

Guard the Gospel



LEHIGH VALLEY
— CHURCH —

Study Guide

Seek God

Seeking God

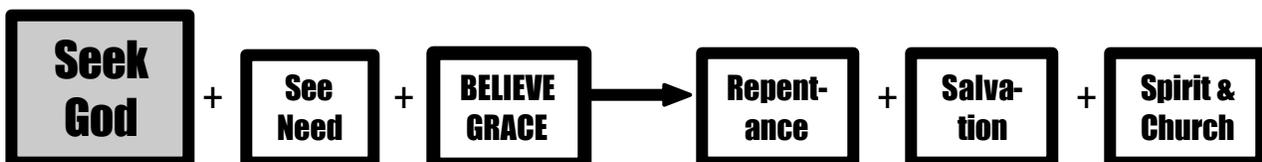
Purpose

Seeking God is a study to clarify what it takes to pursue a relationship with God. While this study will clear up many misconceptions, it can likewise provide great inspiration for one to wholeheartedly seek our Lord and God. In some cases, you may need to share these scriptures with a seeker who has become complacent along the path in his/her search.

- **Matthew 7:7 & 7:13-14.** One of the great promises of the bible: everyone who seeks finds! Plus, one of the great warnings in the bible: only a few will find. If only a few find God, then how many actually seek Him?
- **Luke 13:22-30.** Yes, only a few will be saved; therefore, make every effort to seek. Those who simply 'try' will be caught off guard by their rejection from the kingdom of God. How can you make every effort to seek Him? These efforts should help develop and increase your *faith* in Jesus. Why is it so dangerous to simply 'try'?
- **Matthew 6:25-33.** The greatest enemy of best is good. What good things can distract you from seeking God as your first priority? What changes must you make in order to make God's kingdom and righteousness your top priority?
- **Matthew 13:44-46.** Finding God is like finding a great treasure or a valuable pearl. Is it a joy for you to sacrifice everything in exchange for God's grace? Do you really understand and believe the trade off?
- **Acts 8:26-40.** Here's an example of a seeker who humbly puts God first, thus finding Him and finding great joy. Take note that the Ethiopian Eunuch was: a busy man, a man who needed a disciple's help to seek God, a man who used the bible as his guide to finding God, a man who was eager to be baptized.

Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Acts 17:10-11
- Jeremiah 29:10-13
- Deuteronomy 4:28-31
- Daniel 9:3
- Hebrews 11:6
- 1st Timothy 4:7b-8
- Acts 17:22-27
- 2nd Chronicles 15:1-4



Seek God

Knowing Jesus

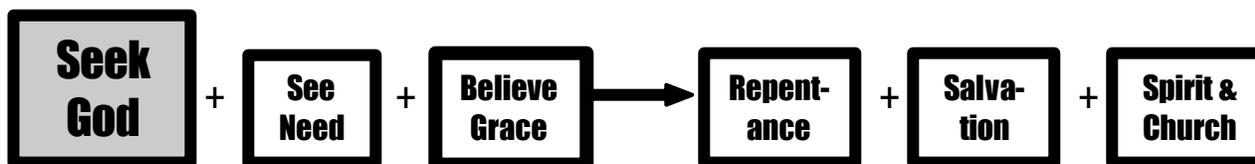
Purpose

The Apostle Paul's great desire was to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection (*Philippians 3:10*). Likewise, he prays that God may give us the wisdom so that we may know Him better (*Ephesians 1:17*). Few people seeking a relationship with Jesus have an accurate picture of Him. Before one can embrace true discipleship, he or she must first know, respect, even love the man to be followed. Otherwise, discipleship remains a mere commitment to 'commitment.' Knowing Jesus is a prerequisite for following Him. While this study will help, you may instead ask seekers to read through a gospel (suggest one week as a timeframe), listing every inspiring observation they make about Jesus. You can then discuss and celebrate that list with them.

