

Turning Points:
A Teaching to Help New Believers
Grow in Their Faith



Introduction

This material has been compiled over the past 35 years by Mannahouse Church for the purpose of training disciples and educating new believers. This curriculum can be used one-on-one or in a group setting. The outlines present foundational truths in a clear, organized way that is adaptable to any congregation and leader. The following will provide new believers with foundational truths, and next steps to grow in their faith.

How To Use This Material

There are 4 total sessions. The points in this material are intentionally simple to help lay a foundation for new believers. These notes can be used for one-on-one discipleship, or taught in a class setting. These sessions are typically taught over weekly meetings. The final gathering is meant to celebrate the completion of this material and the growth of the new believer(s). This might be over dinner or dessert in your home, a class potluck, or even coffee.

There are follow-up tips at the end of each session. These calls are meant to help bridge a connection between participants and the local church. They provide time to answer questions and pray for the specific needs of those you meet with. For larger groups, it is often helpful to ask a few leaders to attend the class and help facilitate these follow-up calls.

There is a student handbook. The handbook has lots of space for note-taking. This is also intentional so that notes can be taken according to adaptations you make to this material.

Turning Points

Session Summary

Session 1 - The Bible Is the Word of God

The objective is to give new believers confidence that the Word of God is true and applicable to their life. This session discusses the fact that there is a real Devil out to kill, steal and destroy their lives. It also covers the true meaning of repentance and God's love for us all.

Session 2 - Faith and Water Baptism

The purpose of this session is to help new believers understand the blessing that comes through a life of faith. We explore the meaning and significance of water baptism.

Session 3 - Hearing From God: The Holy Spirit & Prayer

This session introduces new believers to the joy, peace, and security found in having the Holy Spirit involved in their lives.

Session 4 - A Celebration!

This final gathering is designed to celebrate the completion of this material, and to teach on the importance of community with other believers. This is a great opportunity to spend time in prayer, hear testimonies, and to share information on ministries and resources available in the church.

Session 1 - The Bible Is the Word of God

Our Need For God's Word

The Bible is God's story written for us. Through it we learn about the character of God. We get to know His personality and how passionately He loves us; He will split seas and move mountains to rescue us. We learn how relational God is—He desires us to know Him, talk with Him, trust Him, and receive His love. The Bible is full of wisdom and truth.

We also learn that there is a real devil—also known as Satan—who is out to kill, steal and destroy our lives any way that he can.

The Bible gives us insight to differentiate how God works from how the Devil works. The Devil's strategies involve shame, condemnation, humiliation, confusion, lies, and hatred. God relates with us out of His love and goodness; He is full of mercy, forgiveness, grace, and patience. Even when God corrects us, He is loving and kind.

Spending time each day reading and meditating on God's Word is important to our overall health as a Christian. Just as you need daily nourishment in order to become physically strong, the Bible gives you spiritual nourishment to make you spiritually strong.

1. The Example of Peter

Peter lived and walked with Jesus as one of His followers who were also known as disciples or apostles. Have you heard of the twelve disciples? Peter was one of them. Peter is probably the most relatable of Jesus' disciples. He had all the traits common to humanity. Peter had a great heart, but was negative at times. He was hard-headed, stubborn, and often got himself in trouble. Sound like anyone you know? Let me read you a specific situation with Peter.

Matthew 16:13-17 (CEV)

When Jesus and his disciples were near the town of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, "What do people say about the Son of Man? The disciples answered, "Some people say you are John the Baptist, or maybe Elijah or Jeremiah or some other prophet." Then Jesus asked, "But who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter spoke up, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

Jesus told him:

"Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! You didn't discover this on your own. It was shown to you by my Father in heaven..."

⇒ ***Peter answers Jesus' questions correctly, and Jesus tells Peter that he is blessed for having received a revelation from God. But, just a few verses later, listen to this!***

Matthew 16:21-23 (CEV)

From then on Jesus began telling his disciples what would happen to them. He said, "I must go to Jerusalem. There the nation's leaders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law of Moses will make me suffer terribly. I will be killed, but three days later I will rise to life."

