

What Will You Do With Jesus?

Even as large and as complex as this world is, according to the divine Scriptures, it is only a place of preparation for the life we will live in eternity. Therefore, life here is only a brief beginning. Every human being is a living soul, destined to live beyond this world in heaven or hell. The New Testament describes for us everlasting life and everlasting destruction (Matthew 25:46). There is no place in-between eternal life and eternal death for us to abide in the hereafter. At death or when Jesus returns, our destiny is sealed forever. There will be no second opportunities to change our relationship with God after entering the world of eternity. What a sobering thought! What we do about Jesus has eternal implications. We plead with you to decide that you will become a Christian and live your life for Christ so that you may have the abundant life now (John 10:10) and eternal life in the world to come (1 John 2:25).

You have come to the end of this study of becoming a faithful member of “the church,” as that theme is

presented in the Scriptures. You have been briefly introduced to Jesus Christ—the Son of God—who came into the world and demonstrated by His life, teachings, and love what God is like and what God’s will is. He died for our sins on the cross, making it possible for everyone who obeys His message of salvation to become and live as a child of God. Further, you have studied carefully the nature of the church which resulted and continues to result from His life and death. You have seen how one enters that church and lives in this world as that church. You have now come to the big question, the most serious question you have ever thought about: “What shall I do about Jesus?”

It is the sincere prayer and earnest hope of all Christians that you will resolve in your heart to become a Christian and be a faithful follower of Christ for the rest of your life. In the course of your study, maybe you have already said to yourself, “I want to be a Christian.” Maybe you have thought, “I have some questions about becoming a Christian and when I get those questions answered, I will become one.”

If you are asking questions, carefully read the remaining part of this book. It will provide some answers. Also, it lists and explains some steps that you need to take in order to fulfill your desire to become and live as a Christian.

STEP ONE: SALVATION

The first step to take, of course, is to become a Christian. Anyone, anywhere in the world, can become a Christian if he believes in Christ (John 8:24), repents (or turns from his sins; Acts 17:30), confesses Jesus as the Christ (Romans 10:10), and is baptized

into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Let us answer some questions you may ask:

“What About Children?”

The New Testament never mentions the baptism of infants or small children. They do not need to be baptized, for they are safe in their innocence before the Lord. Since they do not know right from wrong, they are not accountable in God’s sight. When they become conscious of what is required of them by the Lord, then they should become Christians (as should all people) by obeying the Lord’s way of salvation. In their innocence, however, they are safe before God, for they have not sinned. As they are, with their minds seeking to understand, putting their faith completely in those who lead them, their confiding trust and teachableness is an example for adults to imitate (Matthew 18:3). Jesus said of children, “For the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14b).

As a young person or adult who understands the way of salvation, who knows that you have sinned before God, and who knows that you must become a Christian to be saved, you now need to obey the Lord’s plan of salvation.

“What Must I Do?”

In our studies, you have seen how to become a Christian. You can become a Christian by accepting the evidence and testimony of the Scriptures about Jesus’ being the Son of God. The only truly accurate book in the world, the Bible, has told you who Jesus is and what He came into the world to do. Do you accept this message? If you do, then you have come to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came into the

world to die on the cross to save you from your sins and make it possible for you to be a child of God.

You must also ask yourself, "Have I turned from my sins?" You will never be perfect in this world, but by repenting you resolve to put away sin from your life and sincerely follow the Word of the Lord from now on. Following your genuine repentance, Jesus will be your Lord, and the Scriptures will be the guidebook by which you will live.

You must next find someone to baptize you into Christ for the remission of your sins. There may be a church of Christ in your community. If so, find a member of that church and ask him to introduce you to a Christian man who will baptize you into Christ. When you are introduced to that Christian man, tell him that you want to confess Jesus as the Christ before others and that you wish for him to baptize you into the spiritual body of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. He will be happy to assist you.

"How Can I Find the Church of Christ?"

In this day of religious confusion, you will want to make sure that you have contacted a group of people who have entered the Lord's church and are continuing to be the Lord's church. One way you can tell is to notice how they refer to themselves. They will not wear any man-made names. They will call themselves a church of Christ and will refer to themselves by the other designations for the church that are found in the Scriptures. If you see that they have given themselves a name which is not a biblical way of referring to the church, that is a sign that they are part of a denomination and are something separate and different from the Lord's church.

