

Allied Christian Worship Centre

Stevenage, Hertfordshire

Pastor: Charlie Marshall

Web: www.alliedchristianworshipcentre.org

Email: info@alliedchristianworshipcentre.org



5 Steps to Salvation

Are you sure you know where you are going? At Pentecost Peter replied, *"Repent and be baptised, 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 2 v 38**



Author: Steve Phillips

Elders: Charlie Marshall, Gary Watch

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Welcome

Hello and welcome to the beginning of an adventure, the possible birthplace to the rest of your life. However you come to be reading this, whether you saw us on the streets doing what Jesus told us to do, or you are here through a friend, a recommendation, or simply by accident it matters not, it might just be God calling you?

My name is Steve Phillips I am a Christian, which means I have forsaken my former selfish existence to follow Jesus Christ and have put my Faith in Him as my saviour. It also means that I worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and take the Holy Bible to be my ultimate authority on life. I am also "born again", which means I have repented of my sins and been Baptised in water and spirit.

Right now, I am guessing that you are finding all this totally alien and, frankly, rather daft.

"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him" however, it also says in the same letter "the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight". [1 Corinthians]

The big problem for mankind is that we have chosen to rebel against the God who made us and do everything our way. God has told us that we face eternal separation from him unless we change our ways. To put it bluntly, we will spend an eternity in Hell and that's bad, real bad. But we can do something about it.

This booklet aims to give you, the discerning reader, the truth about your eternal destination and an opportunity to find out how you can be rescued from the impending judgement on the World. This is what Christians call Salvation.

It is important to note, at this stage, that salvation is a continual process. However, we take the following 5 important steps first and then we live the life that Jesus wants us to live.

Step 1 - Hear the Good News

Why do you need Salvation?

The first thing we need to explain is why you need salvation? After all you don't go to a Doctor if you don't think you are ill?

It all starts at the beginning. When God made man he made him in his image.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." [Genesis]

Man was perfect in every way.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. [Genesis]

Man did not sin and was put in charge of the whole Earth.

God blessed them, that is, male and female and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground; everything that has the breath of life in it. I give every green plant for food." And it was so. [Genesis]

Man was also immortal; we learn this just after Adam had blown it and lost his immortality.

And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must no longer be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever". [Genesis]

Man had direct communication with God, again we learn of this after their fall.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" [Genesis]

There is a bad guy we call Satan. He was once the mightiest of all the Angels, the most loved by God but he too got proud and thought he could do things his way. For that he was punished and cast out of heaven, so he contrived to spoil God's creation. Satan appeared to Eve in the form of a snake and deceived Eve into disobeying God. Eve, in turn, persuaded her husband Adam to do the same.

Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' ", "You're not going to die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. [Genesis]

Thus sin entered into the world. This is what is known as the "**Fall of Man**". Can you accept this or does it just sound like a fairy story to you? Be careful because a fairy story is exactly the way Satan would love you to see it.

God had set the rules and the standards by which Man was to behave and explained the consequences of disobedience.

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die". [Genesis]

When these rules were broken the punishment had to be carried out just as in a court of law today. If God had turned a blind eye then his laws would be meaningless.

The punishment for sin was death and separation from God. Man was no longer to be immortal and could not have direct communion with God, being banished from the Garden of Eden he now had to work hard for his living.

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. [Genesis]

Unfortunately this "problem" did not end with Adam and Eve and affects all mankind.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. [Romans]

This remains the case until the end comes and God judges the world, but that is a story for another time. We are, therefore, born into sin. We start out life already in rebellion against God.

Through Moses, God gave us some laws he wants us to keep but we just cannot seem to be able to keep them. We call these laws the 10 commandments and we find them in the book of Exodus.

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery: "You shall have no other gods before me. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, which is blasphemy, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. "You shall not murder. "You shall not commit adultery. "You shall not steal. "You shall not give false testimony, which is lie, against your neighbour. "You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour." [Exodus]

For reconciliation with God we would need to be perfect and keep all God's commandments forever. In a fallen World this is just not possible.

The real bad news is that when we die, the physical body may die but the spirit remains. Most atheists believe that death is annihilation, the end of it all, simply oblivion. The Bible tells us however, that death is not annihilation, that we will continue to exist but separated from God in a place called Hell and it is not a nice place to be. Once we are there, there is no coming back, no second chance. Jesus says:

"Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life

maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of Hell. [Matthew]

Fortunately, it is not all doom and gloom. There is good news; God has a rescue plan.

