

BELIEVE BAPTISM BELONG

HOW TO FIND AND FOLLOW JESUS

BY PETER FOXWELL

BELIEVE BAPTISM BELONG

HOW TO FIND AND FOLLOW JESUS

BY PETER FOXWELL

FIND AND FOLLOW JESUS

Arizona pastor Trey VanCamp wrote, “Following Jesus is not about passing a test; following Jesus is about placing your trust.” That kind of trust is called “faith.”

I want to help you to find and follow Jesus by faith. This is the best and most deeply satisfying life anyone can hope for.

This booklet outlines a memorable and practical three-stage process for finding and following Jesus: believe, baptism, belong. The chapters build on each other, and are designed to be read in sequence.

Why Jesus? How to trust him? How to follow him? Keep reading to find the answers.

Following Jesus with you,

Pastor Peter Foxwell
The Cornerstone Church
FamousGod.com

1.

BELIEVE - PART 1: GOSPEL

Gospel is an old English word that means good news. The Bible, it refers to it as the good news about Jesus. Who is he, and why is he good news?

THE BIOGRAPHY OF JESUS

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. After living in Egypt as a refugee from government oppression, he moved with his family to Nazareth, where he grew up.

Jesus was a remarkable child. An angel announced his virgin conception and unique destiny to his parents, Mary and Joseph.

Luke 1:30-33 (CSB) Then the angel told her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. 33 He will reign over the

house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.”

At 30, Jesus launched into an itinerant teaching and prophetic ministry. He announced the kingdom of God, called people to repent and return to the Lord, and gathered disciples. Jesus taught, healed, and cast out demons. He performed miracles as signs that God’s kingdom was arriving on earth.

After three years, the religious and political authorities colluded to arrest, convict, and execute Jesus. He died on a wooden cross outside the walls of Jerusalem at the hands of Roman soldiers. However, he rose from the dead, appeared to hundreds of people, and instructed the disciples about the kingdom before ascending into heaven.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS

The biography of Jesus does not tell the whole story. For that, we need to explore his place in the storyline of the Bible.

The Bible reveals that God made the world and the first man and woman. He placed them in a garden paradise to rule with him. God provided them with everything they needed to flourish in a good world.

Sadly, the humans rebelled against God, and he expelled them from the garden. Their sin and death were passed down and became the new normal for humanity.

The Bible teaches us that we are alienated from God and, despite many religious and spiritual attempts to bridge the gap between us, we cannot find a way to make peace with him.

“TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT, THAT KING IS JESUS. HE IS THE PROMISED SAVIOR OF THE WORLD.”

For thousands of years, the world waited for God to keep his promise to send a mighty but humble king who would restore humanity to God, forgive sins, and renew the world.

To make a long story short, that king is Jesus. He is the promised savior of the world. But he is more than human.

The Bible insists that Jesus is the incarnation of God. One of the earliest Christian hymns describes how God became one of us.

Philippians 2:5b-8 (CSB) ... Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled

himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even to death on a cross.

Jesus is God in the flesh, truly God and truly man. This was necessary for him to become the savior of the world and to complete God's promised rescue plan.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

Sin and rebellion against God demand an eternal death penalty for treason. Without a savior, we would die and be sent away from God. Except ... He has a plan to rescue us.

God cannot die, but the God-man Jesus can. He came into the world for us, driven by love and mercy, and died on the cross in our place to take away our sins, give us new life, and restore us to God. Eternal death has been replaced with eternal life in Jesus.

The gospel, or good news, announces that there is a way to come home to God because he came into the world in Jesus to rescue us.

2.

BELIEVE - PART 2: SALVATION

Salvation is one of those concepts that we hear about but may not fully understand in its Christian context. This is unfortunate because salvation is a matter of life and death. We need to know what it means.

FOUR QUESTIONS - FOUR ANSWERS

The New Testament letter to the church in Ephesus (in modern Turkey) explains salvation.

Ephesians 2:1-10 (CSB) 1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins 2 in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. 3 We, too, all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, 5 made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! 6 He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in

Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — 9 not from works so that no one can boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

The passage contains four answers to four questions about salvation:

Question 1. Why do we need salvation?

The answer is in verses 1-3. We need salvation because, apart from God's intervention, we are sinners who rebel against God in all sorts of ways. We are held captive by the devil and our godless culture, and God is angry with us. We are in big trouble.

