

EXPLORE • REFLECT • SHARE

First Principles

Bible Study

Eleven self-guided studies in following Jesus

Christianity is meant to be contagious: the faith and hope we find in Jesus are meant to spread beyond us (1 Thessalonians 1:8). Knowledge is important, but we don't need years of study behind us to help someone find God. We can begin by sharing the hope we already have.

Someone who has been baptised should be equipped and encouraged to go and make disciples, continuing to learn as they help others follow Jesus (Matthew 28:19–20).

These guides have two aims: to make clear what it means to follow Christ, and to make it easier to share that hope with others, whatever our level of knowledge or confidence.

Read the Bible for yourself. Ask questions. Consider your next step.



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 1 OF 11

Seeking God

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: What does it mean to seek God?

Day 2: How much effort does seeking take?

Day 3: What gets in the way?

Day 4: Is finding God worth the cost?

Day 5: What does wholehearted seeking look like?

Day 6: How do I know whether what I believe is true?

Day 7: A real person seeking God

What does it mean to seek God?

Read

- Matthew 7:7 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

- Matthew 7:13-14 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What words or ideas stand out to you in these verses?
2. According to Jesus, what happens when someone seeks?
3. What contrasts do you notice between verses 13 and 14?
4. Why do you think Jesus describes one way as broad and the other as narrow?
5. Is there a difference between being interested in God and actually seeking Him? What do you think that difference might be?

For yourself

If I decided I genuinely wanted to seek God, what might that look like in practice?

How much effort does seeking take?

Read

- Luke 13:22-30 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 1 Timothy 4:7-8 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What question is Jesus asked in Luke 13?
2. What does Jesus tell people to do instead of simply answering the question?
3. What surprises you about the people who are left outside?
4. What do the words 'make every effort' suggest to you?
5. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul compares spiritual growth with training. What normally makes training effective?
6. What might spiritual 'training' look like?

For yourself

Am I presently exploring God casually, seriously, or somewhere in between? Why?

What gets in the way?

Read the whole section rather than only verse 33.

Read

- Matthew 6:25-33 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What are the people in this passage worried about?
2. What does Jesus tell them to look at and think about?
3. What does Jesus say God already knows?
4. What does verse 33 say should come first?
5. Are the things Jesus mentions bad things, or ordinary and necessary things?
6. What does that suggest about the kinds of things that can compete with seeking God?

For yourself

What things - even good things - are most likely to take first place in my life?

Is finding God worth the cost?

Read

- Matthew 13:44-46 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What are the two things Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to?
2. What do the two people do when they recognise what they have found?
3. What similarities are there between the two stories?
4. What differences do you notice?
5. What emotion is specifically mentioned in the first story?
6. Why might someone willingly give up something valuable after discovering something they believe is worth much more?

For yourself

What would I find difficult to change or give up if following God required it?

What would have to be true about God for that trade to be worthwhile?

What does wholehearted seeking look like?

Look for repeated ideas across the three passages.

Read

- Jeremiah 29:10-13 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Deuteronomy 4:28-31 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 2 Chronicles 15:1-4 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What circumstances are people in when they begin seeking God?
2. What does each passage say about seeking Him?
3. What words describe how they are to seek?
4. What does God do when people turn towards Him?
5. What do these passages suggest about someone who has wandered a long way from God?
6. What, if anything, do these passages tell you about God's willingness to be found?

For yourself

Finish this sentence in your own words: 'If these passages are true, then seeking God wholeheartedly would mean...'

How do I know whether what I believe is true?

Read

- Acts 17:10-11 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Acts 17:22-27 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Hebrews 11:6 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Why are the Bereans described positively in Acts 17:10-11?
2. What did they do with what Paul told them?
3. Does their example suggest that religious teaching should simply be accepted because someone confident says it?
4. In Acts 17:22-27, what does Paul say about God's relationship to humanity?
5. According to verse 27, what does God want people to do?
6. What two things does Hebrews 11:6 connect with coming to God?
7. How could someone investigate God seriously while still asking difficult questions?

For yourself

What do I currently believe about God - and how did I arrive at those beliefs?

What would I like to investigate rather than simply assume?

A real person seeking God

Take your time with this one. It is a story rather than a collection of sayings.

