

## **Christianity in 60 Minutes**

### **-The Bible:**

-Christians believe that human authors who were inspired by God wrote the Bible.

-Therefore, it is God's Word.

-Without the Bible, we could know some things about God by observing the world around us. But we would not know the things the Christianity is really about.

-The Bible is historical – it records how God really acted in our world.

-The Bible is theological – it also tells us how to interpret how God has acted in our world.

-That, along with the fact that it interprets those actions and tells us what they mean for us, makes the Bible indispensable for Christians. It is the one source of certain truth about God and heaven, where we come from and where we are going, what is wrong with our world and how those wrongs are made right, etc. That being said, the words of the Bible are the foundation of our faith. Christians believe what we believe not because of feelings, human ideas, etc. – we believe what we believe because the Bible says it.

-Therefore, before we can begin talking about what Christians believe, we first have to understand that we can trust the Bible. Though there's much more that could be said, here are seven quick reasons why we can and should trust the Bible:

-The Bible is BY FAR the most reliable ancient text in the world.

-The Bible aligns perfectly with the known archaeological and historical record.

-The New Testament (and much of the Old Testament) was written by eyewitnesses of the events it reports.

-The Bible has a perfect prophetic record.

-Even though the Bible was written by over 40 authors over a period of 1,400 years, it never contradicts itself and tells one story throughout.

-The New Testament (and much of the Old Testament) was written by people who believed so strongly that what they wrote was true that they were willing to be killed for it rather than take it back.

-The Bible has a way of meeting us where we're at and it has impacted millions of lives over the millennia.

### **-God:**

-The Bible was inspired by God, and it mainly tells us about God and how he has interacted with humanity.

-While many people like to make the claim that the various religions all worship the same God, this simply isn't true.

-In fact, at his essence, the Christian God is fundamentally different from every other so-called 'god'.

-First, the Christian God is Triune. The Bible says that there is only one God. The Bible also talks about three different persons being God. Though it's hard for us to grasp, the Christian God is triune or three persons in one God.

-The fact that we cannot even comprehend the fundamental nature of God should humble us and let us know how transcendent God truly is.

-While we can't fully understand it, here is one way to begin to grasp the triuneness of God: he is three persons that are so perfectly in love with each other that they are in fact one being, one Godhead.

-The three persons of God are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

-Second, the Bible tells us many attributes of the Christian God that, especially when taken together, make him fundamentally different from every other 'god' that has been created by man. His attributes include:

-He is Spirit, eternal (existing from eternity and to eternity), he is unchangeable, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, holy, just, faithful, good, merciful, gracious, and love itself.

-The first thing that the Bible records God doing is creating the universe part by part by speaking it into existence from nothingness over the course of 6 days. After each day, God looked at his creation and called it "good".

-The final piece of God's creation was man. God created Adam and Eve and called them "very good."

-Unlike the rest of Creation, God made Adam and Eve in his image. Man has a soul. Man has a special opportunity for a relationship with God. Man has a special dignity. Finally, man has a special responsibility of being God's representatives by caring for, building up, and continuing to create in God's Creation.

-The rest of the Bible is the story of God's relationship with humanity.

#### -The Problem:

-The two people who God directly created were Adam and Eve. He made them to be in a perfect love relationship with him. Together they walked and talked in the Garden of Eden.

-But, in order to have a perfect love relationship, Adam and Eve needed to be able to reject God. Without the opportunity to 'not love' – there can really be no love; to put it another way, love requires consent.

-To give Adam and Eve consent and thus to enable them to truly love him, God provided for them a way out of the relationship. They were allowed to do whatever they wanted except eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

-Satan came into the garden disguised as a serpent, and he tempted Eve to eat of the fruit of that tree by telling her that if she ate of it, she would be like God.

-Eve and Adam gave in to the temptation, ate of the fruit, and in so doing, chose to love themselves over loving God. Their perfect love relationship with God was broken.

-That was the very first sin. And, like a single virus can quickly spread and infect the whole body, so also sin, now that it was 'out of the bag' spread and infected the whole of God's creation. Evil and brokenness entirely corrupted the world.