Another way you can tell if a group is a church of Christ is by checking to see if they are following the Word of God. Here are some questions that you can ask them to determine their goals and purposes:

Are you simply trying to be the church of the New Testament?

When you gather on Sunday for worship, what is your worship service like?

Do you partake of the Lord's Supper every Sunday as in Acts 20:7?

Do you sing without instrumental accompaniment according to the New Testament example?

Do you pray in Jesus' name?

Do you study the Word of God as your only creed and guide?

Do you give each Sunday as you have been prospered (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2)?

How are you organized as a church? Do you have more organization than preachers, teachers, elders, and deacons?¹

Do you have earthly headquarters, or do you just look to Christ as your head?²

What is your mission in this world: Are you seeking to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20)?

¹The organization of the churches of the New Testament was simple and basic. First, there were ministers and teachers who preached and taught the Word. Second, each congregation that had become mature enough had a plurality of elders (sometimes called "overseers," "shepherds," and "pastors") who would guide and watch over the congregation. Third, each congregation had deacons who served the church under the oversight of the elders.

²The New Testament names only one head of the church: Christ. His church has no earthly headquarters; each congregation of the church follows only the leadership of Christ.

You would be wise to ask these questions, for you are seeking to understand who they are. You want to become a member of the Lord's church, not a member of a denomination. (See page 275.)

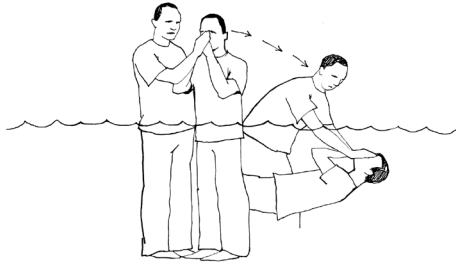
If you cannot find a church of Christ, then you should establish one. Find a sincere man who is interested in serving the true God. Ask him to read this book as he studies his Bible. Then ask him if he will join you in becoming a Christian and in being the Lord's church in your community. If he wants to follow Christ, you can baptize each other. Locate a church baptistery or make arrangements for the use of a swimming pool. If necessary, you can go to a nearby stream, lake, or pond (where you would have enough water to immerse someone).

When you baptize him, make sure that you fulfill three commands of the Scriptures. First, ask him this question: "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" We see this command in Romans 10:10. He should affirm that he believes in Jesus as God's Son.

Second, you need to make sure that you are baptizing the man into the body of Christ—the church—for the forgiveness of sins. Before you baptize him, describe out loud what is taking place, both for the benefit of those present and as a reminder to him of what is happening. Here is one example of how you could state it (based on Matthew 28:19, 20; Romans 6:3; Acts 2:38; and Mark 16:16):

I am baptizing you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, into the spiritual body of Christ, the church of the New Testament, for the forgiveness of your sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, in obedience to Christ's command.

Third, as you baptize him, make sure that you immerse him completely. Remember, baptism in the New Testament is a burial in water (Romans 6:4). Here is an illustration of how baptism can be done:



In the deep water of a baptistery or swimming pool, the one being baptized may be leaned backward until he is fully immersed.

Once you have baptized him, have him baptize you in the same way. He needs to ask you the same question, and he should state clearly why he is baptizing you, just as you did when you baptized him.

After your baptism, you are a Christian, a member of the Lord's church. Even if the Lord's church has not existed in your community in the past, it does now—for you are the church of Christ! You have established the church where you live by becoming a Christian.

STEP TWO: LIVING AS A CHRISTIAN

Of course, the second step that you need to take is a continuous, never-ending step—namely, that of living the Christian life. You now are a Christian, and you will want to live as one. (See the chart entitled “What Elders Are To Be, All Christians Are To Be” on page 278.)

How does a Christian live? A good way to summarize the life of a Christian is to say that he is what

his name implies: a follower of Christ. He is a CHRISTIAN, one who lives the way Christ lived (Philippians 1:21). Life to the Christian is Christ.

