

STUDY GUIDE

# THE WORD.



**THE WORD.**



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# Tips for

# THE LEADER

This material is a study guide prepared for Geração 148 and any other projects that require a curriculum to serve as a reference for Bible studies in youth groups.

## Geração 148

### WHAT IS IT?

Geração 148 is a project formed by Seventh-day Adventist young people who are willing to create a generation of committed, involved, and ready-to-face challenges Christians. They are young people who seek to live their Christian walk for one reason only: the Glory of God, and thus reflect the character of the Creator, testify to His plan of salvation, and live the fullness of this calling.

### VISION:

To revive this generation through intimate relationship with Christ and His Word, resulting in a lively and relevant community in the mission of signaling the arrival of the Kingdom of God with creativity and diversity of ideas.

### NAME:

Based on the passage of Romans 14:8: "For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." The project aims to establish a real and meaningful Christian identity in the lives of young people.

### MEETING:

It is the moment when the members of a Geração 148 FOUNDATION are gathered. The meeting should be joyful, motivating, and spiritual.

### CHALLENGE:

It is a different, unusual, and challenging activity done by the FOUNDATION. This action can be weekly, biweekly, or monthly. We will only reflect the glory of God when we reach out to those who are in the midst of the bitterness of life.

### FOUNDATION:

It is the name given to the meeting place of Geração 148 members. It is the FOUNDATION from where all actions are coordinated. The address should be disclosed to the young people in the church and to the non-baptized friends. This place should preferably be the house of one of the participants and should be a fixed location for at least the study SEASON. It is not forbidden to have the FOUNDATION in the church, but we understand that another location will provide a more informal environment.

### SEASON:

Geração 148 will have two study seasons per year, one in the first semester and another in the second. It will start and end, later resuming in the next season. Those involved need to commit to participate throughout the season. MEETINGS during the end of the seasons are not prohibited, but this period of rest and reorganization of the FOUNDATION is important.

# How to have A FOUNDATION

- a) **Prayer:** Prayer will give you the conviction that God has called you to lead and care for each guest, no matter who they are. This is the only way to overcome any difficulties that may arise during the weeks. If there is a disagreement with someone, forgive or encourage forgiveness. Does someone want to give up? Talk to them to understand the issue. Did they still quit? Let them go and invite them again next season. This is a people-oriented job, and you will get to know the qualities and flaws of both leaders and guests. Above all, the certainty of God's calling for this work will help you overcome the difficulties.
- b) **Planning:** The leader (or leaders) should dedicate time to think through all the steps so that everything is done intentionally, and each moment fits within the process. Meetings should also be planned to make them special and organized.
- c) **Commitment:** The foundation will never be stronger than the leader, so commit completely. You are responsible for the guests, and in the future, they will look up to you and reflect on who you were and what they learned from you during the meetings (and outside of them too). Very important: before passing on the topic, prepare and pray about it; don't leave it to the last minute. Be the best instrument of God you can be!
- d) **Guest list:** Check how many confirmed guests each leader has to avoid one group becoming too large. Start with a maximum of 25 people.
- e) **Promotion:** Talk to each guest about the meeting and say that you are praying for them. Mention that God has put in your heart the desire to invite them and share what this experience has done in your life. It is essential to emphasize that there will be only 13 meetings, as it is much easier to plan. Finally, let them know that you will soon send more information about the time and location.
- f) **Invitation event:** Decide where, when, and how to hold the invitation event. But remember: organized does not mean stiff - there is no need for formalities. People need to feel welcomed and valued so that they can relate to others and also feel the desire to participate in other meetings.
- g) **Relationship:** This is the main goal. Do your best to bring the guests closer together as it will be very important for the immersion of young people in the group, and it is leadership that sets the tone in this regard.
- h) **Resilience:** Know that it will be a great challenge that can only be overcome with the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. If something doesn't go exactly as you would like, remember that God is guiding the whole process. However, if you realize that as a leader or as a group, you need to rethink something, do it! Always with a lot of patience and prayer.
- i) **Dropouts:** Invite 30 people expecting 25, 25 expecting 20, and 20 expecting 15. If there are dropouts, remember that you are praying, doing your part, and that God is in control. Only the guests that God wants to work with at this moment will remain until the end of the cycle. There is a time for everything, and it may be that a guest you wanted to participate in this season will be shaped in a future season. Understand each one's time and focus on the guests who are participating now, regardless of the number.

## INVITATION EVENT:

The first meeting can also be called an invitation event, because during this occasion everything will be explained and the leaders will have a clear idea of who will commit to the next meetings.

### Important:

- a) When people arrive, the snack should already be served. Something like a wall mural with photos of the guests can be made.
- b) Pairs should be randomly formed for a brief conversation. Then, they should serve each other the snack.
- c) After the snack, everyone forms a circle and each person introduces themselves for about 5 minutes with as much information as possible, such as name, age, work, family, and past.
- d) Moment of prayer.
- e) Introduce the first topic.

## WHO IS PART OF THE FOUNDATION?

- a) Church youth: the first audience should consist of the youth from the local church or district. The leader should invite all the youth who attend the church to be present at the meetings.
- b) Estranged youth: the leader should have a list of youth between 17 and 30 years old from the church and/or district. Those who are not attending should be contacted and invited. Often, these youth have drifted away due to a lack of friendship or feeling like they do not belong to any of the church groups. When they are invited, the flame of the gospel may be ignited in many of them.
- c) Youth interested in the church: find out from the youth and the Personal Ministry leader of your church if there is any youth receiving studies. This audience should feel included, accepted, and loved.
- d) Guest: the challenge is for each youth from the previous groups to bring at least one guest with them. It can be a friend from work or college, for example, who does not attend the church but may be interested in a group of youth seeking to strengthen their spirituality.

## LOCATION:

The location for the meetings should preferably be at the home of a youth who will be known as the host. The house should be as central as possible for the participants and easily accessible. The leaders need to arrive a little earlier to help set up chairs and utensils for the snack and, after the meeting, they should leave the house organized with the dishes washed and chairs arranged, so as not to create more work for the host. The host is essential because every week they open their home to people who are initially outside their social circle. They do not gain anything from this, they just make their home available. They are a blessing and need to be valued and loved.

## KNOW THE TOPIC:

I imagine that we shouldn't even touch on this subject, as the term LEADER already evokes a sense of responsibility and commitment. But it's worth remembering that the leader, or whoever will pass on the lesson, should know



the subject in advance, as well as have researched and delved into the topic. The idea is to bless the participants with as much knowledge as possible, but always remembering that by studying and teaching, the leader will undoubtedly be the most blessed by having evolved in knowledge. It is very important that the person responsible for passing on the topic follows the study guide, listens to the podcast, and studies complementary materials.

## **SNACK GROUP:**

It is important to prepare the snack since the first meeting. In the first two meetings, the leaders can divide themselves to be responsible for the food. From the second meeting on, they can form groups to take turns in this activity and not burden anyone financially. It is essential that the snack time is a time for conversation and interaction, enabling the participants to get to know each other better. The menu doesn't have to be fancy or expensive, but it can be creative. It is important to have a leader in each group to supervise and organize everything necessary. The snack group has two main objectives: (1) to organize everyone to collaborate with the food; (2) to go out at least once a month for some extra activity, such as going to a fast-food restaurant or the park.

## **WHATSAPP GROUP:**

A WhatsApp group should be created to communicate interests and topics related to the base and the meetings and also to send support materials such as podcasts and videos. It is important that the purpose of this group is clear from the first meeting so that the focus is not dispersed.

## **PRAYER TRIOS:**

One of the main objectives of this program is to create interaction and affinity among the participants. Therefore, weekly prayer trios can be formed, which, at a defined time of day, will pray for each other. In addition, the trios can also meet outside the group environment to chat.

## **PROGRAM PROPOSAL:**

- **Snack (10 minutes):** serve according to the size of the group. Simplicity is important;
  - **Fellowship (5 minutes - can be with the snack):** chat about the week and about difficulties and victories. High point and low point. Show interest and manage time;
  - **Prayer (15 minutes):** promote the relationship between people: in pairs, trios, or groups. Always choose a person to be the center of prayers.
  - **Recap (10 minutes):** remember the week's activities and exchange experiences;
  - **Announcements (5 minutes):** announcements about the week, meetings, and events.
  - **Theme and discussion (40 minutes):** Present the theme and questions. Allow people to speak more than you. Also, give your opinion, but focus your comments on the conclusion. You are the mediator.
  - **Final prayer (5 minutes):** ask someone to pray and include requests related to the theme of the night.
- a) **High point and low point:** This is a very important moment as it allows the group to get closer. It can be done in different ways: in pairs, trios,

and with the whole group, depending on the size. If considered, this can be the key point for hospitality, relationships, and intimacy to be real in the group.

- b) **Challenges:** They are a practical opportunity to exercise what is being learned. The experiences lived throughout the cycle are very significant, but notice if the challenges are being executed, because if the group is not motivated, they can be a tool contrary to the process, becoming a point of demotivation.
- c) **Theme:** it should not be a sermon! It is not the goal for only one person to speak all the time. Seek to dynamize and involve people in the theme. Use current examples and bring the theme to your context. For all of this to be possible, the theme needs to be prepared in advance.

