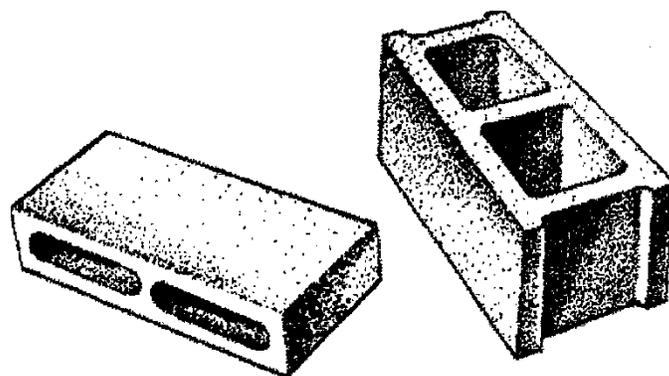


# FOUNDATIONS

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## **A Study On The Building Blocks of the Christian Life**

By  
Barney Wiget

# INTRODUCTION

I assume that you are reading this because you've recently received Jesus as your Savior. Way to go! You've made a great choice that you'll never regret! I welcome you to God's family, and hope this manual helps you begin to get firmly founded on the "Rock" of Jesus Christ.

Jesus begins one of his stories (called "parables") saying:

*"I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on the rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."* Luke 6:46-49

In other words, our lives are like houses, and you're in the process of building your house. It doesn't just appear out of thin air; with God's help, you have to build it. Storms (life's difficulties) will threaten your construction project, and make it challenging to continue at times. But the difference between the two houses of which Jesus spoke is that one had a *foundation* and the other didn't. Put another way, the one man knew where he stood and the other didn't. The one life stood the test, and the other *"collapsed."* The man who did it right, *"dug down deep and laid his foundation on the rock* (the Rock represents Jesus Himself)."

That's what this series is all about - digging down deep and laying a foundation so that you'll be able to develop a solid and successful walk with Jesus. Throughout this manual we'll look at six fundamentals of the Christian life; six key sections of the foundation:

- 1. THE CROSS - (on being forgiven by God)**
- 2. THE INNER-CHANGE - (on being changed by Jesus)**
- 3. CONVERSATION - (on being a person who prays)**
- 4. THE CHURCH - (on having fellowship with other believers)**
- 5. THE SPIRIT - (on being empowered to reach out to other people)**
- 6. THE WORD - (on being a student of the Bible)**

The best way to use this manual is either in a group or with another person who's had more experience in the Christian life than you. That way you'll be able to ask questions and share your thoughts with others. If you have no such option, then go ahead and read it on your own. Ask God to help you

understand everything you need to know in order to build a solid foundation under your feet.

You'll find at the end of each chapter a page designed to help you assimilate the materials you've just read. You'll be encouraged to recall some of the things you've just read. Jotting answers to these questions will help you begin to apply what you're reading. You'll also be urged to read the Bible on your own, memorize some key passages, and journal some of what you're learning. Journaling will help you solidify the changes Jesus is making in your life. I urge you to take advantage of these exercises. God bless you as you build!

*P.S. – This manual is merely information about God. Relationship with Jesus is more about transformation, than information. It's an adventurous journey, a passionate love relationship with Him that we're after. The goal here is not to simply assimilate the facts about Christianity. We want to know Him, love Him, follow Him better and better. The information contained here should help you toward those goals.*

# THE CROSS

## On Being Forgiven

*"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. " Psalm 32:1-5*

The topic of Forgiveness really is the cornerstone of the foundation that's outlined in this book. The whole purpose of God is to share Himself with us so that we can have fellowship with Him. Sin barricades us from Him and keeps us from that fellowship, so we need to have our sins forgiven before we can move forward into the fellowship He wants to have with us.

The passage above tells us some things about God's forgiveness:

1. **What it's *like* to be forgiven** "*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven*" It is a *blessed thing* to be forgiven. To be *blessed* means to be fortunate, to be happy. When you're blessed, you have found a fortune. Keep in mind that this is not written by a man who had never sinned. This is King David who made some big mistakes in his life. But he found forgiveness from God and ended up with a *blessed* life. Jesus said " *...rejoice that your names are written in heaven*" Luke 10:20. Rejoice about it! You're fortunate and blessed because God forgives you.