- **John 1:1 & 1:14.** Jesus is God, yet he became man for us. Why would he do that? What type of man would be described as "full of grace and truth?"
- **John 2:13-17.** Jesus burned with zeal for righteousness. He was a man who acted on that zeal.
- **John 3:1-16.** Jesus taught the teachers. Later, Nicodemus was so amazed by Jesus' righteousness that he began to defend him before the intimidating council of Jewish leaders (*John 7: 50-51*). Ultimately, Nicodemus was so moved by Jesus' sacrificial love, that he exposed his commitment to Jesus by caring for his burial (*John 19:38-39*). What type of man inspires someone like Nicodemus to leave everything and start anew?
- **John 6:35.** Jesus was more than a good moral teacher; he pointed to himself as the source of spiritual nourishment. Could a mere human teacher make such statements about himself? (You may wish to view other "I Am" statements of Jesus in John's gospel: 8:12, 8:58, 9:5, 10:7, 10:11, 11:25, 13:13, 15:1, 18:37) He does not give us the option of simply admiring Him; you must conclude that either He is mad or He is Lord!
- **John 14:1-6.** Jesus is the only way. What more could he do to lovingly show us that one true way? If you get to know him, you will follow him. He will lead you to heaven.

Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- John 4:1-42
- John 12:32
- Luke 4:1-13
- Hebrews 1:3
- Hebrews 2:9-11
- Hebrews 2:17-18
- Hebrews 4:15-16
- 1st John 2:5-6
- Mark 1:32-39



Seek God

The Word of God

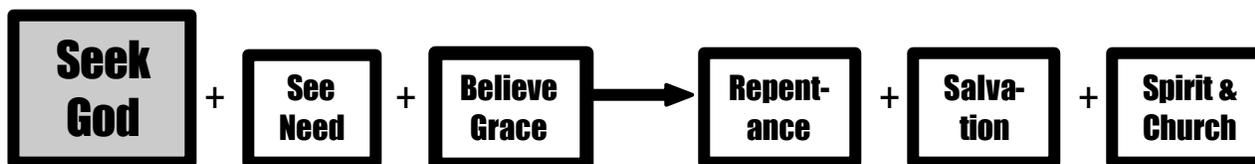
Purpose

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (*Romans 10:17*). Thus, the aim of studying the Word of God is to help a seeker build faith in Jesus. One must accept the bible as the one true standard (vs. feelings, experiences, peers' opinions, or family traditions) by which to live life if one is to know true salvation from Jesus.

- **2nd Timothy 3:16-17.** The bible is highly useful; use it to train in righteousness. Have you trained for anything in life? What principles of training ensure success? The bible thoroughly equips us; thus, it is all we need to seek a righteous life filled with every good work. Man's traditions cannot improve the Word as it equips and guides us.
- **Hebrews 4:12-13.** In the final analysis, we will give a full accounting to God. We won't be able to hide anything from Him. Thus, why is it so important to apply the Word to our life now? What can the Word do? How does penetrating power of the Word benefit us?
- **1st Timothy 4:15-16.** Life and doctrine are both important. What is the result of neglecting one or both? What is the result of persevering in both? Discuss principles of bible study that will produce correct doctrine. Suggest ways to put the bible's teaching into practice.
- **John 8:31-32.** How are these particular Jews described? Is belief sufficient if it is not accompanied by obedience? Who are really Jesus' disciples? How will you know the truth? How will you be set free?
- **John 12:47-48.** Take note of Jesus' purpose for coming to you. The Word will judge us if we reject it. Rejecting the Word is equated with rejection of Jesus and his salvation.
- **Acts 17:10-11.** A noble response to God's Word is an eager examination of it everyday! This is a great challenge to issue to any seeker! Suggest studying a gospel this week to know Jesus better.

Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- John 7:17
- Matthew 13:1-23
- 2 Peter 3:16
- Mark 7:6-9
- John 8:31-32
- James 1:22-25
- 2nd Timothy 2:15
- 1st Thessalonians 2:13
- Psalm 119:60
- 2nd Timothy 4:2-3
- Ezekiel 33:30-33
- Jude 3
- 1st Corinthians 4:4
- 2nd Peter 1:19-21
- Proverbs 3:5, 14:12, 16:2, 28:26, 30:5-6, 28:9



See Need

Discipleship

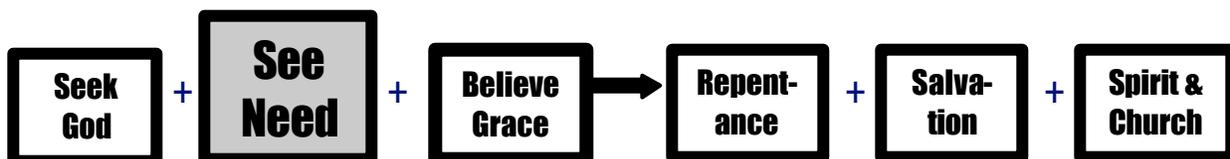
Purpose

The Holy Spirit comes to “convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (*John 16:8*). The Holy Spirit helps us *See Our Need*. Through His scriptures on Discipleship, He convicts us concerning Righteousness. Thus, these Scriptures should: clear up common misconceptions about following Jesus, convict us of our rejection of true discipleship, and inspire us to answer the true call of Jesus.

- **Acts 11:25-26.** How many times is the word Christian used in NT? How many times is the word disciple used? How would you define the word "disciple" non-religiously? If you asked someone on the street, "Are you a Christian," what would be the typical answer? How about being a disciple? Why the difference among synonyms? How can we use the Bible to define “Christian?”
- **Luke 9:23-27.** Emphasize the *heart* that God wants. What are the three demands of discipleship? What does it mean to "deny yourself?" What does it mean to “take up you cross daily?” How can we be “ashamed of Jesus and His words?” What is the consequence of this shame?
- **Luke 9:57-62.** Examine the issues involved with each person - thoughtless following, excuse making, and second thoughts. Note the parallel between “follow me” and “preach everywhere the kingdom of God.”
- **Luke 13:22-27.** Does Jesus answer the question? What’s the difference for you between *trying* and *making every effort*? Why are the rejected seekers surprised?
- **Mark 1:16-20.** What is the invitation? Which is easier to do, catch a fish or catch a man for God? Even fishing needs input. Following Jesus, being taught, discipled trained for his mission... are you involved in that process? If you are not fishing for men, are you following Jesus?
- **Matt. 28:18-20.** The Great Commission: God's plan to save the world. Which would you rather have a penny doubled daily for a month or \$1,000 a day for a month? Likewise, a multiplying chain of disciples best achieves the mission.
- **Matthew 22: 34-40.** The Greatest Commandment! How can you better love God and neighbors? (Hint: He who has been forgiven much will love much...)

Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Luke 14:25-35
- Matthew 10:26-39
- Matthew 7:21-27
- Matthew 25:31-46
- Colossians 3:13
- Luke 11:1-4



See Need

Sin

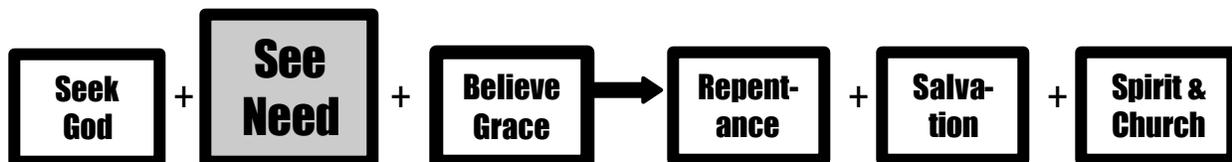
Purpose

While we want all seekers to be saved by grace, there is no grace if we perceive no sin. Of course, all have sinned (*Romans 3:23*); therefore, we all desperately need the grace of God (*Romans 6:23*). Thus, the aim of this study is to help seekers see themselves as our Holy God sees them: utterly sinful and separated from our God. This realization brings about a desire for both forgiveness and repentance. Pray for the Holy Spirit to convict seekers in this study (*John 16:8*).

