

THE CORNERSTONE



Lukewarm Christianity

Gospel Guides

6

THE CORNERSTONE

For in Scripture it says:

"See I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame."

1 Peter 2:6

JESUS IS THE CORNERSTONE

on which the Kingdom of God is built.

Do you know him?

THE CORNERSTONE GUIDES INTRODUCTION

The mission of Gospel Guides is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ and the HOPE it provides to as many people as possible. The Cornerstone Guides are one way we do this.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE CORNERSTONE that the Scriptures mention. He is the foundation on which the Kingdom of God is built. The Cornerstone Guides present foundational Christian truths in an easy to understand manner. There are seven guides each dealing with a different part of Christianity and life. The guides build on each other so reading them from 1 to 7 make the most sense. Guides 1-3 are beginner or seeker level. Guides 4-5 are intermediate level and guides 6-7 are advanced level. It is our hope that these guides will teach and inspire, build knowledge and confidence while helping to eliminate doubt, and help you find Christ or strengthen your relationship with him. We hope the guides will be found by many and used as a teaching and reference resource for years to come.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the hope of the world but it is more than just that. The Bible clearly says that this world is controlled by the prince of evil, Satan. If you look at how people treat each other today you see his work everywhere. Pure evil is evident and raging in the world, it is truly heartbreaking. The Bible tells us that his world and Satan will have its designated time, and then Christ will return. This time he will return as the Lion instead of the Lamb. Christ will call his chosen people to be with him, and Satan and evil will be crushed once and for all. A new world will begin and the King of Kings will reign for eternity.

**Come Lord Jesus come! If you aren't ready,
the time is now and the business is urgent!**

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Guide 6 Lukewarm Christianity

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SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In the previous tracts, we learned there is a God and he created the world and everything in it. He created us in his image because he wanted a relationship with us.

With an assist from Satan, man rebelled against God. After the fall in Genesis 3, God, knowing all things, created a path for redemption and salvation for humankind.

God sent his Son, Jesus, to earth fully human to experience what we experience and walk in our shoes. Jesus lived a sinless life and became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He chose to die for us, paying the sin debt we could not pay. Jesus gave everything to save us. God created the Holy Bible to preserve his laws and the path of Christian salvation forever.

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We live in a world today where many believe every personal desire or appetite is OK. They have no regard for authority, sanctity, or loyalty, especially if it infringes on their desires. They think there are no boundaries or moral laws that apply to them. They live carnally and demand that any regulation they disagree with be changed immediately. Their main agenda is to force others to condone their beliefs. When it comes to Christian beliefs and biblical law, they desire to lower God's standards until it includes their beliefs and behavior.

Sadly, many pastors, church leaders, and church members submit to their popular cultural demands. Rather than confront Satan's culture and false teaching, they are willing to rewrite the Bible, thus lowering God's standards under the guise of compassion and maintaining peace or fairness.

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As Christians, we must be aware that false teachers exist—the Bible clearly warns us about their presence. Satan, the prince of this world, controls popular culture and has placed his disguised demons among us since the very beginning. They attend our churches, our Bible studies, and our events. They roam among us seeking whatever they can destroy.

Matthew 7:15-16 says, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?"

2 Peter 2:1-3 says, "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 depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping."

As Christians, we must mature by reading and studying the Bible so we can discern and rebuke false teaching when we hear it. The Bible is the standard of truth, and we must stay true to it. God never lowers his standards to meet ours—he does not need to because he sent his Son to be our Savior.

God created the Holy Bible to preserve his laws and the path of Christian salvation forever. The Bible is the standard of truth and its teachings must be preserved. If every generation changed and lowered its standards to suit their cultural desires, it would no longer be the Holy Bible or the Gospel of Jesus. God never lowers his standards to meet ours--he does not need to because he sent us a Savior.

LUKEWARM CHRISTIANITY

1. What Is a Lukewarm Christian?

The lukewarm Christian may have attended church for a long time. They probably have a general knowledge of Christian principles. They may have prayed the “sinner’s prayer” and believe they are saved because they did this at some point in their lives. When in church, they do “Christian” things. Generally, the lukewarm Christian believes they are good with God.