What is the Good News?

Enter on to the scene Jesus Christ. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say, John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." [Matthew]

Jesus also referred to God as his father. In the gospel of John we read of the Jews complaining.

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. [John]

While Jesus was on Earth he was also all human and could suffer pain and emotion and be limited by space and time just as we are.

Jesus was regarded as a Rabbi, or teacher.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." [John]

Jesus was also regarded as a healer.

When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. [Luke]

Jesus could command the weather.

The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him". [Luke]

Jesus could cast out demons.

Then Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority. In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are; you're the Holy One of God!" "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area. [Luke]

Jesus performed many miracles. We read in Luke:

When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish, unless we go and buy food for this entire crowd." (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. [Luke]

And finally, Jesus could even raise the dead.

Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know because power has gone out from me." Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead she is just asleep." They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. [Luke]

Jesus spent much of his early ministry bringing meaning to the Law of Moses, describing the Kingdom of God, teaching his disciples, healing the sick and casting out demons. However, all this was secondary to his main purpose which was to die for our sins and thus carry out God's rescue plan for us. Yes, Jesus who was perfect and never sinned.

He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. [1 Peter]

Jesus had to die to pay the penalty for our sins so that we could finally be reconciled with God.

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! [Romans]

This is like a Judge fining us a huge sum of money that we could never pay, for a genuine crime we had committed. If we cannot pay, the Judge tells us that we will have to go to jail, but someone else comes along and pays it for us, thus freeing us from jail even though we were not innocent and had done the crime. We have neither deserved it nor earned it.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of God's wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions, it is by grace you have been saved. [Ephesians]

Jesus is crucified on a cross, for no crime he had committed, and dies. But after three days, God raises Jesus from the dead because death could not hold him and thus the curse of death on us is lifted. This is the Gospel or, in other words, the good news of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!

Why is it Good News?

So God sends his son to rescue us and we kill him! Does that not seem like an odd form of good news? The Pharisees and Sadducees, Jewish rulers and teachers of the Law of Moses, thought they were getting rid of a nuisance and a threat to their power base. The people were disappointed because they were hoping for a military leader who would rid them of the Romans. But it was always in God's plan for this to happen as was predicted exactly by the prophet Isaiah over 700 years earlier who prophesied the following:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, for he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. [Isaiah]

The nature of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus bear witness to the fulfilment of this prophecy. Through miracles, signs and wonders and fulfilment of prophecies, God showed the people that Jesus was truly his son that was predicted to come.

Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. [Acts]

Jesus dies a horrible physical death on the Cross, but what we are not fully aware of is the other battle going on in the unseen spirit world. I will spare you for now of the scant details we have about what happened in those 3 days; just suffice to say it was critical to God's rescue plan for us.

God raises Jesus from the dead after three days and does another vitally important thing which is sometimes overlooked. He exalts Jesus to sit at his right hand and makes him Lord and Christ.

Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." [Acts]

This may, at first seem rather alien, so in simpler words he gives Jesus all authority in Heaven and on Earth to intercede between us and God, so that through him we can be reconciled with God even though we are still sinners. More to the point, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved which is the point of this whole message. We cannot do this for ourselves and we cannot earn it either. Good works will not get you to Heaven but call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and, by grace (that is, given as a free gift), you will be saved. Hallelujah!

Finally, Jesus is given the promised Holy Spirit which he sends in his place to be a helper. We will come back to this Holy Spirit later.

Are there any strings attached?

Oh yes, I am afraid so, you are not getting away with it that easy. God has provided the rescue plan; Jesus has put it into action **AND YOU HAVE TO RESPOND TO IT!!**

Step 2 – Believe and put your faith in Jesus Christ

You have heard the Word

Now you have heard the word and know what the good news is, about Jesus Christ. However, no matter what is said or done there will always be those that will scoff and will never believe. Jesus tells the following story:

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried in hell where he was in torment. He looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' ""No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead' ". [Luke]

Do you know people like that? I know I do. Unbelief however, does not make the good news untrue. I suspect those people will never get this far, so you are thus not one of them.

Before you continue you need to believe what you have heard, understand that you have done wrong in the eyes of God, know that you cannot do anything about it on your own and passionately desire to make a change, putting your faith in Jesus Christ to have the authority to be able to forgive you of your sins.

Beware of false Teachers

A word of warning; the Bible warns us about false teachers and prophets who deceive and mislead.

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. [2 Peter]

You will recognise them by their fruit, meaning deeds.