Peter took Jesus aside and told him to stop talking like that. He said, "God would never let this happen to you, Lord!"

Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Satan, get away from me! You're in my way because you think like everyone else and not like God."

⇒ ***This is a real problem: at first Peter was very in tune with what God was saying and doing. Jesus even commends him! Peter is doing well; he's on a roll, and then...very soon after that he is going against God's will. What a tough deal for Peter. His response seems reasonable—Peter loved and cared for Jesus; he didn't want Jesus to suffer a terrible death. If someone you loved told you what Jesus said to Peter, what would you say to them? You would probably also tell them not to think or talk like that. Furthermore, Jesus dying didn't necessarily fit in with Peter's future plan of action.***

2. The Voice of God vs the Voice of Satan

So here we have two voices: God's voice and Satan's voice. **How do you know the difference?**

In one verse Jesus says, "you are blessed." In the next verse He says, "Satan, get behind me." Peter's response is very reasonable in the eyes of man, but the Bible says, "The wisdom of man is foolishness to God," (1 Corinthians 3:19). We would be in serious trouble if Jesus had listened to Peter! We would be dead in our sins.

We see that there is another voice that tries to deceive us and interfere with the purposes of God.

A lot of times, people believe only what they can see or hear. Do you see the radio waves when you turn on the transistor radio? When there is poison gas in the air, can you see it? Can it kill you? There are things we cannot see or hear, but we know they are there. Cell phone signals, satellite signals, etc. Such is the voice of the Devil and his demonic forces.

Ephesians 2:1-2 (CEV)

In the past you were dead because you sinned and fought against God. You followed the ways of this world and obeyed the devil. He rules the world, and his spirit has power over everyone who doesn't obey God.

What happened to Peter?

Peter was influenced by the devil, who invaded his thought process. Fortunately for Peter, he had Jesus to correct him. If this could happen to someone who walked closely with Jesus, don't you think it could happen to us?

We can also be similarly influenced. Have you ever had a sudden negative thought? Did it cause fear, confusion, shame, contradiction, bitterness, hate, anxiety, or even cursing? Did you feel guilty because of it? That's the Devil, and that is how he works. He is the enemy of our soul.

God's voice speaks to the heart. His voice is one of love, mercy, compassion, and kindness. Don't let the influence of the enemy deceive you; don't accept every thought that comes into your head as your own.

The Sufficiency of God's Word

The Devil is on the attack; sometimes his attacks are not obvious, in fact they are often sneaky. His deception can sound very reasonable—we saw how the Devil distorted Peter's perspective. So how do we deal with this problem in our lives? How can we make sure we don't fall into the same trap that Peter did? Listen to this:

Psalms 86:11 (GNT)

*Teach me, Lord, what you want me to do, and I will obey you faithfully;
teach me to serve you with complete devotion.*

The heart can be divided. Allow God to unite your heart for one purpose and one vision so that you can be completely devoted to Him.

How can we understand how to tell the difference between God's voice and the Devil's voice? The answer is simple, God gave His Word (the Bible) to live by. What does the Bible say? Let's examine this together.

John 1:1-18 (NIV)

(vs 1-4) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

*(vs 12-14) Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (vs 17-18) For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. ⇒ **Who is the Word?**
(repeat verse 1)*

Revelations 19:11-13 (CEV)

*I looked and saw heaven was open, and a white horse was there. Its rider was called Faithful and True, and he is always fair when he judges or goes to war. He had eyes like flames of fire, and he was wearing a lot of crowns. His name was written on him, but he was the only one who knew what the name meant. The rider wore a robe that was covered with blood, and he was known as "The Word of God." ⇒ **Ask again, who is the Word? Jesus is the Word made flesh. When we want to know what God is like, we look at Jesus.***

2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NIV)

*In the presence of God and of Christ, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ➔ **The preaching of the Word of God is commanded by God.***