-Specifically, the Bible says that right after Adam and Eve ate the fruit, work became labor, pain became a reality, thorns and thistles sprang up, human relationships became strained, and worst of all, death was introduced.

-However, those are just some examples. All the evil and brokenness that we see every moment in our world is a result of this first sin.

-The Bible describes our broken world like this: "*For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth.*" (Romans 8:22)

-Additionally, since that time, every human has been infected by the virus of sin. The Bible says that from our conception, we are sinful; in other words, it's part of our DNA, our nature.

-But not only is it a part of our nature – it's also a part of our reality. We aren't just sin at our core, we also commit sin with our thoughts, words, and actions. In fact, each and every one of us has sinned more times than we can count.

-Each time we sin, we do the same thing Adam and Eve did, we choose to love ourselves and do what we want instead of loving God and doing what he wants.

-One of God's attributes is that he's "just" – God is the definition of perfect justice. Because of that, he must punish evil.

- We are evil and we commit evil or sin.
- Our sin necessitates punishment, and the punishment fits the crime. When we sin, we choose ourselves over God. God is the source of life, so because of our sins, we die. God is also the source of all good things, so because of our sins, we go to hell – which is the place where God, and good, is not. Hell is not so much a place that God sends us to, as it is a place that we choose to go to because, when we sin, we reject God.
- This is our problem. We all sin. We all contribute to the brokenness of our world. We all reject God and therefore we die and will certainly go to hell. Because he is just and because we deserve punishment, God must punish us for our sinfulness.
- But God isn't only just, he is also love itself – he desperately loves mankind. Because of his love for us, he wants to restore the relationship that we destroyed and provide a way for us to have eternal life in paradise with him once again. But, because of his justice, he could not simply do away with the punishment.
- So, the Bible says that before he even created the world, God already had a plan in place to provide a Savior to humanity that would restore our relationship and give us eternal life.
- And, immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, God promised them that Savior. (Genesis 3:15)

#### The Savior:

- However, God is patient; the world would have to wait a long time for that Savior. The introduction of the problem of sin, which is the problem that underlies all the other problems in the world, takes place in chapter 3 in the book of Genesis, the very first book of the Bible.
- The Savior wouldn't come for many thousands of years after that. His coming is recorded in the Bible at the beginning of what Christians call the New Testament. The entire Old Testament, as Christians call it, which is about three-quarters of the Bible, was written during and tells us about those thousands of years.
- While there are many other things said, essentially, that part of the Bible tells us about three main things that keep popping up.
  - First, the problem of sin is continually elaborated on – the Old Testament tells us much about how sin has ruined the world and ruined humanity.
  - Second, the promise of a Savior is continually alluded to – the Old Testament contains many people, events, poems, and prophecies that point ahead to the Savior who was to come.
  - Third, the Old Testament tells us the story of the people through whom God would bring a Savior – the Hebrews or the Jews.
- After thousands of years of waiting, finally, on a day that Christians call Christmas, that much needed, long-awaited, constantly alluded to Savior was born in a stable in a small town called Bethlehem.
  - About nine months earlier, an angel had come to a young girl named Mary and told her that she would conceive and give birth to a son who could be called “*the Son of the Most High.*” (Luke 1:32)
  - Very importantly, this young girl was a virgin. When she asked how she would conceive, she was told: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*” (Luke 1:35) The fact that the Savior was born of a virgin conceived in her by God is important because...
    - First, this tells us that this Savior, who would be named Jesus, would be born sinless. He did not have a human father, but instead God is his Father, therefore, his DNA, his nature, was not sinful from conception like the rest of us.

-Second, this tells us that he is man and God. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and is therefore a human. Jesus was also conceived by God, therefore, he is the Son of God and is God. The Bible explains that Jesus is fully, 100% man and fully, 100% God.

-Theologically, it's really important that Jesus was both completely man and completely God. He had to be fully man because he had to live a perfect life in our place while being tempted as we are tempted. He had to be fully God so that he could be born sinless. He had to be fully man so that he could actually die. He had to be fully God because his death had to be enough to pay off the sin debt of the entire human race (only the death of the infinite God could do that). He had to be God so that he could rise from the dead to prove that his sacrifice was enough and to defeat death once and for all.

