

THE 10 BASIC BIBLE DOCTRINES

WHO
GOD IS

AND WHAT
HE DOES

DR. DAVID A. DEWITT

WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE DOES

For 20 centuries godly men and women have gone to the Bible to find answers to these questions. We have discovered:

God is:	Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
What God Does is:	He saves He is building His church He reveals Himself in the Bible He sanctifies people He is involved with man He uses angels He deals with sin .

We call these ten subjects the basic doctrines.

What Are the Ten Basic Bible Doctrines?

Before we begin to investigate each doctrine, it is important to understand what we mean by a "basic doctrine." We're using the term to mean a biblical idea or teaching that the majority of mature, godly Christian men and women of the past 2,000 years have agreed is basic to the Christian faith. In other words, if we asked people like Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, C. I. Scofield, Francis Schaeffer, and Billy Graham, "What are the most important subjects in the Bible?" these are the ones most, if not all of them, would agree on.

The doctrines are easier to understand and remember if we see them as they relate to (1) who God is and (2) what God does. To diagram the topic of "who God is," draw three circles at the points of a triangle that is sitting on one of its bases. In the circle at the top of the triangle write "Father." In the circle at the lower left point of the triangle write "Son." In the circle at the lower right point of the triangle write "Holy Spirit."

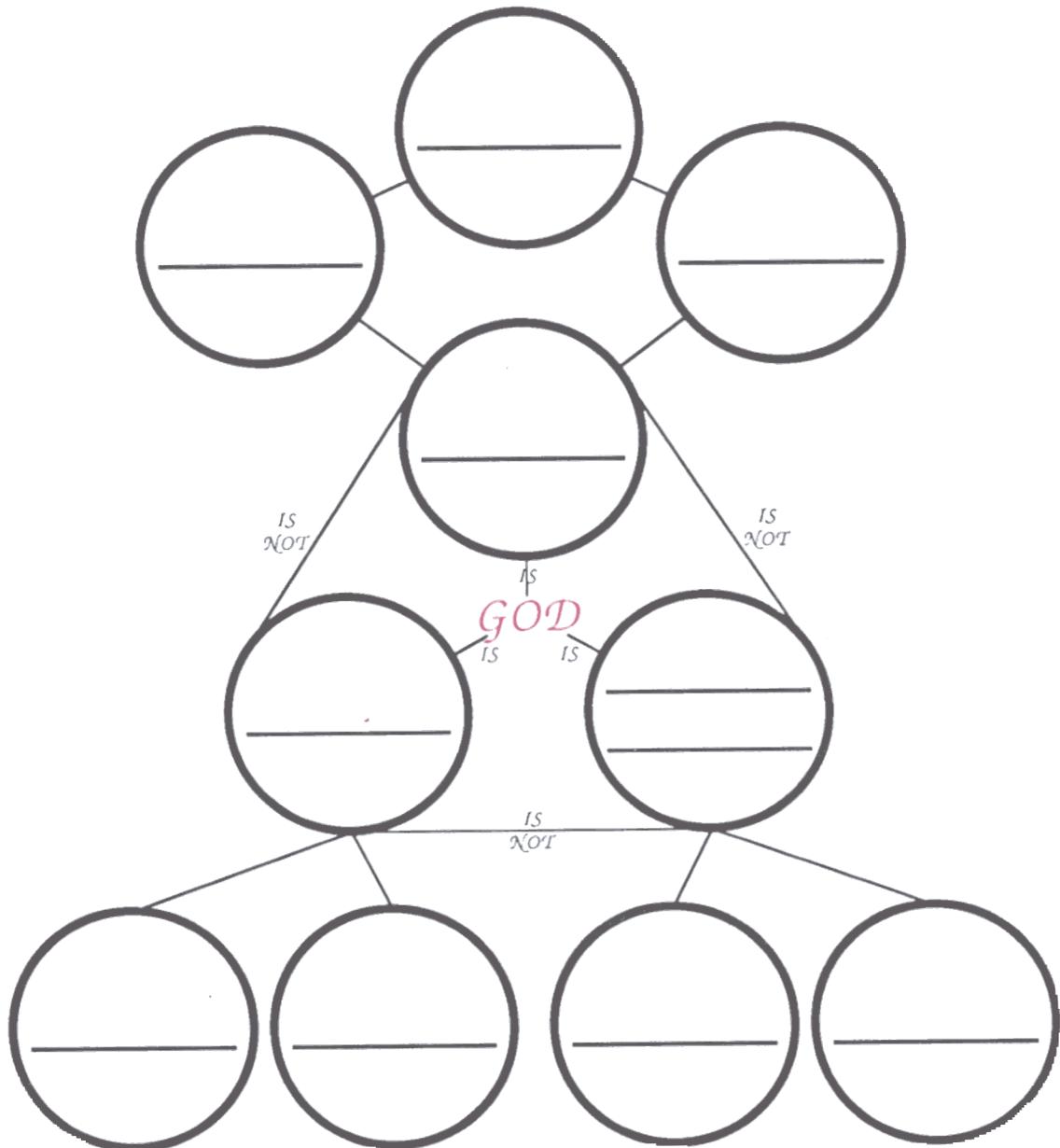
To diagram "what God does," draw two circles coming off each of those circles representing the persons of the Godhead. Each of these circles will be labeled according to the following scheme: God the **SON** is the author of **SALVATION** (Hebrews 12:2) and the head of the **CHURCH** (Colossians 1:18). God the **HOLY SPIRIT** inspired human authors to write the **BIBLE** (2 Peter 1:21) and leads people toward **SANCTIFICATION** (John 16:8-14). God the **FATHER** is Father to both **ANGELS** (Job 1:6) and **MAN** (Matthew 6:14). Since all men and some of the angels sin, we will include the doctrine of **SIN** and connect its circle to both humans (Romans 3:23) and angels (Ephesians 6:11, 12).

Although a diagram like this makes it easier to understand and remember Bible doctrine it does have some limitations. For one thing, all three persons of the Godhead are involved in all the doctrines. For example, the Father (Ephesians 1:3, 4) and the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) are both involved in salvation, as well as the Son. Nevertheless, the diagram is valuable because it helps us picture Bible doctrine as centered around the person and work of God.

For further study in Bible doctrine, we recommend Charles Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1972.

For a more-in-depth study, the most complete work in our opinion is Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary Press, Vols. I-VIII, 1947.

What Are the Ten Basic Bible Doctrines?



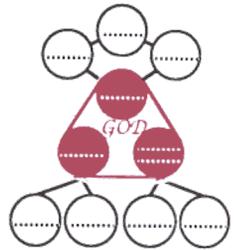
1. What does the term “basic” or “essential” mean when we use it to describe Bible doctrine?
2. List the 10 basic doctrines and then make a diagram that shows what the Father does, what the Son does, and what the Holy Spirit does. Then show the connecting Bible verses.
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this type of diagram.
4. Why is it important to know these basic biblical subjects?

What Is God Like?

The Bible gives us many of God's attributes. An attribute is an essential characteristic. So God's attributes, which do not change, tell us what He is like. On this page we'll discuss 12 of the basic attributes of God.

