

# First Principles

Basic Bible Studies for Making Disciples



Greater Hartford Church of Christ

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season;  
correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and  
careful instruction. 2 Timothy 4:2

*First Principles* is a basic Bible Study series designed to help you guide a seeker along their journey to come to a knowledge of the truth and thereby be saved. (1 Timothy 2:4) It was initially created in 1979 to provide a basis for disciples to use to fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The following Bible studies are designed to be a flexible tool to aid the seeker along this journey. While every true seeker arrives at the same destination, all begin from unique starting points. Along the way, different Scriptures may prove more applicable and effective. Please make the effort to memorize all the scriptures which might be applied to facilitate a seeker's path to salvation.

As you study the Bible with someone:

- Get to know them and build a loving friendship.
- Buy a Bible and journal for your friend.
- Take notes during your Bible studies so that s/he can review the Scriptures you look at together.
- Ask questions about each passage. Don't simply state your points. People learn best through personal discovery.
- Share personally from your own life and spiritual journey.
- Have faith in the power of God's Word to change people's hearts with the truth of the gospel.
- Pray, pray, pray!

Take your Bible and the Holy Spirit and confidently share the gospel with those around you. You are fully equipped for this good work!  
(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

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# Seeking God

This study illustrates the need to earnestly seek a relationship with God.

## **Matthew 7:7**

This is a great promise. God is a loving Father, and he wants you to find him. If you seek him, you will find him.

## **Matthew 7:13-14**

The way is narrow. If only a few find the way to eternal life, then only a few are truly seeking. How should you seek?

## **Matthew 6:33**

The only effective way to seek is to seek God first. What keeps you from making this your top priority? (friends, family, job, studies, fear, ...)

## **Acts 8:26-35**

The Ethiopian was a great example of someone “seeking first.” He was an important and very busy man, yet he still made time for God (the Jerusalem trip). He sought the right place (the Scriptures). He was humble (asked for help). When he found, he did not continue to seek – it was time to act. It has been said, “When a sincere seeker finds what he has been looking for, either he stops seeking or he stops being sincere.” From his example, we can see that it is beneficial to let another person help you understand the Word.

## **Acts 17:11**

The Bereans were another example of people “seeking God first.” They had noble character (integrity). They were enthusiastic. They sought in the right place (the Scriptures). They read daily. They were not naïve; they had a healthy skepticism. They responded to the truth and became believers. It is important that you do your own homework!

## **Matthew 13:44-46 (extra passage)**

The man in the field stumbled across treasure. Most of us were like him in that we were not actively seeking truth. There were three results: joy (the result of finding); sold everything (commitment); and obtained the treasure (as always happens when people seek first). The merchant, however, was looking for fine pearls. Some of us were like him in that we were actively seeking the truth. He experienced similar results.

# The Word of God

This study establishes the Bible as the inspired Word of God. It must be the standard for our lives.

## **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

The Word is inspired by God. It is useful for absolutely everything in our life and should be applied to our life.

## **Hebrews 4:12-13**

The Bible is relevant (living) and active (dynamic). It transcends time and is as applicable today as it was when it was written. The Word penetrates like a sword. It can cut us and “hurt” at times. But that is good because it encourages us to repent.

## **2 Peter 1:20-21**

There is no private interpretation of the Bible. The Holy Spirit inspired the men who wrote the books of the Bible.

## **1 Timothy 4:16**

Life (what you do) and doctrine (what you believe) are of equal importance.

## **Matthew 15:1-9**

Be careful of traditions that supersede the Word of God.

## **John 8:31-32**

Jesus isn't content with our belief and sincerity. He not only wants us to believe and read the Word but to obey it.

## **John 12:47-48**

The bad news is that we will all stand in judgment before our God. The good news is that he has already given us all we need to know. It is vital that we read the Word and live our lives according to its standard.

## **Acts 17:11**

The Bereans were eager to learn. They read the Scriptures enthusiastically and daily. They asked questions. God considers that to be noble. Don't simply accept what religious leaders say, read and study the Bible for yourself. Are you willing to make the Bible your standard? Challenge them to begin reading the Bible every day.