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognise them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them. [Matthew]

The Bible is the ultimate authority to the truth.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. [John]

I have made it as clear as possible with copious references to the Bible (from the New International Version) and I have at least given you the book from where the reference comes so you can check out for yourself what I say, however, if you are concerned then don't just take my word for it, check me out with someone you can trust or from your own study of the Bible. Be like the Bereans.

As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. [Acts]

It is in my vested interest that I tell you the truth, as best as I know it, because I know the consequences on me if I knowingly deceive or mislead you. As Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians:

As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! [Galatians]

Salvation is not a formula

Salvation is not a formula, a series of steps or instructions that you can simply follow dispassionately and once complete, hey presto! You are now saved. Salvation is not like taking an exam where once you have your certificate you can forget everything you have learned. No, for true salvation you have to passionately desire it and go on living it for the rest of your life. There is commitment involved here but the prize is well worth the cost.

I am representing salvation in a step-wise fashion here in order to guide you and help you to understand what is at stake in a structured way, however, I cannot stress strongly enough the part that personal conviction, belief and faith in Jesus Christ has in your salvation and healthy Christian birth. I would even go as far as saying, if you cannot believe what you have read so far then stop right here as you will be wasting your time continuing.

You have known it all along

This knowledge of good and evil, you have known all along. Remember from the word I talked about the "**Fall of Man**" when Adam and Eve became like God with the knowledge of good and evil? That knowledge we call our conscience. Have you ever wondered why we don't need to be taught to do wrong? Furthermore how we instinctively know it is wrong? And when we do well we instinctively feel good about it.

The Holy Spirits part to play in all this?

When Christians tell others about the good news, we are acting as messengers obeying Jesus' commands. The Bible tells us there is another player involved; the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the true "**vicar of Christ**" that means acting vicariously or "**in place of**" Jesus Christ. John writes of Jesus.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you". [John]

Jesus, in the meantime, is currently in Heaven preparing for his second return. Again John writes of Jesus.

"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." [John]

The Holy Spirit is the third part of the Trinity of God along with God the Father and God the Son (Jesus) in the order that I have mentioned them so far. In the second letter to the Corinthians we find a blessing that many Churches even today, say to each other in parting.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. [2 Corinthians]

The Bible tells us that Christians can have the "power of the Holy Spirit" to assist us with the work of the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Jesus said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 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." [Acts]

In the work of saving the lost (salvation) the Holy Spirit acts to convict those people, whom God is calling, of their sin and to convince them of the need for repentance. No evangelist can convict anyone of their sin; that is the exclusive job of the Holy Spirit. When you hear me you only hear the word, without the Holy Spirit to convict you of that word you would never be convinced. In the book of Acts you can read what I am commanded to do but note what the Holy Spirit is doing:

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 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. [Acts]

In step 5 (Receiving the Holy Spirit) we will study more about this Holy Spirit person. For now, let us keep with your belief in the good news and putting your faith in the authority of Jesus Christ.

Belief is not enough

It may come as no surprise to learn that Satan and his demons have absolutely no problem with believing in God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

"You believe that there is one God. Good! But even the demons believe that; and shudder". [James]

No, they are well aware of their enemy and we can be certain they are not going to get salvation. The difference being that they do not put their faith in the authority of Jesus Christ.

It is clear, therefore, that belief, no matter how sincere, is not enough. You have to have faith and more.

Step 3 – Repent for the forgiveness of your sins

Still with us?

At this stage you have heard the good news, albeit the highlights and perhaps, you believe; joining many millions of us around the world. You now have some things to do that will change your life forever.

At Pentecost Peter addressed the crowd of well over 3,000 people, mainly Jews but also people from far and wide and gave them the good news that you have just heard. The following was their response:

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. [Acts]

So Peter told us to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. The subject of Baptism will be discussed in the next step. For now we will concentrate on Repentance.

What is Repentance?

Unfortunately the word repentance is now largely associated with strange bearded and sandaled men with billboards warning that the end is nigh. The word has become a bit of a joke and is rarely used in common speech. However, there is nothing in life more serious than this. So let us get past the jokers and find out what the word really means using words we are more familiar with.

Repentance is saying sorry for the things that you have done wrong and then vowing to turn away from them and set out in a new direction, the complete opposite direction.

