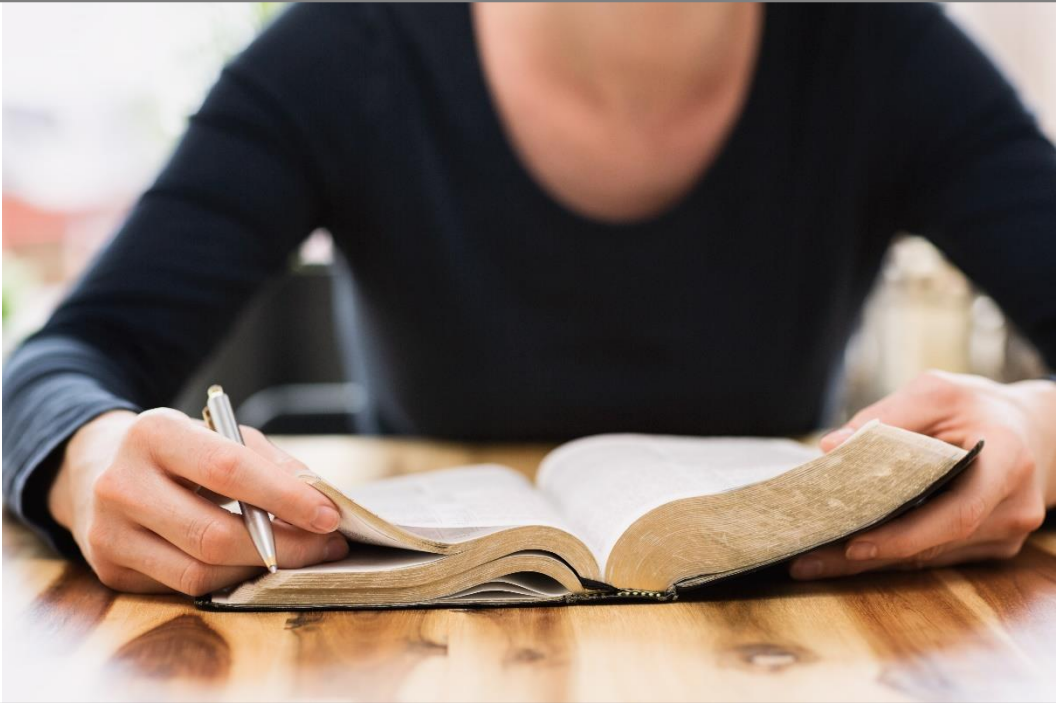


# West End Messenger

November - December 2021



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## Article 1

# Where Did Evil Come From?

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Christians believe in the eternal God who created all things. However, when people consider the presence of evil in this world, it can cause some to conclude that God is actually the source of this evil. Skeptics often use this to continue in their skepticism. Unbelievers can find this to be a stumbling block. And, even Christians can lose faith over this question. Therefore, this is a question we must honestly consider from the Scriptures so that we can develop a proper understanding of both God and the evil that exists.

**1) God is holy and defines what is good and evil.** God is separate from everything evil and loves everything that is good (1 John 1:5-7). In fact, God's characteristic of being holy determines what is holy and unholy, right and wrong, good and evil. For example, 1 Peter 1:15-16 instructs Christians, "But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy." Everything we do is either good or evil, then, based on whether it fits with God's holiness.

**2) God created people and spiritual beings with free will.** To understand how evil came into existence requires people to recognize the way God has created people and spiritual beings. Throughout the Scriptures, God demonstrates that He did not create such as mindless robots who are preprogrammed to worship and serve God without any choice in the matter. Instead, the Scriptures demonstrate God created both people and other spiritual beings (i.e. angels, Satan) with the ability to choose between obedience and disobedience.

**3) The devil and his angels exercised their free will so as to do evil.** At some point, Satan rebelled against God's holy commands. For example, 1 John 3:8 says, "The one who commits sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the devil's

works.” In addition to Satan, 2 Peter 2:4 references “angels who sinned.” So, although God created Satan and all spiritual beings pure and innocent, Satan and other spiritual beings chose to sin.

**4) The devil works to perpetuate evil.** When Satan is introduced in the Bible story, we see him working to deceive the first man and woman God created and put on this earth (Genesis 3:1-7). Satan was permitted to entice them to disobey God and test the free will God had given them. Although God desired them to obey the law He had given (not to eat from the forbidden tree), He did not force them to obey. Satan’s deceptions and manipulations resulted in Eve looking at the tree as something that was “good for food and delightful to look at” and “desirable for obtaining wisdom” – and then eating from the tree (Genesis 3:6). Today, Satan continues working to deceive and manipulate people into disobeying God so that people choose to do evil (1 John 5:19)!

