

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: *STUDY GUIDE: WEEKS TEN AND ELEVEN*

TOPIC NINE: DOCTRINES OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH AND SOME KEYS TO GROWING IN MATURITY IN OUR WALK WITH THE LORD

INTRODUCTION TO WEEKS TEN AND ELEVEN:

Topic number nine is very important as it is so essential that all believers grow strong in their faith and that they have a clear understanding of the doctrines of the Christian faith. For this reason, we will be spending two weeks on this topic as we continue in the segment of this course relating to the importance of making mature disciples.

In this study guide we will be: **i)** Looking at our doctrinal beliefs as a Christian church with references being made to the bible scriptures relating to these beliefs, and **ii)** We will conclude with some important keys that can help Christians to grow in maturity in their walk with the Lord and some related Scriptures.

An important part of Topic Nine is a teaching on the six foundations of our faith as outlined in Chapter six of the book of Hebrews. *This teaching is our primary reading for topic nine and is found in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 6 to 11 manual which is on the following website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course*

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” **(Hebrews 6:1-2)**

In the above passage of Scripture, we see the six foundations of our faith; i) Repentance from dead works, ii) Faith toward God, iii) The Doctrine of baptisms (There are two Christian Baptisms. One is the Water Baptism and the other is being Baptised in the Holy Spirit by Jesus), iv) Laying on of hands, v) Resurrection of the dead, and vi) Eternal Judgment

In our attached teaching on the six foundations of our faith, each of the above foundations is fully explained. **In Hebrews 6:1 we ALSO see the importance as a Christian of growing in maturity as a believer once we have come to Christ, “...let us go on to perfection...”** In the last part of this study, we will look at some practical bible-based keys to help Christians to grow in their faith.

AT THIS POINT YOU MAY LIKE TO STUDY THE TEACHING ON THE SIX FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FAITH

True Spiritual Growth requires meditating on and studying the Word of God. (Joshua 1:8) (2 Timothy 2:15)

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-11 the Apostle Paul emphasised our need for Holy Spirit-given wisdom and revelation,

“But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. For what man know the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? **Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.**”

In 1 Corinthians 2:13 the Apostle Paul emphasised the need to speak the words that the Holy Spirit teaches,

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” **(1 Corinthians 2:13)**

In 2 Timothy 3:16 the Apostle Paul wrote that “ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Here the Apostle Paul was emphasising that each writer involved in the production of the Holy Scriptures was “moved by or inspired” by the Holy Spirit. So, to grow in Spiritual Wisdom and maturity involves growing in our knowledge of God’s word. In order to experience true spiritual growth, we must spend time in the Word and separate ourselves from the hindrances of lovelessness, competitiveness, and strife. When Paul was confronting the carnality of the Corinthians, he attributed this to the shallowness of their intake of God’s word (Not able to take solid food). **(SEE 1 Corinthians 3:1-3)**

The Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of feeding on the Word of God when he wrote,

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Before we get into the study of the doctrines of our Christian faith (and what we believe) I will begin by looking at some of the bible Scriptures in relation to maintaining correct doctrine in our churches and in adhering to correct beliefs as a Christian. Obviously as Pastors and Leaders we have a great responsibility in ensuring that all of our teachings and the messages that we preach are doctrinally correct.

Maintaining a pure heart as a pastor, teacher or leader is very important as what we teach influences the lives of many others with eternal ramifications. As pastors and leaders, we are responsible for the spiritual well being of many. In the lawless times that we are now living in, it is so important that we do not allow the influences in the world and wrong input from other people to cause us to deviate away from the foundational truths contained in the Word of God, but that we continually declare to others the whole counsel of God. (Act 20:27)

As leaders we will receive a stricter judgement. (James 3:1) For this reason heeding the wisdom in the book of Proverbs ““Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) is very important. In 2 Peter verses 2:1-3 the Apostle Peter warns of immoral and greedy false teachers who will use people as a means of reaching their own selfish goals.

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.” (2 Peter 2:1-3)

The New Testament indicates that deceptive teachers will characterize the church age and that their activities will increase “in latter times” (1 Timothy 4:1) (Matthew 24:11)

I will now just look at a few things to consider in relation to maintaining correct Doctrinal Beliefs.