Searching the Scriptures

Anyone who follows Christ will be characterized by one important trait: submission to the Father's will. Jesus was perfect in every way, but one characteristic of His life that you and I can set out to imitate is faithful obedience to the Father. Christian living, then, means searching the Scriptures for God's will and then humbly, reverently, and lovingly obeying that will. A Christian stays close to the Word of God. He reads it daily and tries to put into practice what he learns from it.

Trying to Imitate Jesus' Lifestyle

Three other principles that should guide us in our living for Jesus include the "golden rule," compassion, and prayer. A good way to imitate Jesus is always to ask ourselves, "How would I like to be treated?" The "golden rule" (Matthew 7:12) is followed when we decide how we would like to be treated and then proceed to treat others that way. This rule was Christ's way of living, and it is the best way to live in this world.

Jesus was a man of compassion. The word "compassion" means "feeling with" others. Jesus loved the poor, the needy, and the lonely. His heart went out to them. He ministered to them. Likewise, a Christian should be a person who is concerned about others and continually manifests that love by helping them if he can (Matthew 9:36).

Even though Jesus was the Son of God, He prayed

to the Father often—privately, publicly, and in small groups. A Christian also prays to God continually.

Since you are now a Christian, God is your Father. He has claimed you as His own. Pray to Him regularly with a believing heart. Ask for His will to be done in your life, praying to Him in the name of Jesus. Here is a sample of how you can pray to God:

Address God: Dear Father,

Praise Him: Hallowed be Your name.

Thank Him: How grateful we are for the blessings You have given. . . . (Name some of them.)

Petition Him: Here is what we need, as far as we can tell. Grant these requests if they are in harmony with Your will.

Petition Him: Forgive our sins as we forgive others. Deliver us from evil.

Praise Him: To You be all the glory.

Close: In Jesus' name we pray to You. Amen.

You probably recognized this pattern as taken in part from our Lord's model which He taught His disciples in Matthew 6:9–13. Part of His prayer would not apply to us (for example, the part about the request for the kingdom to come, since His kingdom came at Pentecost), but much of it does apply to us. Remember, the pattern given is just a sample and is intended to be only a suggested order to follow when one is expressing his own thoughts to God.

Let us stress this truth: You will not be perfect. Human beings cannot be perfect, but we can dedicate our hearts to the doing of His will. When we fail, we can get up, dust ourselves off, and set out again to do His will. The important thing is that we are striving to do His will. We will be saved by God's grace—

through faith, not by perfection (Ephesians 2:8). Having faith means honestly seeking to do His will.

When we fail in such a way that we hurt others, let us apologize to them and assure them that we are sorry and that we will seek to do better in the future (James 5:16). If we sin and our sin has hurt the church as a whole, we can come before the church, ask for forgiveness, and request that our brothers and sisters in Christ pray for us (James 5:16). God will forgive us, and the church will forgive us.

One section of the Scriptures that you may want to read first as you enter your life as a Christian is the beginning of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—the life of Christ. This reading and study will give you an understanding of how Jesus lived on this earth. Everything you learn about Him will help you to follow Him more closely.

STEP THREE: WORSHIPING GOD

The third step you need to take as you seek to be a Christian is to begin worshiping God regularly. If a church of Christ exists in your neighborhood, you will want to meet with them on Sunday and any other times that they meet for corporate worship. On each Sunday, they will meet to sing, pray, study God's Word, keep the Lord's Supper, and give of their means as God has blessed them. You should participate with them in each of these expressions of worship. (See page 150.)

If no congregation of the Lord's church meets in your community, you can begin regular, faithful worship of God in your home. It does not matter to God where the church meets, as long as we meet to wor-

ship Him. There is no command in the New Testament to worship in a special building. Scriptural worship can take place anywhere two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus (Matthew 18:20).

Meeting as the Church

In the New Testament we notice that the early Christians met on the first day of the week, or Sunday. This was the day when the Lord arose from the dead. When those first Christians came together for worship on Sunday, they partook of the supper that Jesus instituted to be observed in memory of His death and resurrection. It is clear that they partook of this supper each Sunday. It was the "Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20), taken on each Lord's Day. Study carefully Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 11:22; 16:1, 2; and Acts 20:7.