1 Peter 2:1-2 (NLV)

*Put out of your life hate and lying. Do not pretend to be someone you are not. Do not always want something someone else has. Do not say bad things about other people. As new babies want milk, you should want to drink the pure milk which is God's Word so you will grow up and be saved from the punishment of sin. ➔ **The Bible is a primary way that God will talk to us. From the Bible we learn who God is, what He is like, and what His will is for our lives. Peter (who had to learn through the school of "hard knocks" as we saw earlier) writes in 1 Peter 2:1-2 that the Word is our spiritual food.***

Matthew 4:2-4 (NLV)

Jesus went without food for forty days and forty nights. After that He was hungry. The devil came tempting Him and said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to be made into bread." But Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man is not to live on bread only. Man is to live by every word that God speaks.'"

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

James 1:22-25 (NIV)

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

John 8:31-32 (NASB)

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you

continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Psalms 119:9-12 (NIV)

How can a young man stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees.

As you can see, it is absolutely vital as a Christian to prioritize the Word of God in your life. Without the Word of God, we can find ourselves in the same position Peter was in—having the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God, while allowing the devil to influence our thinking. The devil wants to confuse the wisdom of this world with the eternal purposes of God. Fortunately for Peter, he had Jesus there (who was the Word made flesh along with us...John 1:14) to help correct him. Likewise, the Word of God (the Bible) helps us to live in God's will and purposes.

A common attitude in this day and age is to "do your own thing". The idea of following someone else is not very popular. Jesus directly challenges this independent mindset when he says, "Follow Me," in Matthew 9:9. His heart's desire is for us to follow Him to heaven, therefore He calls us to follow Him on earth. Let's take a closer look at how we begin the journey of following Christ through repentance.

Submission to The Word: Repentance

Open Discussion: What does "repentance" mean to you?

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9, we find a classic biblical definition of repentance:

1 Thessalonians 1:9 (NASB)

For they themselves report about us as to the kind of reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.

Let's go a bit deeper:

1. Repentance is not just regret, it is not merely sorrow for sin, and it is not just shedding tears over sin. Rather it is the act of turning away from false gods, to serve the true God.
2. Repentance is an about-face from old ways of doing and thinking that led to sin.
3. Repentance is a change of mind about Christ, about ourselves, and about sin. We are convicted of our sins and see Christ as the absolutely sufficient sin-bearer. Our mind is changed by the Holy Spirit, we accept Christ and are saved.
4. We are saved by Christ, not repentance. Though repentance is an essential part of the process, it is grace that produces repentance, not vice versa.

If you are truly sorry for your sins and want Jesus to cleanse you from your sins; if you have sincerely made Jesus Christ the Lord of your life, you will want to learn all you can about how your Lord and God desires you to live. As His followers, you have started the greatest journey a human being can ever experience. Your destination is to become a productive, healthy Christian who is victoriously living each day the way Jesus intended.

Proverbs 9:10 says, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." **Does that mean God wants us to be scared of Him?**

God knows that turning away from our sins is in our own best interest. When we sin we violate His commandments. God knows that turning away from our sin is in our own best interest. He created us, so He knows the devastating effect that sin has on our lives.

It is important to understand that we cannot do anything about the sin in our lives. If we could rid ourselves of our sin on our own then there would be no reason for God to send Jesus to die for us. It's foolish to think, "I can turn away from sin on my own." Instead, wisdom says, "Because God sent His only Son Jesus to die a terrible death on the cross for me, God is well able to deliver me from the sin and the strongholds in my life."

Repentance is not something we give to God; it is the gift God gives to us.

Acts 5:31 (NIV)

God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.

Acts 11:18 (NASB)

When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has also granted to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

TESTIMONY: The greatest revelation I had when I came to know the Lord was when I said, "Lord, I can't change or do anything about the sin in my life." Then the Lord said, "It's about time you figured that out. That's why I sent Jesus. Give your life to Jesus and turn to Him. He will help get rid of the sin in your life."

The history of the Bible proves that without God, man is hopelessly lost in sin. That's why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of understanding that it is the Lord who saves us and if we trust Him, that fear will lead to joy, peace, and freedom.