1. **OMNIPRESENCE** (Ps. 139:7-12)—God is everywhere present. Yet even though He is everywhere, He is also somewhere (Job 1:6). God the Son is here in this room, but He is also at the right hand of God the Father (Heb. 1:3).
2. **OMNIPOTENCE** (Is. 40:21-31)—God is all-powerful. He is able to do anything that He wants to do. God will not do something that is absurd or self-contradictory. He won't make rocks so big that He can't move them, or square circles.
3. **OMNISCIENCE** (Ps. 139:1-12; 1 John 3:20)—God is all-knowing. This means that God not only knows everything that is happening, but everything that has happened, will happen, or could happen.
4. **JUSTICE** (Rom. 2:11; Acts 17:31)—God is always right in His treatment of good and evil.
5. **ETERNALITY** (Gen. 21:33; Ps. 90:2)—God has no beginning, growth, aging, or end. He created time but is not limited by it.
6. **SOVEREIGNTY** (1 Chron. 29:11)—God is the supreme ruler. He is the final and ultimate source of power, control, and authority. Nothing happens apart from His will (Job 1:12; 2:6). He, not Satan, is in ultimate control of man and nations (Dan. 4:34,35).
7. **UNITY/TRINITY** (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)—While eternally existing in three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—all three are One in mind, heart, and will.
8. **INFINITY** (1 Kin. 8:27)—God is free from containment and without limitation (compare with number 2 above). Some restrictions are not limitations. To be restricted to righteousness, consistency, and eternity are not limitations.
9. **TRUTH** (John 14:6)—God speaks in a manner consistent with the nature of His existence (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).
10. **HOLINESS** (Isa. 6:3)—God is separate from all that is evil (Hab. 1:13). He is not in any way polluted, compromised, or defiled by anything inside or outside of Himself.
11. **IMMUTABILITY** (James 1:17)—God is unchanging in character. However, He isn't unchanging in behavior. What God says may change (eg. bring animal sacrifices, don't bring animal sacrifices), but that's because conditions change. It is because God never changes in character that He changes in response to changing conditions.
12. **LOVE** (1 John 4:8)—God acts in behalf of the best good and well-being of others. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the fact that God the Father sacrificed His own Son for our rescue (John 3:16).

What Is God Like?



Father		
	O _____	
	= _____	
	O _____	
	= _____	
	O _____	
	= _____	
	J = _____	
	E = _____	
	S = _____	
	U = _____	
	I = _____	
	T = _____	
Son	H = _____	Holy Spirit
	I = _____	
	L = _____	

1. List 12 attributes of God, a Bible verse that describes each one, and a brief definition of each attribute.
2. Suggest something that should be kept in mind about each of the three omni's.
3. Compare and contrast holiness with immutability, justice with fairness, eternity with infinity, unity with trinity, and truth with love.
4. Why do you think God told us so much about Himself, and what difference should these things make concerning how we live our lives?

What Is God the Father Like?

As we turn our attention to God the Father, we might ask, “What works of the Godhead are specifically attributed to God the Father?” There are four basic works we can point to. The Father is described as the ultimate (1) planner, (2) provider, (3) disciplinarian, and (4) protector. To illustrate this, draw a circle and slice it into four wedge-shaped quadrants. Then write “protector” in the left quadrant, “planner” on top, “provider” in the right quadrant, and “disciplinarian” in the bottom. The resulting diagram will help you to visualize the following concepts.

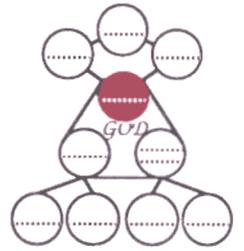
God the Father is a **PLANNER**. (1) He has planned every detail of creation (Job 38-41). (2) He has planned the salvation of all believers (Eph. 1:3-11). However, this does not mean people and angels cannot make their own decisions. It is true that God is a complete planner of all things (Rom. 9:15-23) so that there are no accidents (Rom. 8:28-39). Yet it is also true that we make real decisions that we are accountable for (Deut. 30:19; Luke 7:50; John 3:16; Rev. 22:17). The reason we find the combination of human responsibility and divine sovereignty difficult is that we don't yet have enough information about God to see how both can be true.

He is also a **PROVIDER**. There are at least three ways in which He provides. He provides (1) for all our physical needs (Matt. 6:25-34), (2) strength for spiritual success (Ps. 1:1-3), and (3) deliverance (Gen. 22:14).

God the Father is also a **DISCIPLINARIAN** of His children. Hebrews 12:7-13 tells us that God disciplines us. Although God punishes sin, that is not the main point of Hebrews 12. Discipline is for the purpose of correction. It's to keep us going in the right direction by teaching us to: (a) avoid those things that will destroy us, and (b) pursue those things that are for our good.

The Father is also a **PROTECTOR** in at least three ways: (1) He oversees all people and determines where and when they will live (Acts 17:24-28). (2) He is preserving the nation Israel (Hos. 1:11—2:1). Although God said Israel would be scattered all over the world and persecuted (which is exactly what has happened), He also said He would preserve them as a nation and gather them together again (which is what is happening now), and that a believing remnant of Jews will again become His people one day. (3) God is also the protector of all believers—those who depend on Him for their needs (Ps. 23).

What Is God the Father Like?



PLANNER
of

PROVIDER
of

PROTECTOR
of

FATHER

DISCIPLINARIAN
of

1. List four things God the Father does, together with some examples and Scripture references.
2. According to Hebrews 12:7-13, why does God discipline us? What are some forms God's discipline might take in our lives? What is the difference between discipline and punishment?
3. How does it make you feel when you realize that God has planned out everything? Do you think God's plan includes your career and your marriage? What about stubbing your toe?
4. How does thinking of God as an everpresent Father affect your everyday lifestyle?

What Is God the Son Like?

In addition to eternally possessing all of the attributes of God, the Son has a distinct role in the Godhead. For purposes of understanding and memory, let's look at the role of God the Son chronologically. Divide the circle labeled "Son" into four pieces in the same way you divided the circle labeled "Father." In the top quadrant write "Before Bethlehem." In the right one put "At Bethlehem." In the bottom circle write "After Bethlehem." And in the left one "After Ascension."

BEFORE BETHLEHEM

There are at least three major things we can say about God the Son before He was born in Bethlehem: (1) God the Son was the Creator of heaven and earth (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16,17; Heb. 1:10). Even though God the Father is the planner of creation, the actual agent of creation is the Son. In a sense, the Father is like an architect and the Son a contractor. (2) Many believe that God the Son appeared on earth, before He was born in Bethlehem, as the messenger of Jehovah (Gen. 22:15-18; Ex. 3:2-6; Josh. 5:13-15; Judg. 6:11-24; Zech. 1:12,13). (3) Before He was born at Bethlehem, His birth and life were predicted in the Old Testament (Ps. 22:1,6-8,18; Is. 7:14; 9:6; 53:1-9; Mic. 5:2).

AT BETHLEHEM

When God the Son was born at Bethlehem and named *Jesus* (meaning "Jehovah saves"), at least two noteworthy things happened: (1) An imperfect virgin bore a perfect Son (Luke 1:35). (2) Perfect humanity was added to, not mixed with, undiminished deity (John 1:1-3,14). He became the God-man, 100% God and 100% man.