### OUTINGS:

- a) The tendency for everyone is always the comfort zone, and when you ask the group to go out together, besides the weekly meeting, they probably won't budge because they're not in the habit. So take action, motivate, invite, and lead by example. Invite one, two, or three young people to go out with you and/or organize lunches together, picnics in the park, shopping trips, bowling games, after-work chats, sunsets at your house, church activities, visits to elderly or children's homes, baby showers, hiking, beach trips, game nights, or pizza parties. The important thing is to create opportunities to get closer to them and bring them closer to each other. All meeting activities are for young people to get to know each other, become like a family, and create a safe environment.
- b) At each meeting, ask which group has already done the "outing" and who hasn't been able to yet; mixing with other groups and going out with other people is essential, depending on the day and time that works for everyone. Insist that "outings" outside of meetings happen.
- c) Explain that these "outings" are very important and essential for building relationships. Encourage each participant to share the story of their life when they go out, reminding them that they are in a safe environment. You can be the first to share your story, setting an example for the others. After each "outing," a selfie from the meeting can be sent to the Whats group to motivate others.

*How to have a foundation*

# FAITH & TRUTH

*Have you ever realized the amount of strangers that cross your life every day and how much you trust them? For example, you trust that the bus driver taking you to work is capable of driving. You choose a restaurant for a date with your girlfriend based on the reviews of strangers.*



In a situation where you urgently need to get your nails done, you trust a person you've never seen before to handle your hands with sharp instruments. You trust your dentist, your doctor, kitchens you've never entered before, or the products and services of large corporations whose processes are not visible to you.

Thinking in this way, faith is a part of our daily lives. Faith is not an element of religion. Faith is a component of life. After all, we have evidence, not guarantees. We have experiences that speak of the past but do not tell the whole future story.

## **We live by trusting. We live with faith.**

Faith makes us assume that there is truth in those in whom we believe. Of course, we are disappointed many times! We believe something to be true that turns out to be false, but we keep wanting to believe because we need to move towards the truth. Therefore, it is possible to say that if there is still faith, it indicates that there is still truth. And if there is truth to be discovered, we need faith to approach it. In light of this, some questions arise:

Have you ever realized the amount of strangers that cross your life every day and how much you trust them? For example, you trust that the bus driver taking you to work is capable of driving. You choose a restaurant for a date with your girlfriend based on the reviews of strangers.

- Is it possible that I am sincerely believing in something false?
- How do I know if a source of truth is reliable?
- What evidence do I need before placing my faith in a truth?

Let's seek these and other answers!

# CURIOSITY

*The term "post-truth" (which suggests that objective facts may not have as much value in shaping public opinion) was chosen as the word of the year in 2016. According to studies, when a person believes in something, the brain reacts differently.*

"All truth is God's truth."

*Augustine*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Read and discuss:

- a. Faith is a feeling that only relates to religious life;
- b. Sincere faith can turn a lie into truth;
- c. Faith does not have all the evidence, but is based on rational evidence;
- d. We can live well only with relative truths.

### 2. True or false:

- Faith is contrary to reason;
- Faith is the certainty that things we only hope for will happen;
- Faith and positive thinking are the same thing;
- Truth is relative; therefore, what is true for an individual in a certain context may not be true for another.

### 3. Does truth exist? Read John 8:32 and hear everyone's opinion.

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#### 4. Read Hebrews 11:6 and discuss:

a. In your opinion, what is the greatest evidence that God exists?

#### 5. How to develop faith? Read Romans 10:17.

#### 6. Personal answer: We are used to thinking of truth as an abstract concept. What does it mean to you to think that Jesus presents Himself as the TRUTH?

### EXPLANATORY TEXT:

During modernity, knowledge of the truth was related to what could be perceived by reason and confirmed by science. However, now we live in times of post-truth (a term used to describe the current tendency to take as true that which evokes my feelings and impressions, without needing any kind of proof).

In biblical thought, truth is associated with God. He is the source of truth, from Him comes the truth, which is why Jesus Himself describes Himself as "the Truth" (John 14:6). Thus, a relationship with God is a relationship with the truth. In this relationship, there is the opportunity to discover the truth about origin, identity, purpose, and destiny. Considering the existence of a source of truth is reasonable, as is considering the existence of an absolute truth from which all truths come. In biblical thought, we relate truth to a person, who is God.

By going in His direction, we are going in the direction of truth. Whenever we find the truth, we are finding a little bit of Him.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus affirms that the Spirit would guide people to know the truth (John 16:13). You may ask the following question: "But can His existence be prov-

en?" Similarly, His non-existence cannot be proven either, but when we think about the origin of life, we will always be grappling with the need for faith. Rejecting God as Truth requires faith. Depositing faith in the biblical God is not absurd. You will see this in the next studies.

What is this faith that I need? The author of the book of Hebrews affirms that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). This faith that applies to so many areas of our lives is necessary when we think about admitting that God is the ultimate expression of truth. This faith is not only to believe that He exists, but it will be necessary to feed a relationship and trust that the search for Him will be rewarded, as Hebrews 11:6 teaches us.

This faith needs to be nurtured and grown so that when in contact with new truths, they can be distinguished and accepted. Paul, a biblical author, affirms that faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Where is this Word? This is the question we will address in the next study.

Given the information presented, what decision can you make to help you discover the truth more and increase your faith?



*My decision*

### **Call to action:**

Since faith is necessary for all areas of our lives, how about feeding the faith of a friend who is feeling discouraged?! You may know someone who is struggling against the odds and needs to be motivated. Send them an encouraging message and encourage them not to lose faith.

## STUDY 2

# BIBLE & REVELATION

*Basically, the world is divided between people who admit the existence of the divine and those who reject this possibility. If you reject it, you will need faith and also recognize the limitations of the material world to explain everything about itself.*



In the case of admitting the existence of a divine being, we have two options: either He/he is a thinking being or just a collection of energy that randomly emanates its force. If you choose the second hypothesis, you will need to admit that we have only chance as the reason for the origin and purpose of existence, thus, there is no purpose in existence (irony).

But by admitting that it is a thinking being, two new options appear: He or They are a divine being who wants to be known and reveals himself or only exists distant and indifferent to other beings. By choosing this being that only exists and does not reveal itself, we begin to question if it actually exists, because where would our belief in its existence come from?

Understanding that there is a divine, thinking being who reveals himself, we have two possibilities. Does this being have a primary source of revelation capable of presenting itself and helping us validate or invalidate other forms of revelation? Or does it reveal itself equally to everyone and through all the paths mentioned by various religions? If it reveals itself everywhere, we have a divine being somewhere, revealing itself and laughing at us, because it has revealed itself with truths that mutually exclude each other, after all, it is not possible for Jews and Muslims to both be fully correct.

Thinking this way, it is reasonable to believe that there is a primary source of revelation. Is it still possible to affirm that there is revelation of God in all religions?

## **What would be this primary source of divine revelation?**

How to know where God is revealing himself and where it is just humans with their interpretations? Is there any reason to allow the Bible to be understood as a source of Revelation from the Eternal? Let's try to find these answers, or just new questions.

# CURIOSITY

*The Bible is actually a library with 66 books divided into two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament (BC and AD respectively), written by about 40 different people who lived within a period of approximately 1,500 years. The Bible was originally written in three languages: Hebrew for the Old Testament, Greek for the New Testament, and some portions in Aramaic.*

“When it comes to knowing God, all initiative depends on Him. If He doesn’t want to reveal **Himself, nothing we do will allow us to find Him.**”

*C. S. Lewis*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Read and discuss:

- a. The revelation of God is not the property of a single religion.
- b. Every place where there is a revelation of God should be taken as completely true.
- c. The Bible is a book written by a single person who received a special revelation from God.
- d. To affirm that it is possible to have a personal relationship with God means that He is personalized; therefore, the truth revealed to me may be different from the truth revealed to another person.

### 2. Read and discuss - True or False:

- God reveals Himself only through the Bible.
- Nature is one of the ways God reveals Himself.
- The existence of a moral conscience in different civilizations is another sign of God’s revelation.
- The Bible exhausts all divine revelation. Through it, we can know God completely.



### 3. How did Jesus consider the Bible? John 17:17.

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### 4. Which part of the Bible is inspired? II Timothy 3:16.

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### 5. What benefit does the Bible student receive? John 5:39.

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### 6. Personal answer: Why do you think there is so much disinterest among people in studying the Bible? For you, is knowing the Bible a desire or more of a necessity?

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## EXPLANATORY TEXT:

When writing a letter to the Romans, Paul introduced the idea that God reveals Himself through created things (Romans 1:20). The organization of the natural world, the precision of living organisms, the diversity of species, the repeating cycles, and the complexity present in nature indicate the existence of an organizing mind with the power to create and sustain. In this way, the existence of God, even if someone does not give Him that name, can be perceived through observation of these factors. However, this is a limited revelation because it is not possible to know God's character, His plans and intentions for human beings, or even why we are in a world that deteriorates and is affected by bad things.