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A lukewarm Christian comes to church just before the service starts, and they leave promptly after that, thus avoiding too much interaction with the people around them. They do not read their Bible regularly or at all, and their biblical knowledge is limited to what they hear in church. They were misled into believing all that is required to be saved is praying the “sinner’s prayer.” They do some of the things the preacher tells them they should, such as giving an offering or attending a life group. They occasionally pray to keep God close, thinking that he will hear them when they need to ask for something big. But they keep God at a safe distance, so he will not mess up their lives.

The lukewarm Christian never ventures from the shallow end of the pool of Christianity because they have worked hard to create the lifestyle they desire and are afraid that getting too close to God could mess it up.

I am embarrassed to say I know what a lukewarm Christian is because I was one of them for many years. I even told myself that when the time is right, I will do more for God. I helped at church when they were doing something within my comfort zone or wheelhouse. But mostly, I sat on the sidelines, watching and keeping God at a safe distance.

WARNING: Lukewarm Christianity does NOT exist.

I believed I was good with God because I had prayed the sinner's prayer early in life, and my pastors told me I was saved and could never lose that salvation. That is a dangerous position. Believing you are saved, and that no matter what you do, you cannot lose that salvation is a dangerous belief inconsistent with what the Bible teaches.

Here is an example from Peter with some commentary.

2 Peter 1:1-11 says, "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (verses 1-2)

Our faith is precious; Jesus' purchased our faith with his blood. To those who have received this precious faith through Jesus' righteousness, you should have grace and peace in abundance through your knowledge of God and Jesus.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (verses 3-4)

Through his divine power, Jesus has given us everything we need for a godly life. We have precious promises and can share in God's divine nature, having escaped the world's evil and corruption. Satan and death have no hold on believers.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. (verses 5-7)

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For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. (verses 8-9)

Peter tells us to continue to work, making every effort to increasingly add these qualities of goodness (moral excellence), knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection (brotherly kindness) and love to our faith. And if you have them and grow in them, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of Jesus. If you do not have them, you may have forgotten you have been cleansed from your sins by Christ.

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (verses 10-11)

Peter tells us to be diligent to prove that our behavior reflects and confirms our calling and election (our relationship with God), and if we do these things, we will never stumble, and we will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom. Peter doesn't say, “Now that you are saved, go rest in your faith.” He says to continue to work and make every effort to confirm your calling by increasing your faithful qualities.

Peter's teaching is consistent with John's, James', and Paul's teachings and far different from, “You have said a sinner's prayer, so now you are saved and can never lose that salvation. Go live however you like. Be as lukewarm as you want. You have no further obligations to Christ.”

After reading the Bible, I realized there are no lukewarm Christians!

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Understand that your life, your salvation, and your eternity are at stake. When you admit that you are a depraved sinner and are dead in your sins with nothing to offer, and grasp that you deserve the full wrath of God for your sins, all may seem hopeless. But thanks to Jesus' sacrifice, if you ask for it, you get grace instead of justice. Understanding that and admitting that is a mental reckoning that changes you into a *new creation*.

There is nothing halfway between a lost unbeliever and a committed Christian. Jesus had to give everything, and so do we.

Jesus, our final judge, says (his words in red),

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Revelation 3:15-16)

DO NOT MISS THIS! Jesus is saying here that he prefers the lost unbelievers to lukewarm Christians, “I wish you were either one or the other!” If you are lost, the gospel may not have reached you yet, so there is hope, but if you are lukewarm, you have heard the gospel, and it has not changed you.

A lukewarm response to the gospel is a violation of grace etiquette, and for that, the punishment is severe—Jesus will spit you out.

Jesus goes on to say (his words in red),

“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.” (Revelation 3:17)

Wow! What a description! In other words, you do not even know how lost and bad off you are.

If the gospel has not melted your heart, you have not received it.