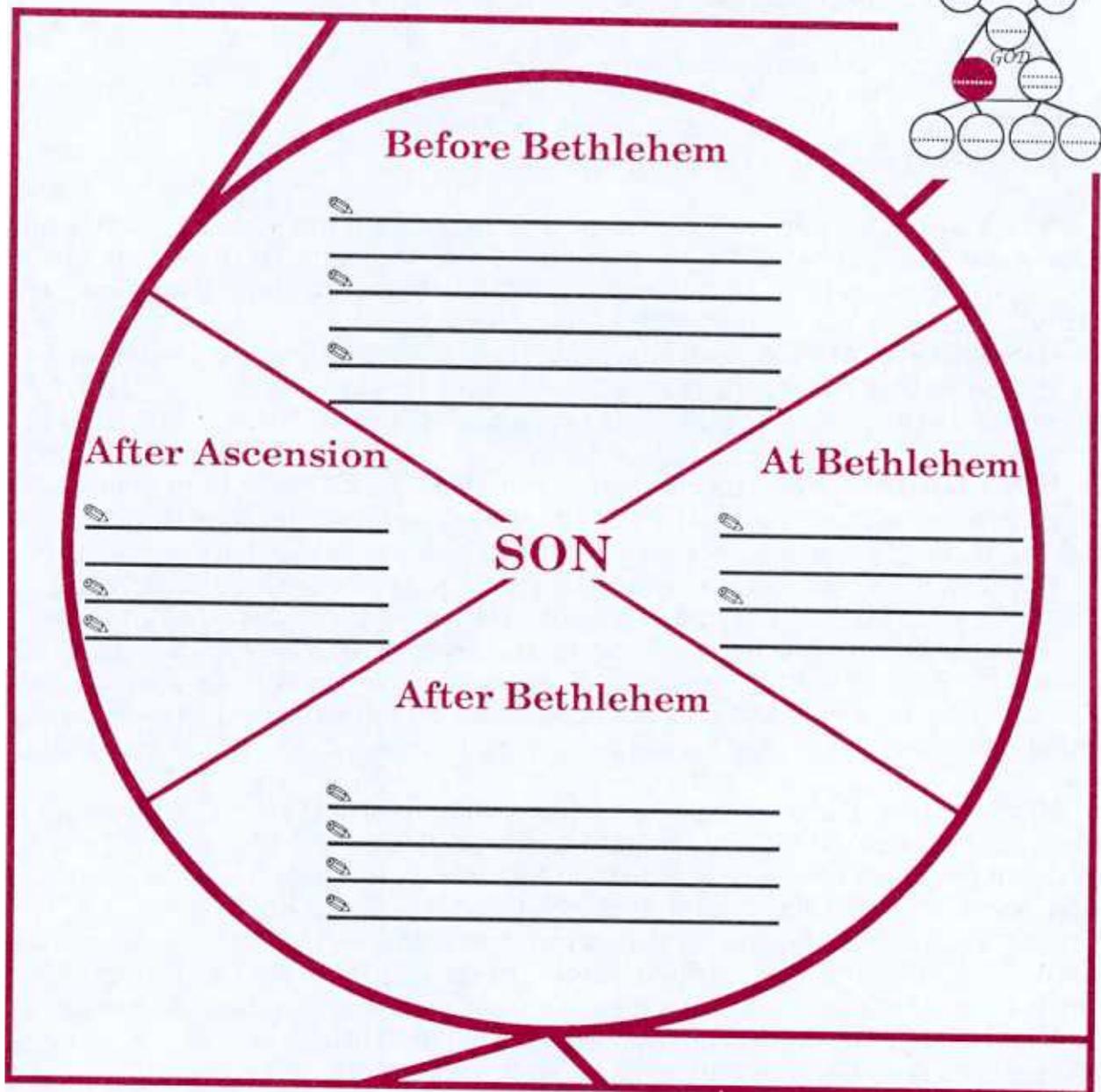
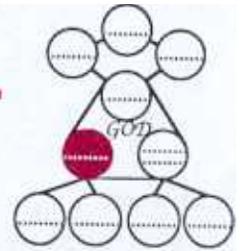
AFTER BETHLEHEM

After Jesus was born at Bethlehem, and while He lived on earth, there are four facts we can note about Him: (1) He became a servant (Phil. 2:5-11), (2) He was tempted but He remained sinless (Heb. 4:15), (3) He revealed God to man (John 1:18), and (4) He became a sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:10).

AFTER ASCENSION

There are also some things we can say about God the Son that are true after His ascension: (1) He is the advocate of all who trust Him (1 John 2:1), (2) He will be the Judge of all creation (John 5:22), and (3) He will reign as King (Jer. 23:5,6; Luke 1:32,33; Rev. 19:16).

What Is God the Son Like?



1. Discuss God the Son around four categories: before Bethlehem, at Bethlehem, after Bethlehem, and after ascension. Give examples and biblical references for each category.
2. What do you think about the doctrine of the “immaculate conception”? (This is the doctrine that says Mary was conceived without sin.)
3. Read John 1:14. Why do you think God did not consider His communication about who He was complete until He took on flesh and blood and dwelt among us? What implications does that have for ministries such as evangelism?
4. Two works of God the Son, usually mistakenly attributed to the Father, are creating and judging. How is this different from most people’s concept of Jesus?

What Is God the Holy Spirit Like?

When we think about the Holy Spirit, four questions usually come to mind:

1. Is He a person or merely a force?
2. What are His characteristics?
3. What does He do now and what has He done in the past?
4. Is He as much God as the Father and Son?

Let's look at the answers to these questions. To diagram them, divide a circle into four parts again (like we did for the Father and the Son). In the top quadrant write "His Personality," in the right one "His Work," in the bottom one "His Deity," and in the left one write "His Character."

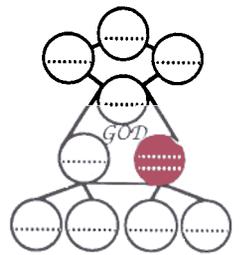
HIS PERSONALITY. To demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is a person, we will need to show that He has the three elements which make up personality. He does! According to the Bible, the Spirit has *intelligence* (John 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:10,11), *emotions* (Eph. 4:30), and *will* (1 Cor. 12:11).

HIS CHARACTER. The character of the Holy Spirit is not only seen in His name, *Holy Spirit*, but also in the way the Bible describes Him. The Holy Spirit is described as: (1) *clothing* because He clothes God's people with power (Luke 24:49), (2) a *dove* because He brings the gentle presence of God (Matt. 3:16), (3) *fire* because He purifies (Matt. 3:11,12), (4) *oil* because He anoints us for service (1 John 2:20), (5) an official *seal* because He protects our salvation with God's authority (2 Cor. 1:22), (6) a spring of *water* because He is to us a continuous source of life (John 7:38,39), (7) *wind* because He cannot be controlled or contained (John 3:8), and (8) a *pledge* because He is the promise of our future with God (2 Cor. 5:1-5).

HIS WORKS. His works are many, but we'll name six: (1) He *convicts* people of their need to be saved (John 16:8). (2) He *cleanses* from sin (1 Cor. 6:11). (3) In the past, He overcame or *overpowered* sin in humans on two significant occasions: (a) that of a human virgin so that she bore One who was the living Word of God without sin (Luke 1:35), and (b) that of human authors so that they could compose the written Word of God without error (2 Pet. 1:21). (4) He *teaches* us (John 16:12-15). (5) He *guides* us (Rom. 8:14,16). (6) He prays for us (Rom. 8:26).

HIS DEITY. His deity is obvious from the Bible. (1) He is revealed as being on the same level as God the Father and God the Son (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). (2) He is part of the ministry of both the Father and the Son (John 15:26). (3) He has the three "omni's": (a) omnipotence (Gen. 1:2), (b) omnipresence (Ps. 139:7), and (c) omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10,11).

What Is God the Holy Spirit Like?



His Personality

His Character

He Is like:

HOLY SPIRIT

His Works

His Deity

1. Discuss the Holy Spirit. Talk about His personality and His deity. Then talk about His work and His character. Give Scripture references where you can.
2. Why is it important to understand that the Holy Spirit is a person, not just a force or an energy field?
3. Think about the process a person goes through when he goes from being an unbeliever to a new believer to a mature believer. What parts of that process are accomplished by the Holy Spirit and what parts are up to the individual?
4. What are the eight biblical descriptions of the Holy Spirit that we listed? What does each of these teach us about the heart of God?

What “Basics” Should We Know About Angels?

Angels are the only other moral, spiritual, eternal creatures besides us (that we know of) in the universe. All the angels, “an innumerable company” (Heb. 12:22), were created by God before He created humans and the material universe (Job 38:6,7). These messengers of God (the word *angel* is a translation of a word which literally means “messenger”) were of two types: The cherubim were involved with guarding things (the “policeman” types [Gen. 3:22-24]). The seraphim were more involved with worship (the “priest” types [Isa. 6:1-3]). We must admit, however, that our knowledge of the differences between these angels is very scanty.