**5) Evil continues as people exercise their free will.** Satan can only do so much. Although he tempts people to do evil, the choice belongs to each individual of whether to listen to God or do evil. For, it is possible for people to choose to submit to God and resist Satan so he will flee from us (James 4:7)! Sadly, we all choose to do evil rather than listen to God at some point in our lives (Romans 3:23). So, after Adam and Eve sinned, Satan continued working throughout the annals of time. This has continued ever since – with each person making individual decisions to do what is evil.

While God is the Creator of everything and set all things into motion, He is not the one who is responsible for evil. For, evil does not exist in the world because God desires people and spiritual beings to rebel against Him. Rather, evil exists in the world because people and spiritual beings have exercised their own free will so as to do what displeases God!

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## Article 2

# Is Being A Good Person Enough To Be Saved?

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“Is God pleased with me as long as I am a good person, help others, don’t hurt people, and generally live a morally good life?” Many believe that this kind of life is sufficient for pleasing God. This implies one of two things. One is that you can be good enough to be saved without needing Jesus. The other is that Jesus died to save any who are good. But, while this may seem like the right answer according to our personal opinions, we must consider the answer God gives in the Bible.

**1) No one is truly good.** The false belief that is underlying this question is that people can be good enough to please God apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Some believe that as long as they do some good things and don’t do anything too terrible, they are sufficient in pleasing God. But, the Bible shows us different. Romans 3 (quoting from the Old Testament), for example, says, “There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one” (verses 10-12). Then, verse 23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” So, while you may be “good” according to human standards, you are not good according to God’s standards! Although we are all born sinless, pure, and good, we all sin whenever we reach personal accountability before God. And, whenever anyone is guilty of any sin, he/she cannot also be righteous and good in God’s sight!

**2) No one can save himself/herself.** The wages of sin is spiritual death (Romans 6:23). No matter how “good” you live, you can never undo the consequences of your past sin by yourself. Paul wrote, “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift – not from works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). So, you cannot make up for your sin

with any amount of good works. Therefore, no one can be saved without possessing true faith in Jesus! Even if someone never sinned again and did every good work God desires, he/she could never be saved apart from Jesus Christ! For, Jesus Himself said, “if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

**3) Must do what God has required for salvation.** Although Jesus died to provide all people with the opportunity to be saved, salvation is only given to those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). So, being saved is not just a matter of believing who Jesus is and what He did to save us and then living however we believe is good. In fact, Jesus even says that there will be many people on Judgment Day who will have believed in Him as Lord and been involved with many good works, who will still be lost in Hell because they did not obey God (Matthew 7:21-23)! Jesus commands that you must hear God’s word (Romans 10:17), believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of your sin (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized (Acts 2:38) to be saved. If you do not obey this plan of salvation, you will not be saved – no matter how “good” you try to live. Then, God requires that you live faithfully in His service throughout your life (1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10). So, living for Christ is not a matter of living according to your own ideas of being good, but living in submission to God’s word!

**4) Example of Cornelius.** Cornelius was a “good” man by human standards. Acts 10:2 says he was “a devout man and feared God along with his whole household. He did many charitable deeds for the Jewish people and always prayed to God.” Then, verse 22 adds that he was “an upright and God-fearing man, who has a good reputation with the whole Jewish nation.” Yet, as you read Acts 10, it is clear that this “good” man was not a saved man. Instead, Cornelius was told that Peter would “speak a message to you by which you and all your household will be saved” (Acts 11:14).

Just being a “good” person is not enough to pleasing God and being saved. Rather, God requires faith and obedience to His saving gospel message! You must never equate human standards

of being “good” with faithful obedience to God. For, God has said that those who do not know God and don’t obey the gospel will pay the penalty of eternal destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

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### Article 3

## What Is Spiritual Death?

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The word “death” is used in two primary ways in the Bible – physically and spiritually. In both senses, it involves a separation. Physical death is a separation of the body and spirit. James 2:26 explains, “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” We all have a good idea about what physical death looks like. However, there is another dimension of death that is not as easily observable. This can be called spiritual death.