2. What Is a Lukewarm Church?

Sadly, while I was a lukewarm Christian, I attended a lukewarm church that condoned this behavior. This church provided Sunday services and “life groups,” and that was it. They urged people to join the “life groups” of their peers and left all in-depth teaching and study to these groups, mostly unsupervised. We attended several of these groups, and except for one group that was led by a pastor, we found them mostly ineffective.

WARNING: Lukewarm churches do exist. And they grieve God!

Typically, a few group members needed counseling, and their personal needs consumed most of the group’s time and energy. The church did not train the group leaders, and there was no set curriculum. These groups were merely clubs of people who attended the same church on Sunday morning.

These life groups allowed the pastors to avoid developing or offering any in-depth curriculum for the church, the deep end of the pool, so to speak. They essentially allowed the pastors to offload their shepherding duties to the untrained life-group leaders.

This practice was demonstrated when a situation arose in a women’s life group. A member of the group admitted that due to her dire personal circumstances, she was suicidal. The group leader knew from this woman’s past that it was a serious situation and went to the pastors for help. They told her she had to handle the situation on her own because that was “her job as leader of the life group.” Our pastors refused to get involved when a member of their church was admittedly suicidal. We were, sadly, at a lukewarm church, and it took us too long to figure it out.

Our pastors refused to get involved when a member of their church was admittedly suicidal. We were, sadly, at a lukewarm church, and it took us too long to figure it out.

LIFE GROUPS:

I am not criticizing life groups. I believe they significantly benefit a congregation when the church's leadership fully supports them.

The church should dedicate personnel to lead the life groups and train the group leaders. The group leaders should volunteer, then be fully trained as group leaders, and then they should start a life group. They should never be coerced into leading. Once a group is started, a curriculum should be in place to follow, and there must be oversight by the pastors. Life groups are an experience very similar to the church described in Acts 2, and they will thrive in a structured environment.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). He intended for his church and Christianity to be a refuge for all those damaged by evil in the world we live in.

The gospel was designed to draw hurting people to Christ and the church, and it does. People will come to the church seeking healing and in need of specialized care such as counseling services and support groups. Congregational care must be a high priority mission for all churches because the hurting will come.

Churches should expect this and partner with professionals to provide the specialized care needed. It cannot be left to the life-group leaders. Life groups should be a supplement to specialized care by providing a nurturing family environment that promotes healing, but the specialized care should be handled by professionals.

In an ideal church, congregational care will include life groups and professional support services in a healthy balance. These should work together and compliment each other. Neglecting either of them will eventually cause the church problems.

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In the first section, I said that there is no such thing as a lukewarm Christian, and based on Scripture, I believe that. But sadly, lukewarm churches do exist and are becoming more normal and accepted. That has a lot to do with society and culture today, political correctness, pressure from society on pastors and church leaders to comply with societal and cultural demands to lower God's standards. It has a lot to do with pastors who prefer to avoid confrontation rather than meet it head on and correct a false narrative or teaching.

Any pastor would rather preach about love instead of wrath, preach heaven instead of hell, talk about forgiveness rather than repenting from sin, but their job is to talk about the importance of all those things. It is their responsibility to teach the whole Bible as it is written, and if the text causes the congregation discomfort, it is the Holy Spirit working on their sanctification.

The Bible was written to comfort us, but it was also written to sanctify us, and sometimes we all need a wake-up call. Many pastors preach on the easy subjects and take a pass on the hard ones—they avoid the uncomfortableness that the “culturally problematic parts” of the Bible cause when they call our behavior into question and require change. Ultimately, those pastors leave their flock lost or lukewarm because they lead them to the Christ of the carnal world, which is an idol of the world's making, rather than the Christ of the Bible.

I believe that lukewarm Churches grieve God deeply, probably more so than even lukewarm Christians. Some of the harshest warnings and condemnation in the Bible are directed at church leaders that mislead God's people. Jesus sacrificed his life and blood to create his church, and taking care of it is a serious matter.

I applaud Pastors who teach the whole Bible without changing the message. I congratulate those who deal with confrontation when needed rather than avoid it, those who preach topics that make their congregations uncomfortable when required to sanctify their people, and those who challenge the lukewarm Christians in their midst to wake up. I have also noticed that the churches of those pastors are growing exponentially.

