



**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE®**

Advanced Bible Study

SPRING 2021 | CSB

STUDY 1:

*Essentials of
Christianity*

STUDY 2:

How to Share Christ

LifeWay | Adults

A PROMISE THAT WILL NEVER BE BROKEN

It hurts when people break a promise. Some people make promises they have no intention of honoring. Others sincerely mean well, but circumstances interfere and they're unable to do what they said they promised they'd do.

God is not like us. When He makes a promise, He keeps it. Period. He is always faithful to His word. For example, He promises an abundant and eternal life to those who trust in His Son, Jesus Christ.

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.... For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:9,13).

But we don't automatically enjoy the benefits of this wonderful promise. We must understand and believe Jesus died on the cross, taking our sin upon Himself, and then rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us. As we believe, we also acknowledge His lordship, turning from sin and surrendering our lives to Him.

God's promise is for you. If you would like a new life in Christ, repent of your sins and put your faith in Him. Admit to God you are a sinner and ask Him to forgive you. Turn from the sin that has kept you from God and accept Jesus' gift of forgiveness. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Express your repentance and faith by praying something like this:

“Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins. I'm sorry for all the wrong I've done and ask You to forgive me. I now accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith. Be baptized as an expression of your faith.

CONTENTS

ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY

Suggested for
the week of

March 7	Session 1	The Nature of God	7
March 14	Session 2	The Purpose of Humanity	20
March 21	Session 3	The Nature of Sin	33
March 28	Session 4	The Death of Jesus	46
April 4	Session 5	The Resurrection of Jesus	59
April 11	Session 6	The Work of the Holy Spirit	72
April 18	Session 7	The Return of Jesus	85

HOW TO SHARE CHRIST

April 25	Session 1	Our Commission	99
May 2	Session 2	Start with Prayer	112
May 9	Session 3	The Message	125
May 16	Session 4	Live the Message	138
May 23	Session 5	Share the Message	151
May 30	Session 6	Trust God to Work	164
		Coming Next Quarter	177
		Discipleship Plan	178

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INTRODUCTION

ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY

When we compare world religions, we quickly see that we are far apart in our beliefs and worldviews. Some people attempt to find a common ground by declaring, “It doesn’t matter what you believe, so long as you sincerely believe it.” But what we believe does matter! Our beliefs make a difference both now and for eternity. This study looks at the core truths central to the Christian faith. Without these truths, life loses all meaning and hope. But within these core truths, we discover the character of God, the nature and work of Christ, who we are, and where we are going—truths that point us to a right relationship with God.

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan (p. 178):

Exercise Faith. Within the pages of Scripture, God has revealed truth, the core things that define Christianity. Knowing these truths is more than an academic exercise; as we trust what God has revealed to us, our faith impacts how we live both now and for eternity.

SESSION 1**The Nature of God****THE POINT**

God has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

THE PASSAGES

John 14:8-11,16-20,23-26

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Modern technology amazes me. I don't pretend for a minute to understand how it all works, but I sure love using it! Computers have revolutionized the way we work, with such features as word processing, spreadsheets that adjust columns automatically, email, and more.

Online shopping means I do not have to leave my house; I merely click some buttons and merchandise arrives on my porch. No more fighting crowds at the mall—unless I enjoy that kind of life! I also can monitor my daily calendar on my computer, and that calendar synchronizes to a program on my cell phone. It also synchs to a copy of my schedule that my office manager can manage. Managing my schedule is so much simpler these days! And how in the world does a Global Positioning System (GPS) work? How does my phone know that a traffic accident looms just ahead? I have absolutely no idea.

Fortunately, we can enjoy the many features of modern technology even if we don't fully understand how they work. Likewise, we can enjoy a relationship with God by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, even if we

don't fully understand God's nature. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah and said, "For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9). One of Scripture's great mysteries involves God's nature. The Bible reveals that God has three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—yet He remains one God. Theologians call this truth the doctrine of the Trinity.

As you study this session, perhaps you will gain new appreciation for the mystery of God's nature. We should not expect to understand fully the nature of our infinite God! At the same time, today's session points us to truth about God's being, who He is, and how He interacts with His creation.

THE SETTING

John 13 begins what Bible scholars call the Upper Room Discourse. John 13–17 describes the night of Jesus' last supper with His disciples, followed by their journey to the garden of Gethsemane, where Jewish religious leaders arrested Him. As Jesus and the disciples spent their time in the upper room, the Lord laid aside His outer garment, took a towel, and washed His disciples' feet (John 13:3-11). A servant typically would do such a menial task, but Jesus washed the disciples' feet to provide them an example of servant leadership (vv. 13-15).