- **Romans 3:23, 6:23.** See comments above.
- **Luke 7:36-50.** Jesus is a bridge between your sin and your potential for love. The more you appreciate your sinful indebtedness to Jesus; the more you will be grateful for his grace. The end result: you love much (i.e. Discipleship). Conversely, the less you appreciate your sinful indebtedness, the smaller your gratitude and the less you love. Is your attitude toward your sin more like Simon's or more like the sinful woman's? Suggest some practicals to get in touch with your sinful indebtedness: Study specific sins as detailed by the Bible. Consider the most recent time you committed that sin; consider the first time consider your attitude towards God each time you indulged that sin. Journals/discussions/ time lines all help increase one's appreciation of our debt through sin.
- **Mark 7:21-22.** Take ownership for sin! We are responsible for our own sin. Despite genetics, parenting, peer pressures, and socio-economic conditions, sin comes from within our own hearts and makes us unclean. What is the consequence of being unclean before God? Discuss the sins catalogued by Jesus. Add scriptures, which catalog sins - if needed.
- **Galatians 5:19-21.** Sinful deeds are obvious. What does "will not inherit the Kingdom of God" mean? Be as specific as necessary to both explain and share about the sins listed.
- **Ephesians 5:3-13.** Not even a hint or a mention of sin should be the standard for followers of Jesus. Has anyone ever shared "empty words" with you in order to minimize God's wrath to sin and sinners? Exposing sin to the light is a great step toward proclaiming a real need for grace.
- **James 4:17.** Sins of commission (sins you commit) vs. sins of omission (virtues you omit).
- **Isaiah 59:1-3.** Your sin has made a separation between you and your God. This study is not just about a list of sins, but instead about the depth of your separation from your Father.

Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Revelation 21:8
- Revelation 21:24-27
- Romans 1:21-32
- 1st Corinthians 6:9-11
- Col 3:5-11
- 2nd Timothy 3:1-5
- Matthew 5:48



BELIEVE GRACE

The Cross of Christ

Purpose

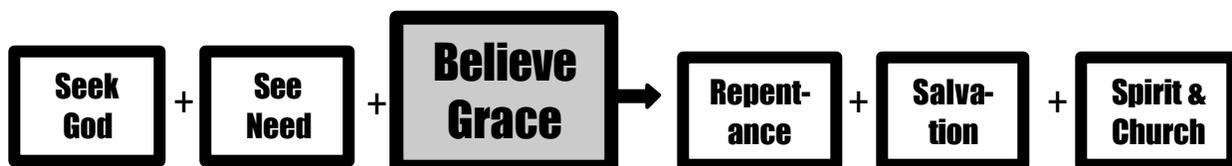
“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (*John 3:16-17*)

Here, the gospel message reaches its peak. We are saved through grace. There is hope! We are saved through Jesus’ loving sacrifice. Be sure that the seeker has seen his/her need for grace, and this study in grace will be powerful. It’s also important for the seeker to understand his/her responsibility for Jesus’ death. Establishing *personal* responsibility will later reap great gratitude and joy for Jesus’ *personal* love and forgiveness.

- **Romans 3:21-27.** All are in complete need of grace for all have sinned. Christ is *propitiation* or *atonement* (*temple illustration*) for the wrath we’ve earned. He *redeems* (*slavery illustration*) us; he *justifies* (*legal illustration*) us. Discuss the illustrations.
- **Romans 4:22-25.** We have Jesus’ righteousness credited to us via faith. Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our *justification*. He takes our sins and gives His righteousness!
- **Romans 5:6-11.** Jesus died for us while we were at our worst, enemies of God, weak and sinful. His blood changes all that and reconciles us to God.
- **Mark 14:26-15:41.** Jesus chose to die for us. Who killed Jesus? I did. You did. Reflect on the reasons why Jesus endures these afflictions (my sins require it, and His love offers it).
- **1st Peter 2:21-25.** Why did Jesus die on the cross for us? So that we might die to sin and live for the new righteousness that the cross provides. This is our response to the cross.
- **Acts 2:36-41.** Peter has preached the message of the cross. What are the next steps?
- **John 3:16-21.** Do you prefer the darkness over the light? Are you ready to move into the light of God’s grace?

Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Isaiah 52:13-53:13
- Acts 2:22-38
- Ephesians 2:1-10
- Psalm 22
- Colossians 2:13-14
- John 1:29



Repentance

Repentance

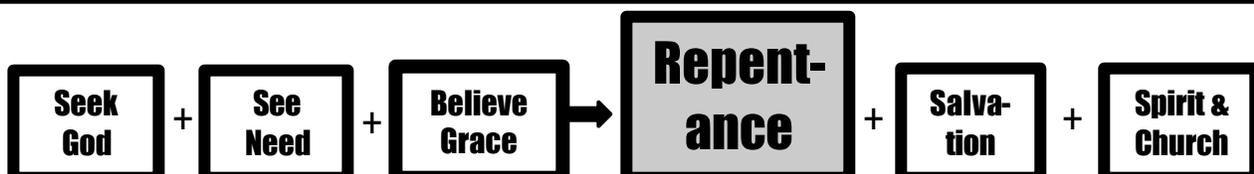
Purpose

After believing grace, the biblical response is to repent and be baptized for forgiveness of sins (*Acts 2:36-38*). Repentance, however, is a powerful blessing from God that has been stripped of its potency. The Greek word for repentance, *metanoia*, means “after – mindset.” With this gift of ‘hindsight,’ we see clearly to take the right path... the path of living for God rather than for self. Be careful not to present repentance as a work that leads to salvation; rather, it is our awakening to come to our senses and live the way God had always intended for us. It is more than a decision; it is God allowing us to see a new worldview, which *always* results in the fruit of a turned, changed life.

- **2nd Corinthians 5:14-21.** Why does Peter call us to repent as a response to the cross (*Acts 2:38*)? Because we are convinced of Jesus’ love for us through the cross. His love motivates us to repent; that is, to live for Him rather than for ourselves. Jesus’ resurrection opens our eyes to look beyond the earthly realm. The old is gone, the new has come! What does the new life look like? How do we view people through our new repentant eyes?
- **Luke 3:7-14.** The fruit of repentance is the evidence of a changed mindset. John the Baptist insisted on repentance before baptism. If you were to ask John, “What should I do?” – how would he respond to you? (Notice that he directs no one to pray and weep before God, confessing how bad he or she feels about his or her sins – which many people today confuse for repentance.)
- **Luke 13:1-5, 6-9.** Jesus preaches that without repentance, we will all perish. He likewise expects to find fruit every time there is true repentance.
- **Acts 26:15-21.** Jesus gives Paul the charge to “open their eyes” (e.g. the “red pill” of the *Matrix* or the Christmas ghosts for Scrooge) so that “they may turn” and prove their repentance by their deeds. Repentance involves a new perspective, a turning of allegiance, and fruit.
- **2 Corinthians 7:8-11.** Beware of worldly sorrow. Have you previously confused sorrow(s) with true repentance? Thoroughly examine godly sorrow, because it leads to repentance and salvation.
- **2nd Timothy 2:24-26.** Has God already opened your eyes via the Scriptures? Can you now see the truth? Then it’s time to escape the devil’s snares. God wants you to be set free from that captivity. Do not neglect this gift that God grants us.

Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Luke 16:19-31
- Acts 3:19-20
- Acts 28:25-28
- Romans 12:1-2
- Romans 2:4
- Acts 5:30-31; 11:18
- Luke 19:1-10 vs. Luke 18:18-30
- Col 2:20-23 v. Titus 2:11-12
- Luke 15:1-2, 11-32



Spirit & Church

The Holy Spirit

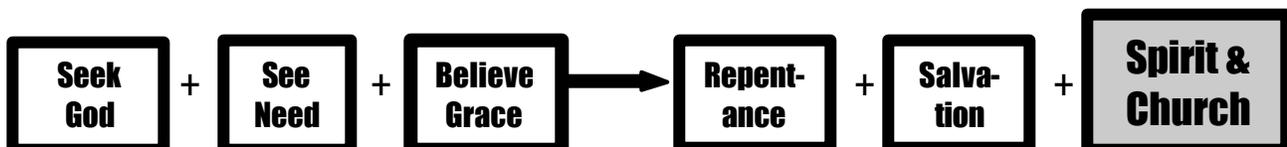
Purpose

Encourage the seeker that he/she will indeed receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit. After baptism, we are sustained by the help of the Spirit. He works powerfully in the life of every baptized disciple of Christ. You may want to combine this study with a study of the Church, as both gifts (the Spirit and the Church) from God help us hold fast to our confession to the end.