- 1) We must always preach the one true gospel (Galatians 1:6-9) (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) We must never add to or preach another gospel. We are justified by faith alone. The Apostle Paul wrote, “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” (Galatians 3:11)
The Apostle Paul also wrote, “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” (Galatians 2:16)
- 2) All that we need is found in Christ (Colossians 1:28) (Matthew 6:25) (Matthew 6:31-33) The Apostle Paul wrote, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19) **The Apostle Paul also wrote,** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3) **In Christ we have been chosen, we are blameless, we have been predestined to adoption into God’s family as sons [children of God – John 1:12], we have been accepted, we have been forgiven and we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise (which is a down payment or first instalment for God’s title to possess us entirely forever) (Ephesians 1:4-14)**

In response to false teachers at Colosse undercutting the major doctrines of Christianity, the Apostle Paul again reinforced the deity and absolute lordship and sufficiency of Christ:

- Not Philosophy but Christ (COLOSSIANS 2:1-10) - Not Legalism but Christ (COLOSSIANS 2:11-23)
- Not Carnality but Christ (COLOSSIANS 3:1-11) The Apostle Paul wrote, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11) (See also 1 Peter 2:4-9)

- 3) **Christ is head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.** (*Ephesians 1:22-23*) The church, which is made up of all born again believers, is the present, physical presence of Christ. The church (the body of Christ) is filled with Him by the Holy Spirit
As believers we are living stones (1 Peter 2:5), temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and TOGETHER we make up the church with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. (1 Peter 2:6-7) The church is the new spiritual Israel. (1 Peter 2:9-10) As we are all part of the body of Christ, we all need one another. (1 Corinthians 12:12-28) Every believer has an important ministry and part to play in the Body of Christ. **As Christians we are all called to represent Jesus Christ in our community by ministering His life, love and power to others. Allowing the Holy Spirit to direct our church meetings is also a key to seeing people experiencing the love of Christ in our meetings in a tangible way.**
- 4) In the early church they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (the Word of God) (Acts 2:38) and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47) Preaching sound doctrine was one of the keys to the rapid growth of the early church
- 5) The Apostle Paul emphasised the necessity of sound doctrine and that all teaching is to be judged by its agreement with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote,
"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome word, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions," (1 Timothy 6:3-4) **AND**
- 6) The importance of all pastors and leaders studying, expounding and also applying the Scriptures to their own life. The Apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy,
"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (1 Timothy 4:12-16)

I will now list the Doctrinal Beliefs for Church of Hope (which are the Assemblies of God beliefs) with related Scripture references. These could be studied in small groups with a leader getting each group members to look up and read out different Scriptures that relate to these Doctrinal Beliefs. These Doctrinal Beliefs are on the following page of the Church of Hope website: www.coh.org.au/beliefs and also in the Church of Hope Pastors Workshop Manual.

THE BIBLE: We believe that the Holy Bible, and only the Bible, is 100% the Word of God. It, alone, is the final authority in determining all doctrinal truths.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) (Proverbs 30:5), (Psalm 1), (Psalm 119:105)

(THE TRINITY (The Eternal Godhead): WE BELIEVE in the unity of the true and living God who is the ETERNAL, self-existent one, who has revealed himself as ONE BEING in THREE PERSONS – *THE FATHER, THE SON (Jesus) AND THE HOLY SPIRIT*, and Who is the Creator and preserver of things visible and invisible. (Deuteronomy 6:4), (Mark 12:29), (Matthew 28:19), (Genesis 1:1), (Psalm 86:9-10), (Isaiah 43:10-11), (John 1:1-3)

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: WE BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity (Triune Godhead), who was and is the eternal Son of God; that he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary. (Jesus Christ was conceived by God the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb) On earth He was 100% God and 100% man. (Isaiah 7:14), (Matthew 1:23)