**1) It is possible to be dead while living.** If we could only understand death in a physical sense, we would not understand passages like 1 Timothy 5:6. That text refers to someone being dead even while she lives. The text is showing an individual who is alive physically but dead spiritually. Interestingly, this same point can be seen in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve were told not to eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that they would certainly die on the day they ate from it (Genesis 2:16-17). But, when they did eat from the tree in Genesis 3, we notice they did not die physically on that day (though the dying process began). However, since God cannot lie, we know there is a sense in which they did die on the day they ate the forbidden fruit!

**2) Spiritual death is caused by sin.** In the two passages already discussed, you can observe that sin is what caused the spiritual death. Other passages demonstrate the same truth. For example, Isaiah 59:2 teaches, “your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.” Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And, James 1:14-15 says, “But each person is tempted when he is

drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.”

**3) Spiritual death is separation from God.** God is holy (Revelation 4:8). This fact explains why sin causes spiritual death and helps us understand spiritual death as a separation from God. 1 John 1:5-6 says, “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely darkness in him. If we say, ‘We have fellowship with him,’ and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.” Whenever you sin, you can no longer be in fellowship with God and receive the spiritual blessings He provides. So, even though you may have physical life, your spirit does not enjoy God’s favor and you have no hope beyond this earth, no peace to sustain you through earthly challenges, no joy that makes life worth living, etc.

**4) Hell is a place of eternal separation from God, the second death.** Those whose physical lives end while they are spiritually separated from God will also be separated from God throughout eternity. Again, this is because a holy God cannot be in fellowship with evil or welcome evil into Heaven (Revelation 21:27)! So, God has warned, “But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars – their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). Furthermore, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 warns that when Jesus comes, He will take “vengeance with flaming fire on those who don’t know God and on those who don’t obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord’s presence and from his glorious strength.” So, this eternal punishment will be away from the presence of God!

Spiritual death is worse than physical death. It is separation from God. Thankfully, although we have all sinned, God has provided the cure through Jesus Christ! So, if we will believe and obey Jesus, He will forgive our sins and restore us to a right



relationship with God so that we will never be hurt by the second death if we are faithful to Him (Revelation 2:8-11)!

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## Article 4

# Seeing God In Your Bible Study

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Studying the Bible should not just be about gaining information about Bible stories, history, and commandments. This kind of informational approach in studying the Bible can make Christianity and discipleship into little more than an ideology, without it producing the deep transformation God desires. Instead, true Bible study should be focused on giving God the opportunity to draw you closer to Him every time you look into its wonderful message! For example, Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets: And they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has listened to and learned from the Father comes to me – not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He has seen the Father” (John 6:44-46).

**1) See God’s nature.** God does not give a single passage in the Scriptures in which He lists all His characteristics. Instead, He gives this information sprinkled throughout the pages of Scripture! Sometimes we see stories about how God interacts with people. Sometimes we see passages where people speak about God. Sometimes we see statements God makes about Himself. Sometimes we see pictures God gives us of Him on His throne. Sometimes we see glimpses into the awesome power and sovereignty of God. Sometimes we see God in human form through Jesus Christ. And, throughout the various pictures, we see different aspects of God’s nature. But, the more we study the Bible, the more we will learn who God is!

**2) See what God has done.** Knowing what God has done in the past helps us learn about both His nature and His ability to do whatever He promises to do in the future. Again, God does not give just a single passage wherein He lists all His awe-inspiring

accomplishments. Rather, He sprinkles them through the pages of His revelation in Scripture. Sometimes we see God's creative power. Sometimes we see God working miracles. Sometimes we see God working through natural events to accomplish certain outcomes. Sometimes we see Him punishing wicked people or rewarding righteous people. Sometimes we see God extending patience and mercy to the wicked. Sometimes we see God sacrificing to save sinners. But, the more we study the Bible, the more we will learn what God has done!

**3) See what God has promised to do.** As we learn God's nature and see what He has done, our faith should grow to fully trust in the promises God makes to people today. All that is written should strengthen our faith in God's promises (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11; Hebrews 12:1-2). Today, God makes has made many promises concerning His care of those who seek Him first (Matthew 6:25-34), that the prayers of the righteous are powerful (James 5:16), that nothing and no one can take our salvation from us as long as we live for God (Romans 8:31-39), and that God will save those who are faithful until death (Revelation 2:10). The more we study the Bible, the more we will learn what God has promised to us!