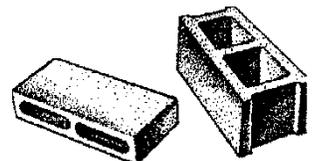
2. **What it *is* to be forgiven** When you're forgiven, your sins are covered and not counted against you. To have our sins *covered* is a beautiful thing because that means they are not visible to God. God destroyed your spiritual-criminal record when He forgave you. You and I both had a bad record before God, but Jesus, by dying in our place, wiped out the entire list of sins we have committed.

3. **What to *do* to be forgiven** "*Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD' -- and you forgave the guilt of my sin*" That's what we have to do - bring our sins to God. You can't *earn* forgiveness, but you have to *receive* it. You must acknowledge your need for it, quit hiding your sin, and confess it to the Lord. This is what you did when you prayed to receive Jesus initially, and that's what you'll need to do to maintain the relationship that you're cultivating with Him.

To become a Christian you have to first agree with God that you are a sinner. That's what it means to confess your sins. Confession means to say the same thing as God says about your sin. To get it covered by God, you have to *uncover* it by confessing it to God. If you try to cover it yourself, it's like painting over rusty metal - it keeps coming back! When you sin, don't run *from* God; run *to* Him! And He will cover your sins and no longer count them against you. Is that good news, or what!

We'll outline this good news this way:

- **The State of the World,**
- **The Solution of God**
- **The Standing of the Christian**



## · THE STATE OF THE WORLD

You have probably heard the President of the United States giving his 'State of the Union' speech. The Bible tells us about the 'State of the World'. If you ask people that don't have biblical values what the state of the world is, you're going to get varied answers.

*The secular humanist* will say that humanity is essentially good. I've heard humanists say that we're not really *bad*, we're just not as *good* as we are going to become someday. They say we're getting better all the time. But it seems to me that six thousand years of human history does not prove that theory!

You can't *earn* forgiveness, but you have to *receive* it!

*The cosmic humanist* will say that we are God. This is a pantheist or 'new-ager' view. So not only are we *good*, but we are *God*. They propose that our main problem is that though we are God, we just don't recognize it!

The Bible, on the other hand, does not tell us *that* we are *good* or *God*, but that we are guilty. In Romans 3:10-19 and 23, Paul gives us a synopsis of the Bible's view of the state of the world:

*"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes ... for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."*

*No one* is righteous, except for God. That He's righteous means that He is *right* and He is our criteria for what is right. The needle of a compass always points North. East, West, and South are all determined in reference to true North. Some people live their lives going directly South – away from God. Some go Northeast, which is closer to living the way God wants us to. But when you're even just a little off course, the farther you go, the farther off you are when you get there! If you are even a couple of degrees off initially, it may not seem like much, but in the long run you'll be way off the mark unless you get yourself back onto what Jesus called the "*narrow path*." It's the only one that is going true North.

The Bible says there isn't anyone righteous. Everybody is guilty before God. *All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God*. When you miss a plane, it doesn't matter if you missed it by one minute or ten hours. If you missed it, you've missed it! God does not grade on a curve. There may be some people who are bigger sinners than others, but the Bible says *everybody* has sinned, and thus have fallen short.

- *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1John 1:8*
- *There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins. Ecclesiastes 7:20*
- *This only have I found: God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes." Ecclesiastes 7:29*

Now this may seem like very bad news, and a terrible place to begin this whole topic on the Foundation of our faith in Jesus. But we will never really appreciate *the solution of God* until we come to terms with *the state of the world*.

**God does not  
grade on a curve!**

## • THE SOLUTION OF GOD

*"... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." Romans 3:23-26*

What this passage does is present us with God's solution to what I call the 'Divine Dilemma.' This *Divine Dilemma* was the problem that God had in how to forgive guilty sinners without compromising His character. How can he maintain His integrity and still save people on a moral basis? If you think about it, there really was only one way He could solve this problem. The only way He could do it was by coming to us in the Person of Jesus, taking our guilty place, and dying for the punishment of our sins. In other words, God can only save us with a cross. The cross did not make God *willing* to forgive, it made Him *able* to forgive without compromising His moral character.

**There may be some people  
who are bigger sinners than others,**

## but the Bible says everybody has sinned, and thus have fallen short.

So what really happened at the cross? What was Jesus doing when He died for you and me?