WE BELIEVE in His sinless life (He was the only man to ever live a sinless life) (Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 2:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21), *miraculous ministry (Acts 2:22, Acts 10:38)*, substitutionary atonement death (Hebrews 9:12), *bodily resurrection (Luke 24:39, 1 Corinthians 15:4)*, glorious ascension (Acts 1:9) and *abiding intercession (Hebrews 7:25)*.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: WE BELIEVE in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity (Triune Godhead), who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is ever present and active in the work of convicting (John 16:7-11) and regenerating the sinner, and sanctifying and guiding (Romans 8:14) the believer into all truth (John 14:26, John 16:13). (Sanctification is the ongoing process of yielding to God in order to become more and more like Christ) (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Romans 8:29, 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

THE ATONEMENT: WE BELIEVE that God's answer to man's sinful state is in the death of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, whose sufferings and shed blood have made full atonement for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and that *there is no other ground for salvation*. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Galatians 1:4, Colossians 1:20, Romans 5:9, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:25-28, 1 Peter 1:18-20, 1 John 1:7)

The blood that Jesus Christ shed on the cross of Calvary was sinless and is 100% sufficient to forgive man of all sins. Jesus allowed Himself to be punished for the sins we had committed, giving all mankind the opportunity of being free from the penalty of sin, (which is death). Each person after reaching an age of reasoning must however make a response of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ to receive God's forgiveness and gift of eternal life. (John 1:29, Revelation 1:5 & 5:9)

SALVATION OF MAN: WE BELIEVE salvation is received through **repentance** toward God and **faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ. This experience is also known as the new birth {Being Born Again} (John 3:3) and is an *instantaneous* and complete operation of the Holy Spirit, whereupon the *believing* sinner is regenerated, justified, and *adopted* into the family of God, and becomes a *new creation* in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17) and *an heir of eternal life*. (Titus 2:11, Titus 3:5-7, 1 Peter 1:23)

REPENTANCE is a commitment to turn from sin in every area of our lives and to follow Christ. (Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19)

SALVATION is a gift from God and cannot be earned. It is not based on our good works or human efforts. "For by grace you have been saved through **faith** (in **Jesus Christ and His death burial and resurrection**), and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

THE DEVIL: WE BELIEVE in the personality of the devil, who, by his influence, brought about the downfall of man, and now seeks to destroy the faith of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Genesis 3:1-15, Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13, James 4:7, John 13:2, 1 Peter 5:8)

THE FALL OF MAN: WE BELIEVE that man was created by God by a specific immediate act and in His image and likeness, morally upright and perfect, *but fell by voluntary transgression*. Consequently, all men are separated from original righteousness, being depraved and without spiritual life. (Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 3:1-7, Romans 5:12-21)

THE CHURCH: The church is the *body of Christ*, the habitation of God, through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfilment of her great commission. *Each believer*, born of the Spirit, is an *integral part* of the *general assembly and church* of the first-born, which are written in heaven. (Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 2:19-22, Hebrews 12:23)

WATER BAPTISM: WE BELIEVE that baptism, by single *immersion*, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is required of all who have repented and believed in Christ as *Saviour* and *Lord*, and that it is symbolic of our identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Following believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, the new convert is commanded by the Word of God to be water baptized by full immersion. The Christian Water Baptism is an outward act of obedience by which a *believer* confesses and confirms, the *inward righteousness* he already enjoys in his heart through faith in Christ's atoning death and resurrection, by openly acknowledging their allegiance to Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 10:47-48, Acts 2:38-39, Romans 6:4-5, Colossians 2:12, Mark 16:16)

THE LORD'S SUPPER: WE BELIEVE the Lord's supper, consisting of the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (**2 Peter 1:4**), and a memorial of His sufferings and death (**1 Corinthians 11:26**), and is enjoined upon all believers "until He comes". (**Luke 22:14-20, Acts 20:7, Matthew 26:26-28**) The Lord's Supper is a unique time of communion in the presence of God when the elements of bread and wine (representing the broken body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ), are taken in remembrance of His sacrifice on the cross for us. (**1 Corinthians 11:23-25**)

SANCTIFICATION: Sanctification is an act of *separation* from that which is *evil*, and of *dedication unto God*. WE BELIEVE it is the glorious provision for *every* believer in Christ to be made *pure in heart* and wholly sanctified, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, by the Blood of Jesus and the Word of God. (**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**)