Question 2. What motivates God to save us?

The answer is in verse 4. God is motivated by his mercy and great love for rebels like us. That is a stunning revelation. He loves us despite our sinful choices.

Question 3. How does God save us?

The answer is in verses 5-7. God saved us through the person and work of Jesus. He saved us when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. He saved us by taking away our sins at the cross and raising us to new life in the risen Jesus.

Question 4. How can we receive God's salvation?

The answer is in verses 8-10. God offers to save us freely as a gift called grace. We can't earn or deserve grace because it is not a payment in return for something but a pure gift.

Not all the religion, ritual, heritage, money, status, or clean living in the universe can save us. Only grace. Only the gift of God. We receive God's grace through faith by turning from self and sin (repentance) to trust in Jesus, who he is, and what he has done for us.

RESPONSE

Now that you have learned the gospel is and explored the meaning of salvation, what is your response?

Jesus always called people to decide. Would they trust him or reject him? For example:

Matthew 11:28-30 (CSB) Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

After his disciples preached about Jesus to crowds in Jerusalem, they called for a decision, a response of repentance and faith in Jesus.

Acts 2:38-41 (CSB) Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” 40 With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation! ” 41 So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day, about three thousand people were added to them.

“NOW THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED WHAT THE GOSPEL IS AND EXPLORED THE MEANING OF SALVATION, WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE?”

How will you respond to Jesus and the offer of salvation by grace? Will you turn from self and sin and receive it by faith?

If your answer is yes, then you have found Jesus. Now, it’s time to follow him. The first step to following Jesus is baptism in water. Chapter 3 has useful information about baptism.

3.

BAPTISM

Water baptism is an essential step in following Jesus. He commanded his apostles to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

When a person turns from self and sin to Jesus Christ, trusting him as their God and Savior, their next step of following him (discipleship) is to receive water baptism.

Baptism comes after faith in Jesus because it’s a sign of God’s saving work in our lives. In baptism, the gospel promises are confirmed visibly rather than verbally. The water is a powerful word from God about his power to cleanse our guilt, wash away all our sins, and give us new life.

The sign of baptism points to our invisible, internal, spiritual union with Jesus. We are joined to his saving death and resurrection as explained in Romans 6.

Romans 6:3-4 (ESV) Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

We go under the water as a sign that God has released us from the power of sin, cleansing us from its guilt and shame. We come out of the water as a sign that God has given us new life. Water baptism also signifies our intention to give our loving obedience to Jesus.

The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith defines water baptism.

“Baptism ... is intended to be, to the person baptized, God’s sign or promise of fellowship with Christ in his death and resurrection; that is, a sign of his being ingrafted into Christ (Rom. 6:3, 4, 5; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27), and forgiven of all his sins (Mk. 1:4; Acts 2:38, and 22:16). It also indicates that the baptized person has given himself up to God, through Jesus Christ, so that he may live and conduct himself in newness of life (Rom. 6:3, 4).”

“BAPTISM IS GOD’S SIGN OF THE BELIEVER’S FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.”

WHO SHOULD RECEIVE BAPTISM?

When we turn from self and sin to Jesus Christ and trust him as our God and Savior, our next step of discipleship is to receive water baptism.

Baptism is to be administered to all who profess repentance (Acts 2:38; Mt. 3:6) and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, being willing to yield obedience to him (Acts 8:12, 36, 37, 38; 10:47, 48). For these reasons, we do not baptize infants since they cannot repent, believe, and obey.

WHY WATER, IMMERSION, PUBLIC?

In Judaism, at the time of Jesus, it was common to immerse oneself in water as an act of cleansing and repentance. Water baptism has been a Christian practice from the beginning.

While there are Christian traditions in which believers are sprinkled with water, the Greek word *baptizo* means to immerse. This preserves the dramatic symbolism of death and resurrection inherent in Christian baptism.

The believer is immersed in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:16; Jn. 3:23; 4:1, 2; Mt. 28:19, 20; Acts 8:38; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

At the Cornerstone, we celebrate baptism in public. It is a beautiful opportunity to testify to God's saving power and

invite friends and family to find and follow Jesus. While faith is intensely personal, it must always be shared. The Lord Jesus taught us to shine like lamps in the darkness (Matthew 5:13-16).

BAPTISM AT THE CORNERSTONE

When you are ready to receive baptism, please complete and return a baptism application to our pastor. The form is available on our website at www.famousgod.com/baptism.