Read

- Acts 8:26-40 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What do you learn about the Ethiopian man before Philip meets him?
2. What is he already doing in his search for God?
3. What does he understand?
4. What doesn't he understand?
5. How does he respond when Philip offers help?
6. What role does Scripture play in their conversation?
7. What does Philip explain to him?
8. What does the Ethiopian ask when they reach some water?
9. What happens after their conversation?
10. How is the Ethiopian described at the end of the story?

Look back

1. What do these passages say about God?
2. What do they say about people who seek Him?
3. What seems to help someone seek?
4. What seems to get in the way?
5. What questions do you still have?
6. Is there anything you now want to investigate further?

For yourself

Based only on what you have read for yourself this week: what do you think your next step should be?

If your answer is 'I don't know yet', what would you need to know next?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 2 OF 11

Knowing Jesus

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: Who is Jesus?

Day 2: What mattered to Jesus?

Day 3: Jesus and Nicodemus

Day 4: What does Jesus claim about Himself?

Day 5: The way to the Father

Day 6: Watch Jesus with people

Day 7: What kind of person is Jesus?

Who is Jesus?

Read

- John 1:1 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- John 1:14 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What claims does John make about Jesus?
2. What does it mean that 'the Word became flesh'?
3. How is Jesus described in verse 14?
4. What questions do these verses raise for you?

For yourself

Who do I currently think Jesus is? Why?

What mattered to Jesus?

Read

- John 2:13-17 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Jesus see happening?
2. How does He respond?
3. What appears to matter deeply to Him?
4. Does anything in this picture of Jesus surprise you?

For yourself

What does this passage add to my picture of Jesus?

Jesus and Nicodemus

Read

- John 3:1-16 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- John 7:50-51 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- John 19:38-39 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What do you learn about Nicodemus when he first meets Jesus?
2. What does Jesus challenge him to understand?
3. How does Nicodemus appear later in John's Gospel?
4. What seems to have changed?

For yourself

What might cause someone's view of Jesus to change over time?

What questions about Jesus would I like to keep exploring, and how could I investigate them?

What does Jesus claim about Himself?

Read

- John 6:35 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- John 8:12 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- John 10:11 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- John 11:25 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What images does Jesus use to describe Himself?
2. What does each image suggest?
3. Are these ordinary claims for a religious teacher to make?
4. What do you think Jesus wanted His listeners to conclude?

For yourself

Which of Jesus' descriptions of Himself speaks most directly to a need in my life? How might I respond?

The way to the Father

Read

- John 14:1-6 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Jesus tell His followers not to do?
2. What hope does He give them?
3. What does Jesus say about Himself in verse 6?
4. What do you think that claim means?

For yourself

If Jesus' claims are true, what difference would that make?

What would trusting Jesus as the way to the Father mean for my own choices?

Watch Jesus with people

Read

- John 4:1-42 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. How does Jesus treat the woman?
2. What does He know about her?
3. What difficult subjects does He discuss honestly?
4. Why does she eventually tell other people about Him?
5. How do their attitudes towards Jesus change?

For yourself

What could I learn from the way Jesus treats this woman, and how could I put that into practice?

What kind of person is Jesus?

Read

- Hebrews 2:17-18 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Hebrews 4:15-16 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 1 John 2:5-6 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. What have you learned about Jesus this week?
2. What do you admire?
3. What troubles or puzzles you?
4. Do you want to know Him better? Why or why not?

For yourself

What is one way I could follow Jesus' example this week? What help might I need?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 3 OF 11

The Word of God

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: What can God's Word do?

Day 2: Where does Scripture come from?

Day 3: Belief and behaviour

Day 4: What makes someone a disciple?

Day 5: Taking Jesus' words seriously

Day 6: Scripture, tradition and ourselves

Day 7: Hearing and doing

What can God's Word do?

Read

- Hebrews 4:12-13 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. How is God's word described?
2. What does it reveal?
3. Why might being completely known by God be uncomfortable?
4. Why might it also be helpful?

For yourself

What has today's passage helped me notice about my own thoughts or motives? How could I respond honestly to God?

Where does Scripture come from?

Read

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Paul claim about Scripture?
2. What purposes does he give for it?
3. What is the intended result?
4. What would it mean to actually use Scripture in these ways?

For yourself

Which of Scripture's purposes do I most need in my life at present? How could I make room for it this week?

Belief and behaviour

Read

- 1 Timothy 4:15-16 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What two things is Timothy told to watch closely?
2. Why do you think both matter?
3. What does perseverance look like?
4. What could happen if someone's beliefs and life move in different directions?