-Jesus grew up, and when he was about 30, he began his public ministry, meaning he began going around Israel and the surrounding territory and telling people about who he was and what he came to do. He also healed the infirmed, cast out demons, and did many other amazing miracles.

-By saying and doing these things, Jesus showed people what he ultimately came to do – save them from the broken world. In other words, by teaching about the Kingdom of God and performing miracles, Jesus gave people glimpses of an unbroken world, he gave them previews of paradise.

-Second, by saying and doing these things, Jesus proved who he really is. They could obviously see that he's a man, but no mere man could do the things he did and speak with the authority that he spoke with. Thus, he also showed himself to be God.

-For about 3 years, Jesus engaged in this ministry. And all of it was leading up to what he ultimately came to do – the acts by which he would save mankind.

-Not only was Jesus born without sin, but the Bible is clear that though he was tempted as we are, he remained without sin for the entirety of his life.

-In other words, he never did, said, or thought anything wrong. He never rejected God in favor of himself. He remained in that perfect love relationship with the Father that he had been in from eternity.

-Because of his perfect life, he is the one person who has ever lived who didn't deserve to be punished. He alone didn't deserve to die nor did he deserve to be separated from God in hell.

-However, he willingly came to earth in order to be the substitute for mankind. In other words, to save sinful mankind from death and hell, the sinless Jesus came to die and experience hell in place of humanity; he came to be punished on our behalf so that we could be forgiven for our sins, have life, and spend eternity with God in paradise instead (Mark 10:45). In other words, Jesus traded places with humanity. He went through the punishment that we deserve so that we could have the reward that he deserves. The punishment of Jesus is called his Passion.

-After spending the evening with his followers, Jesus ate a meal with them called the Last Supper, and together they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane, a place where Jesus regularly stayed. There, as he prayed to the Father asking for this punishment to be taken from him, he was in so much agony that he sweat drops of blood. Even though he knew it would be horrible, Jesus still prayed: "*Not my will, but yours be done.*" (Luke 22:42)

-According to the plan he made with the Father and the Holy Spirit before the world began, this was truly the only way to save mankind. Despite the incredible torment that lay ahead, Jesus consented to the will of the Father – he would go through with taking mankind's punishment.

- At that time, one of his own disciples, Judas, betrayed Jesus by leading a band of soldiers to him.
- The soldiers took Jesus to the house of the High Priest, who was leading a faction of religious leaders intent on putting Jesus to death. There, he was given a sham trial, convicted of claiming to be the Son of God (which he is), and abandoned by his closest friends and followers.
- After that, he was put on trial before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Though Pilate found no guilt in him, the religious leaders incited the crowd against him and they cried: "Crucify him!" Giving in to political pressure, Pilate ordered Jesus to be tortured by scourging and then crucified.
- On the way to the cross, Jesus was mocked, beaten, shamed, and spit on.
- At a place called Golgotha, he was stripped of his clothes and had nails driven through his hands and his feet to the beams of a cross. There the mocking and the torment continued. Jesus experienced excruciating physical pain, but it was nothing compared to the true pain he was feeling.
- Upon that cross, he took the sin of the world, all the bad things that everyone has ever done, into himself. It was as if he committed all the evil that has ever been done.
- And because of that, because the holy God could not be in the presence the pure evil he had become. So, Jesus cried out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46); this means that he was abandoned by the one who he had a perfect love relationship with for all of eternity. When he experienced the absence of God, who is everything good, Jesus quite literally experienced the fullness of hell.
- Finally, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30) And the eternal God of the universe died. (John 19: 33-34)
- At this, nature itself revolted. The sun had been darkened and the earth quaked. Importantly, at this moment, the curtain in the temple was torn in two. The curtain separated God from man, with the death of Jesus, the sins of man were forgiven and the holy God no longer needed to be separate from forgiven man.
- After he died, Jesus was placed into a follower's tomb where he lay dead for three days. (John 19:40-42)
- In doing all of this, Jesus, who didn't deserve it, went through the punishment that mankind deserves – he bore the torture, the hell, and the death that we should bear. Amazingly, because the punishment was willingly born by him, we no longer have to face it! (Isaiah 53:5)
- This act is really the first part of the central teaching of the Christian faith – that God loves each and every one of us so much that he gave his life so that we no longer have to face the punishment we deserve. The Bible puts it this way: "*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8)
- But that is not all. On his third day in the tomb, he rose from the dead – he came back to life! The Bible says it like this: "*God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.*" (Acts 2:24) Christians call this day Easter.
- Jesus' resurrection is the second part of the central teaching of the Christian faith. In fact, the Bible even says that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then Christianity is a sham – the Christian faith centers around the resurrection of Jesus. (1 Corinthians 15:14) It's that important!
- Now, the resurrection of Jesus means many wonderful things. First, it means Jesus really is God. There was no question that he is fully man, that was plain for all to see. But in his resurrection, Jesus was also proven to be fully God, right? No human has