**4) See what God desires and requires.** All of this information about God should work to draw us to love and seek Him with our whole hearts! We should see in God a God who is alive, one who is awesome, one who has sacrificially loved us, one who desires us to be saved, and one whose warnings and instructions are to be taken with utmost seriousness. Therefore, our Bible study must connect with seeing how God desires people to live on this earth. And, we must recognize that these are the ways He requires us to live for Him to grant us eternal life in Heaven. However, if we are allowing God to draw us to Himself, we will not be seeing these things as burdensome obligations. Rather, we will be seeing them from the perspective of a dearly loved Father we desire to please and imitate (Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 John 5:3), so we will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:27)!

When you read and study the Bible, are you careful to see God through it? It is possible to read the words, understand the meaning, and miss the point entirely! Always remember when you study the Bible, that God is ultimately trying to draw you to Himself. Therefore, study your Bible with the desire to let God draw you ever nearer to Him (James 4:7-10)!

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## Article 5

# Does The Bible Teach “Infant Baptism”?

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There are many religious organizations that practice “infant baptism” (or, christening). Usually, this is the practice of sprinkling water on an infant. Some practice it largely as a symbolic dedication of that child to God and some to cleanse the “original sin” they believe the baby has inherited. But, is this practice according to the teachings of God’s word?

**1) There is no Bible authority for infant baptism.** In order for the practice of “infant baptism” to be pleasing to God, we must be able to find Bible authority for it. Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Therefore, everything that we do must have Jesus’s authority behind it. Yet, there is no direct command, no approved example, and no necessary inference in Scripture to authorize the practice of infant baptism!

Some proponents of infant baptism will surely object to this claim and offer what they believe to be supporting evidence for the practice. For example, some cite Colossians 2:11-12 and claim that just as newborns were circumcised as the sign of the Old Covenant, newborns ought to be baptized as the sign of the New Covenant. Next, some may cite passages about households being baptized (i.e. Acts 16:15). However, neither text mentions anything about infants being baptized!

**2) Infants are not the proper subjects of baptism.** Those in the Bible who were baptized were those who had committed sin (Acts 22:16). They had heard God's word (Acts 18:8). They had believed in Jesus (Mark 16:16). They had repented of their sins (Acts 2:38). They had confessed Jesus (Acts 8:37). And, they had chosen to be baptized for themselves. Acts 2:41 says, "So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them."

The Bible clearly teaches that infants have no sin that dooms them to Hell (Matthew 18:1-4). So, infants are not in need of what baptism is said to accomplish according to the Bible. For example, people are taught to be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21), for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16), to enter a right relationship with Christ (Galatians 3:27), and to transition from the old person to the new person (Romans 6:3-4). Infants do not need any of these things, as they are in a safe condition and right in God's sight!

**3) Most practices of "infant baptism" are not even baptism.** Whenever most religious organizations speak of "infant baptism," they are talking about sprinkling water on a baby's head. But, this is not what the Bible teaches concerning baptism. For example, Acts 8:38-39 shows the person being baptized as well as the teacher going down into the water for baptism. Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12 both call baptism a "burial." And, even the Greek word for baptism means "immersion" (note that it was never properly translated into English).

Even if the Bible did authorize and instruct infant baptism (which it does not), most churches today would not be accomplishing it. To truly baptize an infant would require completely immersing that baby in water. However, God does not teach such a practice in the Bible!

While many churches and religious people practice "infant baptism," we must recognize this is a human tradition that is without God's approval. In fact, it is contrary to what we can read about in the pages of Scripture and must be rejected! Instead,

children must be brought up in the training and instruction of the Lord so that when they get older and do sin against God, they can take the appropriate steps to be saved – including true Bible baptism!

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## Article 6

# How Can I Avoid Being Deceived? (Part 1)

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Nobody likes to be deceived. Being deceived makes us feel manipulated, foolish, and ignorant. And, being deceived results in us doing things we would likely not do if we had believed the truth. Although there is a lot of deception in this world about every subject imaginable, there is no greater need to make sure you are not deceived than in those areas that pertain to living in a way that pleases God! Thankfully, God does not want you to be deceived and helps you learn how to avoid such deception.

**1) Recognize there are many deceivers.** As long as you are naïve to think that everyone will tell you the truth and lead you in the right direction, you will be easy prey for deceivers and manipulators. For, God gives many warnings about such people throughout Scripture. For example, Jesus warned about the devil being a liar (John 8:44). Since his influence has spread throughout this world (1 John 5:19), you must expect that many have believed one or more of his many lies – and are even working to spread them to others. When 2<sup>nd</sup> John was written, John said, “Many deceivers have gone out into the world” (1:7). When 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter was written, Peter said, “There were indeed false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you” (2:1). And, when Romans was written, Paul urged people to “watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned” (Romans 16:17). Today, just as then, there are many people who are working to deceive you!