For yourself

Where do my beliefs and behaviour agree, and where do they pull in different directions? What could I work on?

What makes someone a disciple?

Read

- John 8:31-32 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Who is Jesus speaking to?
2. What condition does He put after belief?
3. How does Jesus describe a disciple?
4. What connection does He make between teaching, truth and freedom?

For yourself

What would holding to Jesus' teaching look like in one area of my life?

Taking Jesus' words seriously

Read

- John 12:47-48 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Why does Jesus say He came?
2. What happens when His words are rejected?
3. What authority does Jesus give His message?
4. What response would make sense if His claim is true?

For yourself

Is there a teaching of Jesus I find difficult to take seriously? What would help me consider it honestly?

Scripture, tradition and ourselves

Read

- Mark 7:6-9 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Proverbs 3:5 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Proverbs 14:12 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What danger does Jesus identify?
2. Can religious traditions ever compete with what Scripture says?
3. What warning do the Proverbs give about relying entirely on our own judgement?
4. How could someone test their beliefs honestly?

For yourself

Which of my beliefs rests mainly on tradition or my own judgement? How could I examine it against Scripture?

Hearing and doing

Read

- James 1:22-25 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 2 Timothy 2:15 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Romans 10:17 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. What attitudes towards Scripture have you seen this week?

For yourself

How do you think you should approach the Bible if you genuinely want to discover whether its claims are true?

What is one thing I have read this week that I could begin putting into practice?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 4 OF 11

Discipleship

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: Christian or disciple?

Day 2: Jesus' invitation

Day 3: Excuses and competing priorities

Day 4: Follow me

Day 5: Making disciples

Day 6: What matters most?

Day 7: Count the implications

Christian or disciple?

Read

- Acts 11:25-26 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What are Jesus' followers called?
2. What connection does the passage make between 'disciples' and 'Christians'?
3. What do you normally understand the word disciple to mean?

For yourself

What would being a disciple of someone involve?

If I became a disciple of Jesus, what would I need to learn or change in my own life?

Jesus' invitation

Read

- Luke 9:23-27 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Who does Jesus say may come after Him?
2. What three things does He ask of that person?
3. What might 'deny yourself' mean?
4. Why does Jesus talk about gaining and losing life?

For yourself

Where might following Jesus require me to set aside my own preferences? What could that look like today?

Excuses and competing priorities

Read

- Luke 9:57-62 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does each person say?
2. How does Jesus answer?
3. What seems to prevent wholehearted following?
4. Why do you think Jesus responds so strongly?

For yourself

What am I tempted to put off until later when it comes to following Jesus? What is behind that hesitation?

Follow me

Read

- Mark 1:16-20 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Jesus invite these men to do?
2. What does He say He will teach them?
3. How quickly do they respond?
4. What changes because of their decision?

For yourself

What would responding to Jesus' invitation mean for me? Is there a step I am ready to take?

Making disciples

Read

- Matthew 28:18-20 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What authority does Jesus claim?
2. What does He command His followers to do?
3. What is a disciple supposed to learn?
4. What promise closes the passage?

For yourself

Who could I share what I am learning about Jesus with? How could I begin that conversation?

What matters most?

Read

- Matthew 22:34-40 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Jesus call the greatest commandment?
2. What is second?
3. What does loving God with 'all' suggest?
4. How are love for God and love for people connected?

For yourself

How could I show love for God and for another person in a practical way this week?

Count the implications

Read

- Luke 14:25-33 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. What does Jesus actually ask of His followers?
2. Which parts seem attractive?
3. Which seem difficult?

For yourself

Based on these passages, how would you define a disciple of Jesus?

Which part of following Jesus would be hardest for me? What do I need to consider before deciding how to respond?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 5 OF 11

Sin

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: The basic problem

Day 2: Sin, forgiveness and love

Day 3: Where does sin come from?

Day 4: What does the Bible call sin?

Day 5: Darkness and light

Day 6: Things done and things left undone

Day 7: Is change possible?

The basic problem

Read

- Romans 3:23 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

- Romans 6:23 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Who does Paul say has sinned?
2. What is sin compared with?
3. What consequence does Paul attach to sin?
4. What contrast appears in Romans 6:23?

For yourself

How do I respond to the claim that I too have sinned? What does the contrast between sin's wages and God's gift mean for me?