ever risen from the dead of their own power, it is impossible for a man to do so. So, the fact that Jesus rose from the dead proves that he's not just a man – he's God.

-Second, it is also so important because it assures us that Jesus has really forgiven all of our sins. By rising from the dead, Jesus assures us that God the Father accepted his sacrifice. Because our sins are really forgiven, we can be certain that our relationship with God is really restored.

-Third, Jesus' resurrection lets us know that death has certainly been defeated.

Death is the worst result of sin, it is the chief brokenness in our world, but by dying, being dead for three days, and then coming back to live eternally, Jesus broke death. He beat it. And the Bible reassures us that Jesus has passed his victory onto us! "*Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*" (Romans 6:4) Because death is defeated, we can be certain that we'll live forever in that perfect love relationship with God.

-Finally, the resurrection is also important because God has left us with a wealth of evidence outside the Bible to prove that Jesus really did rise from the dead. Since we can prove that the resurrection of Jesus really happened, we have the assurance that the Christian faith, which hinges on the resurrection, is also true.

-Sin is the great problem of mankind – it is the problem beneath all our other problems. But, even though our sin hurts God terribly, he still loved us enough to take care of this problem even though it meant the immense suffering and death of his beloved Son. Praise God for saving us!

-The Bible explains that after Jesus rose from the dead, he spent forty more days on earth appearing to hundreds of people. After that, he rose into heaven and promised to send the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, to bring people to faith in him.

#### Faith:

-On a day that Christians call Pentecost, ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, he fulfilled his promise and did send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit first came into the closest followers of Jesus, his disciples. All of the sudden, all that Jesus had been teaching them and all that he did suddenly made sense.

-Because they're sinful people, they, like us, were unable to really understand the Good News of Jesus without the help of the Holy Spirit. That's why he's so important – he helps us to understand, he gives us faith.

-The disciples immediately went out and started telling everyone around them about Jesus. The Holy Spirit worked through what they said, and thousands of people believed on that first day. The Christian church was born! Over the next few decades, these disciples and these early believers would go around the known world and through the working of the Holy Spirit, many people believed in Jesus.

-Today, their mission is still ongoing. Jesus had told them, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:19-20). The disciples told people and those people told more people and those people told more people and today, the Good News about Jesus continues to be spread around the world. And the Holy Spirit is still working to help Christians share their faith and to bring people to faith.

-Faith – or trust – in the fact that Jesus loves us so much that he died on the cross to forgive our sins and rose from the dead to defeat death and give us eternal life is the thing that God saves us through. When we trust in what Jesus did, what he earned is applied to us. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith.*" (Ephesians 2:8)

