

First Principles

The Seven Fundamentals
of
Ephesians 4:4-6

Evangelistic Study Series

Midlands Churches of Christ

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First Principles – “*The Seven Fundamentals*”

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” **Ephesians 4:4-6**

An elementary understanding of these topics and commitment to the truths that they represent will enable any person to confidently respond in faith to God’s invitation of salvation and eternal life.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”
(Ephesians 2:8,9)

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” **(Romans 10:17)**

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*Suggestion: *Have the person with whom you are studying, review these additional verses and discuss them with you before you begin the next study.*

One God and Father of All

Describe the kind of relationship you presently have with God. What adjectives best describe God for you?

1. *'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'* (**Genesis 1:1**) This statement alone separates faith in the Bible from most other religions and human philosophies, for example:
 - A. *Atheism* – the belief that there is no God
 - B. *Pantheism* – the belief that the universe (i.e., everything) is God
 - C. *Polytheism* – the belief in more than one God
 - D. *Evolution* – the theory that all species of life developed from earlier forms even to the point that life came from inanimate matter (i.e., creation was not a supernatural event)

2. The Incredible Nature of God
 - A. God's knowledge goes far beyond human understanding (**Isaiah 40:12-14**)
 - B. The power of the nations is like nothing compared to God (**Isaiah 40:15-17**)
 - C. The greatness of God is beyond human imagination (**Isaiah 40:18-20**)
 - D. The vastness of the universe and passage of time are small things to God (**Isaiah 40:21-26**)
 - E. Most incredibly, he cares for each one of us and gives strength to those who put their hope in him (**Isaiah 40:27-31**)

3. God's Created Us for a Purpose
 - A. Being 'religious' is not enough – we must seek the truth (**Acts 17:22-23**)
 - B. God does not need anything from us since he is the source of life (**Acts 17:24-25**)
 - C. God wants a personal relationship with us that we have chosen to have by our own free will – we must seek him (**Acts 17:26-27**)
 - D. Everyone has been made in God's image and therefore inherently knows how God wants to be loved and treated – we are just like him (**Acts 17:28-29**)
 - E. God sent his Son, Jesus to teach us how to have a relationship with him and also proved who he was by raising him from the dead (**Acts 17:30-31**)
 - F. God expects us to respond to his initiative (**Acts 17:32-34**)

4. God Cares for Each One of Us
 - A. God knows exactly what we need (**Matthew 6:25-32**)
 - B. If we seek first his kingdom and righteousness, our needs will be met (**Matthew 6:33-34**)
 - C. God is waiting for us to respond – ask, seek and knock (**Matthew 7:7-11**)
 - D. God is our heavenly Father and we need to build a relationship with him accordingly
 - E. Make a decision to pray daily!

5. Have a Noble Heart before God (**Acts 17:11-12**)
 - A. Not only was Paul not offended by the Bereans attitude, the writer of Acts commends them for their integrity
 - B. Our faith must be in God's word first and foremost, not human opinion
 - C. Make a decision to read and study the Bible every day!

One Faith

For those with religious background, construct a timeline of significant spiritual events such as when they: 'were born again', baptized, 'had their sins were forgiven', 'saved', 'came to faith in Jesus as Lord', 'received the Holy Spirit', etc.

In the previous lesson we studied about God's character and his desire for a relationship with us. Today, we will examine more closely the attitude that God want us to have in approaching him – an attitude of faith.