3. What is Lukewarm Christianity?

Simply put, lukewarm Christianity is the disconnect that occurs when a population claims faith in Christ, yet their actions are not congruent with the faith they claim. All the superstars from the Bible said some version of the same truth: if we have faith, if the gospel has genuinely melted our hearts, our deeds will demonstrate that faith. Our lives will show that our faith and our actions are congruent. Jesus said we would be known by the fruit we produce.

Paul said when describing the Cretans, “They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good” (Titus 1:16).

I attended a business conference early in my career, and the speaker’s central theme was “Things are what they seem to be.” As I have aged, I have found that statement to be so true.

When we look at the Christian faith condition in America, things are as they seem to be.

When polled, 74 percent of Americans claim to be born-again Christians. Yet, statistics show that only about 10 percent of Christians have read the entire Bible, and only 32 percent read the Bible daily. Less than 25 percent of Americans attend church weekly. Over half of all marriages end in divorce. Over half of the population supports abortion and votes for the politicians who support abortion, and over 850,000 babies are aborted in America every year.

Personal finance instructors tell us if we want to know what is important to us, we should look at where we spend our money. In other words, we spend our money on the things we value. If we examine that individually, the average American only gives about 2 percent of their income to charity each year.

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Corporately, only about 25 percent of the average church's congregation gives money to their church. Of those, only about 5 percent tithe giving 10 percent of their income regularly. Food and shelter insecurity are still massive problems in America, even though we are the earth's wealthiest country by far.

Statista did a survey that showed a substantial majority of respondents believe in God (79%), heaven (71%), hell (64%), and Satan (61%). We believe in these things, but sadly, the belief does not change how we live—it doesn't show up in our actions.

All these statistics add up to a massive disconnect from reality. We cannot claim faith when it's convenient and then live like the carnal world the rest of the time. Jesus knew this would be a problem, and he warned us about it.

Jesus said this about the path to heaven (his words in red):

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

Jesus warns us about the false prophets we will encounter (his words in red):

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:13-16).

Jesus said this about entering the kingdom of heaven (his words in red):

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord,’ did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

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Things are what they seem to be in America, and many Christians live in a false state of lukewarm Christianity. This is a dangerous state and must change because Jesus says,

“So because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:16).

God intended for Christianity to lead the world in the following manner:

If 74 percent of Americans were true born-again Christians who read their Bible daily, attended church, and tithed regularly, the church would be the overwhelming force for good that Jesus intended it to be.

Christians would know the Bible and use it as the standard of truth, and Satan would have to flee from us because his schemes could no longer deceive us.

The divorce rate would plummet, and abortion would cease to exist. Any babies born to unprepared mothers would be adopted by loving families rather than killed.

The payroll for American workers in 2018 was about \$8.4 trillion and they gave about 2 percent to charity, or \$168 billion. If we had given the full 10 percent tithe of \$840 billion, there would have been an additional \$672 billion to use for God’s purposes. That money could solve many food, shelter, and health insecurities worldwide.

If Christians were leading the world in this manner, the world’s population would flock to the gospel and Jesus Christ.

Sadly, things are what they seem to be—lukewarm—and they will stay that way until we change it. Now is the time for a CHRISTIAN REVIVAL.

Now is the time for us to IGNITE our faith, and it is a most urgent matter.

Start the revival by getting your faith and your life on a harmonious path with Christ.

Start by reading your Bible every day, and boldly pray to God, asking him to transform your faith from lukewarm to *red hot*. Ask God for a fully committed heart. If you do this sincerely, God will ignite your faith.

Once you are on a harmonious path with Christ and your faith is ignited, help your family find the same path. Then help your friends, your church, and then everyone else you meet.

The apostle Peter says this about being a child of God:

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

And Peter tells us to live this way:

“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12). “For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people” (1 Peter 2:15).

We cannot exist as a member of the kingdom of God doing nothing for God. Start the revival by getting your faith and your life on a harmonious path with Christ. Ask God for a fully committed heart and an ignited red-hot faith.