Sin, forgiveness and love

Read

- Luke 7:36-50 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Compare Simon with the woman.
2. How do they treat Jesus differently?
3. What story does Jesus tell?
4. What connection does Jesus make between forgiveness, gratitude and love?

For yourself

Which person do I understand more easily - Simon or the woman? Why?

Where does sin come from?

Read

- Mark 7:21-23 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Where does Jesus say these things originate?
2. What behaviours and attitudes does He mention?
3. Are they all outward actions?
4. What does Jesus mean by saying these things defile a person?

For yourself

Which of the attitudes Jesus describes do I recognise in myself? What would it mean to address the heart behind them?

What does the Bible call sin?

Read

- Galatians 5:19-21 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Which behaviours are obvious to you?
2. Which are easier to overlook or excuse?
3. Why might Paul put attitudes such as jealousy, hatred and selfish ambition alongside more obvious behaviours?
4. What warning does he give?

For yourself

Which of these behaviours or attitudes am I most tempted to excuse in myself? What would an honest response look like?

Darkness and light

Read

- Ephesians 5:3-13 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What standards does Paul describe?
2. What does he mean by 'empty words'?
3. What happens when things are exposed by light?
4. Why might honesty about wrongdoing be important?

For yourself

Is there something in my life I avoid looking at honestly? What would a first step towards bringing it into the light be?

Things done and things left undone

Read

- James 4:17 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Isaiah 59:1-3 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. According to James, can doing nothing sometimes be wrong?
2. What does Isaiah say sin does to a relationship with God?
3. Is the problem merely breaking rules, or something more?

For yourself

What good do I know I should do but keep leaving undone? What could I do about it this week?

Is change possible?

Read

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Colossians 3:5-11 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. What picture of sin emerges from these passages?
2. What picture of change emerges?

For yourself

Where do you think you personally need God's grace?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 6 OF 11

The Cross

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: Grace

Day 2: Loved while still enemies

Day 3: The crucifixion

Day 4: Why did He die?

Day 5: How did people respond?

Day 6: Love and light

Day 7: Look at the whole picture

Grace

Read

- Romans 3:21-27 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What problem does Paul begin with?
2. What solution does he describe?
3. What words does he use for what Jesus accomplishes?
4. Can anyone boast about earning this?

For yourself

Do I tend to think I must earn God's acceptance? How might this passage change the way I approach Him?

Loved while still enemies

Read

- Romans 5:6-11 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. How are people described when Christ dies for them?
2. What does Christ's death demonstrate?
3. What changes between people and God?
4. What does 'reconciled' mean to you?

For yourself

What does being loved before I have put everything right mean to me? How might I respond to that love?

The crucifixion

As you read, notice what Jesus chooses, what other people do, what Jesus suffers, what He says, and how people respond.

Read

- Mark 14:26-15:41 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Jesus choose?
2. What do other people do?
3. What does Jesus suffer?
4. What does He say?
5. How do people respond?

For yourself

Why do you think Jesus went through with it?

How does reading about Jesus' suffering affect my response to Him? What would I like to say to Him or understand better?

Why did He die?

Read

- 1 Peter 2:21-25 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. How does Peter describe Jesus' behaviour while suffering?
2. What does he say Jesus carried?
3. What purpose does he give for Jesus' death?
4. What response does Peter expect?

For yourself

What would it mean for me to 'die to sins and live for righteousness'? Where could that begin in my life?

How did people respond?

Read

- Acts 2:36-41 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What has Peter's audience become convinced about?
2. How do they react?
3. What question do they ask?
4. What answer are they given?
5. What do those who accept the message do?

For yourself

How do I want to respond to what I have learned about Jesus? What questions do I need to resolve about that response?

Love and light

Read

- John 3:16-21 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Why does God send His Son?
2. What is His purpose towards the world?
3. Why might people avoid the light?
4. What does coming into the light involve?

For yourself

What makes me want to hide rather than come into the light? What could help me approach God honestly?

Look at the whole picture

Read

- Isaiah 52:13-53:12 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

- Ephesians 2:1-10 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. What do these passages say about humanity's problem?
2. What do they say about God's response?
3. What do they say about Jesus' sacrifice?
4. What do they say about grace?
5. What do they say about the life that follows?

For yourself

What does the cross mean to you now?

How might what I have learned about the cross change the way I live or relate to God?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 7 OF 11

Repentance

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: What motivates change?

Day 2: What does repentance produce?