**2) Don't believe someone just because of your perception of him/her.** Although there is a proper place for your wisdom and intuition, you must also recognize its limitations. Most notably, you do not know what is in the heart (mind) of another person. Only God does! So, you must not think you can use your own wisdom and intuition alone to decide whether someone is telling you the truth! For example, Paul warned about false teachers and divisive people saying that they “deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words” (Romans 16:17-18). So, unsuspecting people would be deceived by them. And, Paul also warned other Christians about some who were “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

**3) Know the truth.** A knowledge of what is true according to the perfect standard of God's word is crucial to not being deceived. Only the truth will set you free and lead you to being Christ's true disciple (John 8:31-32). Thankfully, God repeatedly tells us to know the truth, implying that it is possible to know and understand His message of truth (Ephesians 3:3-6; Ephesians 5:17). For example, God has shown that a lack of knowledge leads to destruction (Hosea 4:6; 2 Peter 3:15-18). Furthermore, God asks, “Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived...” and then lists the sort of unrighteous behavior that will keep people out of the kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The single best way for you to spot any frauds, imposters, and manipulations is to know the truth extremely well! And, the only way you can accomplish this is to study it diligently every day (Acts 17:11).

These three keys are crucial to not being deceived! So, you must find ways to implement these points in your life. The consequences of being deceived are far too great for you to not do everything you can to avoid such deception! In part 2, we will explore some additional steps you must take.

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## Article 7

# How Can I Avoid Being Deceived? (Part 2)

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In the first part of this study, we saw the need to recognize there are many deceivers, to not believe someone just because of your perception of him/her, and to know the truth. While this is a good start in making sure you will not be deceived, there is more you can and should do.

**1) Be careful in your associations.** God wants you to be extremely careful about who you spend time with. For example, Paul warned the Corinthian Christians (whenever some were teaching falsely about the resurrection), “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Corinthians 15:33). So, if you know someone you spend time with regularly does not believe the truth, you should not continue allowing that person to be in situations that will work to deceive you! 2 John 1:9-11 issues the stern warning, “Anyone who does not remain in Christ’s teaching but goes beyond it does not have God. The one who remains in that teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your home, and don’t greet him; for the one who greets him shares in his evil works.” You must diligently try not to put yourself in situations (i.e. with friends, with religious teachers, with churches, with media, etc.) that will work to deceive you.

**2) Test what you are taught and believe.** Whenever people blindly follow another (i.e. friend, family member, religious teacher, etc.), it is extremely dangerous! For, you will not know whether you are following someone who is telling you the truth and leading you in the right way or someone who is deceiving you (whether intentionally or unintentionally). Jesus said, “Every plant that my heavenly Father didn’t plant will be uprooted. Leave them alone! They are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit” (Matthew 15:13-14). In fact, there are many

passages that urge you to test what you are taught (including Ephesians 5:6-14, 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22, and 1 John 4:1). A good example of this principle put into practice can be found in Acts 17:11 concerning people in Berea. It says, "The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." In the same way, whenever you are taught anything, you must search the Scriptures for yourself to determine whether it is true.

**3) Seek God according to the truth.** Deception often happens whenever people value other things above seeking God according to His truth. For example, if you value a relationship with another person above God, you will easily be deceived by that person. If you value your relationship with your current church or church leaders above God, you will easily be deceived by them. Or, if you value someone telling you what you want to believe above God, you will easily be deceived by your own desires. Rather than any of these, Jesus teaches, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Later, He said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you" (Matthew 6:33). Your focus must be on seeking God and what He wants from your life. If it is, only the truth will be desirable to you. 1 Peter 2:2-3 says, "Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow up into your salvation, if you have tasted that the Lord is good." This kind of desire will seek God above your desires and above relationships with others (2 Timothy 4:2-4; Galatians 1:6-9; Matthew 10:34-39).

God has revealed the true faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can know it. And, by extension, you can not be deceived by those who are not teaching and following that truth! But, you must do the things God requires to avoid being deceived!