Before the creation of the world, one angel sinned and it appears that 1/3 of the angels followed him in a rebellion against God (Rev. 12:4). The other 2/3 remained faithful. So today there is a major warfare going on between the good and bad angels. Both also attempt to influence us in our three-dimensional material universe. Here are some facts about each group of angels:

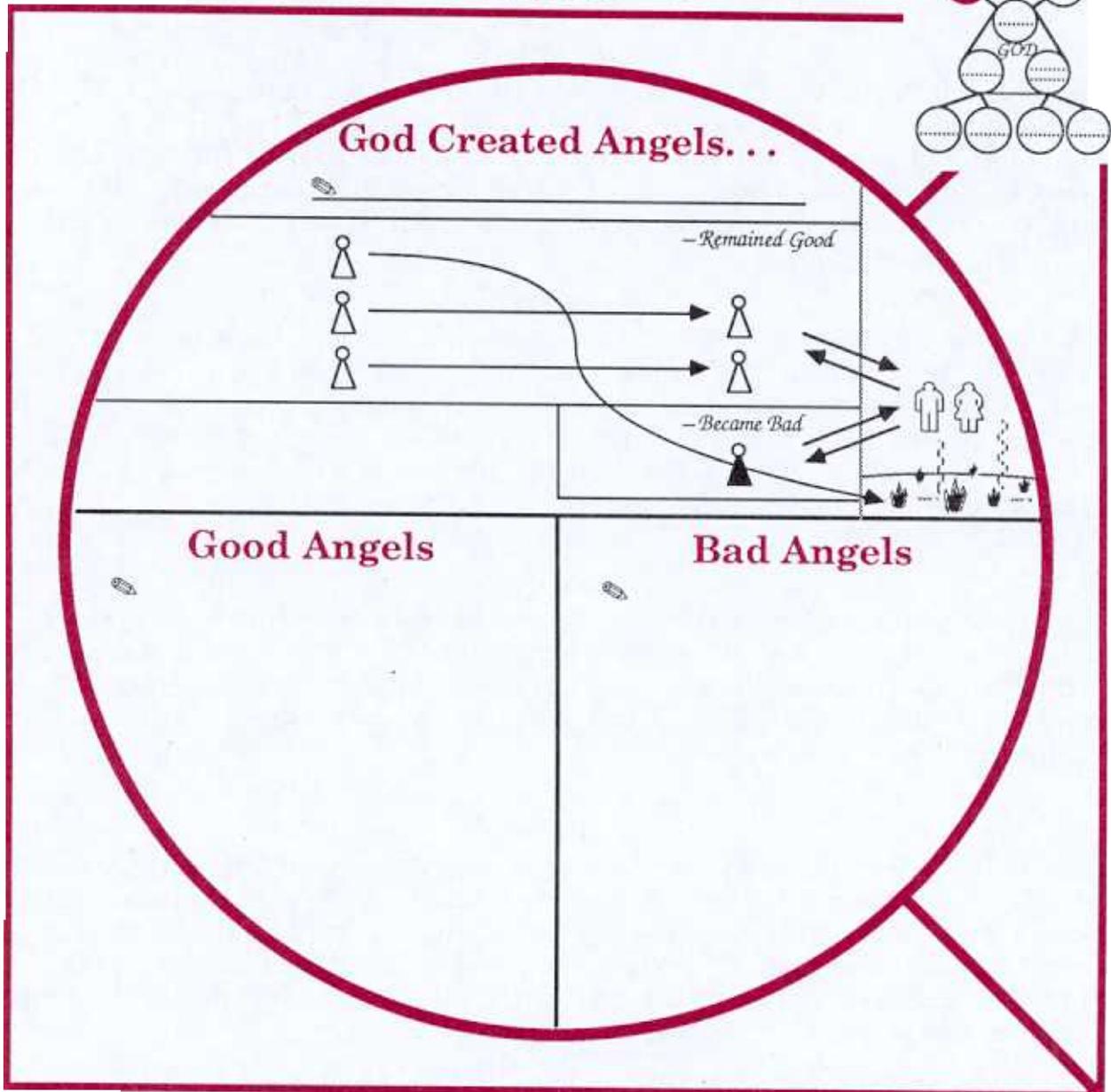
GOOD ANGELS

1. There are two types: cherubim and seraphim.
2. Their power and authority are different: (a) some are very powerful—like the archangel Michael (Jude 9) —but (b) some are less powerful (Dan. 10:12-21).
3. Unlike humans, they (a) do not die (Luke 20:36), (b) are not restricted to one bodily form (Gen. 18:2; Isa. 6:1-3; Heb. 13:2), and (c) do not marry or have children (Mark 12:25).
4. Unlike God, they (a) are not supposed to be worshiped (Rev. 19:10), and (b) are not omnipresent, omnipotent, or omniscient.
5. They are involved in the affairs of men (a) by acting as guardians and servants carrying out some of what God is doing in our lives (Dan. 10:12,13; Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:7; 27:23,24; Heb. 1:14), (b) by being interested in our efforts and success in the area of leading people to Christ (Luke 15:10), and (c) by observing our experience as we grow in Christ (1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Tim. 5:21; Heb. 13:2).

BAD ANGELS

- A. The First Bad Angel (Lucifer, Satan, or the devil)
 1. He was created as the highest and most beautiful angel (Ez. 28:11-16).
 2. His sin was the self-centered pride of wanting to be equal with God (Isa. 14:12-20; Ez. 28:11-16).
 3. His purpose now is to lead an army of evil spirits to defeat God, good angels, and believers by perverting truth and righteousness (Matt. 4:1-11; 16:23; John 8:44; Eph. 6:10-16).
 4. Satan can be limited by God and by believers who trust in God (Job 1:12; John 12:31; 17:15; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8).
 5. Satan’s kingdom is this world—the one in which we live, work, and raise our families (John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4).
- B. The Other Bad Angels (demons or evil spirits)
 1. Their doctrine is evil and leads to evil conduct (1 Tim. 4:1-5).
 2. They work against God’s purposes and for Satan—the leader of the demons (Dan. 10:10-14; Rev. 16:13-16; Eph. 6:11,12).
 3. They influence and sometimes bodily possess people so that humans can do their dirty work (Matt. 9:32,33; 17:18).
 4. Their influence can be resisted by: (a) becoming a Christian, (b) confessing all sin, (c) filling one’s life with Scripture, prayer, and things that make one think about God (such as godly music, poetry, and literature), and (d) commanding them to leave “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (see A4 above).
 5. Some demons were cast into a pit (Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:11). Some of those will be released during the tribulation (Rev. 9:1-11; 16:13,14), but all of them will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41).

What "Basics" Should We Know About Angels?



1. List as many facts as you can about both good and bad angels. Include facts about their creation, their fall, their present activity, and their destiny.
2. Which activities of Christians are angels most apt to be interested in and involved with?
3. Where do you think Satan spends most of his time and effort these days?
4. When would you suspect that a person might be demon-possessed or demon-influenced? What would you recommend to get rid of the demons?

What “Basics” Should We Know About Man?

CREATION

The Bible tells us that “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). God did not say this of animals, but of man. In some special way He patterned man and woman after Himself. God gave them a **body** (1 Cor. 6:19); a **personality**, sometimes called a soul or mind or heart (Matt. 22:37; Heb. 4:12); and a **spirit** (Rom. 8:16; 1 Thess 5:23).

BODY

Whether in this life or in the life to come, humans will have bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-44). The first body of a human is a physical one (Gen. 2:7, 1 Cor. 15:47-49) made up of elements found in the earth. It is a temporary body that will eventually be replaced with an eternal, spiritual body. Our physical body is like a tent or a house (2 Cor. 5:6-8, 2 Pet. 1:13-15). It's part of us and we are confined to it, but we are able to see ourselves as being separate from it.

SOUL*

The word *soul* in the Greek is *psuche* from which we get words like *psychology* and *psychotherapy*. It usually refers to personality.** Human personality is seen as having **intelligence** (the ability to acquire and use information [Rom. 12:2]), **emotion** (feelings [Matt. 22:37]), and **will** (the capacity to make choices [Deut. 30:19]).

SPIRIT

The word *spirit* can mean different things in different contexts. Here we are using it to refer to man's **morality** (the capacity to think in terms of right and wrong [Rom. 1:20; 2:14-15]), **purpose/destiny** (the ability to ask “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “Where am I going?” “What am I for?” and “Am I significant?” [Ps. 73:16-24]), and **creativity** (the capacity to innovate—to do new things and change one's situation in life [Is. 1:11-17]).