Jesus then informed the disciples that one of them would betray Him (vv. 21-26). Such an announcement naturally prompted a stir among the disciples. Judas Iscariot left the room and headed into the night to prepare to betray Jesus while the other disciples remained unaware (vv. 27-30).

Jesus then gave His disciples a new commandment. They were to love one another, just as He had loved them (vv. 34-35). Doing so would show the world they were

Jesus' disciples. Simon Peter boldly declared his allegiance to Jesus, insisting he would lay down his life for his Lord (v. 37). However, Jesus informed Peter he would deny Him that very night, and not once, but three times (v. 38).

The disciples sensed something was wrong, but Jesus encouraged them not to have troubled hearts (14:1). He told them He would prepare a place for them, and He would come again to receive them to Himself (v. 3). When Thomas confessed he was unable to understand what Jesus was saying, Jesus responded: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (v. 6). Only through Jesus would people come to know His heavenly Father.

STUDY THE BIBLE

John 14:8-11

⁸ "Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that's enough for us."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works.

¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.

To know Jesus, the Son of God, is to know the Father. In the original Greek, the Gospel writer, John, also a disciple of Jesus, used language in verses 8 and 9 that conveyed the sense of pulling readers directly into the experience, as if they were in the room when the conversation occurred. The disciple **Philip** now spoke. When Jesus had first met

Philip, He invited Philip to follow Him (John 1:43). Philip promptly found his brother Nathanael so they could follow Jesus together (vv. 45-49). Philip presumably wanted to serve the Lord faithfully in the days ahead, and the Book of Acts records His ministry (Acts 8:4-8,26-40). However, that ministry was yet to come. Here, Philip and the others struggled to understand what Jesus was communicating.

Philip referred to Jesus as **Lord**. The word has a wide range of meaning, from being a basic title and sign of respect, to referring to the Lord and Master of the world. Here, it denotes the respect Philip had for Jesus as his teacher and rabbi.

Philip asked Jesus, **show us the Father**. Jesus' disciple desired an intimate relationship with God, and he heard Jesus announce "the way" (John 14:6). He sensed from his years with Jesus that Jesus and God had a special connection, though he did not understand fully at this point. Philip wanted to see God and know God, and we should commend him for that. Indeed, eternal life means knowing God through Jesus (John 17:3). Philip's affirmation **that's enough for us** indicates that his desire to know the Father was sufficient for him.

Jesus replied to His puzzled disciple, asking, **have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip?** Jesus' public ministry had lasted over three years. For virtually all of that time, Philip and the other disciples had accompanied Jesus wherever He went. They had heard Him teach, and they had experienced His many miracles. Consequently, Jesus asked Philip what he had learned through that experience. Had Philip really not figured out who Jesus was by this time? Of course, the other disciples had not figured it out either!

Jesus then affirmed, **the one who has seen me has seen the Father**. The verb forms translated *has seen* are in the

Greek perfect tense. They express an action completed in the past but with results continuing to the present. Philip had seen Jesus in the past but continued to see Him now. Likewise, Jesus affirmed that the disciples should have seen the Father in Jesus and continued to do so even until that day. Jesus reiterated His challenge; **how can you say, “Show us the Father?”**

Philip and the other disciples did not fully understand the relationship Jesus had with His Father. John’s Gospel records Jesus’ ardent desire to do His Father’s will (John 4:34; 5:17-20; 6:38). He also often affirmed the close relationship He had with His Father (John 17:21-23). The apostle John stated it clearly: “No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him” (John 1:18).

To emphasize the close relationship He had with His Father, Jesus asked, **Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?** The particular form of the Greek question suggests Jesus was gently hinting that Philip certainly must understand this truth. Jesus’ words affirm unity of the Father and the Son with respect to nature and purpose. Jesus challenged Philip, along with the other disciples present, to embrace this fact.

God sent His Son Jesus as Savior of the world (John 3:16), and Jesus’ suffering and death completed the Father’s plan of redemption (Acts 2:23-24; 4:27-28). During His ministry, Jesus had warned His disciples He would die but rise again (Matt. 16:21); however, the disciples never really understood. It would take seeing the risen Jesus for them to understand (John 20:19-20).

Jesus’ affirmation, **the words I speak to you I do not speak on my own**, again testified to His close relationship with His Father. He had come to do His Father’s will. Shortly after this conversation, Jesus was praying in

the garden of Gethsemane, asking His Father that, if possible, the horrors of the next day might pass Him by. Nonetheless, He utterly surrendered Himself to His Father's will, exclaiming, "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39).

The Gospel of John especially stresses the oneness of purpose the Father and the Son shared in bringing salvation to the world. Jesus often affirmed that He had come to do His Father's will. Jesus also told Philip and the others, "**The Father who lives in me does his works.**" The word translated *lives* emphasizes the Father's continual presence with His Son. God was accomplishing His perfect work through His Son Jesus.