Day 3: Repentance and fruit

Day 4: Turning

Day 5: Feeling bad or changing?

Day 6: A gift from God

Day 7: Putting it together

What motivates change?

Read

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Christ's love compel people to do?
2. Who should a person live for?
3. What is described as new?
4. What does reconciliation mean?

For yourself

What currently motivates my choices? What might change if Christ's love became my reason for how I live?

What does repentance produce?

Read

- Luke 3:7-14 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does John demand?
2. What does he mean by 'fruit'?
3. What practical changes does he suggest?
4. What does this tell you about repentance?

For yourself

What practical change would show repentance in my own circumstances? What first step could I take?

Repentance and fruit

Read

- Luke 13:1-9 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What warning does Jesus repeat?
2. What does the fig-tree story add?
3. Why is fruit important?
4. What might fruit look like in a changed life?

For yourself

Where would I hope to see fruit in my life? What needs attention for that change to begin?

Turning

Read

- Acts 26:15-21 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What mission does Jesus give Paul?
2. What contrasts do you notice - darkness/light, Satan/God?
3. What does 'turn' involve?
4. What does Paul say should demonstrate repentance?

For yourself

What do I need to turn from, and what would turning towards God look like in that area?

Feeling bad or changing?

Read

- 2 Corinthians 7:8-11 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What two kinds of sorrow does Paul describe?
2. How are their results different?
3. What does godly sorrow produce?
4. Why isn't feeling guilty necessarily the same as repenting?

For yourself

When I feel sorry for wrongdoing, what usually follows? What would help me move from regret to a changed response?

A gift from God

Read

- 2 Timothy 2:24-26 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Who grants repentance?
2. What does repentance lead to?
3. What picture of captivity and freedom appears here?

For yourself

Where do I need God's help to change? How could I ask for that help and respond to it?

Putting it together

Read

- Acts 2:36-38 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. Based on this week's passages, how would you define repentance?
2. How is it different from regret?
3. What produces it?
4. What should follow it?
5. Is there anything you believe you personally need to turn from or turn towards?

For yourself

What next step would put my understanding of repentance into practice? What support might help me follow through?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 8 OF 11

Baptism

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: What is salvation?

Day 2: Pentecost

Day 3: Baptised into what?

Day 4: Calling on the Lord

Day 5: Paul's conversion

Day 6: New birth

Day 7: Put the evidence together

What is salvation?

Read

- Colossians 1:13-14 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What two realms does Paul describe?
2. What has God done?
3. How does Paul define redemption?
4. What role does Jesus have?

For yourself

What does the rescue and forgiveness described here mean for my own relationship with God? What would I like to understand better?

Pentecost

Investigate this passage carefully.

Read

- Acts 2:36-41 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What do Peter's listeners believe?
2. What question do they ask?
3. What does Peter tell them?
4. What promises are mentioned?
5. What do those who accept the message actually do?

For yourself

Write down the sequence without adding anything that isn't in the passage.

How does my own response to Jesus compare with the response described here? What do I still need to understand?

Baptised into what?

Read

- Romans 6:1-4 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Paul say Christians were baptised into?
2. What connection does he make with Jesus' death?
3. What does burial represent?
4. What is supposed to follow resurrection?

For yourself

What would living a new life mean in my own circumstances? What would need to change?

Calling on the Lord

Read

- Romans 10:5-13 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

- Acts 22:16 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Romans say about believing, confessing and calling?
2. Who may call on the Lord?
3. What language does Ananias use with Paul in Acts 22?
4. How do these passages fit together?

For yourself

What would it mean for me personally to call on the Lord? What questions do I need to investigate about that response?

Paul's conversion

Read

- Acts 22:7-16 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What has Paul experienced before meeting Ananias?
2. What does Ananias tell him?
3. What does verse 16 connect with baptism?
4. What questions does this passage raise for you?

For yourself

Does Paul's experience challenge any assumptions I have about responding to Jesus? What should I examine more closely?

New birth

Read

- John 3:3-5 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

- Titus 3:3-5 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What language of new beginning appears?
2. What role do water, Spirit, washing and renewal have?
3. Who is responsible for saving?
4. Is salvation described as something earned?

For yourself

How does this picture of salvation affect the way I approach God? What might I need to rethink about earning His acceptance?