4. God Calls Christians to Distinction.

God has never called Christians to comply with culture or be like the rest of the world. God meant for Christianity to be distinctly unique and countercultural. God based Christianity on radically different beliefs than all the other religions and worldly views. Unfortunately, not all religions and not all beliefs can be true, biblical, or acceptable. God wanted his people to be different and identifiable so that they would stand out in the crowd as a beacon of *hope* to the world, drawing others to God.

God calls Christians to live by his word and standards defined in the Bible. God requires us to maintain his standards even when they are at odds with the culture, which has always been the case.

Satan, not God, tries to call Christians into compliance with the carnal, worldly culture he creates. Satan has always used cultural pressure to try to get people to lower God's standards. His ultimate desire is to corrupt the Gospel any way he can. He knows that in doing so, he creates a false, worldly God, a God of our making, which is an idol, and if Satan can get a man to worship a false God unknowingly, he wins that man.

The first of the Ten Commandments is, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). I believe this is the first commandment because it is the most problematic. The prohibited false gods includes the gods we create ourselves.

Our previous church neglected the counseling side of congregational care. There were no support groups or counseling services provided, so the people who were hurting and in need of those services went directly to the unprepared pastors, which completely overwhelmed them. Eventually, their preaching reflected this troubling mindset and became very dark and counseling-oriented and lacked Christ's hope found in the gospel.

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Our pastors told the congregation that we worship Christ and not the Bible. They said the Bible was just a tool. To make their case, the pastors took parts of the Old Testament out of context and said those Scriptures showed us that parts of the Bible were not relevant today. Then they said it was acceptable to ignore the portions of the Bible that were outdated and irrelevant. They changed the church's mission to reflect the acceptance of the cultural problems and pain they were dealing with, all in the name of Christ's love. The pastors said we should measure everything through the "love lens of Jesus" and nothing else.

Today, popular culture says that we should define love by how actions affect our feelings, and it tells us that love is inclusive and pain-free, and if it is not, we are doing it wrong. Culture tells us to judge all biblical beliefs and standards by love, and if they cause any pain, separation, or discomfort, the standards are wrong because Jesus is all-loving and all-accepting.

Looking back at our church's history, I can see it was all Satan's plan at work. The lack of diligence and care for the congregation provided the opening Satan needed to work—he used the hurting to wear down the pastors. Eventually, the pastors complied with his will by lowering God's standards. So, what's the big deal with that?

Once we lower God's standards, we worship a god we created through Satan, an idol, rather than the God of the Bible. We might as well be worshiping a gold cow we made in our garage.

There is a massive sin gap between a perfectly holy God and us. We naturally want to bridge that gap ourselves, but lowering God's standards can never be the answer to justifying sinful behavior. God is perfectly holy, and his standards are fixed and do not change, especially since he provided his Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior to bridge the sin gap for us. We are required to depend on Jesus' finished work on the cross for our salvation.

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Trying to lower God's standards is an extreme violation of grace etiquette because it reduces the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice, which is extremely offensive to God.

Jesus' finished his work; he said so himself on the cross (John 19:30). We are sinners, and we cannot add anything to Jesus' work or take anything away from it; we can only *depend* on it.

Today, society tells us it is discriminatory, racist, narrow-minded, unchristian, and mean to draw separation lines among people. Nothing could be further from the truth when someone's eternal salvation is at stake. Preaching the true gospel to the lost, no matter how unpopular it is with the world, is our job as Christians. That is the Great Commission that was given to all Christians by Christ (Matthew 28:16-20).

Anyone teaching that popular culture is correct and the Bible is wrong or that the Bible should be re-written or updated because it offends people is a false teacher working for Satan. Some people our society considers religious leaders do this every day. Don't be fooled by them. They may or may not even know they are working for Satan, but it is that simple.

The Bible is the standard of Christian truth, and the Holy Spirit uses it to sanctify us. We are supposed to read God's Word and apply it to our lives. God's Word is called light because it exposes the sin in our lives that we need to repent from to become more like Christ. We are not allowed to rewrite the Word to match our cultural desires.