The Blessing of Repentance

There are rewards and blessings that come into our lives as we follow Christ. Let's briefly talk about them:

1. A New Identity—By faith in Jesus Christ you are now a child of God.

Galatians 3:26 (CEV)

All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus.

2. A New Nature—Because you are sons and daughters of God the Spirit of Jesus will rest in the center of your being, bringing you a new peace and joy.

Galatians 4:6 (CEV)

Now that we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. And His Spirit tells us that God is our Father.

3. A New Lordship—In Christ we are no longer lord of our lives. We have submitted ourselves to the authority of God.

2 Corinthians 4:5 (CEV)

We are not preaching about ourselves. Our message is that Jesus Christ is Lord. He also sent us to be your servants.

4. A New Understanding—With our acceptance of Jesus Christ comes an entirely new understanding of life and its purpose.

Ephesians 1:17 (CEV)

I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God.

5. A New Power—Now there is a new power inside of us through the Holy Spirit. It is the same power that raised Christ from the dead.

Ephesians 1:19-20 (CEV)

I want you to know about the great and mighty power that God has for us followers. It is the same wonderful power he used when he raised Christ from death and let him sit at his right side in heaven.

6. A New Peace—As we center our trust in Him, a new peace fills our life.

Isaiah 26:3

The Lord gives perfect peace to those whose faith is firm.

7. A New Purpose—To worship, please, and serve the Lord.

Revelations 4:11 (CEV)

"Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive glory, honor, and power. You created all things, and by your decision they are and were created."

8. A New Destiny—This life is only preparation for our place in God's eternal kingdom.

1 John 3:1-2 (NIV)

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see him as He is.

Follow-Up Tips

For Attendees:

Reach out to each person within a few days of going over this material to touch base with them. This doesn't need to be a long phone call, but make it personal. Ask how their week is going, questions about their family, what they do for a living, etc. Ask them if they have any particular needs and pray for them. Relationships will develop naturally during the call. In closing, remind them of the next meeting and give them a quick summary of what to expect.

For Absentees:

Contact anyone who showed an interest in this material, but did not attend the first gathering. Let them know, "We didn't see you there and we missed you!" Ensure them that they didn't miss too much and that the best is yet to come. Briefly summarize the first class and invite them to the next. Ask them if they have any particular needs and pray for them in closing.

Session 2 - Faith And Water Baptism

What is “faith”?

Open Discussion: What does “faith” mean?

Have you ever said, “somebody up there was looking out for me”? You may have had a faith experience without even knowing it! What is a personal example of a faith experience?

We have five senses—sight, taste, touch, smell, and hearing. Which of your senses is most reliable? How many times have your senses left you down? Maybe you thought you heard one thing, and it ended up being different than you thought. Maybe you and another saw the same accident but have very different (even conflicting) versions of the same story. You smelled something and thought it was one thing, and it turned out to be another. Did you know that you have a SIXTH sense that will never let you down? That sense is faith in God, and it is the ONLY one of your senses that will never fail you.

John 3:16-17 (ESV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

How many can say they believe with all their heart that God not only loves the world, He loves *you*?

Part of the faith process is believing that God exists and that He loves you. He’s not here to condemn you—He cares about you! This is one of the most difficult things for some people to expect. Sometimes it is easier to accept the condemnation of the Devil than the love of God. It is easier to say, “I’m no good”, “God can’t fix me”, “I’m hopeless”. The problem is this attitude demeans the power of God and the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. It devalues the fact that God sent His son to rescue us. Faith believes that what God says is true. God says that we can’t understand or relate to the love that He loves us with. It says in Matthew 10:29-31 that God sent His Son to save us, not to condemn us.

Matthew 10:29-31 (ESV)

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

The opposite of faith is fear. God says, "Don't be afraid! I love you—just trust me!" When God says that but you do not trust Him, it means you are living in fear and not faith. Believing God loves you and wants the best for you is vital to your Christian growth. By living your lives in condemnation and fear, you are saying that God is a liar and you are throwing faith out the window. We must remember that God loves us more than we can understand.

What Is the Meaning of Our Faith?

