection from the evil one. Praying the words written in the book of Psalms and making them personal to you is also a helpful way to learn to speak to God authentically.

As we learned in an earlier session, our sin separates us from God. When we come to faith in Jesus, we don't automatically stop sinning. The Holy Spirit living in us makes us aware of our sin and helps us to turn from our sin, but it is a journey that takes time. Therefore, when we pray, we are to confess our sins to God and ask for help to avoid them in future.

### **1 John 1:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

**Ask:** What do you notice happens when we confess our sins to God?

### **3. Listening to God**

As well as speaking with God, it is important also to listen to Him. God may speak to you through your thoughts, through other people, by drawing your attention to signs etc. The most profound way in which God speaks to us though, is through His word contained in the Holy Bible. Therefore, it is very important to regularly read and reflect on the words contained in the Bible.

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

(See also: Psalm 119:105; Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 4:12; Romans 15:4)

**Ask:** What do you notice about what the verse above says about Scripture?

If you are wondering whether what you may hear in your thought life or from others is from God or not, it is best to test it against what the Bible says. For example, if you think God might be telling you to steal something, you can be assured that is not the voice of God, as the Bible explicitly teaches that stealing is breaking God's commandment (Exodus 20:15).

#### 4. Regularly connecting with other believers

Jesus never intended people to live out their faith in Him in isolation from others. When following Jesus, it is important to meet regularly with other believers to worship God, learn from His word, pray together, love one another, build one another up in the faith, and to help grow the kingdom of God together.

Jesus had twelve close disciples and He told them that others would identify them as His disciples by one key trait.

##### **John 13:35**

<sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

**Ask:** What do you notice about how other people will know that we are a follower of Jesus?

We can only learn to love other believers if we are in regular, connected relationship with them which is referred to as ‘fellowship’. Perhaps that is why the author of the letter to the Hebrews encourages the believers not to give up on meeting together.

##### **Hebrews 10:24-25**

<sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

You can regularly meet with other believers by joining a church, a small group, or even connecting one-on-one with another person.

#### 5. Serving and sharing

As you progress in your faith journey, you will notice that that you increasingly desire to be more like Jesus is every way. Jesus has the heart and posture of a servant and is also very generous.

##### **Matthew 20:25-28**

<sup>25</sup>Jesus called them (the disciples) together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup>Not so

with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

(See also: Mark 10:45; John 13:1-17; Acts 20:35)

**Ask:** What are your thoughts about Jesus instructing His disciples to serve one another?

As we learned in Session 5 on the Holy Spirit, God gives every believer at least one gift to be able to serve others and help grow His kingdom.

#### **1 Peter 4:10**

<sup>10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

Jesus is also very generous and encouraged His first disciples to share their earthly possessions with others. It is perhaps for this reason, that the writers of the New Testament encourage all believers in Jesus to share their God-given possessions with those in need.

#### **1 John 3:16-18**

<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

(See also: 2 Cor 9:6-8; Hebrews 13:16; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)

**Ask:** What does the passage say about our reason for sharing our material possessions with those in need?

### **6. Being aware of the battle**

When we come to faith in Jesus, His enemy and ours often goes into battle to discourage us from continuing to follow and remain in relationship with Jesus. The early church leaders, Peter and Paul remind the believers that the battle with the devil and his demons is real.

### **1 Peter 5:8**

<sup>8</sup>Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

### **Ephesians 6:12**

<sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The good news is that Jesus has all power and authority over the devil and the forces of darkness because He defeated them through His death and resurrection (Col 2:13-15; 1 John 3:8). Jesus gives believers His authority and spiritual tools to be able to overcome the power of the devil and his demons.

### **Ephesians 6:13-18**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

(See also: Matthew 6:13; 2 Corinthians 2:11; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9)

**Ask:** What do you notice about the tools Jesus had given us to be able to stand against the devil and his schemes towards us?

## What's Next?

This brings us to the end of the of the Christian Basics Program. You may wish to take one or more of the following next steps in your faith journey:

- do the Baptism training and get baptised
- do the 7-week First Steps program for new believers
- regularly meet with another believer to read the Bible
- join a Christian growth group
- join a serving team.

## Questions

1. What stood out most for you in our discussion today?
2. How have you found the program and our journey together?
3. What do you think might be your next step in your discipleship journey?
4. How can I continue to be in prayer for you?

## Prayer of Salvation

If the person has not yet put their faith in Jesus, you can ask them if they would like to do that today. If they would like to do that, tell them that you are going to lead them in a prayer but that you would like to discuss with them what the words of the prayer will be. Discuss the following prayer with them before leading them through it line by line.

### **Prayer to Make Jesus Lord of Your Life**

Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross to rescue me from sin and eternal separation from God.

I ask for Your forgiveness for all of my sins and I choose to turn from them and make You the Lord of my life.

I receive Your forgiveness and ask You to come and live in me and help me to love in the same way that you do.

Thank-You for the free gift of salvation and for making me a child of God.

Thank-You that You will never leave or forsake me and that I can be assured of spending all eternity in heaven with You, only because of what You did on the cross

for me.

May Your will be done in my life.

Amen.

### **Prayer to Be Filled with Holy Spirit**

When we place our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. While the Holy lives within us, we can always ask to be filled with more of His presence and power. In Luke 11:13, Jesus teaches that the Father will always give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. You can pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day.

### **Prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit**

Dear God,

Thank-You that the Holy Spirit already lives in me.

Please fill me now to overflowing with more of the Holy Spirit  
to be empowered in following Jesus and helping others to know Him.

Amen