# Discipleship

This study teaches the expectations Jesus has for anyone who wants to follow him.

## **Matthew 28:18-20**

With all authority of heaven and earth, Jesus left his disciples the command to make disciples of all nations, baptize them and continue to teach them to obey. Why all nations? So everyone has the opportunity to know the truth and be saved. Once someone has been made into a disciple, they need to be baptized. Then we don't just wish them well; we keep walking together, teaching and encouraging (discipling).

## **Acts 11:25-26**

A disciple is a follower of Jesus. Biblically, a disciple and a Christian is the same thing. The word "disciple(s)" occurs more than 270 times in the New Testament, whereas the word "Christian" occurs only 3 times.

## **Mark 1:14-16**

The beginning of Jesus' ministry was the same as that of the end: Jesus came to seek and to save what was lost. His life's mission was to save souls. As disciples of Jesus, we too must live purposeful lives of saving others. Jesus calls us to be "fishers of men." Fishing takes patience, persistence and passion.

## **Luke 9:23-26**

Self denial is at the heart of discipleship. Are you willing to deny yourself? What will that look like in your life? Self denial is a daily decision.

## **Luke 14:25-33**

God expects total, unconditional surrender. God must be most important in our lives and hearts. Who/what do you practically put before God? It is important that we count the cost before we decide to become a disciple. If we are willing to make Jesus Lord, we must be willing to surrender control of absolutely everything in our lives to him.

## **John 13:34-35 (extra passage)**

As disciples, we are called to love one another to the same degree that God loves us.

**Matthew 28:18-20**

Recap the main points from each scripture you have already looked at.

Ask the person studying:

1. Are you a Disciple?
2. Are you a Christian?
3. Are you saved?
4. Do you want to be a Disciple?

# Sin/Darkness

This study defines sin and shows how sin separates us from God.

## 1 Peter 2:9-10

God calls all of us out of the dark and into the light. We have to be lost before we are saved. Every person is either in the darkness or the light. There is no dusk or shadows.

Darkness	Light
Not a people of God	People of God
No Mercy	Mercy
Lost	Saved
Not a Christian	Christian
Not a Disciple	Disciple

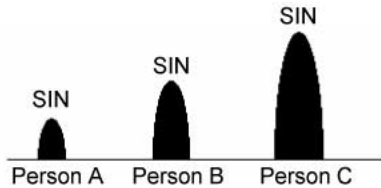
## Isaiah 59:1-2

Our sin separates us from God. In order for a man to have a relationship with God the wall must be broken down – sin must be forgiven.

Darkness (Man)	Wall of Sin	Light (God)
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## Romans 3:23

Everyone has sinned and fallen short. The definition of “sin” means “to miss the mark.”



Who is further away from God? No one. Everyone is equal; everyone is lost. A good moral life won't save you. Only the grace of God will save you through faith in the blood of Jesus.

## Galatians 5:19-21 (Sins of Commission)

Sinful deeds are obvious. We need to take our sin seriously. Those who live in unrepentant sin will not go to heaven.

- Sexual immorality (any sex outside of marriage: adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, masturbation)
- Impurity (fantasies, lust, pornography, provocative dressing, flirting, sensual touching, ...)



- Debauchery (an overindulgence in something to get our pleasure, peace, comfort or escape. i.e. sleeping, TV, internet, smoking, overeating, ...)
- Idolatry (anything that we put before God; i.e. work, school, grades, money, relationships, ...)
- Witchcraft (horoscopes, tarot cards, Ouija boards, ...)
- Hatred (an absence of love, lack of forgiveness, grudges, ...)
- Discord (anything that tears apart the unity of a group: gossip, slander, ...)
- Jealousy (being afraid someone is going to take what you have)
- Fits of rage (internal/ external, verbal/physical)
- Selfish ambition (self seeking)
- Dissensions (being a part of a clique - looking down on others)
- Factions (a small dissenting group within a larger one)
- Envy (wanting what someone else has, lack of contentment)
- Drunkenness (drinking too much to act like a disciple)
- Orgies (wild parties where people go to sin; group sin)
- The like

### **Mark 7:21-22**

We are responsible for our sin. It comes from our own hearts. It is our responsibility – despite upbringing, environment, genes or social pressure.