Share a personal testimony of a miraculous thing you've seen God do in response to your faith.

For example: *For thirty years I have watched people in their 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s say, "I have walked with God for my whole life, and He has never failed me!" They have seen the beginning and ending of many things, and over time have seen God's purpose in it all. So often we expect God to work in two weeks, but He is doing a bigger work than that. We have to allow God the time to do His perfect work in us.*

Hebrews 11:1-3 (NIV)

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the **ancients** were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

⇒ ***Who are the ancients? How many have heard of Noah? Jacob? Joseph? These are people in the Old Testament of the Bible that walked with God. People who pleased God. How did they please God?***

Hebrews 11:6-10 (NIV)

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith. By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

⇒ **Why is it impossible to please God without faith? Even though you don't physically see Him, God wants you to believe that He exists and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. This ties back to the fact that you must believe that He loves you and does not condemn you. So don't condemn yourself.**

No matter what your problems are or what struggles you are going through, know that "all things work together for good to those who love God..." You need to believe that God has your best interests at heart and trust Him. Trust God in your struggles and trials even when things are not going as you think they should.

Romans 8:28 (NIV)

And we know that all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

The Painter's Story:

There once was a great artist who painted murals in majestic cathedrals. He worked high up in the rotunda decorating the ceilings. A single project often took him two or three years to complete.

One day, he was working high up in a huge church putting the finishing touches on a two and half year task. When the last stroke was completed, he stepped back on the scaffold to admire his work. He was so taken up with the sight that he was completely oblivious to the fact that one more step backwards would send him plunging to his death on the stone floor below.

His assistant recognized the danger, and stood frozen in terror for a split second. He feared that by shouting a warning, he would startle his master and cause him to step back over the precipice. Any sudden lunge in his direction would likely produce the same effect. In a moment of terrible inspiration, he dipped his brush in the bucket of paint he held in his hand and hurled it at the mural. In that instant the beautiful masterpiece was transformed into an ugly mess. The infuriated master charged at his assistant in fierce anger, shouting, "What are you doing? How could you?" but the latter held him tight. "If you'd taken one more step back, I would have lost you," he cried, "It was the only thing I could think of to save your life."

That's the way it is with us sometimes. Perhaps we get in a relationship or business deal that is wonderful from our perspective. God only knows the heartache that lies in the realization of our dream, and in His deep love for us hurls His sovereign "paint brush" at the lethal tapestry we are painting. We feel the pain, and from our limited perspective we may question His intentions, unaware of the danger from which He has saved us.

Whatever your struggles or what you are going through, turn away from sin and turn to God. Do it His way and trust Him. The scripture in Romans 8:28 says "all things work together for good to them that love God." Let that be the testimony of your life and you'll join the ranks of those silver-haired veterans whose steps may falter, but whose testimony is clear: never once has He let me down.

The First Great Act of Faith and Obedience to God: Water Baptism

Group Survey (by show of hands):

How many have been baptized in water?

How many of you were baptized when you were babies or very young children?

How many of you were not sure what baptism in water meant, or what was happening to you when you were baptized?

How many have never been baptized?

What is water baptism?

Baptism is bound up in the Great Commission, the last great command given by Christ Himself to His disciples. All new believers are to be baptized.

Matthew 28:19 (NIV)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Who is baptism for?

Water baptism is something God wants us all to experience. If you have been baptized before, it is important to understand if it was in accordance with the Bible. First of all, the physical water itself means nothing without the faith and understanding that goes with it. Second, those of you who have never been baptized in water, let me help you understand why you should be.

Acts 2:38 (NIV)

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:48 (NIV)

So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Do you have to be water baptized?

No act of baptism or any other work can save us, according to Ephesians 2:8-9. Thus, it is not necessary to be water baptized to be a Christian, but it is a necessary act of obedience to God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

When should you be water baptized?

The question of when baptism occurs is answered when two things take place: Repentance (Acts 2:38), and belief in Jesus Christ as your personal savior (Mark 16:16)

Acts 2:38 (ESV)

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 16:16 (ESV)

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

What if I was baptized as a baby? Can a baby repent of its sins?