God reveals Himself through His Word. Paul stated that the Word was **INSPIRED** by God (II Timothy 3:16), and a more precise translation of the Greek text could be "breathed out by God." Peter reinforces this idea when he states that none of the biblical writings, which he calls prophecy, were given by the will of human authors (II Peter 1:20-21), but these men spoke moved by the Holy Spirit. Thus, God revealed Himself to these men and women so that they could deliver a message about Him. The Bible does not exhaust everything about God; Moses says that there are things about God that have been revealed and others that will remain hidden (Deuteronomy 29:29), so we have access to the available and necessary revelation.

God presents Himself and presents how we can live. In the same verse where Paul talks about the Word being "breathed out by God," he indicates that it is useful for teaching in righteousness. Jesus, in conversations with religious leaders, presents another important piece of information about the Bible (John 5:39), which He calls Scriptures. Jesus affirms that religious leaders studied the Word because they understood that it contained a path to eternal life. He does not refute this assertion; rather, He presents that these Scriptures speak about Himself, making it clear that through the Bible, we can know Jesus, and by knowing Him, we can enjoy eternal life.

John, one of Jesus' apostles and author of the book of Revelation, affirms that there is a special blessing that produces happiness for those who read, hear, and keep the Words that come from God. Although the Bible is an ancient book, it has never ceased to be a transformative element. There is no sacred book in the whole world whose relevance has survived the test of time as well as the Bible.

God has revealed Himself. Part of His special revelation is in the Bible. By knowing the Bible, we are growing in knowledge of Him. In other words, the Bible was given to nourish our relationship with Him. How to live in this relationship will be the topic of the next study.

After thinking a little more about God's Revelation through the Bible, what do you understand you can do in your daily life to increase your contact with the Bible?



*My decision*

### **Call to action:**

How about receiving some practical tips for life in the next few days? In the Bible, there is the book of James, which is a letter divided into five chapters. The challenge is to read one of these chapters per day and share with someone (or on your social media) a passage that catches your attention the most. Let's do it?!

## STUDY 3

# RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND PRAYER



*We have never been so connected. We have never been so close and so accessible. It even seems like we are more accessible than we would like to be. We can be contacted almost 24 hours a day, we can be found in the most distant places, and our opinion can be requested at any time.*

If someone sees you online, they will understand that you can chat. If someone looks at the direct messages on Instagram and sees a green dot under your photo, they will understand that it's a good time for an instant response. There have been many revolutions in interpersonal communication. As a result, we are experiencing a revolution in the way we meet people, make and maintain friendships, relate to our families, have our arguments, and live our relationships up close and from afar.

There is no relationship without communication, and when communication changes, the relationship changes. We cannot even divide relationships into personal and virtual anymore because almost all personal relationships we have use virtual environments for their maintenance.

Amidst so many changes, what has not changed is our need for relationships. Today we have more ways to communicate, but of course, every instrument that enables communication also limits it. All our communication possibilities put communication at its limit - we can communicate only as much as our resources allow.

When we think of the transcendent, the divine, we have a relationship of a different nature because it relies on different tools. God does not need our communication tools to be accessed, He is not limited by our resources.

## **He can be accessed from anywhere and by anyone.**

The message doesn't even have to be entirely clear because He is capable of decoding the deepest intentions of the heart. Since it's so easy to get in touch with the divine, and so simple, how can we enjoy this contact? By which paths can we nourish a relationship with God?

# CURIOSITY

*An estimate indicates that in the world's major monotheistic religions, 8.4 billion prayers are made daily.*

"Prayer is opening the heart to God as to a friend."

*Ellen G. White*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Based on **Philippians 4:6-7**, discuss the following statements:

- a. Those who pray do not suffer from anxiety;
- b. Our prayers are composed only of requests for what we want God to do;
- c. We should be careful about what we pray for because there are some topics that should not be brought up in prayer;
- d. The habit of talking to God through prayer can help us deal with anxiety.

### 2. True or false:

- Prayer is a tool for emergencies (Ephesians 6:18);
- Prayer needs to be a repetition of memorized words to be effective (Matthew 6:7);
- Public prayer is more effective than private prayer (Matthew 6:5-6);
- God hears prayers made in secret (Matthew 6:6).

### 3. Read **Matthew 6:9-13** and discuss the most important points of this prayer.

Complete:

Pray without \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

a. wanting    b. ceasing    c. being able    d. fear

### 4. Personal Response: What benefits have you experienced from pray-

## ing? Or how do you feel when you know someone has prayed for you?

### EXPLANATORY TEXT:

The word "religion" presupposes the possibility of connection and relationship. All religions have as their basic proposal the access of humans to the transcendent. It is observable that many of them end up emphasizing more the conditions for living the relationship than the relationship itself. They take a long time to establish rules, times, forms, and places to access the divine than in the privilege of this contact.

The Bible indicates that God has always been interested in being in contact with humanity. We see in the book of Exodus that He proposes the construction of a space to represent didactically this interest in relationship. God shows His willingness to dwell in the midst of the people and His willingness to communicate and listen. When we look at the book of Psalms, which is a collection of songs, we see that some of them resemble prayers. Psalms 5, 25, 65, 130, and 139 are examples of some prayers to start the day, to ask for God's presence, His protection, or just to show gratitude.

Prayer is not a means of providing information to God. According to the Bible, He knows all things (Psalm 139:1-6), so there is nothing new to be communicated to Him through prayer. So why pray? In chapter 5 of the Gospel of John, Jesus meets a paralyzed man by a pool. There was a superstition that said that when the waters of the pool were stirred, the first sick person to fall into the waters would be healed. This man, like so many other sick people, was by the pool waiting for the moment. Jesus approaches him and asks if he wants to be healed; the

question seems out of place, after all, a man in that condition, in that place, obviously would like to be healed, but he responds by talking about his limitations. Here lies an important principle related to prayer. When we pray, we do not inform God about something new, but we recognize our limitations, and thus, stripped of our self-sufficiency, we experience our dependence on Him. For this reason, prayer needs to be made with faith (James 1:6).

In addition to faith, Jesus presents the personal character of prayer. He affirms that significant moments of prayer can be lived in the room, "in secret," in moments between the one who prays and the God who listens (Matthew 6:6). He not only talks about it, but we see Him repeatedly living this experience of going out alone to pray (Luke 5:16).

Prayer is also a resource for us to connect with each other. When we pray, we are led to consider the needs of other people, to empathize with the suffering of the sick, the needy, those who are distressed (James 5:16).

This idea of prayer, making us see the bigger picture of circumstances, is clear in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) - which has always been given by Christ as a model prayer, not as a prayer to be memorized and simply repeated. The whole prayer involves collective requests for supply, forgiveness, and deliverance; in this way, praying for each other is a way to deal with our selfishness and reflect on the fact that we can be an answer to someone's prayer.w

After learning more about prayer, how can you make it a routine in your daily experience?



*My decision*

### **Call to action:**

Look for a friend who you know is dealing with a personal challenge, listen to their conflicts, and ask to pray for them. Pray systematically for this friend. Reinforce, from time to time, that you have been talking to God about them.

# COMMUNITY LIFE

*"No man is an island." Whoever said that has never ridden public transportation in a big city, where people are close together, sharing the same space, going to similar destinations, yet completely immersed in their own world.*



The person who made that statement did not imagine that in a time of such proximity, loneliness would be one of the main maladies of our society. No man is an island, but more and more we are challenging this idea and building barriers, while destroying or ignoring the existence of bridges. The promises of closeness and the extinction of borders lied to us. Connectivity, access, interaction, effective communication were promised, but all of it is delivered superficially. Thus, we are connected but not united; we have access but no affection; we interact but without empathy; we communicate instantly but without depth; we are a crowd of people who are close yet lonely.

The fear of being just another in the crowd made us become more alone; the fear of getting lost in the masses made us lose ourselves. Individualism went to our heads; we began to take care of ourselves, our dreams, our careers, our own happiness so much that we started to think that it would be possible to live all of it alone; and in a way, it is possible. It is necessary that we can be autonomous, but we do not need to be self-sufficient; we can be responsible for our reactions while also taking care of each other.

Our individuality can be strengthened if the collective is healthy. Perhaps it is time to rediscover the pleasure of living and becoming stronger in the community. We need to reconnect with each other and listen to each other's pains and fears; sincerely care about their needs; and thus transform the environments where we live, giving the lonely a way to live in a family.

## Where to start?

How to deal with the challenges of living in a community with people different from us? What are the boundaries between individual and collective? Let's think about this together!

# CURIOSITY

*One in four people often feel lonely. In the case of people between 16 and 24 years old, this number rises to one in three.*

*“What is best in man only blossoms when he is involved in a community.”*

*Albert Einstein*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Read Romans 12:9-21 and find the incorrect alternative:

- a. It is part of community life to seek the honor of others before one's own honor;
- b. Hospitality should be a hallmark of community life;
- c. If someone does something wrong, it is fair that they receive something bad in return;
- d. Seeking peace with everyone is a difficult goal, but it should be pursued.