Observing the Lord's Supper

When Christ created the Lord's Supper, He used two elements: fruit of the vine and unleavened bread. Our Lord was eating the Passover with His disciples when He told them to keep this supper. The Passover supper included only unleavened bread and a beverage, which was a mixture of the fruit of the vine (juice from some kind of grape) and water. Jesus told His disciples to eat of the bread and remember His body that was given for them. He told them to drink some of the cup, or fruit of the vine, and remember His blood that was shed for them.

You will want to follow our Lord's instructions and the example of the Christians in the Book of Acts. Each Sunday, those of you who have been obedient to Christ should gather for worship. You should sing,

pray, and study God's Word. At some point in the worship service, partake of this supper that Jesus gave you. Have available some unleavened bread in a plate. Ask God to receive your thanks for the bread that represents Christ's body and for His great sacrifice. Then, pass the bread to each Christian who wishes to partake of it and remember Jesus' body.

Second, take the cup or cups which contain the fruit of the vine. Pray to God, giving thanks for the cup and the precious blood that Jesus shed for our forgiveness. After the prayer, pass the cups to the Christians present, so that each may partake of the cup and remember that Jesus' blood was shed for us.

Putting Aside, or Giving

Each Christian is to "put aside and save" in order to give to the Lord's work. At an appropriate point while the church is gathered for worship, every Christian should be given an opportunity to give out of his or her prosperity, as the New Testament teaches (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). Some type of basket or other container may be passed around to allow for this giving, or a place may be provided for Christians to leave the money which they have set aside for God. Remember that this is an expression of worship and should be done reverently and joyfully. The donations should be used to do the work of the church. For example, the money may be used to preach the gospel to others, to help the poor, to purchase Bibles for study, and any other purpose that might be in harmony with the work of the church. Decisions on how to use what is collected should be made by the church and not by only one individual.

Here is an example of how a worship service may be planned:

Prayer

Song or songs

A discussion of a chapter from the Scriptures or a sermon if a capable teacher or preacher is available

Song

A Scripture reading concerning the Lord's Supper

Observance of the Lord's Supper

Song

Giving as each has prospered

Song

Prayer

However the service is arranged, each of these elements of worship is to be included.

Singing

Following the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn (Matthew 26:30). Paul's instruction to the Christians in Corinth reveals that the early church employed singing in their worship assemblies (1 Corinthians 14:15; see v. 26).

One fact we know about the first-century Christians is that they were committed to doing things God's way (Acts 2:42; 4:19, 20; 5:29). While God accepted the use of musical instruments in the worship of the Old Testament, the early Christians did not use them in their assemblies. They must have done what they did because of apostolic teaching, which came from God (Matthew 16:17b; 1 Corinthians 2:9–11). The New Testament was written by those same Spirit-inspired men who instructed the earliest Christians.

The apostles knew the real purpose of worship, and their instruction equipped the early church for worship that would please God. We may safely conclude that if God had wanted the church to use instruments in worship, He would have given that instruction to the apostles—but He did not. Once we understand what worship really is and what God wants worship to accomplish, we understand that instruments of music do not contribute to the process.

Conducting Congregational Meetings

In order for the local congregation to conduct its work “properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Corinthians 14:40), the men of the congregation will need to meet from time to time. This is especially true if there are no elders. These meetings will not be for the purpose of making laws for God, but to ensure that the worship and work of the local body is done in a Christlike way. Meetings will provide the appropriate time and place for making decisions on worship times, making assignments for helping with the worship service, planning for good works, and discussing other spiritual matters. It is essential that each one who participates in the meeting conduct himself in a Christlike fashion (Ephesians 4:1–3). Someone once said, “Everyone has a right to his say, but no one has a right to expect his way.” This is a good motto.

As congregational matters are discussed, these questions should be asked about each decision:

- Is it scriptural?
- Will it glorify God?
- Will it edify?
- Will it work?