The Bible says you must repent *and* believe. Did you clearly understand these two things when you were baptized as a child? Of course not. As a baby, how could you make a commitment to repent and believe? Therefore, how could you have been baptized as a child, when according to the Bible you did not meet the qualifications for baptism?

Is the mode of baptism important?

Many people were sprinkled and that was called baptism. The word baptism comes from the Greek word *baptizo* which means the process of immersion, submersion, or to make one whelmed or fully wet.

Matthew 3:16a (NIV)

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went out of the water.

Acts 8:38-39 (NIV)

...Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip...

What happens in baptism?

1. We are forgiven of our sins. We have already seen in Acts 2:38 that we are to “repent and be baptized...for the forgiveness of sins...”
2. We receive a change of heart. Scripture calls this a circumcision of the heart.

Colossians 2:11-12 (NIV)

In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

3. Our past identity is crucified. What that means is your life up to this point—your way of living, mindsets, choices...*everything* in the past—is put to death spiritually. Listen to God’s promise of what happens by faith when we are obedient to him and are baptized in water:

Romans 6:3-5 (NIV)

Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

What does God promise when we are baptized in water?

Going down into the water identifies us with Christ’s death and coming out of it identifies us with His resurrection. Furthermore, the following scripture reveals that in baptism our old sin nature has been crucified and we receive a new Godly nature.

Romans 6:6-14 (NIV)

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin

might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once and for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Application:

Who feels that they would like to be baptized in water? (Show of hands)

Is there anyone who feels like they are unsure and would like to have a little more personal discussion on it?

Tip: If there is a water baptism scheduled, this may be a great opportunity to encourage participation. For those who would like to discuss baptism a bit more, collect their information to follow up by phone or in person.

Invite everyone to stand and close their eyes, and read the following scripture as a prayer:

And we pray this in order “that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of His holy people in the kingdom of light. For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through

*Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him things hold together.
[Colossians 1:10-17 NIV]*

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. [Romans 5:1-5 NIV]
AMEN.

Continue in prayer that God would help the week ahead to be one of faith for each person, no matter what trials they may be going through. Pray they will look to God in faith knowing that "all things work together for good to those who love God..."

Follow-Up Tips

These calls may take a little longer. Reach out to each attendee; talk with them personally and communicate excitement and enthusiasm about baptism. If they were previously baptized, explain the need for water baptism in more detail. It may be essential to review the material covered in class. Talk about their situation and confirm their decision to be baptized. Remind them that they will want to be sure to invite all their friends and relatives. Review the logistics, and remind them to bring a towel and dry clothes, etc.

Inquire concerning their needs and do what you can to encourage them and pray with them. Before hanging up, remind them that the last class is coming up and give them a snapshot previous of its content. Let them know of special plans for the final meeting. (***Suggestion: This intentional time of fellowship is a great opportunity to welcome others to join—I usually let each person know that their friends and family are welcome to join the final gathering.***)

Session 3 - Hearing From God—Prayer and the Holy Spirit

Open Discussion:

Besides the Bible, what is another way we can hear from God?

The Voice of the Holy Spirit

God can speak to us by His Holy Spirit through prayer...but in order to hear from Him we must be open and willing to do things God's way. How many of you have been known to be stubborn once in a while?

The Farmer's Story:

There once was an old farmer who lived way up in the hills. He was a reclusive old hermit who didn't like being around people and just liked living off the land. One day, the farmer went down his long lane to the mailbox, and to his surprise he found a letter from the government telling him that they needed a few acres down in the lower portion of his land for a new road that was going in. They were so anxious to get the land, they enclosed a check DOUBLE the amount of fair market value.