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## Article 8

# Do I Have What It Takes To Follow Jesus?

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Some people have considered what it takes to follow Jesus and chosen not to follow Him. For example, a rich young ruler approached Jesus, wanting to know what he must do to have eternal life. But, he went away sorrowful when Jesus told him that it would cost him all his riches (Matthew 19:16-22). In the same way, perhaps you have considered whether to start or continue following Jesus but have just been unsure whether you have what it takes to do that.

**1) It costs to follow Jesus.** Jesus wants those who follow Him to consider the cost of doing so. For example, Luke 9:23-24 says, "Then he said to them all, 'If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will save it.'" Therefore, it is proper to recognize that following Jesus will be costly and require great sacrifice. However, you must balance this cost with the recognition that following Jesus is the only way to eternal life in Heaven and is the only kind of life that is truly joyful and fulfilling (John 14:6)!

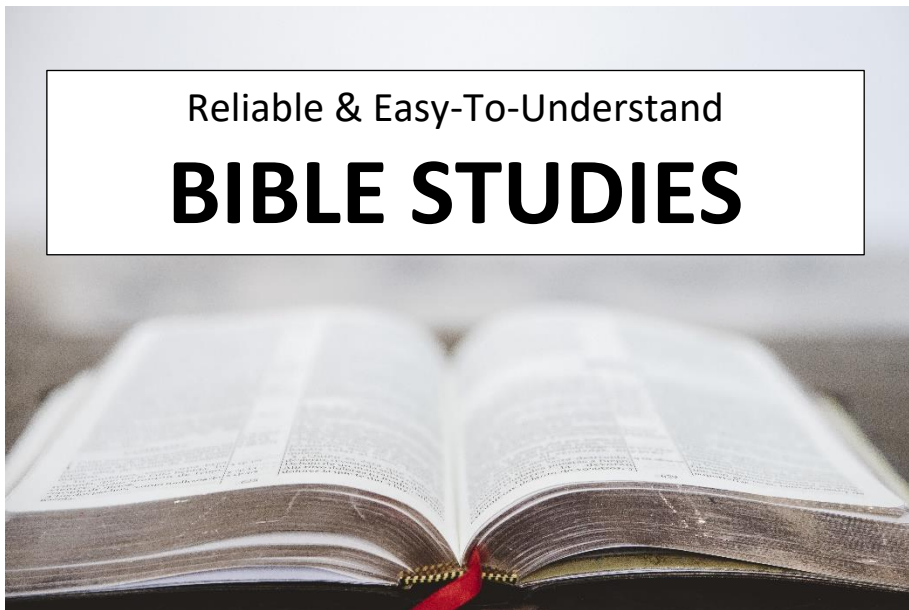
**2) God created everyone with the ability to seek Him.** God did not give some people the ability to make this kind of commitment to follow Jesus and not to others. God has created every person in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). This means we have all been created as spiritual beings, just as God is a spiritual Being (John 4:24). So, when the apostle Paul spoke to idol worshipers in Athens, he said, "From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26-27). There is no one who is so far away from God that he/she cannot reach out and find Him! But, it requires that we seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

**3) There is a war between the flesh and the spirit.** Although we all have the ability to seek God, there is something working against us doing so. The Bible reveals that there is an enemy of all mankind who is working to deceive and mislead us. God calls him Satan (the devil, 1 Peter 5:8-9). Because we are both physical and spiritual beings, Satan is trying to appeal to our fleshly desires in a way that influences us not to seek God. This is called temptation (James 1:14-15). However, we can resist the devil's temptations and not sin (James 4:7). This struggle between the flesh and the spirit is referred to as a war. For example, 1 Peter 2:11 says, "Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul." But, please notice the fact that God gives you the choice as to which side of this war you want to fight on and gives you everything you need to overcome (Ephesians 6:10-18)!

**4) Serving Jesus is an intentional decision every day.** One key in whether people will follow Jesus is whether they will humbly choose to follow Jesus above living for their own fleshly desires. Most do not. Those who choose to follow Jesus and make the sacrifices He requires do so because they recognize what He offers through the love He has shown by dying on the cross! For example, Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Although the decision to follow Jesus should not be made lightly, it is within your ability to make! And, rather than a one-time decision, it is a decision that you must make every day to work out your own salvation in a way that pleases God (Philippians 2:12).

You have what it takes to serve God! God has created you in His image and given you everything you need to follow Jesus. But, He does not force you to do so. He has left it up to your choice of whether you will spend your life pleasing yourself by pursuing the temporary things of this life or whether you will sacrifice yourself to follow Jesus and be rewarded throughout eternity. Which will you choose?

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