1. Faith Goes Beyond What We Can See (**Hebrews 11:1-3**)
 - A. Faith is a conviction of truth beyond the confirmation of our senses
 - B. Faith is the full acceptance of the truth of God's word (i.e., the universe was formed at God's command) – faith must be put in something greater than ourselves
2. Faith Pleases God (**Hebrews 11:6**)
 - A. Without faith it is impossible to please God
 - B. One must believe that he exists and rewards those who earnestly seek him
3. Faith Is Necessary for Salvation (**Ephesians 2:8-10**)
 - A. Salvation is only possible if there is both grace and faith
 - B. Only God has the power to give grace (i.e., forgive the eternal consequences of sin)
 - C. Only man can have faith since God is all-knowing and all-powerful
 - D. Therefore salvation is a gift made available through God 's grace, which can only be received by us through faith – grace and faith must work together
4. Faith Without Action Is Dead (**James 2:14-26**)

Faith is more than simple ascent that God exists – it is demonstrated by one's obedience and service to God. Consider these examples from history:

 - A. By faith Abel pleased God through his offerings (**Hebrews 11:4**)
 - B. By faith Enoch pleased God and was taken from this life without death (**Hebrews 11:5**)
 - C. By faith Noah built the ark to save his family after being warned by God (**Hebrews 11:7**)
 - D. By faith Abraham obeyed and went to a foreign land because he understood that God was calling him to an even better home (i.e., heaven) (**Hebrews 11:8-10**)
5. Through Faith We Can Receive Blessings from God (**Hebrews 10:35-39**)
 - A. We need to persevere in doing God's will so that we can receive what was promised
 - B. Although some promises of God are simply statements of what he will do, others are conditional statements with a blessing and are dependent on our obedience
 - C. Consider the promises covered in the previous study and the spiritual principle, 'If we fulfill the condition in faith, then God will give us the blessing':
 - i. If we seek God with all our hearts then we will find Him (**Jeremiah 29:13**)
 - ii. If we seek God's kingdom and righteousness first then God will take care of all our physical needs (**Matthew 6:33**)
 - D. Although the Old Covenant is most often remembered for the Ten Commandments, the promises connected to those Laws are of even greater significance (**Hebrews 8:6, Deuteronomy 7:12-15**). God's blessings are assured through the faithful fulfillment of the conditions of his promises!
6. Our Lives Need To Be In Agreement With What We Believe (**1 Timothy 4:16**)

One Hope

What is your greatest hope for this life?

1. Faith in God's Message Leads Us to Hope (**1 Peter 1:3-9**)
 - A. It is faith in the resurrection of Christ that gives us the hope of an eternal inheritance
 - B. Assured by the resurrection of Jesus Christ – he's already waiting for us there
 - C. An inheritance kept in heaven that can never perish, spoil or fade
 - D. Our struggles test both our faith and our hope

2. The Spiritual Condition of Mankind (**1 Peter 2:9-10**)
 - A. Everyone is either in the *darkness* or in the *light* – there is no twilight zone

Darkness	God's Light
Not a People	God's People
No Mercy (<i>Unforgiven</i>)	Mercy (<i>Forgiven</i>)

- B. 'Being in God's light' is much more than an 'intellectual' state (i.e., *enlightenment*) but it is our true spiritual condition before God
 - C. Through Jesus we have a new covenant that makes us into God's people and gives us forgiveness of sins
3. Spiritual Darkness Means Separation From God's Light (**Isaiah 59:1-2**)
 - A. Sin separates us from God like a wall
 - B. Salvation is only possible if wall is removed by God since only through his grace can sins be forgiven
4. Sin is Falling Short of God's Glory (**Romans 3:22-24**)
 - A. 'Sin' is translated from the Greek 'hamartano' for 'missing the mark' (i.e., *like an arrow falling short of the target*)
 - B. How much sin does it require to become a 'sinner'? Just one
 - C. Can good deeds cancel out sin? No, only God's grace can make us righteous and that grace can only be received through faith
5. Sins of Commission (In Action, Thought and Attitude)
 - A. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious (**Galatians 5:19-21**)
 - B. Confession and prayer brings healing (**James 5:16**)
6. Sins of Omission (**James 4:17**)
 - A. God also holds us responsible for the good that we know that we should do
7. Man's Eternal Destiny Is Connected To His Spiritual Condition (**Romans 6:23**)
 - A. The wages of sin is death (eternal separation from God)
 - B. The gift of God is life (eternity in heaven with Him)
 - C. These are the only two possibilities
8. God Has Given Us Hope Through the Sacrifice of His Son
 - A. Although we have fallen short of the glory of God because of our sin, we can now rejoice in our hope of the glory of God (**Romans 5:1-5**)
 - B. God loves us even at our worst – powerless, ungodly, sinners (**Romans 5:6-8**)
 - C. The sacrifice of Christ's blood is our only chance (**Romans 5:9-11**)

The 'Good News' About Jesus Christ

Why do you think that the story of Jesus is called 'good news'?

