

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

John 3:16

Who is God?

Why does He love me?

Who is His Son?

What can I believe in?

What happens after I die?

What is The Bible all about?

What is Christianity?

A small booklet for big questions.

**What is
Christianity?**

An Overview of the Holy Bible

What is Christianity?

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Christianity's Foundation

Christianity is faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God, following Him and the teachings of the Holy Bible. The Bible is a collection of historical books, songs, letters, and other Scriptures . all written under the inspiration of God. It begins with books of *The Old Testament (Covenant, Promise)* which show us God, His Law, and His personal interaction with individuals as well as nations. In the writings of *The New Testament*, God fulfills the Old Testament Law and brings His new covenant . through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In later times, as these ancient texts were translated and made available to more readers, each book was organized into chapters and verses. One verse tells the Bible's main message:

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

By itself, this verse might bring up quite a few questions. The following pages can guide you to answers in the Bible, the Word of God. This booklet is not a replacement for the Bible, rather it is an introduction to the hope and love God offers to each person. Each person has an eternal soul, beginning with physical life, continuing after physical death into either Heaven (peace with God) or Hell (perishing, without God). Where and how the soul's eternity is spent depends on the person's awareness and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The Three in One

There is only one true God, *The Trinity*, or three Persons in One: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Heavenly Father is the loving Creator and holy Lord of all. Jesus the Son is God, physically born on earth, sent from Heaven as the Messiah (or *Christ*, ~~the~~ *Anointed One*), to save mankind from Hell. The Holy Spirit is God's active presence on earth within the hearts of those who have accepted Christ.

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

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

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

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

Acts: 2:36 – "...let all be assured of this: God has made this Jesus... both Lord and Christ."

The Creation of All Things

God created the heavens and the earth. He made all matter and all living things and set them into motion. His order of creation is described at the very start of the first book of the Bible, *Genesis*.

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

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

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

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

The Fall of Mankind

Genesis explains that the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, were placed as husband and wife in the perfect Garden of Eden. God spent time with them and provided all their needs. He allowed them to eat anything from the Garden, except for fruit from the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*.

Satan, an angel removed from Heaven for rebelling against God, had set out to deceive mankind about the love and wisdom of the Lord. Satan persuaded Eve to eat from the Tree, with the lie that she would become like God if she ate its fruit. She then gave the fruit to Adam, who also chose to eat of it.

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

1 Corinthians 15:22 – For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

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

Leaders of Faith

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

Abraham . Genesis gives the history of God's Covenant being made through Abraham and his offspring. Abraham was directed by God to move to a new land and he suffered much trouble, yet remained dedicated to the Lord. The Lord promised Abraham and his wife Sarah a son, and in their old age, Sarah conceived her first child, Isaac. Isaac fathered Jacob, who was later renamed Israel. Abraham's descendents, the Hebrews, were often considered enemies by other nations and eventually were enslaved in Egypt.

Moses . *Exodus* describes how God used Moses to lead His people out of slavery and back to the Promised Land of Abraham, the nation of Israel. God also gave the Ten Commandments and the rest of His Law through Moses. Followers of the Law became known as Jews, and they worshiped God in a temple in the Israelite city of Jerusalem.

Others . After the Law was established, Old Testament books detail times of Israelite leaders, judges and kings. King David, a man after God's own heart, wrote a great number of the *Psalms*. His Son, King Solomon, is credited with most of *Proverbs* as well as *Ecclesiastes* and *Song of Songs*.

The Law of Moses

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

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

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

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

The Birth and Life of Jesus Christ

Prophets in the Old Testament voiced God's messages about the need for repentance, warnings of suffering, and the joy of salvation. Hundreds of their prophecies gave specifics of the Messiah. God would give the greatest sacrifice, His Son Jesus, to be born a man, take our punishment, and give us eternal life.

The first New Testament books . *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* . are the Gospels (meaning *Good News*). Matthew 1:18 reads, "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit." Luke reveals further explanations from angels who had visited the virgin Mary and then Joseph. The couple had to travel to Bethlehem and found no room to stay except in a stable, and there Jesus was born. Angels announced the birth to nearby shepherds, who in turn visited the newborn Christ and spread the news. Men from eastern lands had followed a foretelling star to find the young Anointed One, and they worshiped Him with fine gifts. Luke 2:52 tells us Jesus "grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men."