Jesus again challenged His disciples, "**Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.**" After more than three years of listening to Him and observing His life and work, could they not trust His words? If not, Jesus said, "**Believe because of the works themselves.**" The disciples had seen Jesus perform so many miracles. They saw Him heal the sick and afflicted (Mark 2:1-12; 5:25-34) and they were with Him when He calmed a storm (Mark 4:35-41). They saw Him feed five thousand men plus women and children with five barley loaves and two fish (Mark 6:35-44). They even saw him raise people from the dead (Mark 5:21-24, 35-42; Luke 7:11-17). They surely had enough evidence to believe Jesus had a special relationship with God the Father. Therefore, they could believe Him when He told them He was in the Father and the Father was in Him.

The word *Trinity* does not appear in the Bible, but the doctrine best summarizes the Scriptural teaching on God. Passages such as these demonstrate Jesus' close relationship with His Father. They were one in purpose, but they were also one in nature (John 10:30).

What are some lasting truths in John 14:8-11?

- ▶ We come to know God the Father through Jesus His Son.
- ▶ Jesus' life and work should convince us He is God's Son.
- ▶ Jesus and His Father are one in purpose and in nature.

John 14:16-20

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.

¹⁷ He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.

¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too.

²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you.

When Jesus, the Son of God, is in your life, the Holy Spirit is in your life.

As Jesus ate with His disciples, He further clarified how they would experience God in their lives going forward. The words, "**I will ask the Father**" again affirm the close connection Jesus had with His Father. God is one God, yet exists in three Persons. So far, Jesus had mentioned the Father and the Son. Now, He would teach His followers about the third Person of the Trinity.

"**He will give you another Counselor**" refers to the Holy Spirit. The Counselor would provide similar counsel to what the Father and the Son brought the disciples. The word translated *Counselor* also can be rendered "Comforter" (KJV) or "Helper" (NASB). It describes one who is called alongside another person. Jesus told His disciples the Counselor would **be with you forever**. They were concerned because they did not know where Jesus was

going. The Lord assured them they would not be alone. He would be with them, but in a way they had not anticipated.

Jesus described the Comforter as **the Spirit of truth.**

The Holy Spirit would bring truth to the disciples' hearts. Earlier, Jesus described Himself as "the truth" (John 14:6). By identifying the Holy Spirit as *the Spirit of truth*, Jesus further accentuated the link between the Son and the Spirit. God's truth will guide us through life.

Regarding the Holy Spirit, Jesus stated, "**The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him.**" When Jesus came to earth, many of His own people did not receive Him (1:10-11). The apostle Paul would later write that people who do not know God are not able to discern spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14). They need a special work of God in their hearts to receive it. Sometimes we wonder as we share our faith why others cannot see its truth. Until God does a work in people's hearts, they will not be able to receive Him.

In contrast, Jesus affirmed, "**You do know him.**" Jesus' disciples had walked with Him for over three years and had come to know God through Him. Jesus was leaving them, but preparing the way for the Holy Spirit to come. However, the disciples did not fully understand this yet.

Jesus further affirmed that the Spirit **remains with you.** The word translated *remains* is the same word for *lives* in verse 8, and carries the connotation of abiding or staying. The Spirit would not only remain with them, He would actually live in the disciples.

Today, we sometimes forget we are engaged in a spiritual battle. Many of the culture wars we fight occur because people do not embrace God's truth. When their own hearts become the standard for morality, people go astray. But when they follow God's truth, they embrace life in all its fullness. This was Jesus' goal for His disciples (John 10:10).

Jesus assured His disciples, **“I will not leave you as orphans.”** *Orphans* often had no one to defend their cause. The prophet Isaiah decried those who treated orphans and widows unfairly (Isa. 1:17,23). However, Jesus assured the disciples they would not be alone. We should understand His comforting words, **“I am coming to you,”** in light of what He had just said about the Spirit of truth. He would not abandon His disciples after His death and resurrection, but would be with them through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told His disciples, **“In a little while the world will no longer see me.”** He was going to the cross, and many in the world would think His ministry was over. Even Jesus’ own “disciples deserted him and ran away” at His arrest, unaware the resurrection lay just ahead (Matt. 26:56). However, Jesus’ assuring words, **“But you will see me”** probably alluded to His rising from the dead after His crucifixion. We must remember the disciples experienced confusion because they did not understand what was about to happen. We have the blessing of more informed perspectives as we look back on these events.