- Faith is so important, because it's only through faith that we are saved – that we receive eternal life in heaven instead of eternal life in hell.
- The Bible defines faith as being assured or convinced of that which we hope for but do not see; in other words, faith is trusting that we really get to go to heaven because of what Jesus has done for us even though we can't see heaven right now. (Hebrews 11:1)
- The Bible explains that this trust is not something we can work up in ourselves, rather, it is a gift from God. God offers this faith to all people, but we are allowed to reject it.
- If we choose to reject God's gift of faith and to not trust God but instead choose to trust in ourselves, in some other god, or in someone or something else, then we are not saved because those things can't take away our real problem – sin.
- The Bible very clearly says that the ONLY way to get out of hell and go to heaven is through faith in Jesus Christ and what he has done. *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12)
  - Sometimes people disagree with this, but actually it makes sense. If there were any easier way for us to be saved than the Son of God dying an excruciating death, God certainly would have done that. If God would go through all of that for us, we owe him our trust and allegiance.
- If we have faith, it not only results in our eternal salvation, but it also gives us some really great things here and now. For instance, through faith we have a special ability to endure trials, peace and security no matter what we're going through, and strength and comfort always.
  - We have these things through faith because faith trusts that Jesus, who is the God of the universe, loves you to the extent that he sacrificed himself on the cross for you and that he rose from the dead. If God has that much power and loves you like that, faith understands that he's with you no matter what you're going through and that he will get you through it.
- It makes sense that we receive the benefits of what Jesus has done for us through faith...
  - First, being saved through faith enables God to maintain our free will. Just like in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, God will not force us to be saved, he will not force us to love him. So, he doesn't automatically save everyone. He offers salvation to all people through faith, but since it still requires that trust to be saved, we can reject it and him.
  - Second, being saved through faith allows us to be assured of our salvation. If it were left up to us to be good enough or create our own faith, we would always be wondering if we did enough or had enough. But since we are saved by faith that is given to us by God, we can be certain that we will be going to heaven if we simply have the trust in God that God put into us. This is a great comfort as we go through the challenges of life and as we face the reality of death.
  - Third, being saved through faith opens a relationship that we get to have with God. Just as human relationships are based on trust, so our faith in God allows us to have a relationship with him.

### The Outcome:

- When we have faith in the efficacy of Jesus' death and resurrection, the end result is eternal life in paradise, or heaven, for all who believe in what he has done.
  - For those who have faith in Jesus and die before he returns, this paradise will take two different forms.
  - For those who die first, their souls will go to heaven, which is the spiritual realm where God lives with angels and the souls of others who have died trusting in Jesus.
  - The Bible doesn't really say much about heaven, but it does call it “paradise”. (Luke 23:43)  
We are certain that it is a wonderful, incredible, beautiful place to be!
- This largely unknown, ethereal, spirit world of 'heaven' is not the end hope for Christians.

-Over and over again, the Bible explains that there will be a time when Jesus returns to earth. This is commonly known as Judgement Day. When he returns, Jesus won't come as a humble baby to die, instead he'll come to claim the victory that he won in the cross and his empty grave.

-When Jesus comes again, he'll come with great glory. Everyone all over the earth will see him and be gathered together. Also, all the dead will be raised. Everyone who has ever lived will bodily come back to life and will likewise be gathered together.

-Those who were alive will be changed and those who are raised will be different than they were previously. We'll all be ourselves, but, the bodies of those who trusted in Jesus will no longer be infected with sin and its consequences.

Additionally, Our bodies will be powerful, glorious, spiritual, and imperishable. Our bodies won't ever get tired. We will experience something the Bible calls "abundant life."

-At this time, there will be judgement. Jesus will put on his right all those who have faith in him and on his left all of those who did not have faith in him. Those who did not trust Jesus will be cast eternally into hell, the place where God is not – and subsequently where no good exists – and there they will languish in eternal punishment with the Satan and his demons. Those who do have faith will remain with Jesus.

-At this time, there will be recreation. The old sin-ruined universe will be burned up, and God will create a new heaven and a new earth. (Revelation 21:1) The Bible does give us some idea of what this new creation will be like.

-First, it will be a return to the perfect world that God had originally created. It will be untainted by sin. There will be no brokenness, no evil, and no bad of any sort. It will be perfect! (Isaiah 65:25)

-Second, it will be the place where God lives. If hell is the place where God is not and thus there is no good there, the new creation is the place where God is and thus where all the good is. The Bible says that it will have "*no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*" (Revelation 21:23) In other words, believers will bask eternally in the brilliant glory of God.

-Third, it will be that way forever – there will be no end to and no death in this New Creation.

-Additionally, there will be a giant, beautiful city there called the New Jerusalem. People from all the nations will be there. It will be utterly beautiful and glorious. We'll worship and serve God. There will be a feast. And there will be no marriage. And there will be no more pain or sadness.