*"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

Galatians 3:13

This is telling us that Jesus Christ did not die an *innocent man*; He was not an innocent bystander. Jesus Christ became *cursed* for us - instead of us. He took our legal place and died under the weight of our guilt. This takes us back to Romans 3:25 where it says, " ... *God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement.*" The wrath of God was being poured out on Jesus Christ and was exhausted on Him when he was crucified. Now there isn't any punishment left for us because Jesus took it all in our place.

*"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with Suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."* Isaiah 53:3-5

Do you see how the prophet is telling us how Jesus bore our judgment? When you read the gospel narratives about the cross, they tell how it became dark for the last three hours Jesus spent on the cross before He died. The darkness denoted the awfulness of hell, and that Jesus was taking the punishment of hell in our place. He purposely experienced "outer darkness" and eternal separation from God in our place.

There was a capital punishment method that once was employed. All the criminals would stand in a line, and the first would be handed a cup of poison. He would take a drink and hand it to the next. The second one would drink and hand it to the third, etc. If the poison was gone before the last ones in line got the cup, they were able to go free. This illustrates what Jesus did for us. He was at the head of the line and drank the entire cup of our punishment for sin. So, if through faith in Him,

we align ourselves with Him, we will not have to drink the cup of God's wrath. The cup is empty by the time it gets to us!

We've talked about *the State of the world*, which is utter guilt and sin before God. Then we spoke of *the Solution of God* in sending His son Jesus Christ to die in our place as a perfect substitute. Now let's look at *the Standing of the Christian*.

## · THE STANDING OF THE CHRISTIAN

Because of the cross, the Christian stands in a different place than he used to in relationship to God. *What is the Christian's standing like? How do you enter it? And how do you maintain it?*

### ***What is the Christian's standing like?***

*"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:1-2*

The operative term here is, "*justified*". This is a theological term which someone once described as "*Just-as-if-I'd-never-done-it.*" I like to use the illustration of twin brothers who are on their way home with their report cards. They are just finishing high school, and their parents had promised them that if they did well they would reward them with a trip to Europe. But if they didn't do well, they would be punished. One of the brothers was particularly academic, he received all A's throughout his entire high school career. The older brother flunked every class that he ever took. As they were walking home they were discussing the reward and punishment that they would each receive. The brother who had received all the A's suggested that they exchange report cards. So when they got home and presented their records to their parents, the one who actually got all F's was rewarded with the trip to Europe, and the one who had gotten all A's was punished.

This is what Jesus did for us on the cross. He took our "report card" home to Father God, and was punished for its contents. Then He gave us His straight A's to present to God. And now we're treated by God as though we had earned all of the good grades on our own!

Another way to see this is to imagine a massive filing system in heaven. One day the Father is going through the files and He comes to your name and pulls the file. He reads the contents and sees all the wrong things you've done, every commandment you've ever broken, every sin you've ever committed. He is grieved

by this and puts the file back in its place. Then he finds the file marked "Jesus Christ." Its contents, on the other hand, are incredible. The record included nothing but good deeds, righteous motives, and a perfectly pure life! So the Father decided that to rectify your situation, He would switch the contents of Jesus' folder with yours. Now, when he looks at your file it looks like Jesus' file - immaculate and perfect in every respect! This really is how the Father sees you when you are a believer in Jesus.

*"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." II Corinthians 5:21*

The way I define justification is *"God's righteous way of righteousing the unrighteous with His righteousness"*. Sin has been punished, so God doesn't defy His justice in order to forgive your sins; He took the punishment Himself and freely hands over His righteousness!

Keep in mind that this is a *standing* we're discussing, not a *feeling*. Today you may feel like saint, tomorrow you may feel like you ain't! You don't base the knowledge that you're saved on *feeling good*, you base it on *God's promise* that when you put your trust in Christ you were given a right standing with God. This is called *justification*.

### ***How do you enter this standing?***

We saw in Romans 5:1 that "we have been justified through *faith*." Also in Ephesians 2:8-10 *"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. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Therefore we enter our standing with God through faith - not by works, human effort or good deeds. It is not something you *earn*, but it is something you *reach for* by faith.

Faith is like the 'coupling' that joins the train's engine to the first car. The coupling is not what *pulls* the whole train, but it is the latch between the engine and the rest of the cars. We are saved by not *by faith*, so much as, *through faith*. You are saved *by* Jesus *through* your confidence in His promise to you. Never make a savior out of your faith, Jesus is the only Savior!