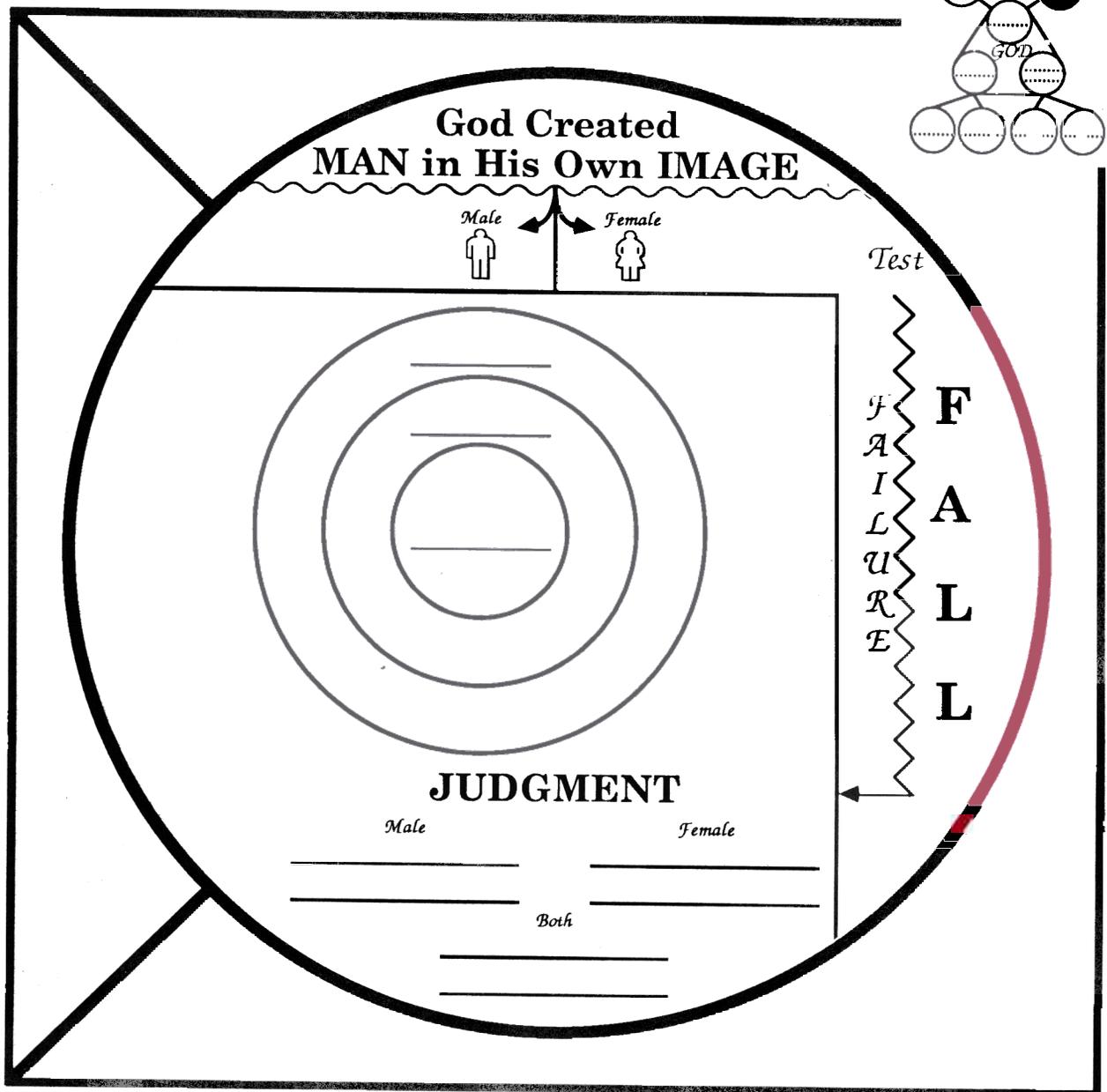
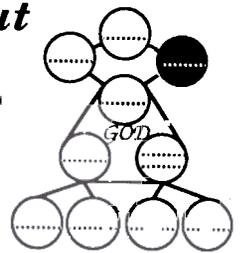
TEST, FAILURE, AND JUDGMENT

God gave the first humans a test (Gen. 2:1-17) to see if they would be obedient. They failed the test (Gen. 3:1-6). The judgment was that they would die in their depravity (Gen. 2:17, 3:19). But God also individualized certain parts of their judgment. The man was to spend his life in the hardship of labor (Gen. 1:28; 2:15,17-19). The woman was to have pain in childbirth and remain submissive to her husband. This fall of man resulted in a curse not only on all humans but on all creation as well (Rom. 8:20-22).

* Some see man as only body and non-body. The immaterial or non-body part of man may be broken down into soul, spirit, flesh, and mind.

**The context is important, since the word *soul* doesn't always refer to personality.

What "Basics" Should We Know About Man?



1. Discuss the first human beings as they were originally created. How would you describe the material and immaterial parts of both males and females? What aspects are the same and which ones are different? What do we mean when we say we are in God's image?
2. What test did God give man? What was man's failure? What was his judgment?
3. Why do you think God created males and females so different? Why do you think He gave them different judgments?
4. Is the command of the submission of wives to husbands because of the fall (see Eph. 5:21-24 and Gen. 3:16)? Would there be a need for this command to be submissive if Adam and Eve had not sinned?

What “Basics” Should We Know About Sin?

The doctrine or study of sin can be summarized by answering three basic questions. Here are those questions and answers:

WHAT IS SIN?

Sin is the perversion of good. To say I have a good arm is the same as saying I have an arm. An arm is a good arm unless there is something wrong with it. But if I say that I have a bad arm, I mean my arm has been perverted in some way. A broken arm cannot exist except as a perversion of a good arm. So it is with sin. Since God is the definition of good, sin is any perversion of good as defined by God. Simply stated, ***sin is anything contrary to the character of God.*** It is something that falls short or misses the mark of God’s goodness (Rom. 3:23), or something that violates God’s law (James 2:8-11).

WHERE DID SIN COME FROM?

1. We have to realize that God allowed sin to come into existence. Although that seems ironical, it is true. God thought it good to let evil be possible.
2. The first actual manifestation of sin was found in an angel—the angel Lucifer who is called Satan or the devil (Ezek. 28:15).
3. Next, sin was found in 1/3 of the angels who followed Lucifer (Rev. 12:4).
4. After the earth and man were created, man was placed in the Garden of Eden. It was there that Satan tempted the woman and she the man. Sin was then found in them (Gen. 3:1-7).
5. Finally, sin was found in Adam’s children (Gen. 4:3-15) and all his descendants. The whole human race was found to be sinful.

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE SINFUL?

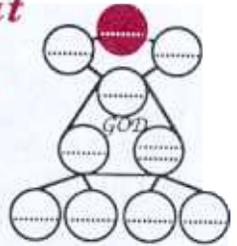
Actually, there are three ways to describe people’s sinfulness—three things that alienate people from God.

1. Imputed Sin. This is sin imputed or transmitted from Adam to each and every member of the human race (Rom. 5:12). It’s guilt by association. Because we are citizens of a particular country, we are guilty of what that country does. This guilt is not because of what we did, it is because of who we are. So it is with imputed sin.

2. Natural Sin. More often called our sin nature, this is the bent capacity and natural obsession to do things contrary to God’s character. It’s transmitted to us from our parents, just like our physical bodies are (Rom. 1:18—3:20; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:18). This is not to say we inherit our parents’ sins or their particular sin patterns, but only that the bent or motive to sin comes from our ancestors—all the way back to Adam.

3. Personal Sin. This is the sin we are most familiar with—the sins we each commit as individuals (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1 John 1:8-10). It comes directly and only from each of us individually and results in our individual loss of fellowship with God.

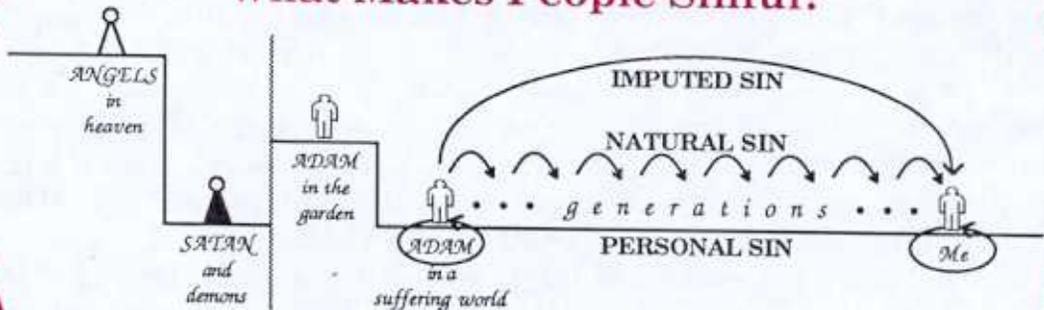
What "Basics" Should We Know About Sin?