(**John 17:15-19, Acts 15:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 10:16-19, Romans 12:1-2**)

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT: WE BELIEVE that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the bestowing of the believer with power *to be an effective witness for Christ*. This experience is **distinct** from, and **subsequent** to, the new birth; *is received by faith*, and is accompanied by the manifestation of *speaking in tongues* as the spirit gives utterance, as the initial evidence. (**Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 1:8, Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 2:17-18, Mark 16:17, Acts 8:15-19, Acts 11:14-17, Matthew 3:11, Acts 19:1-7**)

Given at Pentecost, it was the promise of the Father, sent by Jesus after His ascension, to *empower* the Church to preach the gospel throughout the whole earth, to edify believers (**1 Corinthians 14:4**), to enhance the prayer life of believers and as a sign to unbelievers. (**1 Corinthians 14:22**)

GIFTS: WE BELIEVE in the **present day** operation of the **nine** *supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit*, as recorded in **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**. (*The word of wisdom, The word of knowledge, The gift of faith, Gifts of healing, The working of miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of spirits, Different kinds of tongues and Interpretation of tongues*). We also believe in the **five** ministry gifts of Christ, as recorded in **Ephesians 4:11-13**. (*Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers*)

OTHER GIFTS FROM THE FATHER INCLUDE: Prophecy, Exhortation, Giving, Leadership, Mercy, Ministry and the gift of Teaching (Regardless of Public Office) (**Romans 12:3-8**) Helps and Administrations are two other gifts. (**1 Corinthians 12:28**) **WE MUST HOWEVER NEVER FORGET THAT WHATEVER WE DO IN LIFE MUST BE DONE IN LOVE.** (The Apostle Paul emphasised this in chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians) (See also Romans 12:9-21)

DIVINE HEALING: In accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures, we trust our heavenly Father to protect and heal our bodies from sickness and disease. (**Isaiah 53:5**) WE BELIEVE that divine healing for the body, as with all *redemptive blessings of God*, has been provided for us by the *atoning death and victorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ*; it is the privilege of *all* believers and it is *appropriated by faith* in our heavenly Father's unfailing promises. (**Exodus 15:26, Psalm 103:3, Matthew 8:16-17, 1 Peter 2:24, James 5:14-15, Mark 16:17-18, John 14:12-14**)

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST: WE BELIEVE in the *premillennial*, imminent and personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ to gather his people unto Himself. Having this glorious hope and earnest expectation, we purify ourselves, even as He is pure, so that we may be ready to meet Him when He comes. (**1 Thessalonians 4:15-18**)

Jesus Christ will physically and visibly return to earth a second time to establish His Kingdom. This will occur at a date undisclosed by the Scriptures. (**Matthew 24:36**)

THE RAPTURE (PROPHECY): There are several different theological views on the timing of the rapture of *true* believers.

The Premillennial mid-tribulation view: sees all believers being "raptured" after 42 months (1,260 days) of the 7-year Great Tribulation, with the Rapture and Second Coming being separate events.

The Premillennial Pre-Wrath Rapture View: sees all believers being “raptured” during the Great Tribulation, but prior to the “day of God’s wrath” (Rev. 6:17), with the Rapture and Second Coming being separate events. This view states that true believers will be raptured *prior to the “day of God’s wrath”*, as believers have *not been appointed to wrath*, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (**1 Thessalonians 5:9**)

If Chapter 24 of Matthew is to be interpreted in light of Chapter six of Revelations, the rapture could take place Mid-Tribulation (**Matthew 24:31**) *after* the cosmic disturbances mentioned both in **Revelation 6:12** and **Matthew 24:29**, just prior to the great day of His wrath. (**Revelation 6:17**)

The Dispensational Interpretation, (Pre-Tribulation), sees the rapture of all true believers (**Revelation 4:1**) taking place prior to the Anti-Christ rising to power. *This interpretation* sees him as the Conqueror in the First Seal, and the Great Tribulation commencing with the first seal. (**Rev. 6:1**)

The Premillennial Pre-tribulation Partial Rapture View: sees only some believers being “Raptured” before the Great Tribulation. Those who are “unready” must be martyred to verify their faith, with the Rapture and the Second Coming being separate events.