1. The Gospel Is The Power of God for Salvation (**Romans 1:16-17**)
 - A. 'Gospel' is translated from the Greek 'euaggelion' (literally, 'good news')
 - B. The righteousness of the gospel comes only through faith
 - C. The facts of the gospel are that Jesus died, was buried, and then was raised to life (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**)
2. The Gospel Was God's Plan From the Beginning (**1 Peter 1:18-21**)
 - A. Jesus was the lamb of God chosen before the creation of the world
 - B. His resurrection gives us faith and hope
3. The Sacrifice of Jesus Began Long Before His Death On the Cross (**Philippians 2:5-8**)
 - A. He gave up equality with God
 - B. He took the form of a servant being made in human likeness
 - C. He humbled himself to the point of death
4. Read **Matthew 26:31 – 28:10** and consider the suffering of Jesus as well as how the people around him were sinners just like us:

Suggested reading intervals:

26:31-35	26:36-46
26:47-56	26:57-68
26:69-75	27:1-10
27:11-26	27:27-31
27:32-44	27:45-56
27:57-61	27:62-66
28:1-10	

5. Christ Suffered For Us In His Body (**1 Peter 2:21-24**)
 - A. He set us an example by trusting in God through his trials
 - B. He bore our sins and received the punishment that we deserved
6. The Incredible Power of the Blood of Christ (**Hebrews 9:14-15,22**)
 - A. The blood of Christ cleanses our consciences and sets us free from the guilt of our sins
 - B. The blood of Christ puts the new covenant into effect and guarantees forgiveness
7. Jesus Asked Us to Remember the Sacrifice of His Body and Blood (**Matthew 26:26-30**)
 - A. The bread represents his body which was given for us
 - B. The cup represents his blood that was poured out for the forgiveness of our sins
 - C. *Communion is usually celebrated each week during the Sunday worship service*
8. The Good News Should Be Shared (**2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2**)
 - A. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation
 - B. We are God's ambassadors as if God is making his appeal through us
 - C. The message is clear and personal for each one of us: *'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God'*

One Baptism

How does someone respond in faith to the message of the gospel?

Introduction

1. Jesus Taught That We Must Be Born Again (**John 3:3-8**)
 - A. Being born again is equated with being born of water and the Spirit
 - B. No one can enter the kingdom unless they are born of water and the Spirit
 - C. Being born of the Spirit is invisible and miraculous
2. The Apostles Taught That We Believe the Gospel and Respond (**Acts 2:22-24, 36-41**)
 - A. Our sins put Jesus on the cross (i.e., we ‘crucified’ him as surely as the Roman soldiers did)
 - B. Jesus physically rose from the dead
 - C. The truth should cut our hearts and help us surrender to God’s will: “What shall we do?”
 - D. Everyone must make their own decision *to repent* and *be baptized* – these are the *conditions* connected to God’s promise of forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit

Repent (translated from the Greek ‘metanoeo’ meaning ‘to change your thinking’)

1. Repentance Leads to Salvation (**2 Corinthians 7:10,11**)
 - A. Sorrow for sin is not enough – godly sorrow leads to repentance and worldly sorrow leads to regret and death
 - B. True repentance comes from the heart and is zealous in both attitude and action
2. Repentance Is Also a Turning to God
 - A. Brings times of refreshing (**Acts 3:17-20**)
 - B. Demonstrated by actions (**Acts 26:19-21**)