### 2. True or false:

- Community life works best when we all become the same (Romans 12:4-5);
- Jesus' disciples would be recognized by the causes they support (John 13:35);
- Community life is possible among the different (Galatians 3:28-29);
- For Christ, it does not matter how many people are gathered, as long as it is in His name (Matthew 18:20).

### 3. What kind of involvement should I have with my neighbor? Galatians 6:2.

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#### 4. Complete based on Psalm 133:

It is good and pleasant for brothers to live in \_\_\_\_\_  
a. healthy competition b. church c. houses d. Unity

#### 5. Personal response: What is your personal challenge when you think about sharing life with other people in a community?

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### TEXT EXPLANATION:

God made us to live in relationships, to be beings who share our experiences with our peers. We grow in likeness to Him through relationships. In the Old Testament, we see God relating to a people all the time. He calls Abraham to be the father of this nation, of this community that He would start. We can see God preserving this people, who after being subdued by Egyptian domination, were then liberated. During the journey of this community through the desert, through Moses, God gave clear indications of how they should live, how they should share space, how work relationships and those who might commit errors against each other should be. Thus, God was guiding how they should live in community, since this people's notion of individuality and collectivity had been corrupted by centuries as slaves.

We notice throughout history that God advises His people to take care of each other, provide support for widows and orphans, care for foreigners who approached want-

ing to be part of the community, and always think of the best way to relate to each other.

In the New Testament, guidance on life in community continues. We notice that the first Christians shared life with each other, including food (Acts 2:46 and 47). We perceive the numerous advice of Paul and other authors about important care in relationships, such as: seeking to be humble (Philippians 2:3), helping fellow travelers to carry their burdens (Galatians 6:2), confessing errors sincerely (1 John 1:9), being careful with words that can hurt or denigrate someone (James 3:1-12), and praying for each other (James 5:16).

Today, we can see many people gathering in temples to experience moments of worship, and this is also part of life in community, but sharing the same building during a worship moment does not make us a Church. Church is life in community. A community of people who have accepted Christ and live their relationships, guided by what the Word of God says.

When you think about your experiences and skills, how do you understand that you could benefit people on their spiritual journey?



*My decision*

**Call to action:**

Invite a friend or friends for a meal and offer them the possibility to talk about their personal struggles and share yours. Then, make a commitment to help and pray for each other.

# CREATION AND SABBATH

*Where do we come from? Perhaps this is one of the most important questions in life and one with the greatest variety of answers. Each civilization has thought about it and developed its own myth of origin. These myths have been adapted and given new versions, some have been forgotten, and then Science arrived offering its version of the origin.*



Follow my reasoning on this. When we think about origin, there are, in essence, two ways to conceive of the beginning. Either things arose from a creative mind that imagined and gave rise to everything, or what we know emerged from chance – one day (when there was not even a day) there was nothing, and the next moment something emerged.

In the second case, it would be more or less like imagining that a room was closed with some pieces of wood, fabric, and some insects inside it. This room would be opened two hundred years later, and inside there would be the same things and a sofa, assembled during all those years. The idea of life arising by chance is more or less like this, with the exception that there would be no raw materials or workers initially. The first case, in which an organized mind gives rise to life and its order, has to do with something we know; in which something complex only comes into existence by the action of a more complex mind than it.

In both cases, we need faith – the one we talked about in the first study, do you remember? Even though there is evidence that points to one side or the other, we do not have anything that can be taken as proof; therefore, the answer about the “origin” is ultimately a matter of faith.

Contrary to what we usually hear, believing in an organizing mind is not absurd. We have rational elements on which to rely. Thus, the invitation is not to blind, ignorant faith. It is not the experience of believing in something distant, irrational. On the contrary, it is to believe that we were created by a higher Being, with a much more complex mind than all the complexity created by Him, who created devices for life and for the reproduction of life. It is something feasible. Feasible enough that it is worth knowing.

**Perhaps you should open yourself up to know the biblical account of creation.**

# CURIOSITY

*Almost all cultures have a creation myth. The Tupi-Guarani creation myth, one of the ancestral Brazilian peoples, tells of a deity that became a hawk and through its song created all things.*

**"The more I study nature, the more I am amazed at the Creator's work."**

*Louis Pasteur*

## QUESTIONS

### **1. Based on the reading of Genesis 1, what can we NOT affirm:**

- a. God created all things only with the power of His word, except for human beings;
- b. The days of creation are actually long periods of time, and not literal days;
- c. The Sabbath, as a day of rest, is indicated from the beginning of everything;
- d. Human beings were created with God as their reference.

### **2. True or false:**

- To look at the organization of natural things is to be awakened to the fact that there must be an organizing mind behind everything (Romans 1:20);
- The presence of the expression "let us make man" may be an indication that the deity is composed of more than one person (Genesis 1:26);
- God created woman to serve man, as she was created as inferior (Genesis 2:18);
- The fact that God is the Creator makes Him worthy of worship (Psalms 95:6).

### **3. What was God's last creation in the week of creation? Genesis 2:2-3.**

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**4. On what day did Jesus usually go to the Synagogue? Luke 4:16,31.**

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**5. After Jesus' death, did Sunday become the new day of worship? Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 17:2; 18:4.**

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**6. Personal Response: We are used to thinking of truth as an abstract concept. What does it mean to you to think that Jesus presents himself as the TRUTH?**

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## EXPLANATORY TEXT:

Within biblical thought, there is no room to think of anything other than God as the originator of life. Not only in the reading of the initial chapters of Genesis, but in many other biblical passages, there is the certainty that God created all things (Psalms 139:13-14; Hebrews 3:4; Jeremiah 32:17).

Looking at the initial account of creation, we can highlight some important points: (1) God made everything only by the power of His Word. He called the elements into existence and movement, and thus they emerged. Only human beings were made differently: God made man with His hands; He molded and breathed the breath of life, making him a living being (Genesis 2:7); (2) God used a period of 6 literal days to create. There is no indication or biblical basis that the days are a symbol of many years, and there is no reason to suggest that God would need to do so (Genesis 1:31); (3) God placed man to dominate; however, this dominion of human beings over created things should be in the sense of care. The idea of domination as exploitation did not even exist. God puts human beings to be those who cultivate and care for created

things, and this duty has not changed. God still expects this attitude from human beings (Genesis 1:26-28); (4) Upon completing the work of Creation, God established the Sabbath as a day of rest. He understood that it would be necessary for man to stop and reposition his priorities in time, once a week (Genesis 2:2-3). Speaking of the week, it is interesting to note that we have no movement of the stars that can be related to the weekly cycle; unlike days, months, and years, which we can refer to astronomical movements. The weekly cycle as we know it cannot be justified by any of these movements, nor does it fit perfectly into the other periods of time. The justification we have for the seven-day weekly cycle is the biblical account of creation. Thinking of God as the originator of everything brings us answers to the central questions of existence: Where do we come from? From Him. Who are we? His children. Why are we here? To care for created things, to relate to each other as equals, and to grow in likeness to Him. Where are we going? To Him (that is the subject of another study).

What should be your attitude towards people and nature now that you know that everything was made by God and belongs to Him (Psalm 24:1)?



*My decision*

**Call to action:**

Next Sabbath, take some time and invite some friends to quiet down the noise of the city and the use of technology and spend some time in nature.

# LIFESTYLE

*Do you remember that TV show that advertised to present something little-known, with the proposal to answer “how they live, what they eat, where they live?” Sometimes, they tried to understand isolated groups of the world, ethnicities with their peculiarities, and even some animal species. The quest was to understand how those who live, live.*



Living is not an option. Existence was imposed upon us; we were born without being consulted. We did not choose our family, nor even the city of origin. We did not choose the color of our skin, hair, or eyes, nor were we consulted about the name we would like to receive at birth. Some things, we simply accept, adapt to, and, in some cases, even modify these impositions; but we have many other choices to make.

We can choose a way of life, a way of living. We can choose how we will relate to the world around us, how we will deal with people near and far, how we will take care of our health, what kind of impact we will have on the environment where we are inserted, which values will guide our businesses and careers. We can choose whether we will have a family and on what principles it will be based, how we will educate our children, how we will see our marriage and the crises it will go through. All of this is a matter of choice. We were not free to choose to exist, but we are free to choose how to exist.

From the moment we realize that we are the results of God's plan and that He created us, we can open ourselves to know how this God wants us to live. It's like the manufacturer knowing the best use of what he made, you know?! God, the Creator, made us free to decide our lifestyle, but so that we don't feel lost amidst so many possibilities, He guides us on how to live. What values did God leave to guide our way of life? On which principles can we build our way of living? These are our questions for today.

# CURIOSITY

*The eight richest men in the world have the equivalent wealth of the 3.6 billion poorest people in the world.*

“Your actions speak so loudly, I can’t hear what you’re saying.”

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## QUESTIONS

### **1. Read the story recorded in Luke 18:18-30 and see which of these statements**

**best** defines the lessons we can draw from this encounter between Jesus and the rich young ruler:

- a. Jesus is against wealth and to follow Him one must be poor;
- b. The Kingdom of Heaven is closed to a person who has many possessions;
- c. What Jesus asked of the rich young ruler was unfair;
- d. Jesus’ request indicates that nothing should be more important in our life than Jesus himself.