What Is Sin?

Where Did Sin Come From?

What Makes People Sinful?



Imputed Sin – _____

Natural Sin – _____

Personal Sin – _____

1. What is the best all-inclusive definition for sin? What do you think about these definitions: (a) "selfishness," (b) "breaking God's laws," (c) "doing what we know to be evil"?
2. Where did sin get started? Why was sin possible? Who sinned first? Who sinned next?
3. Describe imputed sin, natural sin, and personal sin, giving reasons for each.
4. What are the best ways to fight the personal sins in our lives?

What “Basics” Should We Know About Salvation?

In order to be saved (rescued from the consequences of our sin) we need to make a decision to accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. It is sin that separates us from God, keeps us out of heaven, and more basically, keeps us from having any relationship with Him. The Bible says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). To begin a relationship with God, a person needs to receive the payment God has already made through the death of Christ. It’s like someone offering to pay off the entire mortgage of your house. You must receive the gift before you can stop making house payments. Such a decision to receive God’s offer of salvation can be made with a prayer something like this:

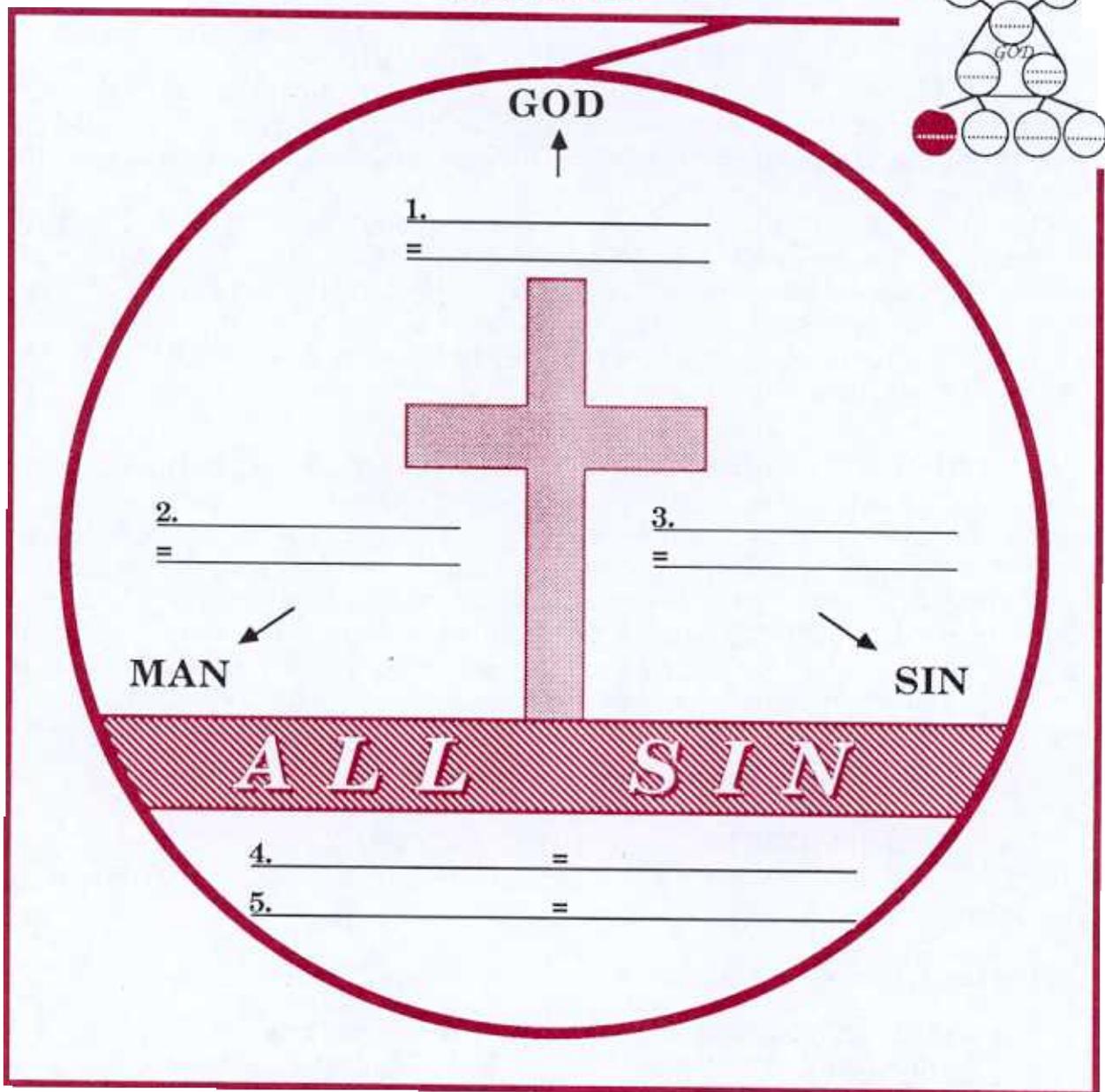
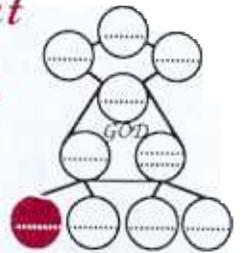
Dear God, I admit that I am a sinner. I also understand that the Bible says Jesus, being God, paid for my sin on the cross. I now invite Him into my life as my personal God and Savior. Thank You for coming into my life. (See John 1:12, 5:24; 1 John 5:13.)

But what exactly did God the Son do on the cross to make salvation possible? There are five big words in the Bible that answer this question. We shall list them along with some easier words that describe and define them. We’ll also give a passage of Scripture to indicate where each one can be found.

To diagram these five elements of salvation, draw a cross. At the top of the cross write “God,” to the left “man,” and to the right “sin.” Now, between the cross and “God” write “propitiation,” between the cross and “man” write “reconciliation,” and between the cross and “sin” write “redemption.” At the base of the cross write “substitution” and “justification.”

1. **PROPTIATION** means “satisfied” (1 John 2:2). It is God who is satisfied, and He is satisfied that what Christ did on the cross completely paid for sin. That’s different from the way it was in the Old Testament. God always required a blood sacrifice, but only the cross was a completely sufficient sacrifice.
2. **RECONCILIATION** means “changed” in such a way as to bring us into a relationship with God (2 Cor. 5:19).
3. **REDEMPTION** means “paid for” or “bought” (Matt. 20:28; Gal. 3:13; 2 Pet. 2:1). Sin has been paid for, so when we receive Christ, we choose to be bought out of the slave market of sin by God.
4. **SUBSTITUTION** refers to the fact that Christ died on the cross instead of us (Matt. 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:21). He took our place.
5. **JUSTIFICATION** is the declaration of God that we are right, or righteous, in His eyes (Rom. 3:23-25).

What "Basics" Should We Know About Salvation?



1. What are the five key words in the Bible that describe the different aspects of salvation? Give some everyday words that define these big words and some Scripture verses where they can be found.
2. How much of all the sin that was ever committed was paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross? How much of that payment is applied to me if I receive Christ as my Savior? Does that include all of the sin that I will commit as well as what I have already committed? What if I sin real bad or become an atheist or begin worshiping Satan? Are these sins already paid for on the cross?
3. Were the sins of believers in the Old Testament paid for on the cross? Does that mean that their sins were not paid for when they died? If their sins were not yet paid for, did they go to heaven anyway? If not, where did they go?

What “Basics” Should We Know About the Church?

A DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH

Ever since Adam sinned, God has been in the process of calling people back to Himself. About 2,000 years before Christ, God did this by creating a nation of people from the offspring of Abraham. These people were known as Israel, the Jews, or the Hebrews.

After the death of Christ, God began calling men and women of all nations to be members of what we now refer to as the church. The word *church* literally means “a group or assembly.” The church, then, is that group of all true believers—those who have received Jesus Christ as God the Son—from the time of Christ’s death to the present (or more specifically, from Acts 2 until the present). It has been in existence for about 2,000 years.