It was a sizable check and the farmer was pretty excited because he never used that scrub acreage anyway. So he hopped in his old pickup truck, and headed into town to cash his check and get his money. He rolled down the dusty main street, pulled up in front of the bank. He sauntered up to the teller's window, and said, "I'd like to cash this here check." The teller looked at the check, everything seemed to be in order so he told the old farmer, "You just sign right here on the back of the check and I'll give you your money. The farmer stepped back from the teller's cage with a horrified expression on his face. He threw up his hands, and said "I'm not signing anything for anybody." The teller replied, "I'm sorry sir, but if you don't sign the check I can't give you the money." With even greater resolve the old farmer reiterated, "I'm not signing anything for anybody, just give me my money." And again, the teller replied, "I'm sorry, I can't give you the money unless you sign the check."

The farmer angrily stomped out of the bank and down the street. He stormed into another bank at the other end of main street. After he collects himself, he walks up to the teller's cage. This one really was a cage, with big iron bars and a scrawny teller perched on a stool peering through a little window. Once again, the farmer

explained the situation and handed the teller the check. "Okay," said the teller, "it all looks in order, just sign the check and I'll give you your money." He handed the farmer a pen. "Wait a minute," said the farmer in stunned disbelief, "I'm not signing nothing for nobody." They proceed to argue back and forth for several minutes until finally the exasperated teller reached through the bars, grabbed the farmer by the shirt collar, and banged his head against the steel cage six or seven times. "Just sign the darn check!" Dazed, the old farmer grabbed the pen, signed the check, and collected his money.

The farmer walked down the street counting the wad of bills in his hand. Who should he run into, but the teller from the first bank on his way to lunch. The farmer walked up to the teller and waved the money in his face, "See, I went over to that other bank down there and they gave me my money." The teller shook his head and looked at the farmer in disbelief. "I know that they won't give you any money without you signing the check. Why did you sign the check for them and not for me?" The old farmer looked at him and sneered, "That other fella just did a whole lot better job of explaining it to me."

Once in a while, we are like that old farmer, aren't we? God has to do something very unusual to get our attention. Like the farmer, when it's over we might be a little dazed and have a headache, but we're sure glad to get the money. Sometimes we tend to resist the very power God intended for our blessing. That power is the Holy Spirit.

Responding to the Voice

You may have heard that God is made up of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is called the Trinity, one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The Word of God calls it a great mystery so we can't try to fully understand it or explain it. Let's talk about who the Bible says the Holy Spirit is and what His involvement in your life should be. Here are some passages that describe the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Luke 11:9-13 (NIV)

So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will you give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will you give him a scorpion? If then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

When we have a need, what should we ask for?

Jesus is saying here that if we have a need, it is even more important to pray for the Holy Spirit than to pray for the specifics of our need because *He* is the answer to all of our needs.

Have you heard of King Solomon?

King Solomon was David's son. He had one of the richest kingdoms of his day. He had armies, gold, land—he had it all! Just before he became king, God spoke to him and said that He would grant Solomon anything he asked. How many times have you heard this story? What did King Solomon ask for? He asked for the wisdom of God in ruling His people. He could have asked for riches. He could have asked for huge armies...or land...or a long life. Yet, he chose the wisdom of God. Why?

God's wisdom is an abundance of His Holy Spirit. Solomon knew that the wisdom of God was the key to a blessed life. The wisdom of God would carry his life into success because of the Holy Spirit's involvement. This is what Jesus is saying in Luke 11:9-13. If we have needs in our life, we should pray for more of the Holy Spirit and He will give it to us. The success of your life in God—your peace, your joy, and your security—is directly dependent on the Holy Spirit's involvement in your life. Ask for more of the Holy Spirit. As you receive more of God's wisdom all your real needs will be met and your life will be blessed.

Acts 1:8-9 (NIV)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Acts 8:14-17 (ESV)

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:43-47 (NIV)

"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

2 Timothy 1:14 (ESV)

By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

The Holy Spirit is real and He lives inside you– you are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Make the Holy Spirit a major part of your life. You will be blessed as you prayerfully ask for more of His involvement in your life.

In keeping with this, it is vital that we become men and women of prayer.

A Heart For Prayer

Mark 11:24 (ESV)

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 6:5-13 (NIV)

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who

sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling on like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This then is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

How many of you have heard of the Lord's prayer? Does it mean to sit around all day and quote it? Let's take a look at that and see what He meant:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name"

We begin by praising God.
Example: Lord, your name is above all names. You are our Creator. We praise you!