My youngest son found out, when he was four years old, that the word sorry could be used as a sort of talisman. If you did wrong then you just said sorry and that seemed to avert impending punishment. This was not true repentance, however, and the power of the talisman very soon faded. The trouble was that there was no meaning behind the word sorry, my son would simply use it to get out of trouble but then carry on as he was before. He had no intention of stopping what he was doing nor finding out what pleased us so, he had to learn the hard way.

As for us with God, learning the hard way is a mighty bit more serious and permanent. Hell is the punishment and it is eternal. Hell is not oblivion; you will know about it and live it. You have heard this before but let us hear it again, this time from Marks gospel:

***"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where" 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'* Everyone will be salted with fire. [Mark]**

So when you repent you must mean it and take steps in your life to stop doing those things that are dishonouring to God. There is no need to list them because your conscience will tell you when you are doing wrong. Incidentally this is not a one-off step, as you continue in

your Christian life there will still be things that you say or do that you will be ashamed of and require repentance, however, you will not desire them as you did before.

How can I know I am a sinner?

So what makes me a sinner then? God's measure for us is perfection anything else is a sin. We sin when we break God's laws. Most of us know these as the Ten Commandments.

To see how you measure up, take this simple test:

1. Have you ever told a lie, even if it was just once? What would that make you? It would be a Liar.
2. Have you ever stolen anything even if it was just a few sweets when you were a kid? What would that make you? It would be a thief.
3. Have you ever misused the Lord's name even in frustration? What would that make you? It would make you a blasphemer.
4. The Bible says even if you have just looked at another person with lustful thoughts you have committed adultery. Have you ever done that? What would that make you? It would be an adulterer.

How are you doing so far? If these ring true to you then by your admission it would make you a lying, thieving, blasphemous adulterer. Notice I have only covered 4 of the 10 but the cynic in me tells me that I need not go any further. Have you got the idea yet? Perfection is just impossible to keep up.

Salvation by grace not by works

This repentance stuff and vowing to obey God's commands sounds all too close to salvation by works. Let us remind ourselves what Jesus said:

"I am the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except by me." [John]

When we repent we do it in Jesus' name who intercedes to God for us. No amount of repentance or good works will do it for us without Jesus. It is by grace that we are saved NOT by works.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith; and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. [Ephesians]

God looks at our heart not our actions. In other words it is about our attitude to God, how sincere we are. When I repent, it is not because it is one of the steps to salvation like a talisman nor even because of thoughts of punishment but because I want to. I don't like it when I upset God; I desire to do what pleases him.

My youngest son now desires to please, which is a joy to behold and consequently there is no need to punish him as often. He still does wrong of course, but his whole attitude is different. If you are a mother or a father and have experienced this joy then you will know something of what it must be like for God when we repent and truly mean it.

For the forgiveness of your sins

Jesus upset the Pharisees and teachers of the law when he claimed to have the authority to forgive sins. God gave him that authority and true repentance leads to the forgiveness of our sins.

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead; whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of

these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. [Acts]

The reference seems to be to Israel but don't worry if you are a Gentile (not a Jew), Jesus and the apostles make it quite plain that the Gentiles are included, grafted onto the olive tree that is Israel. So the promise is first to the Jews and remains with the Jews but the Gentiles are grafted on to that promise. If you are still unsure then read Paul's letter to the Romans.

Forgiveness means that we are free of the burden of the past. We can start anew without having to be guilty for the things we did in the past. As far as God is concerned those things are forgotten.

Some people will say, "Yes, I think I am a pretty good person" but a quick test through the 10 commandments soon shatters that illusion while others will say; "I am not good enough to be a Christian I have done too many bad things in the past". If only they could realise that they will never be good enough but if they repent, those things they are ashamed of will be forgiven and forgotten. In Luke we can read what Jesus had to say about the subject:

Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is; that she is a sinner." Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii's, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." [Luke]

Another way of looking at this is to say that you die to your old self and get born again to a new life in Jesus. This is what Baptism is all about.

Step 4 – Be Baptised

A physical event with a spiritual effect

The next step on your path to salvation through Jesus Christ is a physical action which has a profound spiritual effect on your future life. Some say Baptism is a symbol of your renewed state and an outward confession of your repentance and new found faith in Jesus Christ. Although this is one effect of Baptism it dangerously misses the spiritual importance of Baptism to the individual. If Baptism was just a symbol to show others then it might imply that if you did not do it, it would not matter that much you would still be saved. Wrong!

At Pentecost Peter replied to the crowd:

"Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." [Acts]

This statement from Peter puts repentance and baptism together for the forgiveness of sins. We have covered repentance so let us look at baptism. Clearly Peter urged the crowd to put their faith in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins and be baptised. These were all essential ingredients to salvation so baptism, therefore, plays a significant part for the individual, not just for others to know that you have been saved.