Put the evidence together

Read

- Colossians 2:11-14 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 1 Peter 3:21 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Galatians 3:23-27 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. What does baptism represent?
2. What does God do?
3. What does the person do?
4. How are faith, repentance and baptism connected?
5. How is baptism connected with Jesus?

For yourself

What conclusions do you draw?

In light of these passages, what do I believe my next step should be? What, if anything, do I still need to understand?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 9 OF 11

The Holy Spirit

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: The promised gift

Day 2: Living water

Day 3: What does the Spirit do?

Day 4: Strength within

Day 5: Life in the Spirit

Day 6: What does the Spirit produce?

Day 7: The Spirit with us

The promised gift

Read

- Acts 2:36-38 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What gift is promised?
2. To whom?
3. What else is mentioned in the same response?
4. What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit?

For yourself

What do I currently believe about the Holy Spirit? What would I like to investigate from these passages?

Living water

Read

- John 7:37-39 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What picture does Jesus use?
2. Who may come?
3. What does John tell us Jesus is referring to?
4. What does the imagery suggest about the Spirit?

For yourself

What am I looking to for spiritual satisfaction? How might Jesus' invitation affect where I turn?

What does the Spirit do?

Read

- John 16:5-13 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Why does Jesus say His departure will help His followers?
2. What work does the Spirit do?
3. What does the Spirit reveal?
4. Where does His message come from?

For yourself

Where might I need to let God's truth challenge my own judgement? What questions about the Spirit's work do I want to explore further?

Strength within

Read

- Ephesians 3:14-21 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Paul pray for?
2. Where does the Spirit's power operate?
3. What does Paul want Christians to understand about Christ's love?
4. How are love and strength connected?

For yourself

Where do I need inner strength at present? How could Paul's prayer shape what I ask God for?

Life in the Spirit

Read

- Romans 8:5-16 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What two mindsets does Paul contrast?
2. What results from each?
3. What does the Spirit enable?
4. How does the Spirit affect a person's relationship with God?

For yourself

What tends to occupy my mind and guide my choices? What might change if I sought to live by the Spirit?

What does the Spirit produce?

Read

- Galatians 5:22-23 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What qualities are called the fruit of the Spirit?
2. Why do you think Paul uses the singular word fruit?
3. Which qualities seem easiest to recognise?
4. Which would you most like to grow in?

For yourself

Which quality of the Spirit's fruit do I most need in a current situation? How could I seek God's help and practise it?

The Spirit with us

Read

- John 14:16-18 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. What have these passages taught you about who the Holy Spirit is?
2. What have they taught you about what He does?
3. How does He change people?
4. How does He relate people to God?

For yourself

What would you expect a life influenced by God's Spirit to look like?

Where would I most welcome the Spirit's help in my life? How could I respond to what I have learned this week?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 10 OF 11

The Church

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: The first church

Day 2: One body, many parts

Day 3: Unity and maturity

Day 4: Why meet together?

Day 5: Daily encouragement

Day 6: What should identify Jesus' followers?

Day 7: Where do I fit?

The first church

Read

- Acts 2:40-47 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What are these Christians devoted to?
2. What do they do together?
3. How do they treat one another?
4. What role does God have in what happens?

For yourself

What would a community like this feel like to belong to?

Which part of this community's life would I find most challenging to take part in? What might help me begin?

One body, many parts

Read

- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Why does Paul use the human body as a picture?
2. What happens if one part thinks it isn't important?
3. What happens if one part thinks it doesn't need the others?
4. What responsibility do members have towards one another?

For yourself

Do I tend to feel I have nothing to offer, or that I do not need others? How could I respond to that honestly?

Unity and maturity

Read

- Ephesians 4:1-16 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What qualities protect unity?
2. What things does Paul say Christians share?
3. Why are different gifts given?
4. What does spiritual maturity look like?

For yourself

Which quality in this passage do I most need to practise in my relationships? What could I do this week?

Why meet together?

Read

- Hebrews 10:22-25 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What are Christians encouraged to do?
2. Why should they consider one another?
3. What purpose do meetings have?
4. Why might encouragement become more important over time?

For yourself

How could I make room to meet with other Christians and encourage someone when we gather?

Daily encouragement

Read

- Hebrews 3:12-14 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What danger is described?
2. How can sin affect someone?
3. What role can other Christians play?
4. Why does the writer say 'daily'?

For yourself

Who could I encourage this week, and who could I invite to encourage me? What would help those conversations be honest?

What should identify Jesus' followers?