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

God is wiser than we are and we ask for His way in our life and situations.
Example: We want Your Kingdom to come first in our lives. The only prayer we want to pray is Your will.

"Give us today our daily bread"

God has provided all of our daily needs and we are grateful! We are blessed!
Example: Thank you Lord for taking care of the necessities of life, our daily needs. We acknowledge you doing that.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

God understands the area of greed and bitterness. We ask

for forgiveness for our wrongs
and we receive His grace.

*Example: If we have sinned
against you in any area, forgive
us. If I have done wrong,
forgive me. And I will make
sure that I forgive others the
same.*

"And lead us not into temptation"

We ask for help to make the
right decisions and to keep us
from sin.

*Example: Don't allow
temptations of the world to
come upon me.*

"But deliver us from the evil one"

We ask for forgiveness for
agreements we made with the
wrong thoughts and beliefs
about who God is and who He
says we are.

*Example: Don't allow my life to
be deceived, to fall into the
deception of the Devil. Thank
you God, for your mercy, grace,
and forgiveness. Thank you for
your love and kindness. I
praise you God!*

Matthew 6:14-16 (NIV)

*For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father
will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will
not forgive your sins.*

Hindrances to Prayer

Very often, many of us carry bitterness toward someone who has wronged us—whether it is abuse, or a relationship gone bad, or whatever. We find it impossible to settle the issue and forgive. Have you been a victim of bitterness to some degree? Are you carrying some bitterness right now?

Let's consider this passage of scripture:

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV)

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

It is vital that we settle issues of hurt, bitterness, and anger in our lives in order for God to answer our prayers and fill us with more of his Holy Spirit. Just as God has forgiven you of your sins, I want you to open your hearts to a new willingness to forgive even the worst of offenses committed against you. Ask God to for the help of His Holy Spirit, to give you the supernatural power to forgive.

Invite everyone to stand and close their eyes. Read the following scripture and close in prayer. If anyone would like to stay for a time of personal prayer, invite them to stay.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. [Romans 12:1-21, NIV]

AMEN.

Continue to pray that their lives would be blessed with more of the Holy Spirit, that they would be released from any bitterness in their lives and become men and women of prayer.

Follow-Up Tips

Call each person. By this time, you should know everyone pretty well and they will welcome your call. Remind them about the special, final meeting and get an idea of any guests they may bring. If they volunteer to bring something, such as dessert, accept their offer gratefully. Inquire about what is going on in their life and pray for them.

Final Session - A Celebration!

Note:

This session is meant to be a time of fellowship, and to celebrate the growth of each new believer that has completed Turning Points. It may be helpful to offer childcare. You may find that a small group/Bible Study has been organically formed, and you may continue to meet. For those going through this material one-on-one, invite this person to a church Bible Study, small group or regular meeting; spiritual growth will continue with consistency and relationship with fellow believers.

Whether you meet over a meal, coffee, or a fun activity, allot time for prayer, discussion, and praise testimonies. Some groups might include a short time of praise and worship.

The Book of Acts in the Bible describes what happened after the resurrection of Jesus. Believers gathered together regularly in the temple and in each other's homes. The scripture in Acts illustrates the importance of having community with fellow believers.

The Role of the Church

The local church is vital to the maturity of every believer. There is never a need to go it alone. The support of the local church is always there and will provide you with a web of support. Do not overlook the appointed times that are available and designed to provide you with an atmosphere of worship, prayer, teaching, and fellowship.

***Note**

Share what is presently offered at your church. Some groups may find it helpful to invite ministry leaders or pastors to discuss that ministry and its mission in greater depth.

Here are some practical resources that may help:

- *What is the check in process for the children's ministry*
- *What student/youth ministry is available?*
- *What ministries are available for other age groups and demographics?*
- *How does one sign up for small groups?*
- *What is the process to receive pastoral care and counseling?*
- *Are there any programs offered for those in recovery?*