THE ORDINANCES (OR SACRAMENTS) OF THE CHURCH

Whether they are called ordinances or sacraments, nearly all Christians have at least two historical practices that were originated by Christ Himself and practiced by the New Testament believers. Those practices are: (1) *baptism*, the application of water to the body to signify belonging to Christ (Acts 8:36), and (2) *the Lord’s Supper* (sometimes called Communion or the Eucharist), the remembering of Christ’s body and blood by eating some sort of bread and drinking some sort of juice. Different groups place different significance on the eaten elements, but all agree that they represent the body and blood of Christ, which were sacrificed for us.

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

In the Bible, the ministry of Jesus Christ and His church is pictured with various illustrations. For example:

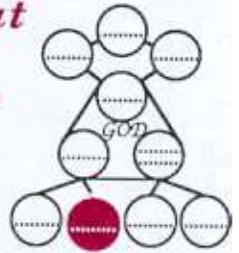
The Lord Jesus Christ is like:

- A. a high priest (Heb. 8:1)
- B. a cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:5-8)
- C. a new Adam (1 Cor. 15:45)
- D. a bridegroom (Eph. 5:25-27)
- E. a shepherd (John 10)
- F. a vine (John 15)
- G. a head (Col. 1:18)

Believers are like:

- A. individual priests (1 Pet. 2:9)
- B. building stones (same)
- C. a new race (2 Cor. 5:17)
- D. a bride (same)
- E. sheep (same)
- F. branches (same)
- G. a body (same)

What "Basics" Should We Know About the Church?



Definition

+

_____ YEARS _____ YEARS

Ordinances/Sacraments

A. _____ = _____

B. _____ = _____

Ministry

<i>The Lord Jesus Christ is like:</i>	<i>Believers are like:</i>
A. _____	A. _____
B. _____	B. _____
C. _____	C. _____
D. _____	D. _____
E. _____	E. _____
F. _____	F. _____
G. _____	G. _____

1. Write out a definition of the church. Include your thoughts on how old the church is and who is in the church.
2. What is an ordinance or sacrament? What is the significance of these activities? How important are they? Which ones are common to almost all Christians? Should a person not be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper if they are not a member of the local church serving it? Does a person have to be a clergyman to administer the Lord's Supper or baptism?
3. Think about the biblical illustrations that describe the ministries of Christ and the church. Make applications of each of these. For example, in what sense is Christ the vine and believers the branches?

What “Basics” Should We Know About the Bible?

There are five words that describe the “basics” about the Bible. First, we’ll list those words, together with a definition and verse of Scripture describing each one (except #3, which is historical).

1. **REVELATION**—God revealing Himself and His view of the world (Rom. 1:18-20).
2. **INSPIRATION**—God overseeing human authors to write down His message (i.e. His revelation) in their own words but without any mistakes (2 Tim. 3:16).
3. **CANONICITY**—God guiding people to pick the right books for the Bible.
4. **ILLUMINATION**—God giving people the ability to see things from His point of view (1 Cor. 2:10-16).
5. **INTERPRETATION**—figuring out what an author had in mind when he wrote (2 Pet. 1:20).

Revelation began at the very beginning of God’s dealings with man. Adam talked with God in the garden. Noah was given revelation to build an ark. Abraham was told to go to Canaan by God. Jacob saw a ladder leading to heaven.

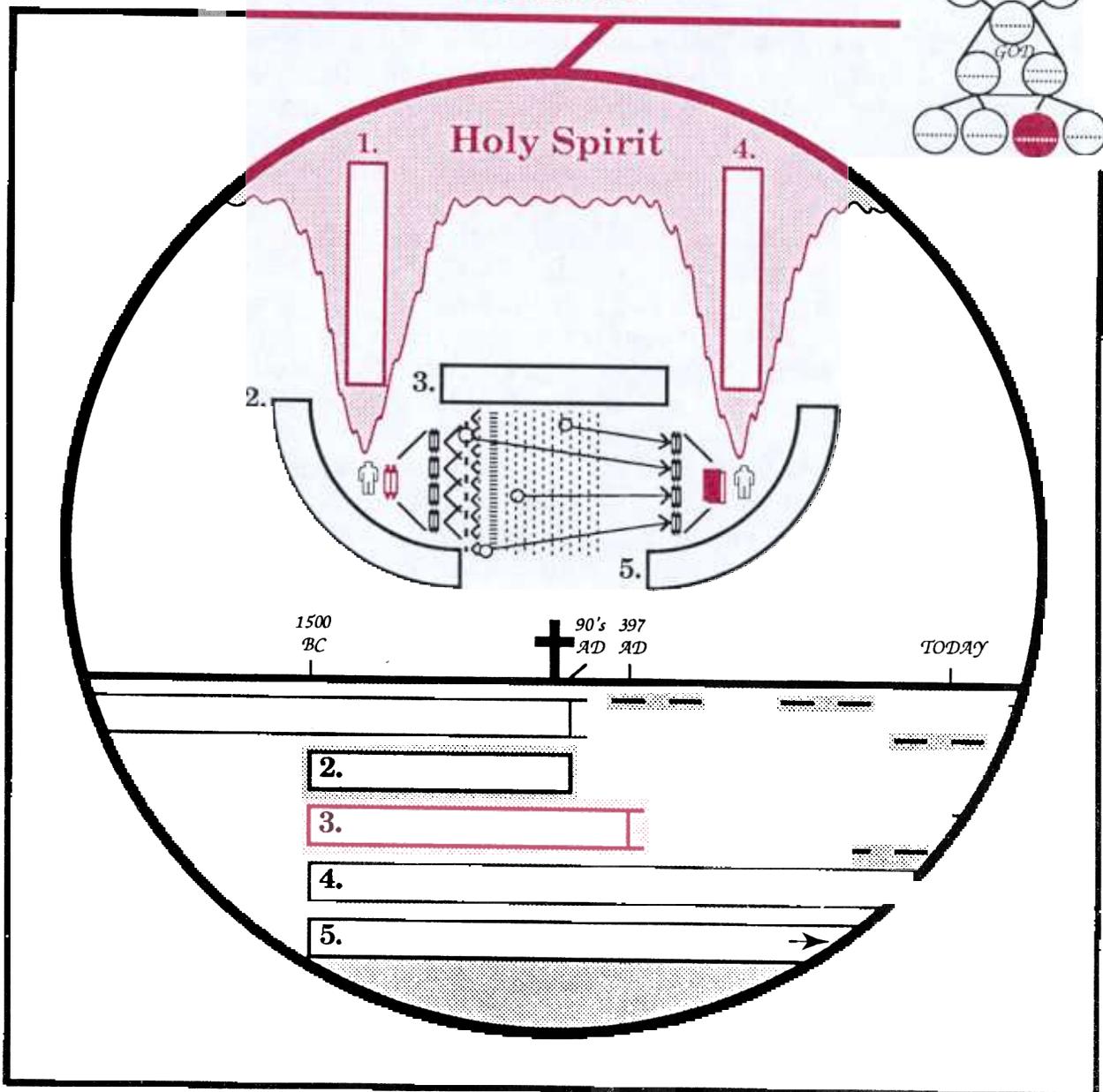
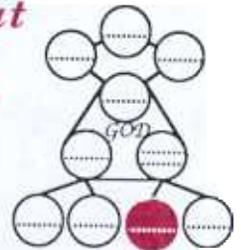
All these examples are revelations of God but none of them are the inspirations of God. Not until the time of Moses, around 1500 B.C., did God guide a human to write down His revelation without error. This inerrant writing of revelation is known as **inspiration**. This writing went on until about the end of the first century A.D.

Historically, however, people had to decide which books were those which God Himself inspired. The collecting of those books into a Bible (lit. “book”) is called **canonicity**, or the forming of the canon of authoritative Scripture. Many tests were used for canonicity. For the New Testament, a canonical book (a) was written or sanctioned by an Apostle, (b) claimed internally to be from God, (c) taught things consistent with the rest of the Bible, and (d) was already being used by believers.