God's Word has always offended because sin and Satan like to hide in the darkness.

“Every word of God is flawless;

he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Do not add to his words,

or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.” Proverbs 30:5-6

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If you look closely at Jesus' ministry in the gospels, you will see that everywhere Jesus went, his teaching offended people. It typically offended the religious authorities the most, and it often angered them to the point that they attempted to kill Jesus. But he would always escape until his time had come. His teaching offended them because they had corrupted the religious system for personal gain, and Jesus exposed them.

Many are falsely teaching today that Jesus is all-loving, and would not judge and condemn someone just because of what the Bible says. They teach that if you accept Jesus, that is all you need to do because Jesus loves you and you can continue to live as you choose with no fear of condemnation. Jesus tells us to repent and believe and abide in him because his kingdom is at hand. Jesus is not a beggar hoping we will accept him on our terms—he is God, our Judge, and our Savior if we put our faith in him. But if we do put our faith in Christ, his biblical standards apply. There was no need for Christ to die on the cross if there were no judgment or wrath.

If there were no judgment or wrath, there would have been no need for Christ to die on the cross.

Many false teachers teach a corrupted version of the gospel in which Jesus did not need to die. This teaching cheapens Christ's sacrifice to the point of not being needed at all. That is a gross violation of grace etiquette.

Paul says,

“For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

We need to be careful of any teacher or teaching who reduces God's standards from those defined in the Bible. We should demand scriptural proof from any teacher doing this. Paul says, “Their end will be what their actions deserve” at the final judgment. We need to make sure our faith is based on the Bible's teachings so the false teachers cannot deceive us.

Jesus taught that membership in the kingdom of God requires us to repent and believe the Gospel (Mark 1:15); be born again (John 3:7); be born of the water and of the Spirit (John 3:5); abide in Christ and our relationship with him (John 15:4); allow the Holy Spirit sanctify us through the Word as written (1 Corinthians 2:6-16); grow up in our salvation (1 Peter 2:2); and do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus said the lawless who reject his gift of salvation and mercy are condemned and will be ordered to depart from him, separated from him for eternity (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus is all-loving, which is why he chose to die for us to provide us with grace. He freely gives us his mercy, but he described the way as a narrow path that only a few will find. That is what Jesus taught. Read it for yourself in the Bible—it is all there.

God has rules and standards he clearly defined in the Bible, and we do not get to change them. There are consequences for our decisions to break his rules.

5. What is a Committed Christian?

The person who sincerely prays this prayer with a fully committed heart, “God, please train me in your Word, please fill me with your Spirit, and please make me passionate for your purposes!” will eventually become a fully committed Christian. God will make that happen for you if your heart is fully committed. (Note: It is OK to pray the prayer asking God to help you develop a fully committed heart. God will help you with that over time.)

Throughout the Bible, we are told that God knows what is in every heart, and he requires a fully committed heart. If you are willing to pray that prayer with a fully committed heart—meaning you are ready to do what God asks you to do, are eager to go where God leads, and are willing to give what God desires--God will work in your life like never before. God is fully capable of amazing you and has great plans for everyone that wants to get involved in his work. Just be honest with God, and he will lead you.

Sadly, we tend to believe that God will mess up our lives if we pray that prayer.

GUIDE 6 LUKEWARM CHRISTIANITY

Sadly, we tend to believe that God will mess up our lives if we pray that prayer. We are afraid God will ask us to give away all our money and possessions, move to a third world country to be a missionary, give up the things we like to do, or become a hermit or Monk. We have somehow developed the idea that missionaries or pastors are the only people living out God's will. That's not true. Everyone has a different calling from God.

In full disclosure, though, God may ask you to give away some or all of your possessions. There may be things in your life that you prioritize and idolize above God, and he may ask you to do away with them. God may ask you to move to a third world country to be a missionary—as many receive that calling, and they will tell you it was a far better experience for them than the people they were there to help. God may ask you to stop doing some of the things that consume your time to make time available for his plans or work.

God may ask you to do something completely different that you never thought of doing. But when you talk with a fully committed Christian, they never complain about anything they gave up serving God. They always see the benefit in it. They feel they received more than they gave, and they are always appreciative of the change and opportunity.