### **James 4:17 (Sins of Omission)**

Sin isn't just what we do that is not good. It is also the good that we know we should do and choose not to.

### **Ephesians 5:3-5 (extra passage)**

Not even a hint – not only the action is condemned, but even the very appearance of evil.

### **2 Timothy 3:1-5 (extra passage)**

This is a good one for religious people who appear to be good by their actions but have secret sin within their heart.

Suggest to the person studying that they write a list of their personal sin that separates them from God. Encourage them to be specific about their sins so they might see the gravity and magnitude of their sin.

# Baptism/Light

This study defines baptism and the relationship between baptism and salvation.

## John 3:1-7

We must be reborn to enter the kingdom of heaven.

## Acts 2:22-24

Do you believe:

1. Jesus is the Son of God?
2. He died on the cross for your sins?
3. He rose from the dead?

## Acts 2:36-39

God made Jesus both Lord (master) and Christ (savior). He cannot be your savior if he is not your master.

The people were “cut to the heart” – they had godly sorrow – and asked Peter what they should do. He told them to:

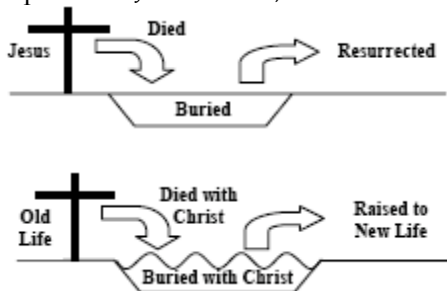
1. Repent
2. Be baptized

They then receive:

1. Forgiveness of their sins (salvation)
2. The Holy Spirit

## Romans 6:1-4

Baptism is a participation in Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection.



## 1 Peter 3:21 (extra passage)

Baptism is not a symbol. The floodwater from Noah’s time symbolizes baptism. Baptism saves.

# Repentance

This study defines repentance and its significance with the forgiveness of sin.

## **Acts 2:38**

Review this scripture. It talks about salvation. We have already looked at Baptism. We will now look at Repentance.

## **Psalm 36:1-2**

We must hate our sin.

## **Luke 13:1-5**

The Word is clear. There are only two choices: repent or perish.

## **Acts 26:19-21**

Repentance is a change of heart and mind. It is a decision, followed by action. A person's life must reflect the change. It can be done in an instant, though the effects last a lifetime. Notice the opposition that tends to come from religious people when repentance is preached.

## **2 Corinthians 7:8-11**

Worldly sorrow is being sorry that you got caught. (speeding ticket)  
Godly sorrow is being sorry that your sin hurt God. Godly sorrow is essential for salvation. It produces a visible change in our character:

- Earnestness (seriousness about our sin)
- Eagerness to clear yourselves (don't wait, right past wrongs)
- Indignation (righteous anger about our actions)
- Alarm (fear, urgency)
- Longing to see justice done (whatever it takes to make this right)

## **Luke 19:1-10 (extra passage)**

Zacchaeus is an example of radical repentance.

## **Matthew 5:29-30**

God wants us to have a radical attitude toward eliminating our sin.

## **Acts 3:19**

Repentance brings refreshment!

Talk through the person's list of sin and specific plans of repentance for the sins listed.

# The Cross

The cross demonstrates how much God loves you. It demands a response from you.

## **Romans 5:6-11 (extra passage)**

This passage describes the essence of God's grace. The cross demonstrates God's love for us.

## **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

These scriptures were written approximately 700 years before Jesus was born. They prophecy and accurately reflect Jesus life and death. It may be helpful to put the name of the person studying into Isaiah 53:4-6 to make it more personal.

## **Psalms 22:1-18 (extra passage)**

This prophetic psalm was written by David centuries before Jesus' birth. It prophesies Jesus' death on the cross.