As we try to understand God’s written revelation, we all tend to see things through the mental presuppositions established by our childhood, our culture, and our value system. It’s like seeing everything through a pair of colored glasses. So to understand God’s written Word, we need His glasses (i.e. His perspective, His point of view). That God-given point of view is God’s **illumination**.

But even with God illuminating us, we tend to be inconsistent and lapse back into our own culturally determined feelings about what something should mean. So it’s very helpful to write out a logical systematic set of principles to guide our understanding of written material. This is what we call **interpretation**.

What "Basics" Should We Know About the Bible?



1. What four key words best describe what the Bible has to say about itself and where in the Bible are they found? What fifth word describes the preservation of the Bible historically? Give an easy-to-understand definition of these key words.
2. Now discuss these words historically. (a) When did revelation begin? (b) Is it still going on? (c) When did it stop or when will it stop? Next think about the other four words using the same three questions.
3. Why do you think God chose to use the written word to communicate His truths?
4. Why did He use humans? Why did He allow them to compose it instead of just dictating it to them like He did with the ten commandments?
5. Discuss the difference between illumination and interpretation. If we have illumination, why do we need interpretation?

What “Basics” Should We Know About Sanctification?

Sanctification means to be “set apart” from that which is wrong. It comes from the root word that is translated “saint” or “holy one.” It is God setting us apart from sinfulness for Himself. The Bible seems to describe three types or aspects of sanctification.

The first one happens when we first receive Jesus Christ as our God and Savior. At that instant, God sets us apart as belonging to Him. We may not feel that we have changed, but our legal standing before God has changed dramatically. For example, if we enroll in a new course, we may not actually know much about the subject. The fact that we enrolled does not increase our knowledge of the subject, but it does set us apart from the rest of the world in the sense that we are now members of a new group. In a similar way, when we receive Christ, we are set apart by God. We shall call this **positional sanctification** (1 Cor. 6:11).

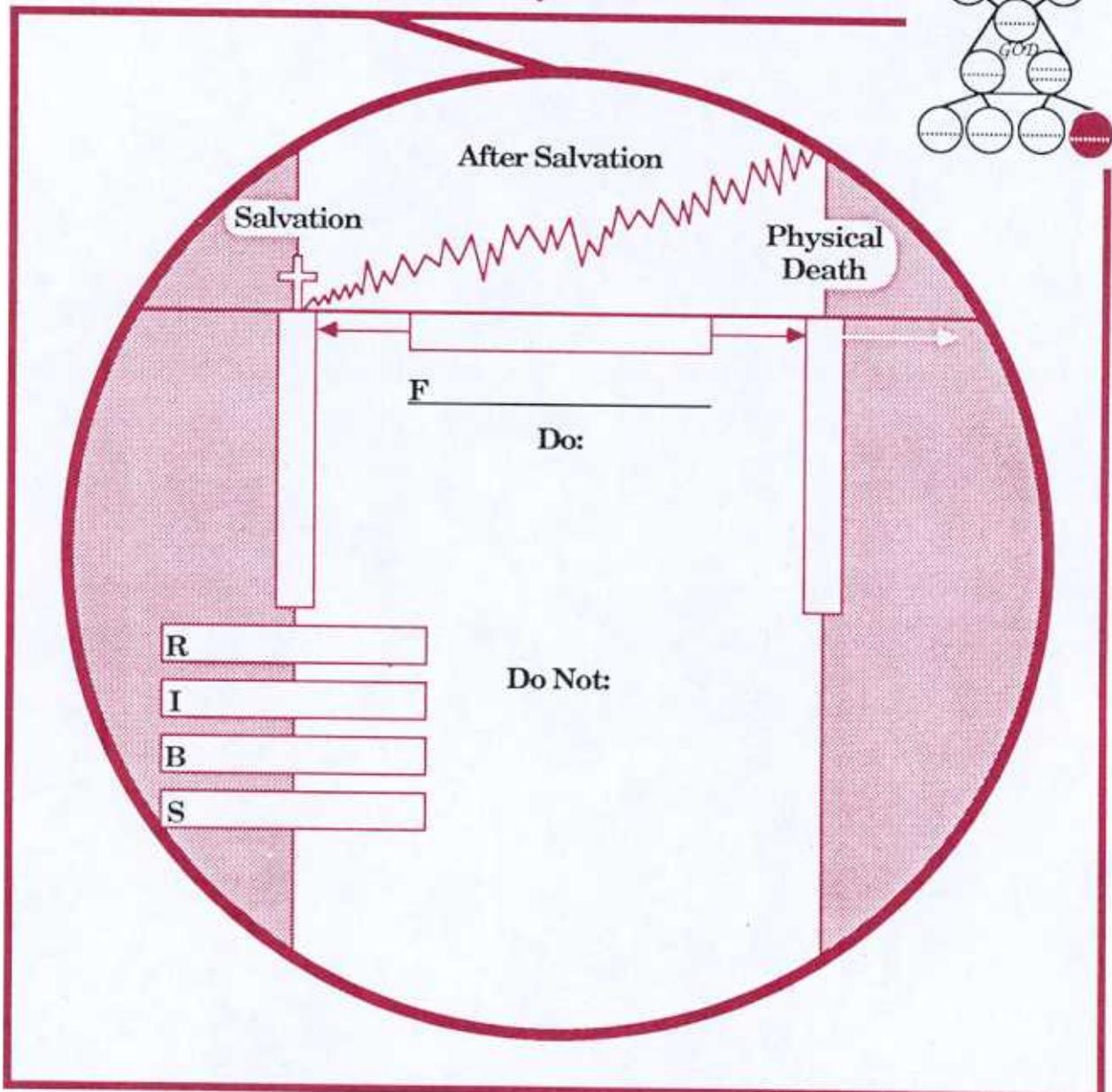
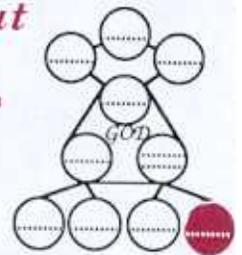
As we continue to become more Christlike, we will experience a change in our lives. In a similar way, as we begin to study the new subject we enrolled in, we will experience a progressive, ongoing setting apart. Spiritually, we will continue to be set apart for God all during our lives. We'll call this **experiential sanctification** (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

As long as we live, we will be plagued by our fleshly nature. Ultimately, though, when we die, we will be set apart to complete holiness. That's like mastering the course we signed up for. This we shall call **ultimate sanctification** (1 John 3:1-3).

At the time of our positional sanctification (our salvation), the Holy Spirit does four things for us. They can be remembered by using the little word RIBS. (1) The Holy Spirit **R**egenerates us (Titus 3:5)—gives us new life. (2) He also **I**ndwells us (1 Cor. 6:19)—comes to live within us in a special way. (3) He **B**aptizes us (1 Cor. 12:13). This baptism doesn't have anything to do with water. The Holy Spirit immerses us into and identifies us as members of the universal church, the body of all believers in Christ, at the time we are saved. (4) He **S**eals us (Eph. 4:30)—preserves us until we get to heaven.

As we grow in Christ, we will notice “experiential sanctification.” The key ingredient here is the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). But unlike RIBS, the filling of the Holy Spirit can be lost. So here's what we do to get it and keep it: (a) Confess your sins—agreeing with God that those sins He's bringing to mind are indeed wrong (1 John 1:9), and (b) keep following Christ no matter how many times you fail (Gal. 2:20). Also (a) don't grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30) by doing things you shouldn't do, (b) don't quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19) by not doing what you should do, and (c) don't “rule” out the Spirit (Gal. 4:9-11) by following rules, laws, and traditions instead of God's Word.

What "Basics" Should We Know About Sanctification?



1. What are the three basic kinds of sanctification described in the Bible?
2. Name four things the Holy Spirit does for you the instant you are saved—things you do not feel and you cannot lose.
3. Name something the Holy Spirit does for you after you are saved that you can lose. What should you do to get it? What should you not do in order to keep it?
4. Why do you think the Bible uses being drunk with wine as a contrast to being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18)?
5. Is it possible to ever confess all your sins? If not, which sins should you confess?
6. Think of some ways our Christian traditions (like Christmas, Sunday school, certain do's and don'ts) can both help and hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.