AS WE TEST OURSELVES

When we assess our personal commitment to God, we need to remember what God did for us. God allowed the WORST thing possible—crucifixion, humiliation, and death, to happen to the BEST person to ever live his Son, Jesus Christ—and he did this to offer us the possibility of salvation by his grace—free salvation that we could not earn and do not deserve. God and Jesus had to commit fully to giving this to us. We cannot expect them to settle for anything less than that from us—we must be fully committed to Christ.

As a short, personal example, I used to keep a sizeable salt-water reef tank in my office. It was a hobby I enjoyed, but it took a significant amount of time and money to keep it going. Over time, I realized God was telling me to give it up. I felt like he was saying, “What does this accomplish? Nothing.” I ignored that request for a while. Then one night, I walked into my office, and the floor was wet; the bottom seam on the tank had started leaking. I worked hard and patched it, and the tank was water-tight again for about a week, and then the floor was wet again. I repaired it a second and third time, and it leaked again so, I finally complied and decided to get rid of the tank.

My son placed an ad on the internet, and a guy showed up, bought everything I had, and a few days later, I was entirely out of the hobby. My sense of relief was immediate and remarkable. I was writing these tracts, and progress had been slow and—boom!—as soon as the tank was gone, the words began to flow.

I don't think God has anything against reef tanks. They display the beauty he created. But for me, it was a distraction that was slowing my progress from the task God had given me. Once I removed the distraction, progress came quickly. Truthfully, I have not regretted or missed the tank at all, and I think that is also God's work.

6. What does it mean to be fully committed to Jesus?

The fully committed Christian has a relationship with Christ they enjoy every day. They long to be closer to him. They make time and prioritize reading the Bible to hear God speak and to know God, they pray for God's will for their lives, and they live leaning into Jesus and trying to set a Christian example for the people they meet. They abide in Christ, and he abides in them. They produce fruit, and their enduring faith is known by the fruit they produce.

Proverbs 27:19 says, “As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart.”

GUIDE 6 LUKEWARM CHRISTIANITY

For a while, there was a trend for Christians to wear plastic arm bracelets with the letters WWJD, which stood for, “What would Jesus do?” The purpose of the bracelets was to remind us to think about what Jesus would do before acting. Thus, helping us make better decisions and set a better example for the world.

A fully committed Christian would wear the bracelet WDJD, meaning, “What did Jesus do?” because that is what they will also be doing. If you study the Gospels, you will find that Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, hung out with and helped those that society outcast, Jesus preached his Gospel message of hope. Jesus is still building his Church today. We should align our lives to do all those same things, and we should *do them consistently*.

**A fully committed Christian seeks to mature and become like Christ.
We do that by following Jesus' example and doing what Jesus did.**

So how do we feed the hungry?

We can financially support or volunteer at a food bank, a soup kitchen, an organization or charity like the Ronald MacDonal house. We could make a meal for someone in need or organize the meals for a period for a family in need. Go where there is a need, and just do it.

How do we heal the sick?

We can financially support St. Jude's Children's Hospital or charities bringing medical relief such as the Red Cross. We can donate blood, work in the medical field, or volunteer at the hospital gift shop. Go where the need is, and do it.

How do we hang out or help those who society has outcast?

We protect the weak. We can financially support or volunteer our time at a shelter or rescue mission. We can donate Christian literature to a shelter, foster a child in need, teach a Bible study, or volunteer at a prison ministry. Go where the need is, and do it.

How do we preach the gospel?

If you are a good speaker, you could preach as a guest speaker or layman. You could be a guest speaker or leader at a Bible Study. You could write books. You could tithe to a Church that is preaching the message weekly. You could donate to a nonprofit Christian radio station or sing in the choir. You could support Gospel Guides and help us deliver the message. You could just tell someone what the Gospel means to you. Go where the need is, and do it.

Always be prepared to share your Gospel story. Sharing the Gospel is the greatest gift of love you can give someone. And you may be the only person that ever does that for them.