The Premillennial Post-tribulation View: sees all believers being “Raptured” at the end of the Great Tribulation and that the Rapture and the Second coming are the same event. Given that Believers have not been appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation, this particular view does not appear plausible.

There are also other theological views on the timing of the rapture and which deal with the “last things” (Eschatology)

HOWEVER, for those who are faithful in their Christian walk, the Bible promises that they will be kept from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. (Revelation 3:10) WE MUST SIMPLY BE READY TO MEET THE LORD AT ANY TIME.

THE MILLENNIUM: WE BELIEVE in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up His millennial reign on this earth. (**Zechariah 14:5, Daniel 7:22, Rev. 5:9-10, Psalm 96:10-13, Revelation 20:1-10**)

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED: WE BELIEVE in the everlasting punishment of the wicked (in the sense of eternal torment) who wilfully reject and despise the love of God, manifested in the great sacrifice of his only Son upon the cross for their salvation. (**Romans 6:23, Matthew 25:46, Matthew 13:49-50, Luke 12:47-48, 2 Thess. 1:8-9, Revelation 20:11-15**). We believe that the devil and his angels and whosoever is not found written in the book of life shall be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (**Revelation 19:20, Revelation 20:10-15**)

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH: “We according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness” (**2 Peter 3:13, Revelation Chapters 21 and 22.**)

RESURRECTION: WE BELIEVE that Jesus Christ was physically resurrected from the dead in a glorified body three days after His death on the cross. One day all believers who have died in Christ will also be physically resurrected in their glorified bodies and will be judged to determine their eternal rewards in heaven, where they will dwell with God forever. (**Luke 24:36-40, 1 Corinthians 15:42,44, John 20:26-28, John 21:4, Luke 24:15-18**)

The final resurrection at the close of the millennium will be mainly for those who have rejected Christ, and they will be judged for what they did while in the body. Following this judgment, those who rejected Christ will be consigned to the lake of fire (spirit, soul and body). (**Revelation 20:13-14**)

Two categories of people in the final resurrection, who will come forth to the resurrection of life and not condemnation, are people such as the queen of the South (Sheba) and the men of Nineveh referred to by Jesus, who were not granted a revelation of Christ’s atoning sacrifice in which they could trust for salvation, (Luke 11:31-32) and the righteous who died during Christ’s millennial reign on earth. (One of the purposes of Christ’s return is for the national salvation of Israel.)

CREATION: WE BELIEVE that the heavens and earth and all original life forms, including man, were made by the specific immediate creative acts of God as described in the account of origins presented in Genesis, and that all biological changes which have occurred since creation are limited to variation within each species.

I will now finish this study guide for topic nine by looking at a few keys and disciplines to help all Christians to grow in their walk with the Lord, “Let us go on to perfection...” (Hebrews 6:1)

1. It is crucial for *all* new Christians to *immediately* gain a clear understanding of the basis of their right standing with God as believers after they come to Christ. They need to know:

i) That they were justified by faith and that they now have peace with God, (Romans 5:1-2)

ii) That they were saved by grace through their faith in Jesus Christ and that not of themselves.

iii) That eternal life was a free gift of God which they received when they repented and received Jesus Christ into their hearts and lives as their Lord and Saviour. (Ephesians 2:8-9) (Romans 6:23) (John 1:12)

(Romans 3:21-28) and iv) That the moment they believed in Jesus Christ they were declared righteous in God’s sight and His righteousness was imputed to them. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

We must also never as believers get back into trying to earn God’s love and approval, by endeavouring to be justified by our own righteous acts. (Isaiah 64:6) (Galatians 3:1-3) (Galatians 5:4) We must simply allow Christ to continually do the work of change in our life as we learn to say no to our fleshly desires and to live a life under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps to empower us to lead an overcoming life. **SO AS CHRISTIANS WE CAN BE ABSOLUTELY SECURE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND LIVE A LIFE WITHOUT CONDEMNATION (Romans 8:1)** In the book of Hebrews we read one of God’s great promises to us as believers,

“...For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say:

“The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5-6)