Jesus began His ministry at about the age of 30, preaching throughout Israel to urge people to turn away from their sins and know God personally. Jesus called on several individuals to join Him, and they became known as The Twelve Disciples. While many followed Him and supported His purpose, many others rejected Him as the Son of God.

Teachings of Jesus Christ

The Gospels record words and works of Jesus during His three-year ministry. Jesus taught wisdom to crowds and, among His many powerful miracles, He healed the sick and disabled. In John 10:10, Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” He emphasized that righteous living involves the condition of your heart, not the actions by themselves.

Love . Love the Lord and your fellow man.

- *Mark 12:30-31* “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ...‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”
- *Luke 6:27, 31* – “...Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you... Do to others as you would have them do to you “

Forgiveness . Forgive others freely as God forgives us.

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

Humility . Serve God and others just as Jesus did.

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

Faith . Believe and trust in God.

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

Holiness . Recognize no person is sinless other than Jesus.

- *Matthew 5:20* – “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- *Mark 1:14-15* – Jesus went... proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

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

- *John 14:6* – “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”
- *Matthew 10:32* – “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.”

Prayer . Fellowship with God directly.

- *Matthew 26:41* . “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”
- *Luke 5:16* . Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Peace . Depend on God for all your needs.

- *Matthew 6:25, 33* . “...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
- *Matthew 11:29* – “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Each Gospel book records that Jesus was arrested after proclaiming to be the Son of God and He was sentenced to die, to publicly suffer a crucifixion along with criminals. The third day after Jesus' death, His tomb was found empty by a woman named Mary Magdalene, and then by two of the Twelve Disciples. An angel at the tomb announced to them that the Messiah had risen from the dead. Jesus soon appeared in flesh and bone to The Disciples and others before returning to His Father in heaven (Acts 1:3). The death and resurrection of Christ conquered sin, giving us all the freedom to choose God's purpose for our lives.

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

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

The Return of Jesus Christ

It is written in *Revelation* and other Old and New Testament Scriptures that Jesus Christ will return to earth, restoring creation to its full glory, eternally destroying the devil and evil.

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

Each person will come to a Judgment Day where all will be accountable for everything we each have done. Jesus Christ, as one who is fully God and fully human, will be our Judge. Those who have chosen to believe in Christ will escape eternal condemnation and live forever with God. Jesus Christ being the only way to unending peace is central to Christianity.

Revelations 20:12 – ...the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened... were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

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

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

Growth of the Christian Church

Just after Jesus ascended into Heaven, the disciples preached the Gospel in Jerusalem to Jews from many different nations. Then, as *Acts* and other New Testament writings document, the Gospel was shared and received throughout the world.

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

Believers in Christ eventually became known as Christians, meeting frequently to worship the Lord and to support each other. Today, church groups worship God in ways varying with their culture, their needs, and their abilities. In some worship services, *the Apostles' Creed* is repeated to state the essentials of the Church's faith:

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

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

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

A Prayer of Salvation

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

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

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

Acts 2:38 – Peter says, "...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."

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

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

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

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

Steps of Discipleship

James 1:27 says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." Here are other practical Scriptures to help your Christian walk:

Pray to God

- *John 15:7 – Jesus said, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*
- *Philippians 4:6 – "...in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."*

Study the Bible

- *Acts 17:11 – "...they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."*
- *II Timothy 3:14-16 – "...continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of... All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."*

Follow God

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

Trust in God

- *I Peter 5:7 – "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."*
- *Hebrews 13:5 – "...be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'*

Grow in the Holy Spirit

- *Acts 1:8 – "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses..."*
- *Galatians 5:16, 22 – "...live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..."*

Assemble with Christians

- *Matthew 18:20 – Jesus said, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
- *Hebrews 10:25 – "Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another..."*

Witness for Christ

- *John 15:8 – "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*
- *Matthew 28:19-20 – Jesus said, "...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

If you would like more information, send us a contact card found at the back of this booklet (see *printed version*) or e-mail booklet@gramlingumc.org. We hope this information leads you to prayer, Bible study, and most of all a close relationship to the One True and Living God, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.