Total immersion

What exactly is this physical action of Baptism? Well, it is total immersion in water. The whole body is submerged in water in exactly the way that John the Baptist taught and practised and Jesus endorsed in order to fulfil all righteousness. In Matthew we get an account of Jesus' baptism:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented. [Matthew]

We will cover more of that later. Some churches have their own Baptistry, a cross between a large bath and a small swimming pool. The chapel where I worship is a council owned community centre so we use the local swimming pool instead. Where you are baptised and what water you use is irrelevant, there is nothing significant about the place or the water itself.

Die to your old self and be born again

Let us now understand what is happening when we get baptised. Christians talk about being ***"born again"***. This expression comes from a conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus a Pharisee and member of the Jewish ruling council:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly

things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven; the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God". [John]

In this conversation Jesus talked about both baptism of water and spirit, albeit mostly that of the spirit in this particular passage. We will come on to baptism in the spirit in the next step on receiving the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to Nicodemus

No-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. [John]

In order to be born again we must have died first. In baptism of water we die to the old self. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he uses the term washed as a reference to water baptism relating to the fact that the Christians in the church of Corinth were made holy by having their sins washed away in the act of baptism:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. [1 Corinthians]

When we repented we said sorry to God for our past sins and when we get baptised we have those sins washed away and the past is put behind us, we are born into a new life with Jesus Christ no longer living for ourselves but now alive for Christ. This is all summed up in an excerpt from Paul's letter to the Romans:

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised 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. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; because anyone who has died has been freed 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 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 the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. [Romans]

Jesus' example

If you are not convinced then look at Jesus' example, this time from the gospel of Matthew:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." [Matthew]

Jesus who was perfect did not need to be baptised hence John's initial objection to the request, however, Jesus did this act as an example to us to do the same to fulfil all righteousness. If Jesus said do it and I put my trust in Jesus now, then do it!

A note about Infant Baptism

At this point in the discussion I need to say something about Infant Baptism. There is much confusion about this issue and many denominations will baptise, or christen, infants and babies in order to secure their salvation. Even worse, adults will believe that they do not need to be baptised because they were "done" when they were a baby. There is nothing in the Bible that mentions infant baptism. All references to those baptised are people who are mature enough to hear the word, understand it, believe in it, put their trust in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins... and only then be baptised. This cannot be something a baby can do. No, although baptism is something someone else does to you, it is you who have decided that it is the right course of action and have requested it.

Obedience to commission mandate

Finally we have Jesus' commission to us (meaning those already saved) to:

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Matthew]

If I did not tell you about this, and offer to do this for new converts, I would be disobedient to the great commission on me from Jesus himself. If Jesus made such a point of commanding us in this way and with all the teaching we have on Baptism in the New Testament gospels, acts of the early church and in letters to churches then we have no doubt whatsoever about its place and importance in the act of salvation.

So what about that other form of baptism Jesus talked about?

Ok, we hinted about this earlier and John the Baptist mentioned it:

I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. [Matthew]

These are references to the final step on the road to salvation.

Step 5 – Receive the Holy Spirit

Biblical references

This step is, to some, the hardest to understand, probably because it is the least well-taught. We have already looked at water baptism and in that step I deliberately missed out the references to spirit baptism so that we would concentrate on one without worrying about the other. However, it was hinted at and had you checked up the Bible references you cannot have missed reading about it. Let us go back to some of those references again and deliberately include the references to spirit baptism or the receiving of the spirit.

We start with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus the Pharisee in John's gospel:

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."
[John]

Here is John the Baptist's prophetic statement about Jesus' form of baptism:

"I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". [Matthew]

Read what happened at Jesus' baptism:

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." [Matthew]

And finally we shall re-read again what Peter said to the crowd after Pentecost:

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, 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]

So who is he?

As you have read in our last biblical reference the Holy Spirit is a gift from God freely given to you to confirm your acceptance by God. Baptism of spirit is clearly and distinctly different from baptism of water. John the Baptist could not offer it, only Jesus. As a gift, you thus, receive it.