### **2. After reading 2 Corinthians 9:11-15, state which of the statements are true and which are false:**

- When we accumulate wealth, we need to understand that this achievement is ours by merit and we should use our resources for our own satisfaction;
- When we share our wealth, we bless other people who can then be thankful to God;
- When we confess our faith in the gospel, this, in addition to being demonstrated by words, must be followed by our generosity;
- Our generosity is part of our recognition that what we have comes from God.



### 3. Based on Matthew 7:12, discuss:

- a. What are the things I most hope others will do for me?
- b. What are the feelings I value the most?
- c. What attitudes do I need to change in my relationship with other people?

### 4. Complete:

Let your \_\_\_\_\_ be known to everyone (Philippians 4:5).

- a. Intensity b. Good works c. Moderation d. Fame

### 5. Personal answer: While on Earth, Jesus sought a simple life of constant generosity. What is missing for more people to adopt this lifestyle?

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## EXPLANATORY TEXT:

Jesus, while on Earth, stood out for many things. His miracles caught people's attention, His speeches and teachings gathered crowds. Furthermore, He and His followers, later on, would have the same impact, as they caught people's attention by the way they lived. Christ's lifestyle was marked by the understanding of the Kingdom of God, which indicates that we are living under Christ's sovereignty all the time and that nothing is more important than taking care of the interests of this Kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

With this in mind, Jesus led a life in which He had time for God. He prioritized His moments of communion, through meditation on the revealed Word and prayer (Luke 22:39-41). He also paid attention to people and relationships, so that even in His intense life, there was room for deep and meaningful conversations (John 4:4-26), to spend time with people in His closest circle (Luke 10:38-42), and to talk to people very different from Him (Luke 19:1-10).

We can see that Jesus' simple life also draws attention. This simple life is one in which there is no wear and tear on what is superfluous. There is confidence that what is necessary will be provided by the Father (Psalm 37:5). We can see this same principle in the apostles' advice when they talk about modesty (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

What is being indicated serves as a principle of continuous development, in which I need less and less of what is not essential and focus on taking care of the essential, which is Jesus' agenda, my relationship with God and with people. In this process, my way of dressing, the use of my resources, the use of my time, the care of my health, my leisure time, and my abilities begin to serve the development of my communion with God and the improvement of my personal relationships, understanding that the best thing I can do for people is to provide them with this same experience of living according to the way of life of the Kingdom of God.

What practical priority can you set in your life to move towards a simpler and more generous lifestyle?



*My decision*

**Call to action:**

Encourage your friends to donate clothes, shoes, and other items that are lightly used. Gather everything, and take them to an organization that can put these resources to use for people in need.

# THE GREAT CONTROVERSY AND SIN



*You have probably wondered why good things happen to bad people; or, why good people are unfairly affected by evil? Why do the wicked seem to prosper while the righteous suffer oppression? Why does it seem more worthwhile to follow the wrong path than to do what is right? Why are innocents victims of the cruelty of feelingless men?*

These questions can be answered in many ways, but there is one answer that applies to all: we live in an unjust world. Everything around us has already suffered the impact of injustice. A logic without logic. A functioning where it is not possible to predict the movement of life. A system where we can do everything right and have all our plans frustrated. We can strive to achieve something that can be taken away, without warning, the next moment. We can give our best to some relationships full of empty promises and end up hurt. This is the unjust logic of our world.

How to harmonize a life held hostage by injustice with the existence of a God who, as far as is known or said, is just? What message about this God exists in this unjust world? Is this God an ideal creation of the human mind? Is He a just God, but without the power to interfere in the injustices of this time? Or is He simply unjust and promotes injustice?

## **Justice and freedom are two themes that go hand in hand.**

Injustice opposes freedom. The freedom to be, to have, to think, to plan, and to love. Injustice deprives us of the right to live freely. But injustice exists because free beings choose, often, to reject the just. And it is by thinking about freedom that we can understand how a just God moves in an unjust world. Evil exists, there is no denying that. Why does evil exist in a world made by a good God? This will be the question we will try to answer from now on.

# CURIOSITY

*A strong portrait of injustice is the fact that 8 million children die of hunger in the world every year.*

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

*Martin Luther King*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Read, discuss, and define the correct alternative:

Reading Ezekiel 28:13-15, we see that a very special angel nurtured a feeling that caused great problems. What feeling was that?

- a. Guilt
- b. Pride
- c. Anguish
- d. Generosity

### 2. True or false:

About Genesis 3:1-5:

- The serpent seduced the woman with the idea that she would be like God;
- Doubting the Word of God will always be a risky path;
- The woman did not have clarity about what she could and could not do, so she ended up eating the forbidden fruit;
- Just as Lucifer wanted to be like God, he deceived the woman by sowing the same desire in her.

### 3. Puzzle:

Organize the sentence:

fallen - of - sinned - of - All - short - the glory - and - have - God." (Romans 3:23)

#### 4. Who needs God's forgiveness and glory? Romans 3:23, 5:12.

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#### 5. How is it possible to overcome sin? Ephesians 6:10-18.

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#### 6. Personal response: Since sin affects everything and everyone we know, bringing injustice and death, what could we do to lessen the impact of evil on us and on the people around us?

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### EXPLANATORY TEXT:

God created human beings to live in the ideal conditions that He had planned for them. However, if we do not live in such conditions, it is because evil entered the world and sin became a part of the human experience. However, we cannot read the word "sin" only in the common way, as we sometimes do, understanding sin as acts that contradict what is expressed in the Bible or defended by a religious group. Sin is ultimately an act of rebellion against God, something that becomes a part of human nature, putting us in a position of disobedience to Him. Paul described this when he said "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:15).

God is good, perfect, and does good and perfect things. He created beings, like Himself, perfectly free, and being perfectly free, they have the freedom to interfere with the perfect, thus becoming imperfect. According to the biblical account, a perfect being created by God as a very special angel chose to rebel against the way God conducted things. Lucifer chose to reject God as sovereign and placed himself as sovereign over himself (Isaiah 14:14). In this way, the evil that potentially existed within the freedom with which the children of God were created now existed as real. This angel,

now deprived of his celestial functions, became the opponent, presenting evil to the children of God. He did this in Eden, with Adam and Eve, proposing to them what had seduced him, which is equality with God (Genesis 3:5). In this way, human beings rejected divine authority and began to understand themselves as their own masters. This is what sin consists of, the abandonment of God in the name of self-proclamation of the creature as master.

The issue is that with so many lords, lawmakers, and people selfishly seeking to survive and self-preserve, injustice became the norm that operates, and where there is injustice, suffering is established. Suffering is not the result of the inefficacy of divine power or the inefficiency of His love, but of the perpetuation of injustice by the creatures of God who rejected Him and placed themselves in His place.

Sin became the condition of human beings (Romans 3:12). We not only commit sin, we are sinners. Sin is the prevailing norm in our lives. How has God dealt with this? What alternative route does He suggest for us to deal with this nature and its effects? This is the subject for the next study.

We are affected by injustice, and sometimes we become instruments by which injustice perpetuates. What can you do so that evil does not infect you and you do not become an instrument of injustice, but of justice?



*My decision*

**Call to action:**

You surely know someone who is experiencing some suffering or sadness. How about surprising that person with a gift, an invitation to do something they enjoy, and/or a comforting message?



# GRACE AND JUDGMENT

*What was the last gift you received? Do you remember the reason? In our society, we expect gifts as a response to something. We do something good and then receive a gift as a reward, or someone wants to obtain a desired stance and tries to achieve it through a gift. But there are gifts that appear out of nowhere, without warning, apparently for no reason.*

**H**ow good it is to be remembered and gifted by surprise, without having done anything, only by the goodwill of the giver - someone who likes us and just because of that feeling manifests itself generously.

You have probably gifted someone for the simple pleasure of giving something. But almost always, our good actions arise from our understanding of the other's merit. We establish the criteria, evaluate our feelings, consider our interests, and based on that, we weigh what and how to deliver and what the value of the gift will be. We have difficulty giving something to strangers precisely because we cannot go through this process, but there is another type of movement in which we are gifted with very special things without having done anything to deserve them.

It is that type of gift that makes us feel almost small, that surprises us, leaving us speechless or actionless, while we feel special. This movement is called Grace - which consists of giving something good to someone who does not deserve it. Grace is when a mother forgives her child's killer. Grace is when a father welcomes home a son who left with a heart full of ingratitude. Grace is when an unpayable debt is forgiven.

## **Grace is accepting the unacceptable.**

According to the Bible, Grace is what God offers us. He puts us before the possibility of living eternally, for free, by Grace. If you want to know this gift, go ahead.

# CURIOSITY

*George Stinney was sentenced to death at the age of 14 for the murder of two girls. He was the youngest defendant to be sentenced to capital punishment in the United States. His sentence was executed 83 days after the crime. Seventy years later, he was declared innocent.*

"Our merits deserve nothing. God's work deserves all the merit."

*Max Lucado*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Mark the alternative that is in accordance with Ephesians 2:8-9:

- a. Through our good deeds, we earn divine favor;
- b. Once we are saved, we can take pride in having earned it;
- c. Salvation is solely by faith that Jesus gave us salvation for free;
- d. Everyone is saved by grace, even those who do not believe.