Be Baptized (transliterated from the Greek ‘baptizo’ meaning ‘to immerse’)

1. Baptism unites us with the death of Christ (**Romans 6:3-7**)
 - A. Baptism is a burial so that we might be raised to a new life
 - B. Through baptism we acknowledge that our ‘old self’ (our sins) was crucified with Jesus on the cross
 - C. Through baptism we contact with the cleansing blood of Christ (**Hebrews 9:14-15,22**)
2. Baptism Saves Us (**1 Peter 3:21-22**)
 - A. Not through ceremonial cleansing but by virtue of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our faith in the promise of God (i.e., the response of a good conscience)
3. Baptism is the putting off of the sinful nature (**Colossians 2:9-15**)
 - A. A spiritual circumcision that takes place through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - B. Jesus also cancelled the written code of the Law through his perfect sacrifice
4. Baptism is an expression of God’s kindness, love and mercy (**Titus 3:4-7**)
 - A. Salvation comes through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Remember the words of Jesus, ‘You must be born again – born of water and the Spirit’
 - B. Our own righteousness cannot save us, but we are justified by his grace
 - C. We become heirs of God with the hope of eternal life

One Spirit

What does the phrase 'to be born again' mean to you?

1. Review the Old Testament's Teaching – God Is Spirit
 - A. The Spirit is the power of God (**Genesis 1:1,2**)
 - i. 'Spirit' is translated from 'ruwach' (Hebrew for 'wind', sometimes also 'breath')
 - ii. *The earth was formlessness, empty and darkness was over the surface of the deep.*
The creation was then transformed into form, order, life and light by the Spirit of God
 - B. The Spirit is the presence of God (**Psalms 139:7-10**)
 - i. The Spirit of God being everywhere means that God is everywhere
 - C. The Spirit is the person of God (**Isaiah 63:7-10**)
 - i. God responded personally to the condition of Israel – distress and grief
 - D. The Spirit of God moves like the blowing of an invisible wind – through the Spirit we see the effects and evidence of God's power, presence and person in the creation
 - E. *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in Spirit and in truth* (**John 4:19-24**)
2. The Gift of the Indwelling Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:17-21, 29-41**)
 - A. After Jesus was raised to life, he ascended to heaven and received the promised Holy Spirit from God that he then poured out on all people on the day of Pentecost
 - B. Only those that repent and are baptized with water will receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e., be 'born again')
 - C. This succession of events resulted in the quality of 'sonship to God' being made available to anyone who responds in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ (**Galatians 3:26-27, 4:4-6**)
3. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is the Power of Christ in Our Hearts
 - A. To guarantee our salvation and help us stand firm in Christ (**2 Corinthians 1:21-22**)
 - B. To be transformed into the likeness of Christ (**2 Corinthians 4:7, 3:16-18,**)
 - C. To live righteously and not be controlled by sin (**Romans 8:9-13**)
4. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is the Presence of Christ in Our Hearts
 - A. To make our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit and to prove our spiritual union with him (**1 Corinthians 6:17-20**)
 - B. To guide us in spiritual living and produce God's character in our hearts (**Galatians 5:16-18,22-25**)
5. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is the Person of Christ in Our Hearts
 - A. Testifying that we are God's children as he is (**Romans 8:14-17**)
 - B. Helping us in our prayers by interceding for us to God (**Romans 8:26-34**)
 - C. Enabling Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith (**Ephesians 3:16,17a**)
6. If Anyone is in Christ There is a New Creation (**2 Corinthians 5:16-17**)
 - A. This miracle happens through the gift of the Holy Spirit in our hearts
 - B. Christ now works, lives and guides our hearts through the Spirit

One Lord

Can you accept Jesus as your Savior without accepting him as your Lord?