- **Acts 2:36-38.** Notice the harmony with *John 3:5* and *Titus 3:5* (perhaps from a previous study on baptism). At baptism, we are born again via water and the Spirit. As we are made holy by Jesus' blood, we are also filled with the Holy Spirit.
- **John 7:37-39.** *After* Jesus' glorification (crucifixion and resurrection), God sent His Spirit to flow from within us like streams of running water. Previously (OT), the Spirit came upon people. Now, He dwells within us.
- **John 16:5-11.** The Spirit convicts us (and the world) with regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment. He does this abundantly through His Word which He gave to the Apostles as they were guided into all truth (*John 16:13*).
- **Ephesians 3:14-21.** We are strengthened with real power through the Spirit who dwells within us. Understanding Jesus' amazing love for us is a source of that strength.
- **Romans 8:5-16.** A powerful statement on the Spirit's role in our Christian walk. A spiritual mindset brings life and peace, and obedience to God's word. Be secure that the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, thus you belong to Him. The Spirit leads us into freedom from fear to confirm God as our Father.
- **Galatians 5:22-23.** The fruit of the Spirit! Expect it. Pursue it. This is the best 'evidence' that you have received the Holy Spirit.

Additional Helpful Scriptures to clear up misconceptions about the Spirit:

- John 14:16-18 v. 1st Sam 16:13, 19:18-24; Act 2:1-4, 8:16, 10:44-45
- Luke 1:15 v. John 10:41
- Ex 4:5, 1st Kg 17:24, Mk 16:20, Act 14:3, Heb 2:4
- Act 8:18
- Rom 1:11, 12:4-8 v. 1st Cor 2:1-5, 12:4-11
- Act 6:3-6
- 1st Cor 13:8-12



Spirit & Church

The Church

Purpose

Encourage the seeker that each will not be left to fend for one's self after baptism. Instead, Jesus baptizes us into the body, the church (*1st Corinthians 12:12-13*) to be joined by a *team* of likeminded disciples in our devotion to Him. These brothers and sisters are meant to be a continual source of encouragement in our walk with Christ. Even more good news!

- **Acts 2:40-47.** The first 3,000 converts joined together in devotion to the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. A beautiful view of the early church. How would such a church be received today?
- **1st Corinthians 12:12-27.** The Spirit baptizes us into the body of Jesus, his church. The church consists of distinct yet unified parts, just like a human body. God, Himself, has arranged it this way. We are the church; each of us must actively look for the distinct yet unified ways we are to support this body. How will you help build up the body of Christ?
- **Ephesians 4:1-16.** Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the church requires humility, patience, gentleness, and selflessness. We maintain unity on the essentials of doctrine – one Lord, one faith, one baptism. God provides specific offices within the church in order to prepare us for works of service which build up the body.
- **Hebrews 10:22-25.** After being washed in baptism, we need the continual exhortations of brothers and sisters to stay the course. Prepare in advance how you will spur on fellow Christians in the fellowship. Also prepare to receive biblical input that will result in greater love and good deeds. Why is missing meetings of the body described as a bad habit? Why and when do we meet?
- **Hebrews 3:12-14.** We each have the charge and the responsibility to see to it that no one has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from God. Daily encouragement helps everyone stand firm until the end.
- **2nd Corinthians 8:7.** God loves a cheerful giver. Our giving supports the body as we reach out to a world in need of Jesus.

Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- 1st John 1:5-10
- Eph. 2:19-20
- Rom. 12:4-8
- John 17:20-26
- Col. 1:18
- Col. 2:18-19
- John 13:34-35