### 2. True or False?

- Eternal life is obtained through religious devotion and acts of charity (Romans 6:23);
- Jesus was born without sin and did not commit any sin in His life (Hebrews 4:15);
- The death of Jesus encompasses all people, from all places and times (Hebrews 2:9);
- The coming of Jesus into the world is a result of God feeling obligated to do something for human condition (John 3:16).

### 3. What was the purpose of Jesus coming to this earth, and how does it have an impact on my life today, more than two thousand years later? Luke 19:10, John 3:17.



#### 4. How can a person attain salvation? 1 John 5:11-12.

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#### 5. Personal response: If salvation is by God's grace, why do you think there are so many religious groups encouraging human beings to do good things in order to be saved or accepted by God?

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### EXPLANATORY TEXT:

As we saw in the previous study, sin has brought disorder, injustice, and suffering. It altered our natural condition and put us in a tendency to reject God, even when we understand that He is the best option we have (Jeremiah 2:13). However, God did not leave us without the possibility of change. Our destiny is not sealed because we were born with a sinful nature that leads us to commit sins.

Firstly, we need to understand that there is no good we can do to change our condition and restore our bond with God to what it was before sin. We cannot, by ourselves, change our nature (Jeremiah 13:23), no matter how much we become people with better religious attitudes or good citizens. Nevertheless, we will still be sinners and our state of rebellion with God persists in us. There is no self-development manual that can solve this condition.

Therefore, we need an external action that can change who we are. Who better than the One who created us to recreate us? (2 Corinthians 5:17). At this point, grace comes in (Ephesians 2:8), which is God's providence to solve the problem of sin.

Grace is the possibility that God has given us, free of charge, to have our sins forgiven and enter into a new relationship with Him. Paul affirms that now we can again have "peace with God" (Romans 5:1). When, through faith, we accept this gift from God, we cease to be treated according to our nature and actions, and we begin to be treated by God according to His mercy.

It's as if we were in a courtroom, and before the trial, the judge told us that at the time of the sentencing, after hearing our lawyer (1 John 1:9), He could absolve us of any charges, only requiring us to accept the offer before the trial even begins. If we believe in what He says and accept, we will not be judged by our accusations because the sentence will be the result of the mercy and grace of the judge. On the other hand, if we refuse, we will have to prove our innocence ourselves. This would be impossible, and our sentence would be unfavorable.

Grace is God telling us that He is open to a relationship with us. We can come to Him with faith, certain that He will receive us and treat us with mercy (Hebrews 4:16).

Do you accept that you are under the condition of a sinner and that your nature leads you to live far from God's ideals? Do you also believe that Jesus accepts you as you are, loves you, and desires to participate in your life, through the forgiveness of your sins and the assurance of eternal life?



*My decision*

### **Call to action:**

The best thing to do now is to pray and tell Jesus that you accept Him, open your heart to Him, and invite Him to be a part of everything that concerns you. Then, share this experience with a friend who is helping you in your spiritual journey.

## STUDY 9

# LIFE AND RETURN OF JESUS



*Very few people dare to deny that Jesus was a historical figure. In other words, that there was a man in the region of Palestine who began to teach and gather followers, causing discomfort among some religious leaders, and who was punished by the Roman Empire. Therefore, the life of Jesus is historically unquestionable.*

**W**hat many question is whether this Jesus has been overvalued by the Gospels and the Christian tradition. Is the Jesus questioned by historians the same Jesus of the Gospel? When we look at the prophecies of the Old Testament about Jesus, we see that they were fulfilled in the smallest details.

It was predicted from the city of His birth to the way He was treated in His death, and it was fulfilled exactly as pointed out by the men who lived hundreds of years before Christ, which leads us to think that there is something supernatural around the figure of Jesus. This becomes even stronger when we think of the movement initiated by Him, which remains alive even two millennia after His death and resurrection.

It is a fact that Jesus came to this world. Everything that surrounds His story points to the fact that He was not just another guru, an enlightened man, or a revolutionary. He lived a life different from the religious leaders of the time, had a discourse that spoke of renewal, peace, and hope. And above all, when He spoke of Himself, He said He was the Savior of the world.

Foreigners heard Jesus and accepted Him as Savior; women and children, who lived on the margins of society at the time, heard Him, were accepted by Him, and accepted Him as Savior; men of questionable character decided to start over after encountering Him; religious leaders deepened their spiritual journey with Him, and people with little education understood His message and embraced Christ as Savior.

Crowds who only heard about Jesus, who did not see Him or hear Him personally, understood that He was the way to life in fullness. He was heard, believed, and accepted by all who wanted to. He is the Savior - the one who divides the history of the world before Him and after Him, and who also divides people's stories. He brings new possibilities, reconciles God's children with the Father, brings hope even in the face of death, and does all of this under the promise that His coming to this world was only the first. He will return! Why return? When will He return?

**How to live knowing this promise?**

# CURIOSITY

*Throughout the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, there have been over 30 people who claimed to be the Messiah or something equivalent.*

**“The return of Christ does not depend on whether you believe it or not, or whether you are prepared or not. He will return!”**

*Alejandro Bullón*

## QUESTIONS

### **1. Read Luke 24:15-32 and discuss and mark the correct alternative:**

- a. The people of Jesus' time had no information about how His life and death would be;
- b. Jesus presented to the people evidence that His life and sacrifice were predicted by Moses and other prophets of the Old Testament;
- c. The disciples were satisfied with Jesus' death because they understood that things should be that way;
- d. Jesus was easily recognized by the two travelers.

### **2. True or false?**

- We do not know the date of Jesus' return nor do we have indications of its proximity (Matthew 24:29-30);
- All the dead will rise when Jesus returns (I Thessalonians 4:16);
- Jesus' return will be a secret event (Revelation 1:7);
- Those who are alive when Jesus returns will have their bodies transformed (I Corinthians 15:51 and 52).

**3. What is Jesus' promise and how does it impact my life? John 14:3.**

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**4. What are some characteristics that those who are waiting for Jesus' return should develop while that day does not come? Read Titus 2:13 to help with the answer.**

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**5. Personal answer: Read Matthew 24:6-7 and answer: what comfort can we have in the face of the intensification of these events predicted by Jesus?**

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## EXPLANATORY TEXT:

You may remember that when we talk about God as Creator, we indicate that in this understanding there is an answer to the main questions of existence: Who are we? Where do we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? And about the last one, we said that the answer would be "to Him". Our destination is Him. He is our origin and our destination.

Understanding that God made us to enjoy a full relationship with Him, that sin interrupted that relationship, and that Grace gave us the opportunity to live that ideal again, we live in expectation that this relationship will be reestablished. For this, Christ came to the world, to reconcile us with the Father (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Jesus came as God who became incarnate (John 1:1) to give us back the possibility of a relationship with divinity. The life of Jesus, who was born without a sinful nature and lived a life without sinful acts, is the life that replaces us (1 Timothy 2:5-6). How so? - you may ask. When Jesus came to Earth, He came with His teachings and miracles, but above all, He came to be the Savior, and He

did this by sacrificing Himself in our place.

The reward for those who rejected God, the author and giver of life, is death (Romans 6:23). But the grace of God was manifested, making Christ assume and suffer the penalty of sin in our place; therefore, "the gift of God's grace in Christ Jesus is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).

And this Jesus, who came to offer us salvation, did not complete His work. He promised to return so that reconciliation will be complete (John 14:1-3). His return is not symbolic, it is literal. It will happen as a historical event, and every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7). At His return, the eternal destinies of all will be sealed (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Even those who died believing in Him will be resurrected (1 Thessalonians 4:16). We will talk about this part of the resurrection of the dead in the next study.

We can believe that the Jesus who came, who lived without sin, who sacrificed Himself in our place to grant us eternal life and reconcile us with the Father, will return to finish His work of redemption.

Everything we have studied so far is the way that Jesus expects us to live while He is not yet back. From everything you have learned, what is the most urgent transformation that you need to undergo while Jesus hasn't returned yet? How about praying for it now?



*My decision*

### **Call to action:**

Share the promise of John 14:1-3 with some people in your circle. Don't say anything or explain, just wait. If anyone asks about the text, talk about the hope you have discovered in the return of Jesus.

## STUDY 10

# DEATH AND ETERNAL LIFE



*Life is not made up of many certainties, in fact, life is a constant pursuit of certainties. A search to control variables, an incessant attempt to dominate the future. To live is to walk through a valley of uncertainties, where only one certainty cannot be changed, that at some point we will be visited by death.*

**D**eath is an intruder in the human experience, but there is no way to live without dealing with it. Only those who die before being conscious of life are not confronted with the reality of death. For everyone else, death is real, closer than we would like, uneducated and full of surprises.

Thinking about death is something we avoid, and it is strange to be this way since we cannot avoid it. Wouldn't it be better to think about it once and for all? Wouldn't it be wiser to face the subject, think about the ideas that surround the theme, gather information, exercise faith, and seek hope to deal with the inevitable?