## **Matthew 26:31-35**

Jesus predicts Peter's denial.

## **Matthew 26:36-46**

Jesus provides an excellent example for us when we are struggling to surrender our hearts to God's will. He prayed until he was surrendered and then rose to face his path.

## **Matthew 26:47-56**

Jesus knew the horrific death he faced. He could have stopped the crucifixion, but he didn't. Why not? He knew God's plan was the only way to insure our salvation.

## **Matthew 26:57-68**

The Sanhedrin had to prove to the Roman Empire the need to put Jesus to death. They created lies to support their desires. Jesus remained righteous throughout the trial.

## **Matthew 26:69-75**

The pain Jesus felt was not solely physical. Despite Peter's insistence that he would never deny Jesus (verse 35), our Lord listened to him outright deny the existence of their relationship. Jesus felt truly alone.

**Matthew 27:1-10**

Peter and Judas had very different responses to their sin. Peter had godly sorrow which allowed him to repent and go on to become one of the greatest preachers of the New Testament church. Judas had worldly sorrow. He was so consumed with himself that he committed suicide and was never able to do anything great for God again.

**Matthew 27:11-26**

Pilate offers the crowd the choice to set free one of the condemned men. Similar to our lives, the guilty man is set free while the sinless man is condemned to die. The very people Jesus came to serve repay him with the words, "Crucify him."

**Matthew 27:27-31**

The physical torture continues. After a severe flogging which nearly killed him, Jesus is beaten over the head while wearing a crown of thorns.

**Matthew 27:32-44**

Even while enduring an excruciating death, Jesus hears the mocking from the very people for whom he is dying.

**Matthew 27:45-54**

Jesus refuses a drink to dull the pain, showing us the extent of his love for us. After a number of hours of excruciating pain, Jesus dies.

**Read The Medical Account of the Crucifixion****Romans 8:31-32**

The cross demands a response from you. Your response needs to show in your life, not simply your words.

# The Church

This study defines the church and our role(s) within the church.

## Acts 2:42-47

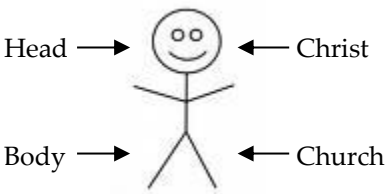
This is the birth of the New Testament Church. Our church should imitate the first disciples and their fellowship. They were devoted to:

- The apostles' teaching
- The fellowship
- Breaking of bread (communion)
- Prayer

They shared everything they had and filled each other's needs. They met together and ate together daily. And God added to their number. God wants his church to grow numerically.

## Colossians 1:15-18

The church is the body of Christ. Jesus is the head; we are the body.



## Ephesians 2:19-22

The church is the family of God. Jesus is the Cornerstone of the church. The church's foundation is the Apostles and Prophets (The Bible).

## Ephesians 4:1-6

The Bible teaches that there is one church – one body. These are the 7 essentials of unity we strive for.

## 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

There should be no divisions within the body. Don't follow people. Follow Christ.

## 2 Timothy 4:1-4 (extra passage)

Don't follow your feelings or what is comfortable. Follow Christ.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

We need the body and the body needs us. It is vital that we are involved on a relationship level in the church. What strengths/gifts/talents do you bring to the body? Take time to encourage your friend with the strengths/gifts/talents you see in them.

**Hebrews 3:12-13**

As Christians, we must be involved in one another's lives.

**Hebrews 10:23-25**

We are commanded to meet together. The fellowship helps us to be unswerving in our commitment. It is important that we do not miss church. We can encourage and spur one another on during these times.

**Homework:**

Write a letter to God expressing your thoughts to the following questions:

1. Why do you want to become a Christian?
2. What does the cross mean to you?
3. What commitment are making to God when you get baptized?

# Counting the Costs of Discipleship

This study helps us to be certain we are ready to make Jesus the Lord of our lives.

## Luke 14:25-33

God wants us to “estimate” the cost of following him. Think through what it will take to be committed for life. Jesus does not want a rash, emotional or short sighted decision.