Jesus promised His disciples another astounding truth: **“Because I live, you will live too.”** Jesus often told His disciples He would rise from the dead (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19), but they failed to understand His words. Even on the morning of His resurrection, they struggled to understand the implications of the empty tomb (Luke 24:10-12; John 20:8-9). Nonetheless, Jesus’ words were true. His resurrection guaranteed their resurrection, just as it guarantees ours (1 Cor. 15:20-22).

On that day may refer to the day the disciples saw the risen Jesus, or to Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit would come. His followers finally would understand the meaning of all Jesus came to do. He assured them, **“You will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you.”**

The fellowship God shares with the Son He also is willing to share with His children. We are God’s children by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). The Holy Spirit lives in us—the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11).

The Bible teaches that Jesus is coming back, and every day is one day closer. The Holy Spirit lives in us to grow us into the people God wants us to be, to make us more like Jesus. On the day of Jesus’ return, we will receive our resurrection bodies and know Him as we never have before (1 John 3:2).

This salvation comes from the plan of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—One God. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we receive the Holy Spirit into our lives and hearts (Eph. 1:13-14).

What are some lasting truths in John 14:16-20?

- ▶ The Holy Spirit is our Counselor, who remains with us forever.
- ▶ The world cannot understand the Spirit’s work in the world or in our lives.
- ▶ One day we will enjoy perfect intimate fellowship with our God.

John 14:23-26

²³ Jesus answered, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

²⁴ The one who doesn’t love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ “I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you.

²⁶ But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

God the Father sends the Holy Spirit to continue the work of the Son.

Jesus had two disciples named Judas. One was Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him. The other was Judas, the son of James (Luke 6:16). Judas the son of James asked Jesus how He would reveal Himself to His disciples (John 14:22).

The Lord responded to Judas with an identifying trademark of those who loved Him. **“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.”** The Scriptures often identify obedience as the best evidence of salvation. Jesus said not everyone who called Him “Lord” would enter heaven, but those who did His Father’s will (Matt. 7:21).

Jesus affirmed again later in the upper room that obeying His commands was a mark of love (John 15:10). The apostle John, who was present at the Last Supper, remembered this when he wrote the letter we know as 1 John. He told his readers their obedience to God’s commands provided evidence they truly were children of God (1 John 2:3-5).

Jesus then described the result of a disciple’s obedience: **“My father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”** God the Father will set His love upon those who demonstrate their faith through obedience.

Jesus’ words *we will come to Him* show the Father and the Son working together in a believer’s life. The expression *make our home with him* furthers this idea. God’s children can enjoy fellowship with Him and with Jesus.

Jesus also highlighted the opposite understanding: **“The one who doesn’t love me will not keep my words.”** Do you know people who speak of their relationship with Christ, but do not keep His commands? Such people may well be deceiving themselves. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), but saving faith expresses itself in action (v. 10).

Jesus also affirmed, **“The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent Me.”** Jesus again affirmed He had come to do the will of His Father. In the garden

of Gethsemane, He yielded His life to His Father's will (Matt. 26:39). Again, the theme of Jesus doing His Father's will is a common one in John's Gospel (John 5:19; 12:49-50).

Jesus knew His arrest was coming within a few hours. He told His followers, **"I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you."** The grand events of God's salvation—Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection—were about to transpire.

Jesus was leaving His disciples, but He had a plan. He reminded them again of **the Counselor, the Holy Spirit**. The Spirit would continue the work Jesus had begun. Jesus also described the Spirit as the One **"whom the Father will send in my name."** Notice in the text that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son. This verse demonstrates the clear cooperation between the Persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—to accomplish salvation in believers.

When the Holy Spirit came, He would **teach** the disciples **all things** they needed to live the lives God expected of them. The Spirit would also **remind** the disciples **of everything** Jesus revealed to them. Even after the resurrection, when the disciples had seen Jesus, some biblical texts suggest they struggled to grasp the implications of these events (Matt. 28:16-17).

Jesus stayed with His disciples for forty days after His resurrection, continuing to teach them (Acts 1:3). Before He ascended into heaven, He instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the power that would soon come upon them (vv. 4-5). The Holy Spirit came from the Father and the Son to usher in the next step in God's redemptive purpose for the world.

As the Spirit fell upon the early believers on the Day of Pentecost, He lit the flame of kingdom advance. Some theologians have put it this way: the Father planned our

salvation, the Son provided it at the cross, and the Spirit applies it to our lives. Glory to our triune God!

What are some lasting truths in John 14:23-26?

- ▶ We should demonstrate our love for the Lord by keeping His word.
- ▶ Jesus came to accomplish His Father's will.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit will enable us to live the lives God intends for us.

LIVE IT OUT

As you reflect on this lesson, respond to the following questions:

How does each Person of the Trinity play a role in our salvation? What are the implications for believers?

In what areas of your life could you demonstrate more evidence of your faith?

What difference does it make that the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you?