2. CONTINUALLY RENEWING OUR MIND WITH THE WORD OF GOD (Romans 12:2) – The importance of continually meditating on the Word of God and applying it to our own life. (Joshua 1:8) (Psalm 1:1-3) As we are daily exposed to negative things and as we live in a world full of ungodly influences, more than ever before meditating on the truths and promises in God’s Word on a regular basis is crucial. Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of being BOTH a hearer and doer of the Word of God. (Matthew 7:24-27) Speaking out God’s Word is a key to growing strong in our faith. (Romans 10:17)

3. Learning to walk in the Spirit. To grow in Christlike character, it is crucial that we learn to walk in the Spirit. We must choose continually to not react out of our old fallen nature (works of the flesh) but to walk in the newness of life that we have in Christ – to put on the new man (Colossians 3:12-14) As believers we have the ability to walk in love towards others “because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Romans 5:5) The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” (Galatians 5:14-18)

4. Continually putting the Lord first in our life. - Choosing to live a lifestyle of obedience (Just doing what Jesus tells us to do) God knows what is best for us. His ways are far higher than our ways. (Isaiah 55:8-9) When we put the Lord first place in our life God promises to meet our every need in life. (Matthew 6:31-33) Living a lifestyle of obedience is the key to seeing God’s blessings in our life as believers (Isaiah 1:19)

5. Learning to trust the Lord with a childlike faith. It is the key to maintaining ongoing peace in our life (**Isaiah 26:3-4**) and to seeing God's plan and purpose for our life coming to pass (**Psalm 37:3-5**) (**Proverbs 3:5-6**) When we continually trust the Lord and commit to following His plan for our lives we will bear much fruit in our life (**Jeremiah 17:7-8**) When we take steps of faith, (**Hebrew 11:1**) we will always see God making what is impossible in the natural for us to do possible. "For with God nothing will be impossible." (**Luke 1:37**)
6. Worship is a great key to getting to know the heart of God and to having godly desires (**Psalm 37:4**) King David was a worshipper who wrote many psalms. (**Psalm 63:1-5**) He was the only person in the bible referred to as being a man after God's own heart (**Acts 13:22**) Worship helps us to connect with God's heart and to usher God's presence into our circumstances. (**Psalm 22:3**) Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of true heartfelt worship and worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth. (**John 4:23-24**) Worship helps to give us Christ's heart of compassion for others. Worship and prayer help to see breakthroughs in our circumstances as we focus on the bigness of our God. (**Acts 16:25-26**)
7. Involving God in all that we do (Having a lifestyle of prayer) (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) Having a lifestyle of prayer helps us to make right choices in life as we involve God in all that we do and is a key to living a life without anxiety. (**Philippians 4:6-7**) Persevering in prayer is the key to seeing breakthroughs in our life. (**Luke 18:1-8**) God is both willing and able to answer all of our prayers that are in line with His will for our life. (**1 John 5:14-15**) (**Mark 11:22-24**)
8. The importance of continually making time to get to know the Lord in a real and personal way. (**2 Peter 3:17-18**) We need to consistently make time to spend alone with the Lord so that we can get to know Him in a more intimate way. (**Psalm 46:11**) (**John 15:4-5**) Our primary focus as a believer needs to be on getting to know Jesus more and more and to know His love for us in a real and tangible way. When we get too busy to spend quality time with the Lord, we are more likely to get troubled by little things in life. (**Luke 10:38-42**) The Apostle Paul wrote, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (**Ephesians 3:17-19**)
9. The importance of being PLANTED in a loving local church fellowship
Having fellowship with other believers is crucial if we are to remain strong in our faith. Being planted and connected to the life of a healthy bible-based church is crucial if our lives are to bear much fruit. (**Psalm 92:13-14**) As the devil is continually trying to undermine and destroy the faith of believers, (**1 Peter 5:8-9**) it is important for all believers to have regular fellowship with other Christians who can encourage them in their walk with the Lord. This is especially the case when believers are going through great trials in their life. (**Hebrews 10:23-25**) Our God given destiny will always be worked out in connection with other believers. When connected with other mature believers we can also receive godly counsel to help us to make good choices in life. (**Proverbs 11:14**) Being connected to other Christians also helps to give us accountability which is so important given the lawless days that we are now living in. (**2 Timothy 3:1-5**)
10. The importance of having godly friendships – Not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers
Choosing good friends in life who will encourage us to grow in our walk with the Lord is crucial if we are to fulfil all that God has planned for our life. The bible says much about the importance of associating with the right people and how evil company corrupts good habits. (**Proverbs 12:26**) (**Proverbs 13:20**) (**1 Corinthians 15:33**) (**2 Corinthians 6:14-16**) If we are to soar with the eagles, we need to have good godly friends who are people of vision and purpose.