1. What have you learned over these past several weeks of prayer and Bible Study?
2. What has changed in your life/heart over the past several weeks?
3. What has been your greatest challenge so far?
4. Why do you want to be a disciple?
5. What will your greatest challenge be in becoming a disciple?
6. Do you see discipleship as a lifetime commitment? (Luke 9:62)
7. Are there any areas of life that you are holding back from surrendering to Jesus?

## Discipleship

1. Please explain how to become a Christian.
2. Who do you know who is a Christian? How do you know?
3. How do you know who is and who is not a Christian?
4. Is there any sin you have yet to repent of?
5. Do you understand your new purpose in life as a disciple?
6. Persecution is the inevitable result of preaching repentance. (Acts 26:21, Luke 6:22-23, 2 Timothy 3:12)

## Baptism

1. Who is a candidate for baptism?
2. Can someone be baptized before they repent?
3. Can someone be saved if they repent but are not yet baptized?

## The Church

1. What have you come to understand about God’s church?
2. Do you understand that there is only one church? Explain.
3. What is your biblical commitment to the church? (Acts 2:42)
4. Are you committed to meeting with the body when it meets?

## Luke 9:57-62

Are there any “but firsts” in your life?



## Areas of Jesus' Lordship

1. Marriage/Dating
  - What costs do you need to count within your marriage?
  - How does your husband/wife feel about you becoming a disciple?
  - Single disciples should only date and marry disciples. Where will you find a disciple to date?
2. Parenting
  - What costs do you need to count within your parenting?
  - Are you committed to seeking advice on your parenting?
3. Job/Career/School
  - What costs do you need to count at your place of employment/education?
  - Is your job or education an idol in your life?
  - If you have to move for school or your job, do you have a conviction to move only where there is a church of disciples?
4. Finances
  - Are you willing to sacrificially give back to God, his church and the poor?
5. Discipling
  - Are you committed to a one-on-one discipling relationship?
    - Get together for follow up studies
    - Confess sin
    - Seek advice
    - Share your faith together
  - How do you feel about ...
6. Time
  - Are you committed to attending the meetings of the body? (Sunday, Wednesday, Devotionals, Bible Talk)
  - Are you committed to being an active member of a Family Group?
  - How are your Quiet Times?
7. Mission
  - How is your personal evangelism?
  - Are you committed to seeking and saving the lost?

# **False Doctrines**

This study addresses commonly taught false doctrines.

## **Infant Baptism**

### **Colossians 2:12**

Our personal faith is essential in our baptism! This false doctrine began in approximately 300A.D.

## **Original Sin**

### **Ezekiel 18:20**

Proponents of infant baptism site its necessity from another false teaching – the doctrine of “Original Sin.” This false teaching became church doctrine in 549A.D. Guilt is not transferrable. God holds each and every one of us responsible for our own sin. We are not responsible for our parent’s sin, nor will our children be responsible for ours. We may, however, bear the consequences of our parent’s sin.

## **The Sinner’s Prayer/Praying Jesus into Your Heart**

Praying and asking Jesus to come into your heart is a relatively new, popular false doctrine. It began in the early 1800s in America. It minimizes the need to become a disciple, repent of sin, be baptized and make Jesus Lord.

## **Romans 10:9-10 and Revelation 3:22**

These scriptures are commonly used to support the “sinner’s prayer.” However, they were written to people who were already saved. They were never intended to be used by a non-Christian as a method to be saved.

# Lordship

This study explains the concept of making Jesus Lord and offers a relatively thorough examination of the areas of our life to submit to Jesus' lordship.

When you decide to make Jesus your Savior, repent and wash your sins away through the power of the cross, you must also willingly put yourself under Jesus' lordship.

## 1 Corinthians 1:2-9

"Lord" is used six times in this passage. There is an obvious emphasis on this concept.

Jesus was known as "Lord" in the Bible. "Lord" means ruler or master. Making Jesus "Lord" means that you are choosing to have him be in control, not you anymore.