-All this is the outcome for the Christian – what we receive because of what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf. Our hope is akin to what we know now – physical and tangible but without any of the defects and with the presence of the all-good God surrounding us. We will see unbelievable sites, we will hear the most beautiful music, we will taste the most delectable food, we will sniff the most sensational smells, and we will touch the most profound things. We will love all people and be loved by all people with a love that makes even the greatest lovers here appear like enemies. Every hint of glory and grandeur that we get a glimpse of here will be realized in full. Every day will be a perfect day and yet somehow the next will be better than the last, and this will go on and on forever and ever without end. It is quite impossible for us to fully comprehend the extraordinary magnitude of the constant excellence of the eternal life we shall enjoy with God in paradise. It is quite impossible for us to exaggerate the wonder of that place.

-All of this is often referred to as the Christian's "hope". By hope, we do not mean something we wish for that may or may not happen. Rather, it is a certain hope, a guaranteed hope, a promised

and assured hope. It is called a “hope” because it is something we do not yet have – now we still struggle and suffer under the brokenness of sin – but at the same time we do have it – it will certainly be ours forever.

-It is possible to speak with such certainty because receiving it is not up to us. Instead, we can have this blessed assurance because Jesus already earned it for us. The cost was already paid – “*not with perishable things such as silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ.*” (1 Peter 1:18-19) We are not yet at the show, but Jesus has already purchased our tickets and placed them in our hands.

### Relationship with God:

-Because faith is the means through which we receive this incredible paradise that Jesus has earned for us, faith is the most important thing in our lives. We spend a lot of time building our knowledge, our bank accounts, our skills, etc. but all of those things are temporary – ultimately, the joy we derive from them stops when our lives stop. But faith is different, the joy we derive from faith can be the greatest joy that we’ll experience here on earth, and it is a joy that will reach new heights and continue forever because it’s that faith that receives eternal life with God.

-So, it is of the utmost importance for us to spend time strengthening and building our faith – and that happens as we spend time with and build a relationship with God.

-Our faith is something that can grow and something that can shrink. And if our faith isn’t growing, it’s shrinking. We have three powerful enemies that are constantly trying to degrade and destroy our faith and our relationship with God – the devil, the world, and our own sinful natures. All of these things are opposed to God, and they are constantly working to pull us away from him, back into sin, and ultimately into hell.

-Ultimately, while we are powerless against these three great enemies, God is not. We cannot overcome them and come to faith or strengthen our own faith, but God is more powerful, and he promises that when we spend time with him and when we put ourselves in the places that he promises to be, he will strengthen our faith. It is of the utmost importance to remember that we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in God or come to him, but when we put ourselves in the places where God promises to be, he will strengthen our faith in him.

-In this way, our relationship with God is like our human relationships. If you spend quality time with someone and they consistently prove themselves trustworthy, your trust in them will grow and your relationship will deepen. Similarly, when we spend time with God and we experience his trustworthiness, our trust in him grows and our relationship deepens. Assuming both parties are honest, how does your trust in someone grow? Generally, it happens over time as you spend time with a person, get to know their character, and see them keep their word and promises time and time again. Likewise, our trust or faith in God also grows as we spend time with him so that we get to know his character and see him keep his promises time and time again.

-God gives us specific “places” that he promises to be in. When we spend time in these “places”, we spend time with God and get to experience his trustworthiness so that our faith grows.

-Prayer is one of these “places”. God listens to every one of our prayers. Communication is important to building any relationship – when we communicate with God, he builds our trust in him by faithfully listening and answering with what is best for us.

-When we pray, we should do so simply, humbly, continually, and in faith.

-God’s Word is another “place”. The Bible specifically says that when we listen to and read the Bible, God strengthens our faith. Just as it’s important to communicate with God to build a relationship, it’s also important to hear God communicate back to us through what he says

in the Bible. Here we consistently hear his promises and see how he has always fulfilled even the most lavish of oaths.

-Don't forget that taking in God's Word can also include listening to faithful sermons, reading solid devotions and books, and engaging in Bible studies.

-We also meet with God when we worship and fellowship with other Christians. The Bible says that when we gather in God's name, he is present. And as we experience other Christians faithfully acting like Christ, our trust in him grows, too.