11. Continually living with eternity in mind knowing that we are only pilgrims in this life here on earth. It is so important that we always live our life with eternity in mind. We have one life to store up treasures in heaven. **(Matthew 6:19-21)** We need to learn to make the most of our time here on earth by consistently seeking to do the will of God for our lives.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “**See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**” (Ephesians 5:15-17)

We must purposely choose to not allow the cares of this world and desires for other things to enter into our heart to pull us away from what God has called us to do in life. The devil will continually try and get us focusing on the temporary things of this life so that our lives bear little or no eternal fruit. **(Mark 4:18-19)** Living a consecrated life that is devoted to living for the cause of Christ is the key to seeing our lives bearing much fruit. **(John 15:16) (John 12:24-26) (Luke 9:23-25) (Galatians 2:20)** We have all been given one gift of life here on earth to make a difference for eternity. Each day once lived can never be regained.

When we live with eternity in mind it will influence the way we live our life and the choices that we make with the use of our time, talents and resources. It will also give us a greater urgency to reach out to those who are unsaved knowing the reality that there is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain. **(Proverbs 11:30)**

12. Depending on God’s enabling power to do what He calls us to do (2 Corinthians 3:5)

Whatever God calls us to do for Him in life; He will give us the ability to accomplish. We must never limit what God wants to do in and through our lives by looking at our own natural abilities and resources. We need to depend on the Holy Spirit to empower us for the tasks that God gives us to do. Jesus Himself depended on the Holy Spirit to perform His ministry here on earth. **(Acts 10:38)** God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. **(2 Corinthians 12:7-10)** It is so important that we depend on God’s enabling power in all that we do. In this way we will accomplish more with less effort as we do things in His strength and power **(1 Corinthians 2:2-5) (Zechariah 4:6) (1 Peter 4:11)**

13. Continually yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in our life to grow in Christlike character (Fruit of the Spirit).

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” **(Romans 8:28-29)**

The whole Christian Walk is one of growing in Christlike character over time so that we become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. *Jesus Himself said,*

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” **(Matthew 5:13)**

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see you good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)**

The way we live our life often has the greatest impact on the lives of others. For many people the only bible that they will ever read will be our own life. Allowing the Lord to do a work of change in our life over time is therefore important if we are to grow in Christlike character and influence those around us.

Quickly heeding the conviction of the Holy Spirit and having a repentant heart helps us to grow in Christlike character. **(1 John 1:9)** It is so important that we continually respond to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit so that we grow in maturity in our walk with the Lord. **(John 14:26) (John 16:13)**

14. Having a repentant heart (Keeping short accounts with God and with others)

Having a repentant heart helps to keep our line of communication with God clear. Unconfessed sins can be a hindrance to seeing our prayers being answered. **(Psalm 66:18-19)** Jesus Himself also emphasised the importance of forgiving others who have hurt us **(Mark 11:25)** if we want our Father in Heaven to also forgive us our trespasses. Jesus made it clear that if we were not prepared to forgive others that have hurt us then neither would our Father in heaven forgive us our trespasses. **(Mark 11:26)** Having short accounts with both God and others is a key to living an abundant life as it helps us to have an intimate relationship with the Lord (in His presence in fullness of joy) and to have healthy loving relationships with other people.