Jesus and Paul used the same method of preaching the Gospel. First, they figured out who they were talking to and then adjusted their presentation to meet their audience's needs. They started by affirming whatever truth the audience knew and then built on that truth.

Jesus and Paul never changed the message of the gospel, no matter what the audience might think about it. Often this got them into trouble with the authorities, but still, they never softened the gospel message.

A true Christian teacher will never contradict or try to "explain away" what the Bible says. The Bible tells us to mature, study the scriptures, and search them when evaluating teachings. We should compare what any teacher says against what the scriptures say.

"The Gospel is like a caged lion it does not need to be defended, it simply needs to be let out of the cage. – Charles Spurgeon

So how do we help Jesus build his church?

First, we fully commit with an undivided heart to becoming a committed Christian and align our life to reflect that commitment. We prioritize God with our time. We read the Bible and hear God's voice and seek his will for our lives. Once we live congruently within that commitment, God will place opportunities in our path to build his church. It may be an opportunity to give your testimony to someone who asks about the hope and peace you have or teach a class, lead a life group, or lead a Bible study. Only God knows the great things he has in store for you, but if you lean-in, he will reveal his plan to you.

The opportunities to do all these things and many more are endless. The point is to get busy doing something and producing fruit for the kingdom of God. Your actions or inactions are the only limits to your ability to help and touch lives. You will never know the reach and impact you can have. Choose how you want to contribute, and start doing it. Technology makes it easy to do these things consistently on a recurring basis, so start today.

Your actions or inactions are the only limits to your ability to help and touch lives. You will never know the reach and positive impact you can have if you act. Doing God's work in God's way will bring God's success!

In Acts 10, Luke tells us the story of Cornelius, the first Gentile converted to Christianity by Peter. An angel of the Lord appeared to him, and in fear, he asks, "What is it, Lord?" The angel responds, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Send to Joppa for Simon, who is called Peter." He did, and Peter came and preached the gospel to Cornelius' family, and the Holy Spirit descended on them in Peter's presence.

This event showed Peter that the gospel was for all, not just the Jews. This passage about Cornelius' conversion shows three things, the gospel is for all people, God pays attention to our prayers, and God appreciates our gifts to the poor.

**God pays attention to our prayers and appreciates our gifts to the poor.
God notices the fruit we produce.**

7. Test Yourself.

The apostle Paul tells Christians to “examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5). The apostle Peter tells us, “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble” (2 Peter 1:10). Jesus’ brother James tells us the “testing of [our] faith produces perseverance” (James 1:3).

Here are some questions to ask yourself.

1. Am I a lukewarm Christian or a fully committed Christian?
 - a. How do you answer that question?
 - b. How would someone in your family answer that question about you?
 - c. How would a good friend answer that question about you?
 - d. How will Jesus, who gave everything he had, answer that question about you?
2. If you do not like your answer to #1, ask yourself, How am I going to change it?
 - a. Write down a plan of specific action steps?
 - b. An excellent first step is to ask God for guidance—he will provide it.
 - c. Start taking some consistent actions daily.
3. Am I prepared to give my testimony and explain the hope I have in Christ if asked?
 - a. Getting this question is a good indication you are putting off a committed Christian vibe.
 - b. Prepare an answer explaining your relationship with Christ, what it means to you, and the hope you have. Practice your delivery. You never know when someone may ask that question, and it may mean everything to them. You may be the only person they ask!

SUMMARY

The peace of having rock-solid assurance of your faith in Christ and knowing your eternity is secure and will be spent with Jesus is abundant life on earth.

Do you know Jesus? Does Jesus know you?

Are you abiding in him and are you producing fruit?

Do you have rock solid assurance of where you will spend eternity?

Do you have this peace?

**LEARN ABOUT PEACE AND ABUNDANT LIFE IN
GUIDE 7 ABUNDANT AND ETERNAL LIFE**

THE CORNERSTONE



The mission of Gospel Guides is to share the HOPE and PEACE found in JESUS CHRIST with a world that desperately needs it. If you would like to help us with this endeavor please go to www.Gospel-Guides.com to sign up.

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