-We should not worship mechanically but in spirit and truth, by giving the glory and honor to God, in an orderly fashion, with our whole hearts, and with praise and thanksgiving to God.

-Serving others is a fourth "place" to meet God. The Bible says that when we serve others, not only are we imitating God and getting to know him better in that way, but we are also actually serving God. As we serve God, we are spending time with him and our relationship with him is growing. Additionally, the biggest competitor to God in each of our lives is ourselves – when we serve others, we're taking the focus off of us and putting it on God – in other words, we're learning to trust God instead of trusting in ourselves.

-A fifth "place to spend time with God is through baptism. Baptism is a Christian sacrament that Jesus instituted and commanded us to do at the very end of his ministry. To baptize means simply to wash, but it is no ordinary washing. Instead, when the water is used to wash in conjunction with the biblical words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," God promises to be present in that baptism and give great and gracious blessings.

-In every biblical example of baptism, faith always comes first. But when one comes to faith, they are always immediately baptized. Faith and baptism go hand in hand, they are two sides of the same coin. When one has faith, they get baptized, and there is no faith if one is refusing to get baptized.

-The Bible says that in baptism, we receive many incredible gifts including: the forgiveness of sins, a unification with the death and resurrection of Jesus, eternal life, the Holy Spirit, and adoption into God's family. Obviously, baptism then is not something that man can do, but it is a miracle of God worked through the water and Word. And since God is present to bestow all of these gifts, one's faith is also being strengthened.

-The Lord's Supper is another "place" to experience God. The Lord's Supper, also known as Holy Communion, is another Christian sacrament that Jesus instituted and commanded us to do. He did this while eating the Passover meal on the night that he was betrayed by Judas.

-Like baptism, the Lord's Supper requires simple elements and the Word of God. The elements present in the Lord's Supper are bread and wine. The words that are spoken come from the Bible: "On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said: 'Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also, after supper, he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, 'Take, drink, this is my blood of the new testament which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do as often as you drink of it in remembrance of me.'"

-Like baptism, God works a great and gracious miracle through the Lord's Supper and blesses us with an incredible gift. First, we receive the forgiveness of sins. Second, the bread becomes simultaneously the body of Jesus, and the wine becomes simultaneously the blood of Jesus. This is the same body and blood of

Jesus that was given on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins and which rose from the dead three days later.

-Importantly, the Bible also explains that if we receive the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, we do it to our harm. So, it is important that one receives it after being baptized, in faith in the truth of the Scriptures and the work of Jesus, in repentance and reconciliation with others, and in belief that it is truly the body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin.

### The Results of Faith:

-Through trust, we come to have a relationship with Jesus. But trust in someone is never just a 'mental exercise' – trust or faith in someone always affects our actions. If I trust someone, I'll listen to them, and I'll follow them into situations that I might find difficult.

-Our faith in God acts the same way. This is often hard for people to understand, but when we trust in God, it changes our lives. When we trust him, we should start to listen to him. When we trust him, we should follow him wherever he leads.

-The Bible is clear that while we are not saved by our actions, our faith is demonstrated by our actions. For instance, "*Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*" (James 2:17) In other words, our faith is always accompanied by actions that prove or demonstrate the reality of our faith.

-The root of these actions that are the evidence of our faith also flows from our faith: humility. When we trust in Jesus and what he has done, we are put in our proper place – beneath him; he is God, and we are his creation. Faith leads to humility, but humility also leads to more faith. As we act as we are – beneath God – we start to obey him and live the way he desires for us to live, which will strengthen our faith.

-Here are some actions that the Bible says Christians will naturally engage in, not to be saved, but as evidence that they are trusting that God has saved them...

-First, we willingly put ourselves in the places where God will strengthen our faith. When we trust that God wants a relationship with us and that it's through that faith and relationship that we not only receive the blessing of his presence now but also the blessing of eternal life, we put ourselves in all of the places we just talked about because we'll desire to be with God and for him to strengthen our faith.

-Second, we will try to keep God's Law. Commonly, God's law is called the Ten Commandments. These laws from God teach us how God designed for us to live in his creation. The Ten Commandments are elaborated upon throughout the Bible.