The men will need to agree upon the frequency and time for these meetings. They should choose a time when the greatest number of men will be able to attend. One of the mature Christian brothers should be selected to lead the meetings. It is wise to vary who takes this responsibility. This is not a position of authority, but an expedient way to proceed. Decisions made should represent a consensus of the men. Someone ought to keep a record of the decisions. A meeting might follow this order:

Prayer

Old business—discussion left from past meetings;
reports on progress and assigned responsibilities

New business—consideration of needs, future plans,
assignments, and spiritual concerns

Prayer

Worshiping God Daily

You will want to worship God daily in your heart and with your physical family. At each meal, pray to God, giving thanks for the food He has given before you eat. Pray regularly with your family, bringing before God the needs that you have and giving Him thanks and praise for all that He has done for you.

Of course, you will want to worship God at times other than on Sunday. You will always meet on Sunday, including in that worship service the observance of the Lord's Supper and the contribution. Beyond that, you may want to meet with fellow Christians at other times during the week for Bible study, prayer, and singing. It is important for Christians to meet together often, worship together, and encourage one another in the Lord.

As a servant of the Lord, you should let Him talk to you daily by reading and studying His Word. You can also talk to Him daily by praying to Him.

STEP FOUR: DOING GOOD WORKS

The fourth step that you need to take is that of serving the Lord. You are now a Christian, a follower of Christ, so live the way He lived. We are told that He went about doing good (Acts 10:38).

Sharing the Gospel

Christians are to evangelize, to share the gospel. Jesus told us just before He went back to heaven to “go into all the world and preach the gospel . . .” (Mark 16:15). Christ died to create the gospel; now we must work to see that it is preached to every person. One way that you can evangelize is to ask others to read this book. Encourage them to become Christians. Let us do all we can to lead others to Christ.

Edifying Others

Another task of the Christian is to edify others. The word “edify” means to build up. When you have an established congregation of fifteen or more, please write to Truth for Today World Mission School (use the address on page 303), and we will send you some materials to assist you in studying the Bible. Let us continue to grow in our knowledge of Christ and His way, and let us encourage others to grow with us.

Helping Others

You will also want to engage in works of benevolence. Ask yourself, “What can I do to help the poor?”

You cannot be like Christ if you do not care for the needy (Matthew 25:31–46).

Here is a list of some good works Christians do:

- Teach others the gospel
- Minister to the sick
- Assist children in learning about God
- Feed the hungry
- Help widows and orphans
- Visit those in prison
- Practice hospitality
- Distribute Christian literature
- Invite others to worship services
- Pray for others
- Read the Bible to those who cannot read

Jesus came into this world to serve. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister unto others and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). We cannot die for others the way Jesus did; but we can live for others by teaching them the gospel, helping them to grow in Christ, and showing compassion for them when they are hurting.

CONCLUSION

Have you read the story of the Ethiopian nobleman in Acts 8? If not, pause in your reading of this book and read that story. Philip was sent to him to teach him the gospel. Gladly, the Ethiopian received the gospel and became a Christian.

Philip was an inspired man. This book that you are reading is not inspired (except for the last section, the New Testament). However, in these pages, you have read what the New Testament teaches about the salvation Christ brought and the church He es-

tablished. These pages have pointed you to the inspired book, the Bible. Compare what you have read here to the Scriptures, and you will see that we have tried to teach you what the New Testament teaches.

God gave the Ethiopian an opportunity to be saved. It was not a long, drawn-out study; but it was sufficient to teach him how to become a Christian and live as a Christian. We have tried to provide the same teaching for you. The opportunity is now yours. May you take full and complete advantage of this opportunity. We bid you a sincere farewell. May God's rich blessings fall upon you as you obey the gospel that He has given through His Son. We will be looking forward to meeting you in heaven, if not before.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(answers on page 272)

1. Why does the question "What will you do with Jesus?" have eternal implications?
2. Do infants and small children need to be baptized? Why or why not?
3. What is the purpose of baptism?
4. What are some questions that will help you to find the church of Christ?
5. What Scripture teaches that baptism is a burial in water?
6. What is a good way to summarize the life of a Christian?
7. Why will a Christian stay close to the Word of God?
8. Each Sunday the church will meet to worship God. What expressions of worship should be used?
9. What two elements did Jesus use when He created the Lord's Supper?
10. What are the four steps you need to take in order to become a Christian and live as a Christian?