Read

- John 13:34-35 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

- John 17:20-26 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Jesus command?
2. How should His followers' love be measured?
3. What does Jesus pray for?
4. What might Christian unity communicate to outsiders?

For yourself

How could I show Jesus' kind of love in one of my relationships this week?

Where do I fit?

Read

- Romans 12:4-8 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 2 Corinthians 8:7 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Look back

1. According to these passages, is church mainly a building, an event, an organisation, or a community of people?
2. What responsibilities do Christians have towards one another?

For yourself

If you were part of such a community, what could you contribute?



BALLARAT & CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST PRINCIPLES | STUDY 11 OF 11

Counting the Cost

A self-guided Bible study. Read the passages for yourself, then write down your own answers, questions and conclusions.

This week

Day 1: Before you decide

Day 2: A relationship with God

Day 3: A mission

Day 4: Helping each other remain faithful

Day 5: Fellowship

Day 6: Relationships, gifts and service

Day 7: Money, priorities and the whole decision

Study 11: Final Reflection

Before you decide

Read

- Luke 14:28-33 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

- Acts 2:36-41 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. Why does Jesus use the examples of a builder and a king?
2. What does He want someone to consider before following Him?
3. In Acts 2, what decision do people make?
4. What appears to lead up to it?

For yourself

What would I need to understand before making a serious commitment to Jesus?

A relationship with God

Read

- Matthew 4:4 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Mark 1:35 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 2 Timothy 2:15 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What place does God's word have?
2. What place does prayer have?
3. How did Jesus Himself make time for prayer?
4. What habits might help someone develop a continuing relationship with God?

For yourself

What time could I realistically set aside for prayer and Scripture? What would help me begin and keep going?

A mission

Read

- Luke 19:10 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 2 Corinthians 5:10-21 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Matthew 28:18-20 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What does Jesus say His mission is?
2. What mission does Paul describe?
3. What mission does Jesus give His followers?
4. How might following Jesus affect someone's purpose in life?

For yourself

How could sharing the hope I am discovering become part of my life? Who might I begin with?

Helping each other remain faithful

Read

- Hebrews 3:12-13 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What danger does the passage identify?
2. What are Christians supposed to do for one another?
3. Why might this require openness and trust?
4. What kind of encouragement actually helps someone follow God?

For yourself

What would help me receive encouragement honestly and offer it thoughtfully? Who could I build that kind of trust with?

Fellowship

Read

- Acts 2:42-47 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Hebrews 10:23-25 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What do the first Christians regularly do together?
2. Why do they meet?
3. What does Hebrews say Christians should contribute when they gather?
4. What might committed participation in a church community involve?

For yourself

What would committed participation in a church community mean for my time and priorities? What could I contribute?

Relationships, gifts and service

Read

- 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Ephesians 2:8-10 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Romans 12:4-8 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What principles about close relationships do you see?
2. Is salvation described as something earned through good works?
3. What place do good works have afterwards?
4. Why are people given different abilities?

For yourself

How could following Jesus affect my relationships, priorities and use of my abilities?

Money, priorities and the whole decision

Read

- Acts 2:45 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Luke 11:42 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- Malachi 3:10 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)
- 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 - [Read NIV on YouVersion](#)

Think about it

1. What different attitudes towards possessions and giving appear?
2. What dangers does Jesus identify in Luke 11:42?
3. What principles can you see about supporting God's work and caring for others?
4. What is the difference between generous faith and merely following a financial rule?

For yourself

What do my current spending and giving reveal about my priorities? What might I change in response to these passages?

Final Reflection

You have now worked through the full First Principles series. Before anyone tells you what conclusion you should reach, go back through your own notes.

What have I discovered about God?

What have I discovered about Jesus?

What have I discovered about myself?

What do I think the Bible says someone should do in response to Jesus?

Which conclusions am I confident about?

Which questions are still unresolved?

What would I like to investigate next?

Based on what I have read for myself, what do I believe my next step should be?

It is okay if the answer is: 'I don't know yet.' If so, write down exactly what you still need to understand.

Pilot feedback

If you are test-running this material, it may help to note which days felt clear, which questions felt leading or confusing, which readings felt too long, and what you wished the study had asked.

Source note

This pilot edition was developed from the study sequence and Scripture selections in the supplied Sydney Church of Christ study series (Guard the Gospel), with the discussion material rewritten as self-guided, open-ended questions.