Our pastor will interview you to confirm that you understand the gospel and have turned from self and sin to trust in Jesus Christ as your God and Savior.

During the baptism celebration, all candidates answer three questions in the affirmative.

1. Have you turned from self and sin to trust in Jesus Christ as your God and Savior?
2. Do you intend to follow Jesus Christ for the rest of your life?
3. Have you renounced the devil and all his works?

We encourage you to invite friends and family to witness your baptism. Here are some practical suggestions:

- Bring: Towel, change of clothes, friends, and family.

- Men: Wear swim shorts and a dark T-shirt.
- Women: Wear a swimsuit, shorts and a dark T-shirt.

4.

BELONG

Believing the gospel, trusting in Jesus, and receiving baptism are the beginning, not the end, of our spiritual journey. You have launched into a lifelong “walk” with Jesus, which impacts every aspect of your life.

You belong to Jesus as his disciple or follower, which means you are committed to loving, learning from, and obeying him. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commands” and “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word” (John 14:15, 23, CSB).

That sounds daunting, if not impossible. However, the good news is that God will help you follow Jesus. His grace is an ever-available source of enabling power. You’re not alone.

RESOURCES FOR JESUS-FOLLOWERS

Jesus-followers have access to God’s resources for following Jesus. The Christian life is a supernatural, Spirit-empowered life. For example:

New life: When you trusted in Jesus, God’s Spirit brought you from spiritual death to life and gave you a heart that is open and oriented to God, his will, and ways.

Ephesians 2:4-5 (CSB) God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, 5 made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses.

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (CSB) I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances.

New freedom: The Holy Spirit has united you with Jesus in his death and resurrection so that the power of the cross breaks sin’s dominion, and the power of the resurrection unleashes a godly life.

Romans 6:4, 6-7, 13 (CSB) 4 Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life... 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, 7 since a person who has died is freed from sin... 13 But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness.

New power: The Holy Spirit is your “fuel” for following Jesus in every situation. You may feel weak, helpless, or defeated, but the Spirit provides sufficient empowering grace to do God’s will. His power is released when you step up to obey.

Titus 2:11-12 (CSB) For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age...

2 Corinthians 12:9 (CSB) But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness."

New destiny: God saved you for a purpose. Your destiny is to bring honor to God through your good works.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (CSB) So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 5:15 (CSB) And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised.

Ephesians 2:10 (CSB) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

GET ON THE GROWTH TRACK

Half-hearted Christianity is like half-hearted anything else: bland, boring, and unsatisfying. I recommend you pursue your walk with Jesus with wholehearted commitment and intensity. Zeal is the key that unlocks the full riches of the Christian life. It will come with challenges, but it also comes with many benefits.

I developed the Growth Track to help everyone grow into wholehearted followers of Jesus. Consider joining the growth

track and working through the three phases. You could invite a friend to follow the Growth Track with you.

Phase One: Connect. Connect to Christ and his Church. After believing in Jesus and receiving baptism (Chapters 1-3 in this booklet), you should attend Cornerstone 101 to learn more about the church and apply for membership. Also, find a small group that feels right for you and join it for friendship, support, encouragement, and opportunities to serve.

Phase Two: Grow. Engage in spiritual practices such as church worship services, Bible study, prayer, and fasting. Learn the Christian faith by, for example, listening to sermons, attending classes, and reading biblically faithful books.

Phase Three: Serve. The Cornerstone offers many opportunities to volunteer your time, skills, and spiritual gifts to help people and build the church. A great way to serve is to support the Cornerstone and other ministries financially.

THE ONE PLAN

Spiritual growth formulas are often unhelpful and lead to frustration and discouragement. However, I am confident you will enjoy following Jesus more if you follow our Growth Track. You will be a healthy, growing, joyful Christian when you make it a habit to follow the One Plan: participate in one church service, one small group, and one ministry (serve team) regularly. Simple, but true.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Foxwell helped launch the Cornerstone Church in 1997. Today, he serves as the lead pastor responsible for preaching and leading the congregation. Peter earned a law degree from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, a Master of Divinity from Cornerstone Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, and a Doctor of Philosophy from Liberty University in Virginia. His doctoral research focused on clergy work-related stress. Peter is married to Kim, and they have two adult children.

The Cornerstone Church

FamousGod.com