## 2 Peter 3:18

"Lord" and "Savior" are eternally connected in the mind of God. Jesus is either Lord *of all* or *not at all*. You must make Jesus Lord in all areas of your life.

## Areas of Lordship

### Marriage/Dating

1. Are you ready to put your love life into God's guiding hands?
2. How does your husband/wife feel about your recent studies and changes?
3. What costs do you need to count within your marriage?
4. Be a godly wife.
5. Single disciples should only date and marry disciples. Where will you find a disciple to date?

### Parenting

Be a godly parent. Provide biblical discipline. Teach your kids about God. Bring them to church. Be an example for them of putting God first. They will learn from you how to prioritize God and the body of Christ.

### Job/Career

#### Colossians 3:17-24

Have integrity at work. Work as though you are working for the Lord.

## **Finances**

1. Are you ready, willing and happy to contribute toward the work and needs of the church? Giving should be sacrificial (2 Corinthians 9:7-8) and demonstrate your faith.
2. Support the work of the church. (Matthew 10:10, 1 Corinthians 9:14, Philippians 4:14-19)
3. Give to the Poor.

## **Discipling**

1. Matthew 28:18-20 talks about teaching new disciples to obey. Learning is ongoing. Get together for follow up studies, confess sin, share about your quiet times, ask questions and share your faith together.
2. Are you committed to being open with your life and keeping people involved in all areas of your life?
3. Discipleship includes having an accountability partner. How do you feel about ...

## **Time**

1. Jesus is Lord of your time.
2. Be committed to the meetings of the body. (Hebrews 10:25)
3. Prioritize having daily quiet times (reading the Bible and praying) with God. How are your QTs going?
4. Your commitment to you Family Group will also help you build relationships and provide a place to bring visitors for Bible study.

## **Mission**

1. Your mission as a disciple is to seek and save the lost. Jesus' mission is our mission.
2. Are you committed to evangelism – daily reaching out sharing your faith with others? Hospitality is also a tool for sharing your faith.

# Medical Account of the Crucifixion

“The Passion of Christ from a Medical Point of View”

C. Truman Davis, M.D., M.S.

In this paper, I shall discuss some of the physical aspects of the passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ. We shall follow Him from Gethsemane, through His trial, His scourging, His path along the Via Dolorosa, to His last dying hours on the cross...

This led me first to a study of the practice of crucifixion itself; that is, the torture and execution of a person by fixation to a cross. Apparently, the first known practice of crucifixion was by the Persians. Alexander and his generals brought it back to the Mediterranean world - Egypt and Carthage. The Romans apparently learned the practice from the Carthaginians and (as with almost everything the Romans did) rapidly developed a very high degree of efficiency and skill in carry it out. A number of Roman authors (Livy, Cicero, Tacitus) comment on it. Several innovations and modifications are described in the ancient literature; I mention only a few which may have some bearing here. The upright portion of the cross (or stipes) could have the cross-arm (or patibulum) attached two or three feet below its top - this is what we commonly think of today as the classical form of the cross (the one which we have later named the Latin cross); however, the common form used in Our Lords day was the Tau cross (shaped like the Greek letter Tau or like our T). In this cross the patibulum was placed in a notch at the top of the stipes. There is fairly overwhelming archeological evidence that it was on this type of cross that Jesus was crucified.

The upright post, or stipes, was generally permanently fixed in the ground at the site of execution and the condemned man was forced to carry the patibulum, apparently weighing about 110 pounds, from the prison to the place of execution. Without any historical or biblical proof, medieval and Renaissance painters have given us our picture of Christ carrying the entire cross. Many of these painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixes today show the nails through the palms. Roman historical accounts and experimental work have shown that the nails were driven between the small bones of the wrists and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when they support the weight of a human body. The misconception

may have come about through a misunderstanding of Jesus words to Thomas, Observe my hands. Anatomists, both modern and ancient, have always considered the wrists as part of the hand.

A titulus, or small sign, stating the victim's crime was usually carried at the front of the processions and later nailed to the cross above the head. This sign with its staff nailed to the top of the cross would have given it somewhat the characteristic form of the Latin cross.