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." [Acts]

On another occasion when Jesus was talking privately to his disciples he predicted his death and told the disciples about the Holy Spirit that he would send. In this passage in John's gospel we get one of the best descriptions of who the Holy Spirit is and what his purpose is:

"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;

and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. [John]

Notice how the Holy Spirit is regarded as "him", thus the Spirit is a person like God and Jesus, together making up what is known as the Trinity (Godhead of three persons). That is why I started off this section with "So who is he?" rather than "So what is it?". The Holy Spirit is also called a counsellor and a convicter. If you have believed and repented then the Holy Spirit has already been at work in you convicting you of your guilt in regard to sin because you would not have believed otherwise. Now you can receive him as a counsellor, an aid and a comfort in your life to come.

Do I need the Holy Spirit?

Oh yes. Baptism of water is for forgiveness from past sins and thus deals with the past. Baptism of the Holy Spirit equips us for our future life in Christ. Once we have been forgiven of our sins and had them "washed away" we need to fill the vacuum with the Holy Spirit lest we slide back to our old ways.

"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation." [Matthew]

The Holy Spirit gives to the body of Christ (the church) gifts of the spirit used to help the church in its job of seeking the lost and bringing people to a faith in Jesus Christ. As we have already seen it is the job of the Spirit to convict people of their sins. We deliver the good news but we need the Spirit to do the convicting otherwise no-one would believe us.

So how do I get the Holy Spirit?

You have to ask for it through prayer. Of course, you must have already believed, repented and gone through water baptism first. For some people the receiving of the Holy Spirit was very soon after baptism in water (the same day) for others it is received some time afterwards. Interestingly Jesus encourages us to ask persistently until we receive it in this little parable from the gospel of Luke:

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness (or persistence) he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

"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; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you 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?" [Luke]

Not only can you ask for the gift of the Spirit but others can also ask for you as happened in the early Church:

When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. [Acts]

All evidence suggests that the Holy Spirit was usually received after the laying on of hands (that is physically touching) often by placing a hand on the head or shoulders of the person to "receive", from other Christians.

How do you know that you have the power of the Holy Spirit?

Those that received the Holy Spirit usually showed some visible evidence of the fact although, not always in the same way. On several occasions we read of Paul verifying if believers have received the Holy Spirit yet:

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all. [Acts]

Notice how sometimes the answer was no and that there were many who had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. No wonder it is the least well-taught subject today. However, Paul soon put the record straight. Notice, again the laying on of hands but most importantly of all with respect to the "how do we know?" issue is that they started doing something they could not do before, speaking in tongues (meaning different languages) and prophesying. In all cases where this is reported in the New Testament, people seemed to be able to say whether they had or had not received the Spirit implying that something happened to confirm the fact.

Conclusion

We have arrived at the end of our adventure. If you have followed what I have said this far and carried out all the actions with true repentance and sincerity then welcome brother or sister, you can now call yourself a Christian and have the assurance that you are saved. However, if we equate this adventure to natural childbirth you have now got to the equivalent of leaving the Maternity ward with your parents. There is a whole new life ahead of you. Being saved is a continual process until you die and finally meet up with the Lord.

So, about your "parents" then? We are not meant to be alone but a part of the body of Christ. That body on earth is represented by the church.

Find yourself a good Bible believing church family to join in fellowship with. If you live in Stevenage, Hertfordshire why not try my church? It is the Allied Christian Worship Centre. You can contact us through our website addressed: www.alliedchristianworshipcentre.org by email using info@alliedchristianworshipcentre.org by phone on **01438 237 996** or visit us at the Hertford Road Community Centre, Kenilworth Close, Bragbury End for Sunday morning worship at 10:45

Get a Bible as soon as you can. I recommend the New International Version for new converts at least. All the quotations on this presentation come from that version. If you cannot afford one, download the free electronic one from our Literature section on Bibles from our website. Read your Bible every day if you can, it is your divine authority now and contains everything you need to know about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and your responsibilities as a Christian for a Holy life pleasing to God.

Warning

I have a warning for you so that it does not come as a surprise if it happens. Jesus never said that our lives on Earth would necessarily be a "bed of roses" now that we are Christians; in fact, quite the opposite. Jesus talks about the world not liking Christians because it did not like him and that we may face persecution.

This is my command: Love each other. "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. [John]

In this country, at the moment, persecution rarely amounts to more than ridicule, however, sinister laws are being passed separating the state from God's laws and a time is coming when Christians are going to have to stand up and be counted for what we believe in even under threat of prosecution.

Final instructions

Finally, I will leave you with Jesus' great commission to us from Matthew's gospel. Now that you have found a new life in Jesus and an assurance of your place in heaven then it is only right that you should tell others as I have done for you:

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." [Matthew]