There are many answers about what happens to people after they die. The multiplicity of answers helps you choose what best comforts you, but at the same time leaves a sense of uncertainty and fear.

When we look at the Bible, we see that its characters seem very calm when talking about death and facing it. They have such a great conviction about life and about the Author of life that they can look at death with a lens of hope.

## **Death is not a subject that cannot be talked about.**

It is not necessary to run away from it at all costs. It seems that if there is a belief in what happens after death that is strong enough to generate hope, death can be faced with a less negative outlook.

The question is: how to deal with something so heavy under the perspective of hope? What does the Bible teach about death that made people who believed in its message be at peace in the face of death? While there is life, there is time to learn about death. Let's go?!

# CURIOSITY

*When a person is about to die, the last sense to stop functioning is the sense of hearing. ~*

Whoever doesn't know what life is, How can they know what death is?"

*Confucius*

## QUESTIONS

**1. Read John 11:1-14. It is a conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Analyze and discuss the correct alternative:**

- a. Jesus compares death to sleep;
- b. Jesus shows that he would invite Lazarus to return from Heaven to Earth;
- c. Jesus was talking about literal sleep;
- d. Jesus has no solution to offer in the face of death.

**2. True or false:**

- Those who die cease to participate in the lives of the living (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6);
- The dead take their feelings with them to the afterlife (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6);
- The time to praise God is in life, because after death, we cannot praise Him (Psalm 88:10);
- When an individual dies, their opportunities to carry out their plans end (Psalm 146:4).

**3. What exactly happens when a person dies? Ecclesiastes 12:7.**

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#### 4. Who is the solution to death? John 11:25.

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#### 5. Personal answer: Thinking that Jesus is the solution to death produces what feeling in you?

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### EXPLANATORY TEXT:

Death is a topic that the Bible does not avoid dealing with, because nothing essential in the human experience is left out by the biblical text. And to understand death, it is important to go back to the origin of life. According to the Creation account, man was created by God; He took the mineral, lifeless matter and breathed into it the breath of life, called spirit. Then, a living SOUL came into existence (Genesis 2:7). From the beginning, it is clear that life is something that comes from God and that the human being does not have a soul dissociated from the body, since the union of matter and breath of life makes a human being into a soul. On the other hand, death is the opposite equation, it is the separation of matter and the vital energy that comes from God.

According to the Bible, death is the direct result of sin. Because, as we have seen, sin is the rejection of God, and God is the source of life, so there is no life far from Him; therefore, to live under the power of sin is to live under the condition of being mortal. In the Bible, there is an important distinction: natural death, which is the one we deal with and is only a part of the problem, because there is still the larger part, which is eternal death, the definitive cessation of existence (John

11:25 and 26). Jesus came to reverse this.

Therefore, by accepting the grace of Jesus, we still remain subject to natural death, but it does not have the final say on our existence, because, according to the promise, those who die in Christ will rise again at His return - this is our hope - and those who have died are resting, waiting for that moment. In biblical thought, death that can come to us through various causes is an interruption of life and participation in the reality of the living (Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 6); Jesus Himself compares natural death to sleep (John 11:11).

In this way, we can believe that death is the result of sin, and that God, in solving the problem of sin, also solves the problem of death (Romans 6:23). We also believe that those who are taken by death are in a state of sleep, without contact with the world of the living, and that Jesus' return will be the moment when those who died in Christ will rise again to never die again.

Paul points to the hope of Jesus' return as a path of consolation (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Knowing that death is a conquered enemy and that it does not need to be seen as definitive is a great consolation. A consolation that can be ours and that of our loved ones if we accept the grace of Jesus in our lives.

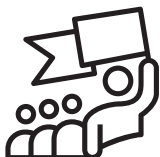
How does the certainty of eternal life impact your understanding of death? What can you do to ensure that this certainty affects more areas of your life?



*My decision*

**Call to action:**

Do you know someone who has recently experienced grief? How have you been present for them during this time? Take practical action to show that you care about the pain that this person is experiencing.



# MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP

*You've probably heard phrases like "everything happens for a reason" or "God has a purpose for your life." These phrases speak to our need for a meaningful life and how we understand that God is involved in giving meaning to our lives.*

**H**owever, these statements usually come with our desire to find a reason for every event in our lives. Why didn't I get that job? Why did I face traffic on the day I needed to arrive on time? Why did a loved one pass away on a holiday? Why do I seem to find someone to share life with, but then something happens and we're separated? Why do others achieve things that I can't reach?

In the face of these questions, the idea of God having a purpose seems to calm us, but also brings a little bit of anger, since it seems we have certainty about the meaning of everything. However, this meaning seems to always be hidden, difficult to perceive.

When we look at the Bible, we clearly see that God has a maximum purpose for everyone and that this purpose goes through the unfair scenes of each of our lives. But this purpose is not found by looking for symbols or following clues that are mysteriously thrown along the way, but clearly when Paul writes, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). What does that mean?

## What does it mean to live for the glory of God?

Basically, it means that in every occasion in life we can find an invitation to know God better, and also to allow Him to be revealed through our actions and reactions to what happens to us. This double movement of getting to know God and representing Him is the constant purpose of life that appears in the Bible and can be understood as a walk learning about Him, which we call discipleship. In this journey, we show others that we can walk and be His disciples. This is our mission.

# CURIOSITY

*There are billions of people in the world who have never heard the name of Jesus.*

“The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’” John 21:19.

*E.G.W. The Ministry of Healing, p. 143.*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Discuss and analyze the correct alternative:

When the Holy Spirit was given to the followers of Jesus, according to Acts 1:8, what would they become?

- a. Witnesses of Christ to the Jewish world;
- b. Witnesses of Christ to the whole world;
- c. Guardians of Christ’s messages so they would remain secret;
- d. Privileged people who would be the last faithful generation to God.

### 2. True or false:

Reading John 13:35 leads us to think about an important characteristic of Jesus’ disciples:

- We will be known as disciples of Jesus by attending church;
- We will be known as disciples of Jesus by our knowledge of the Bible;
- We will be known as disciples of Jesus when we live in secluded places away from cities;
- We will be known as disciples of Jesus by the loving way we treat people.

### 3. Jesus left us some challenges, among them, see Matthew 24:14 and Mark 16:15.

- a. Who is this challenge for?
- b. How can I participate in fulfilling this challenge?
- c. Where can I fulfill this challenge?

### 4. Personal response: What do disciples of Jesus need to do to fulfill the mission He left?

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## EXPLANATORY TEXT:

Jesus, before finishing His work here on Earth, left a mission for His disciples: to do for others what He had done for them. Thus, He instructed them to go into the world as His witnesses (Acts 1:8) and make others into disciples too (Matthew 28:19-20).

In this final speech of Jesus, before ascending to Heaven, we see that He was making it clear that His followers should continue His work. They should continue what He began, but that would only be possible if they, in addition to accepting Jesus, placed themselves at the disposal to receive the power of the Holy Spirit that would make them capable of this great work: to bring the Kingdom of God to the whole world (Acts 2:17).

Jesus began a movement here on Earth in which people could know Him through His followers (John 13:35). Once those who follow Jesus put themselves under the guidance of the Spirit, in a condition of availability to fulfill the mission, they become continuers not only of Jesus' work, but of His method as well.

Jesus' method was to make disciples.

To do this, He ate with them (Matthew 9:11), prayed with them (Luke 22:39), participated in their lives (Mark 4:35-36), allowed them to perceive His vulnerability (Matthew 26:36-41), and taught them the things of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). In this way, the life of Christ was reproduced in His followers. They not only became listeners of His teachings, but saw in practice how

these teachings were lived out, and could begin to practice what Jesus taught.

The mission given to the people who saw Jesus ascend to Heaven is still the same: to make the Kingdom of God known. After all, only then will the end come (Matthew 24:14). This mission includes following Christ's method of demonstrating sympathy, mingling with people with genuine interest, meeting their needs, having compassion, and inviting them to become followers of Jesus. We are His disciples, with the mission to invite others to also become His disciples.

What about those who do not accept? We continue to love, support, and care for them, until He comes and realizes that we have cared for people, even the least of these, as if we were doing it for Jesus Himself.

Do you accept to become someone through whom Jesus can continue His work here on earth? What talents do you possess that can be used to make this happen?



*My decision*

### **Call to action:**

Think about something that recently happened to you that you understood to be a direct intervention from God. What lessons did you learn? Find an opportunity to share this experience with someone who may need similar lessons for the moment they are living. If you prefer, make a public post that can benefit people who pass through your feed.

# GOD'S LAW

*Freedom! You have probably used phrases and even a speech about freedom to justify giving up a commitment, to leave a place, to choose to eat something different from the people who were with you, or even to end a relationship.*



**Y**ou have probably wished to be free from some responsibility at work, an academic activity, some norm of coexistence, some WhatsApp group that you “cannot” leave, and perhaps even from a law that limits your rights.

A fact about freedom is that it is not possible to have complete freedom, basically for two reasons: (1) we are limited beings in time and space. We cannot break the natural laws that preserve our existence, so we are only as free as the nature of who we are allows us to be; (2) we live in society, so it is not enough to just be free, it is necessary that my freedom preserves the integrity of my neighbor’s freedom, because a fully free being would become a tyrant over others whose freedom is diminished.