-The Ten Commandments can be summarized by two commandments: Love God and love your neighbor.

-Often, we want to live contrary to God's law – there are things that he tells us not to do that we would like to do. But with faith comes a trust that God knows what's best for us even when it doesn't line up with what we want to do in the moment.

-Ultimately, keeping the Ten Commandments will bring us closer to God and strengthen our faith while breaking the Ten Commandments will lead us further away from God.

-Third, we will repent. Even when we do have faith, our faith is never perfect – therefore, we often stumble and break the Ten Commandments. But when we trust that God is merciful, we come humbly before him in repentance.

-To repent is not just to say, "I'm sorry." To repent is to feel sorrow over how you've broken God's law, turn away from it, and make an effort to stop doing it.

-True repentance is an action that is brought on only through faith and the Holy Spirit working through that faith. If we do not trust that God knows what is best nor

that he is merciful, we would have no understanding of our need to repent. But when we do trust those things, the Holy Spirit convicts us and brings us to repent. Every time we repent, we receive the forgiveness that Jesus earned for us on the cross.

-Fourth, we pick up our crosses. This means that we willingly and even joyfully endure the sufferings that come from knowing Jesus and living the Christian life. The Bible actually tells us that when we come to faith, life will get harder not easier (though it will get better). But when we trust that Jesus willingly picked up his cross and suffered on our behalf, we willingly follow him by picking up our crosses and enduring suffering on his behalf.

-Why will life get harder for us? There are several reasons, but here are a few: First, it is harder to resist the temptation to break God's law than it is to give into those temptations. Second, the world is naturally opposed to our message and worldview and will persecute us. Third, the devil may put suffering in our lives to try to pull us away from God. Fourth, because we want more people to experience the love of Jesus, we'll put ourselves in more difficult situations regarding money, stress, time, and even physical danger. Finally, God also uses suffering as a means to strengthen our faith and help us to rely on him more.

-Whenever we suffer, in faith, we always remember that Jesus suffered first – and he didn't deserve any suffering because he was sinless. In faith, we also remember that because he suffered, he earned for us an eternity free from suffering – this faith which breeds hope is how we pick up our crosses and endure the suffering.

-Fifth, we serve others. Part of keeping the Ten Commandments is loving our neighbors. Part of picking up our crosses is denying ourselves and sacrificing for the good of those around us. Again and again in the Bible, we are called to serve others with our time, talents, passions, and possessions. Once again, this is only something we can do in faith; trusting that God has radically served us and sacrificed for us through Jesus, the Holy Spirit inspires us to sacrificially serve those around us.

-As Christians, we don't serve because others deserve it. Rather, Jesus says that when we serve others, we're really serving him. In other words, we serve people because Jesus deserves it.

-As Christians, we also don't serve others because that is how we earn heaven. Jesus already earned it for us, and we could never serve enough to overcome all of our sin. Instead, we serve because we trust that Jesus has served us.

-As Christians, we do serve because by serving we are displaying Jesus to those we are serving. As we act like Jesus and sacrifice, love, and help, people see Jesus through us, and we want people to see Jesus! And, as Jesus did, we serve all people, even our enemies.

-As Christians, some ways to serve include forgiving others who have wronged us, giving money and possessions to those who are in need, giving money to support the church, and using your time and talents for the good of others.

-Sixth, we share the Gospel. The Gospel is the Good News that Jesus loves us so much that he sacrificed his life for us and rose again to earn eternal life for us. When we trust that this is true and understand that it is the best news ever and is a message that everyone needs to hear, then we tell people the message.

-When we really trust the Gospel, when we really believe that God loves us to the extent that he sacrificed his life to save us, the Gospel becomes something we can't help but share! Faith – trusting in what Jesus has done – brings us to tell people about what Jesus has done.

-The Bible says that the Holy Spirit will help us to share this message.

-Seventh, we love everyone. In a way, this summarizes this entire section – for as we love people, we engage in all of these evidences of our faith. To love someone is to do what’s best for them even when it’s hard. Loving includes treating people with respect, kindness, and gentleness. We don’t shy away from the truth, but we always speak it in love.

-May the Glory be to God! Amen.