1. God Has Made Jesus Both Lord And Christ (**Acts 2:36**)
 - A. Jesus is Lord whether we accept it, say it or even know it (**Philippians 2:5-11**)
 - B. God calls each one of us to acknowledge this truth and live by it
 - C. 'Doing God's will' is the right response to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (**Mat 7:21-23**)
2. Disciples Called 'Christians' For The First Time (**Acts 11:19-26**)
 - A. 'Christian' was the name that the world gave to followers of Jesus (only 3 times in NT)
 - B. Most often, the followers of Jesus are referred to as 'disciples' (more than 250 times) and Jesus clearly defined its meaning through his example and teaching
3. Jesus Calls The First Disciples (**Mark 1:14-18**)
 - A. Jesus called them to "Follow me" and they immediately left everything
 - B. He promised to give them a new purpose to be "fishers of men" (just like him)
4. The Cost Of Following Jesus (**Luke 9:23-26**)
 - A. Deny oneself like Jesus did – "Not my will, but your will" (**Matthew 26:36-39**)
 - B. Carry the cross daily – always prepared to sacrifice our wills
 - C. Gain the world and lose your soul, or lose your life to Jesus and receive eternal life
 - D. Love Jesus' will for our lives more than any other's – even our own (**Luke 14:25-27**)
 - E. Love Jesus' kingdom more than all we possess (**Luke 14:28-33**)
 - i. One way to fulfill this is through *regular contribution* to the work of the church
 - F. Each person must count the cost – without faithfulness to the end, all the sacrifice is pointless (**Luke 14:34-35**)
5. Learn How To Pray (**Luke 11:1-4**)
 - A. The disciples wanted to be like Jesus in his prayer life
 - B. Jesus prayed to God for *daily* sustenance, spiritual guidance and deliverance
6. The Greatest Commandment (**Mark 12:28-31**)
 - A. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength
 - B. Love your neighbor as yourself
7. Go Preach the Gospel And Make Disciples (**Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20**)
 - A. This command is for every disciple (whether going to another country or just next door)
 - B. The *Great Commission* includes baptizing and teaching obedience to Christ
 - C. God uses faithful disciples to make more disciples and bring them to maturity
 - D. Faithfulness to God's plan could evangelize the world in one generation through exponential growth (i.e., 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, ... $2^{33} > 8$ billion)
8. The World Will Know The Disciples of Christ
 - A. By loving one another as Christ loves us – selflessly and sacrificially (**John 13:34-35**)
 - B. By 'holding to' his teachings (**John 8:31,32**)
9. The Power of God's Grace (**Titus 2:11-14**)
 - A. The reality of our salvation teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions
 - B. The truest motivation for being a disciple is love and gratefulness

One Body (The Church)

What image comes to mind when you hear the word 'church'?

Introduction:

- A. 'Church' is translated from 'ekklesia' (common Greek word for 'assembly')
 - B. In the New Testament, 'church' is mostly used in a spiritual sense as the assembly of God's people both *universally* and *locally*
 - i. Universal Church: The assembly of all who will live in heaven with God forever
 - a. Only the church of Jesus can overcome death (**Matthew 16:15-19**)
 - b. The names of the saved are written in heaven (**Hebrews 12:22-24**)
 - ii. Local Church: The assembly of baptized disciples in a certain geographic area that share the hope of eternal life (**Acts 2:41,42-47**)
 - a. As the gospel spread there came to be many local churches on earth
1. Powerful Descriptions of the Church (**Ephesians 2:19-22**)
 - A. God's household: all members are therefore 'brothers and sisters'
 - B. A Building: built on the truth of God's word as recorded in the New Testament
 - i. Jesus is the chief corner stone (level and direction for the rest of the foundation)
 - ii. *Apostles* (Paul, Peter, John, Matthew) and *Prophets* (Mark, Luke, James, Jude, *unspecified* writer of Hebrews)
 - iii. A local assembly can only be part of God's universal church if it is built in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament
 - C. A Holy Temple: God lives in the church by his Spirit
 2. Unity in the Church
 - A. Universally (**1 Corinthians 12:12,13**)
 - i. Entrance through one baptism
 - ii. Membership in one body
 - iii. Sustained by one Spirit
 - B. Locally (**1 Corinthians 1:10-12**)
 - i. Unity in mind in thought and thought requires effort
 - ii. God doesn't want divisions or denominations
 3. Ministry of the Local Church (i.e., shared responsibilities of all disciples) (**1 Peter 4:8-11**)
 - A. *Teaching Each Other* (**Romans 15:14**)
 - B. *Encouraging Each Other* (**Hebrews 10:24,25; Hebrews 3:12-14**)
 - C. *Benevolence* (**1 John 3:16-18**)
 - D. *Evangelism*: Go into all the world (**Matthew 28:18-20**)
 4. Leadership in the Local Church (**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:7,17,24**)
 - A. Needs to be respected and loved
 - B. Accountable to God for how they shepherd and lead (their authority is from God)
 5. Judgment and the Church (God's Kingdom on Earth)
 - A. There is a paradox: membership in a local assembly of believers does not guarantee eternal life – salvation requires personal faithfulness (**Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; Revelation 2:4-5**)
 - B. We need to keep the church pure and not associate with *brothers* who refuse to stop sinning (**1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Matthew 18:15-20**)
 6. The Expression of God's Manifold Wisdom (**Ephesians 3:7-12**)
 - A. The Church represents God's eternal purpose for man
 - B. This knowledge allows us to approach God with freedom and confidence

Extra Reading Suggestions for Homework

One God and Father of All

1. The proof of God's existence is clearly seen in the creation (**Romans 1:20**)
2. It is incredible that God cares for us (**Psalms 8**)
3. God's plan for us is more precious than gold (**Psalms 19**)
4. God knows everything about us (**Psalms 139**)

One Faith

1. All Scripture is inspired by God and works to mature our hearts (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)
2. The word of God reveals the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts (**Hebrews 4:12,13**)
3. Although Jesus came to save, the same message of salvation will condemn those who do not accept it (**John 12:47-48**)

One Hope

1. With a true understanding of our sinfulness comes humility (**Psalms 51**)
2. Each person is responsible for their own sin (**Ezekiel 18:20**)
3. Without hope in Christ there exists only terrible judgment and punishment (**Revelation 21:6-8**)
4. The wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God (**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**)

The 'Good News' About Jesus Christ

1. Simply review the scriptures given in the study

One Baptism

1. Repent or perish (**Luke 13:1-9**)
2. God knows our hearts and gives grace to the humble (**James 4:4-10**)
3. Without humility there will be no salvation (**Matthew 18:3,4**)
4. We must decide to get rid of all the sin in our lives (**Colossians 3:5-10**)
5. The example of Paul's conversion (**Acts 22:12-16**)

One Spirit

1. Men wrote down prophecies of Scripture through the Holy Spirit (**2 Peter 1:19-21**)
2. Ezekiel prophesied that God would open the graves and bring up his people, put his Spirit in them and give them life (**Ezekiel 37:12,13**)
3. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples (**John 14:15-27**)
4. Christ's Spirit lives in us (**1 John 3:24, 4:13**)
5. The Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing what is to come (**Ephesians 1:13,14**)

One Lord

1. Salvation comes through the realization and confession that 'Jesus is Lord' (**Romans 10:9-11**)
2. Christ is the head of the body, the church (**Colossians 1:15-20**)
3. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life – the only way to the Father (**John 14:6, Acts 4:12**)
4. Jesus set us an example of humility and servitude (**John 13:13-17**)

One Body (The Church)

1. Be on guard for human tradition replacing respect for God's word (**Matthew 15:1-9**)
2. Built together as a temple and priesthood (**1 Peter 2:4-10**)
3. The need for forgiveness and graciousness (**Ephesians 4:25-32**)
4. Each part of the body is special and needed by all the others (**Romans 12:1-21, 1 Corinthians 12:15-26**)