The physical passion of the Christ begins in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of this initial suffering, I shall only discuss the one of physiological interest; the bloody sweat. It is interesting that the physician of the group, St. Luke, is the only one to mention this. He says, And being in agony, He prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground.

Every attempt imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away this phrase, apparently under the mistakes impression that this just doesn't happen.

A great deal of effort could be saved by consulting the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of Hematidrosis or bloody sweat is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process alone could have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

We shall move rapidly through the betrayal and arrest; I must stress that important portions of the passion story are missing from this account. This may be frustrating to you, but in order to adhere to our purpose of discussing only the purely physical aspects of the Passion, this is necessary. After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the High Priest; it is here that the first physical trauma is inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfolded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat on Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the morning, Jesus, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, is taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea,

Pontius Pilate. You are, of course, familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to pass responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate.

It was then, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Bar-Abbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion. There is much disagreement among authorities about scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate the two. Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus scourged as his full punishment and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the Procurator was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who claimed to be the King of the Jews.

Preparations for the scourging are carried out. The prisoner is stripped of His clothing and His hands are tied to a post above His head. It is doubtful whether the Romans made any attempt to follow the Jewish law in this matter of scourging. The Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes. The Pharisees, always making sure that the law was strictly kept, insisted that only thirty-nine lashes be given. (In case of a miscount, they were sure of remaining within the law.) The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each.

The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus shoulders, back and legs. At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they are cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke

in this provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. A small bundle of flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there is copious bleeding (the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body.) After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back. This had already become adherent to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, and its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, causes excruciating pain...almost as though He were again being whipped - and the wounds again begin to bleed.

In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments. The heavy patibulum of the cross is tied across His shoulders and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves and the execution detail of the Roman soldiers, headed by a centurion, begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa. In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden cross together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. he tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance. The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock. The 650 yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is finally completed. The prisoner is again stripped of His clothes - except for a loin cloth which is allowed the Jews.

The crucifixion begins, Jesus is offered wine mixed with Myrrh, a mild analgesic mixture. He refuses to drink. Simon is ordered to place the cross on the ground and Jesus is quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexibility and movement. The patibulum is



then lifted in place at the top of the stipes and the titulus reading Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews is nailed in place.

The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain - the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this wrenching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by His arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences which are recorded:

The first, looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

The second, to the penitent thief, "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

The third, looking down at the terrified, grief stricken, adolescent John, (the beloved Apostle), He said, "Behold thy mother, and looking to Mary, His mother, Woman behold thy son."

The fourth cry is from the beginning of the 22nd Psalm, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting joint- rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, and searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins. A deep crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

Let us remember again the 22nd Psalm (the 14th verse), "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels." It is now almost over - the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level - the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue - the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to draw in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps His fifth cry, "I thirst."

Let us remember another verse from the prophetic 22nd Psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death."

A sponge soaked in Posca, the cheap, sour wine which is the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, is lifted to His lips. He apparently does not take any of the liquid. The body of Jesus is now in extremis and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words - possibly little more than a tortured whisper. "It is finished." His mission of atonement has been completed. Finally He can allow his body to die.

With one last surge of strength, he once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, "Father into thy hands I commit my spirit."

The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that the condemned men be dispatched and removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by cruxifraction, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevents the victim from pushing himself upward; the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest, and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when they came to Jesus they saw

that this was unnecessary, thus fulfilling the scripture, not one bone shall be broken.

Apparently to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. The 34th verse of the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to John: And immediately there came out blood and water. Thus there was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart and blood from the interior of the heart. We, therefore, have rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that Our Lord died, not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

Thus we have seen a glimpse of the epitome of evil which man can exhibit toward man - and toward God. This is not a pretty sight and is apt to leave us despondent and depressed. How grateful we can be that we have a sequel: A glimpse of the infinite mercy of God toward man - the miracle of the atonement and the expectation of Easter morning!