Given these two factors, we need to accept the fact that freedom will work best where there are limits. Limits promote freedom for the collective, as well as allow the potential of individuals to be better developed.

When we look at biblical thought, we see laws. Some people seem to see only this when they look at the Scriptures; however, these laws arise as a path to a life of freedom. When the Bible speaks of “not killing,” it is ensuring that everyone is free to live and that no one interferes with that. When it prescribes “not stealing,” it is saying that everyone should be free to own things without them being arbitrarily taken away by someone who just wants to satisfy their desires.

In addition to being this path of preserving freedom, biblical laws promote the development of individual potential, because these laws reflect, to a large extent, who God is, and by observing them, I open up space for my actions to be more like His. As I was created to live in the image and likeness of God, by paying attention to the laws, I am developing this potential that I carry within me since I was created.

Of course, some questions arise: is it possible to keep all this law and reach a point in life where I will not disobey any divine ordinance? Besides knowing if it is possible, we need to know if it is necessary. What to do when we cannot live up to the demands of this law? Let’s look at what the Bible says about it.

# CURIOSITY

*There are many strange laws in the world. For example, in Hong Kong, a betrayed woman can kill her husband, but she must be the author of the homicide herself and cannot hire someone else to do it.*

"So that we can be free, we make ourselves slaves of the laws."

*Cicero*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Reading the 10 commandments recorded in Exodus 20:3-17 and Luke 10:27, we can affirm that:

- a. Jesus' words in Luke invalidate the ten commandments;
- b. Jesus' words in Luke show the breadth of the ten commandments;
- c. Jesus' words in Luke inaugurate a new era where the commandments described in Exodus are no longer valid;
- d. Jesus' words in Luke show the inconsistency of the biblical authors, as they are mutually exclusive.

### 2. True or false:

- Believing sincerely exempts us from the need to do what the law asks (Romans 3:31);
- A more viable way to keep the law is to choose the commandments with which we identify the most (James 2:10);
- Jesus, even though He was God, remained faithful to the commandments (John 14:15);
- Just as everything is temporary, the Law of God is also (Matthew 5:18).



### 3. What motivation should we have to keep the commandments? John 14:15 and Psalm 19:7.

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### 4. Personal response: What benefits could we enjoy if we lived in a society where everyone respected God's laws?

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## EXPLANATORY TEXT:

The evil that we feel free to do is the same evil that will enslave us. This is something certain and notorious. There is no denying it, which is why God's law is called the law of freedom (James 1:25), because walking in conformity with this law puts us on the path of limiting the action of evil over us and over our attitudes towards other people. After all, the evil that affects us begins to affect others through us.

The Law, as presented in the Bible, needs to be understood in 3 ways:

With the function of providing diagnosis:

1. The law indicates where the error is. Paul even says that he would not have known sin if the law had not defined it as such (Romans 7:7). The law shows us what is not in conformity with God's will expressed in His Word. Understanding that this God created us and that by grace He calls us to a new life, in which we return to recognize Him as Lord, it becomes important for us to know what He understands as right and wrong. You may question, "But if He forgives us of sin, then why obey the Law and avoid sin?"

Indicating a way by which we can represent God in the best way possible:

2. Walking according to the commandments is not so that God no longer needs to forgive me, nor so that I can achieve perfection, but because this is the way by which

I can live for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), which is the purpose for which we live. This life means knowing God more deeply, and we know Him through the Law, for it does not only tell us about what He wants, but about who He is. And as we walk in conformity with Him, we are reflecting His image, so that He can be seen through us. Our life in holiness speaks of a holy God with whom we walk (Leviticus 19:1).

The Law is an expression of love:

3. Love of God for us: for offering us clear limits and a path to maximum development of who He calls us to be (Matthew 22:39).

Our love for our neighbor: because obeying the Law, in addition to respecting the freedom of others (and this is a proof of love), we also communicate the God we know.

The Law is our proof of love for God, since we prove our love through our commitment to become more like Him.

We can also say that, even though the law has so many functions, for one thing it does not serve: it cannot give us salvation. Our good behavior cannot free us from sin, just as looking at our dirty face in the mirror does not clean us; realizing what we need to change by looking at the Law does not absolve us of the guilt of sin. The Law can only be a blessing to those who have accepted the grace of God and are committed to communicating that grace and the glory of the God who saves.

Read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and consider which of these commandments is the most challenging for you.



*My decision*

**Call to action:**

Invite someone to enjoy a period of Sabbath with you in nature and share with that person what you have learned.

# BAPTISM

*If you could choose any time in past history to be born, when would you choose? If you could choose a place in the world to be born, which would you choose as your birthplace? If you could be born again, what experiences would you like to re-live, and which ones would you prefer not to repeat?*



**H**ave you ever imagined how different things would be if you had been born in another place, another time, or another family, and had different childhood experiences? All of this is just imagination; we can live imagining hypotheses, drawing alternative realities, suffering for things we have never experienced, and thinking at length about how life would be if...

However, we know that the life we have lived so far is the one we have lived, and there is no way to go back in time and be born again. How could we go back to the mother's womb? — that was the question a religious leader asked Jesus. Why did he ask that? Because Jesus told him he needed to be born again! Exactly. Jesus said he needed to be born again. That's why this man questioned Jesus, as he saw no possibility of going back to being a baby and starting all over again.

What he did not understand is that Jesus was talking about another type of rebirth. We are all born condemned to gradual deterioration, followed by death. The only certainty we could be offered when we are born is that death will come to us at some point. That is our existence: the constant certainty of the reality of death, accompanied by the uncertainty of when it will come. We are born trapped in this reality.

But when Jesus calls us to be born again, He invites us to be reborn into a new life, to accept a new system, in which the certainty of death no longer bothers us. In which those who were born to survive, and struggle for it, can now accept that life is on a journey with the Author of Life and that He grants life in abundance; new life for those who are born again.

This new life begins, according to the Bible, through baptism, which needs to be a personal and voluntary decision to be born into a life oriented by the Holy Spirit. Baptism is that point of restarting, that new start, that zero mark in the middle of the way.

**Baptism is the way to be born again.**

# CURIOSITY

*The word baptism comes from the Greek "baptzo" and means to immerse, to dip; thus, the very word "baptism" gives us information about the biblical method of the ceremony.*

"The new birth is not about improving who you are, but about creating a new 'you.'"

*John Piper*

## QUESTIONS

### 1. Discuss:

Reading John 3:5, we see Jesus talking about the New Birth that is celebrated through baptism. In this regard, we can affirm that:

- a. Baptism needs to be done as soon as the person is born;
- b. For those who want to live in the Kingdom of God, the new birth is optional;
- c. The baptism of people I love can serve for me to be saved;
- d. Being born again is the only way to understand the Kingdom of God.

### 2. Based on Acts 2:38, discuss and evaluate: true or false?

- Repentance is a prerequisite for baptism;
- Baptism is an individual experience, intransferable in its effects;
- Through baptism, we have the assurance of forgiveness of sins;
- Once we are born again, we submit to the Holy Spirit to guide our lives.

### 3. According to Mark 16:16, what is the condition to be saved?

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#### 4. Complete:

Consider yourselves dead to \_\_\_\_\_ and alive to \_\_\_\_\_ (Romans 6:11).

- a. sin / God
- b. the world / the Church
- c. pleasure / suffering
- d. evil / baptism

#### 5. Personal answer: If repentance and faith in receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord are necessary for baptism, why do so many people not follow this path?

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### EXPLANATORY TEXT:

Before starting His public ministry, Jesus went to John the Baptist, who was preaching on the banks of the Jordan River, to be baptized. John's baptism was for repentance, but Jesus went to him not because He needed to repent of something, but so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled and so that everyone would witness the moment when Jesus would be anointed as Messiah, for in Jesus' baptism there is the voice of God confirming Him as His son and the descent of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16-17).

Before Jesus said goodbye to His disciples, as part of their mission, Jesus indicated that they should baptize people (Matthew 28:19), for whoever received Christ and believed in Him should be baptized. Baptism thus became the public expression of a personal faith in Jesus as Savior.

During the New Testament, especial-

ly in the book of Acts of the Apostles, we see baptism as the response of those who were believing. They accepted the apostles' teachings about Jesus as Savior, decided to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for a new life, and then were baptized.

Baptism, according to the Bible, is a voluntary and personal decision based on an understanding of each person's sinful nature and the salvation that exists in Jesus. Moreover, it is the decision for a new life, that is, a newness of life, which is affirmed publicly through immersion in the waters. This movement of being plunged and emerging symbolizes the death to a life governed by sin and the rebirth to a life governed by the Holy Spirit, that is, we are buried with Jesus and born of the Spirit. Thus, baptism is the public expression of faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, and the desire to have a life guided by the Holy Spirit.

Now that you know about baptism, what obstacles do you need to deal with so that you can be baptized as soon as possible?

*My decision*

**Call to action:**

Share your desire to be baptized with someone and ask them to help you take the necessary steps to make it happen.



THE WORD.

# JUST ISSUES