15. Using our gifts and talents to serve the Lord in what He has called us to do.

Every believer has a unique ministry, “good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” **(Ephesians 2:10)** God has also uniquely gifted each believer with different gifts and talents to be a blessing for others and the wider Body of Christ. It is as we work together in unity with other believers (joined and knit together) that the church makes an impact in the world and we see growth in the Kingdom of God. **(Ephesians 4:16)** As we all need one another in the Body of Christ, it is important that we all faithfully use our gifts and talents for the Lord and follow His plan and purpose for our life. True joy and purpose in our walk with the Lord come from loving the Lord and being faithful stewards of our gifts and talents. **(Matthew 25:14-23)** The Apostle Paul wrote, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **(Romans 12:4-8)**

16. Choosing to continually walk in love and forgiveness towards others (The greatest is love)

As Christians we have the ability to love people with the unconditional agape Love of God which “...has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit...” **(Romans 5:5)** Dealing quickly with offenses, helps us to maintain a soft and loving heart towards others. Jesus warned that many would be offended in the days just prior to His return and would betray and then hate one another. **(Matthew 24:10)** We must always be quick to forgive others and must not allow the sun to go down on our wrath. **(Ephesians 4:26)** We must refuse to “give place to the devil” **(Ephesians 4:27)** by allowing offences to enter into our heart and by going to bed with unresolved anger. Jesus emphasised the importance of loving others, even our enemies and those who spitefully use us, so that we can be an example to those in the world. **(Luke 6:27-28) (Matthew 5:43-45)** Jesus also said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **(John 13:34-35)** The Apostle Paul also emphasised the importance of all that we do for others being undergirded and motivated by love. **(1 Corinthians 13:1-8)**

17. Refusing to dwell on our past failures, regrets and injustices so that we are free to fully embrace the future that God has planned for our life. Life and life more abundantly

We must refuse to allow our past disappointments and failures to stop us from moving on into the future that God has planned for our life. No amount of dwelling on our past failures can change things. But to live in the past will prevent us from embracing the future that God has planned for our life. The Apostle Paul made many mistakes before his conversion to Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” **(1 Timothy 1:12-15)**

But the Apostle Paul knew that he could not live with regrets. He knew that if he was to fulfil God's plan for his life, he would have to put his past behind him to embrace all that God had planned for his future. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14)

God is able to turn our past messes into messages and to turn our lives around totally if we can let go of our past regrets and failures. King David wrote,

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, And **forget not all His benefits; Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, **who redeems your life from destruction**, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."** (Psalm 103:2-5)

18. Being continually filled with the right spirit, the Holy Spirit

It is so important that we are continually filled with the right spirit, the Holy Spirit so that we are empowered to witness to and minister to others. As we give out to others, we need to be continually filled ourselves with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit," (Ephesians 5:18)

19. Having a teachable spirit (being open to others speaking into our life)

Having a teachable spirit helps us to grow more quickly in our walk with the Lord and to make fewer wrong choices in life. If we are prepared to have others speak into our life, we have the ability to make better decisions on a more consistent basis. The book of Proverbs clearly emphasises the importance of being teachable and willing to receive counsel from others. (Proverbs 11:14) (Proverbs 15:22) (Proverbs 19:20) (Proverbs 23:12) Having mature Christians as mentors in our life helps us to grow more quickly in our walk with the Lord, as we learn from their experiences and what they have learned while walking with the Lord for many years. (2 Timothy 2:2) **AND**

20. Finally, our Christian Walk is simply one of being in relationship with the LORD. When our love for Jesus is our highest priority in life, we will then also have a great love for people

Out of our relationship with the Lord, His plan and purpose for our life will unfold. (Proverbs 3:5-6) (Psalm 37:23) We must be careful that we never become religious in our walk with the Lord, doing things out of obligation and tradition, but that all the good works that flow out of our life and the way we worship the Lord, come from our passion to know Christ in an intimate way. When we do things for others out of a sense of obligation, we will never enjoy the fullness of life that God has planned for all believers. (John 10:10) But when we are filled with God's love and the fullness of joy that comes from being in God's presence, we have great delight in helping and serving others. (Matthew 20:28) Jesus Himself summarised the simplicity of our walk with the Lord when He said,

"And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. (Mark 12:30)

"And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:31)

I will finish with what the Apostle Peter wrote in relation to the importance of growing in maturity (in the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23) and in knowledge as a believer; "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;" (2 Peter 1:5-10)