If you are particularly thirsty, you may go into a restaurant and order a large lemonade. They will probably give you a tall glass with a straw. You drink *through*

the straw, but it's not the straw that quenches your thirst. It's the lemonade coming *through* the straw that takes away your thirst. Faith is like the straw between you and Jesus. It's through your faith that He reaches you with His saving work!

When you have faith in Jesus, you are authorizing God to be your 'Heavenly Surgeon.' He will do the surgery that you need on your soul. You couldn't perform this surgery on yourself but you can, by faith, authorize Him to do it.

This faith that I have described above does include a commitment, or what the Bible calls, "*repentance.*" The way I like to summarize the way to access the grace of God for salvation is that it is as simple as A-B-C:

**A**dmit that you're a sinner!

**B**elieve that He took your place, and offers you forgiveness!

**C**ommit your life entirely to Him!

When you have faith in Jesus,  
you are authorizing God to be  
your 'Heavenly Surgeon'

When you get married, you say vows. The vows are a statement of commitment. You wouldn't say, "I really love you and want to live with you forever, but I'm not sure if I can commit myself to you for that long". That wouldn't make much of a marriage, would it? In the same way, your life with God won't be much if you don't make the commitment. Part of your saving faith in Him is this commitment.

A man named Blondin was a French tight rope walker, and an incredible performer. He would stretch tightropes across Niagara Falls and push wheelbarrows loaded with potatoes and different things across the ropes to stun the crowds. One day, when he had a particularly large crowd, he spoke to them after performing. He said "How many of you believe I could put a person in this wheelbarrow and wheel them across?" Everybody in the crowd who had seen him perform raised their hands and shouted, "I believe it!" Blondin then asked for a volunteer from among these "believers," but everyone declined. Everyone "believed" he could do it, but no one would *commit* themselves to letting him do it to them!

He then looked for his mother in the crowd and asked her if she *believed* he could put a person in the wheelbarrow and wheel them across. She said she did, and then hopped in. *She believed and committed herself to what she believed.* This is how saving faith works. If you authentically believe in Jesus you'll behave what you believe, and let Him have His way in your life!

## ***How do you maintain this standing?***

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9*

Again, we have entered into our standing through our confident and repentant faith. Let me assure you that this doesn't mean that you will never sin against God again. I say to people all the time, *"I am not sinless, but I am sinning less and less!"* Failure is not *falling down*, failure is *staying down*. We need to daily apply the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice to our sinfulness, get up and walk on!

The verse above is a kind of 'Christian first-aid kit'. The purpose of a first-aid kit is not to encourage getting injured. It is there in case you *do get* injured. The purpose of 1 John 1:9 is not to encourage us to sin, but it is the solution in case we do.

A few verses later John says, *"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense --Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."* 1 John 2:1-2

Jesus cannot cleanse your sin until you make it known to Him. He can't cover your sin until you *uncover* it. Proverbs 28:13-14 says, *"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble."* Don't *conceal* your sins, *confess and renounce* them and you'll find mercy in the Lord.

Keep in mind that this is the *relationship* that you have with God now. You are now standing in righteousness because you entered into it through faith in Jesus Christ. You can maintain your standing by keeping your faith in Christ and through confessing your sins to God on a regular basis. Don't wait until Sunday when you can come to a church gathering and confess your sin. Keep your account with God short, daily confess your failings to God wherever you are.

Remember where we began? Psalm 32:2 *"Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit."* This is a blessedness that God wants you to continue to maintain. He goes on to say in verse 5, *"Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin."* I assure you that if you will acknowledge your sin and confess it to God, He will forgive you of all your guilt.

# If you truly believe in Jesus you will behave what you believe ...

*Father God, I thank You for every person reading this manual who has received Jesus as their own personal Lord and Savior. I thank You that if they have Admitted that they are Sinners; Believed in Jesus Christ who died in their place and rose again; and Committed their lives to living for You, that they are forgiven. Help them to appreciate the chasm that You bridged when you died in our place. Help them to access the grace that is available to them, and to live out of the context of an appreciation for what You have done by forgiving them. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

### **A rehearsal...**

Everybody's a sinner... What verse in the Bible says that? Exactly what does it say?

- What do we mean by the "Divine Dilemma?"
- What does it mean to be "Justified?"
- What role does "faith" have in our salvation?

### **A verse to memorize...**

- 1 John 1:9

(I recommend that you look up the verse, write it on a card or something, and repeat it over and over throughout the day until you can quote it verbatim.)

### **Another thing to consider...**

How do these three things impact your new-found faith in Jesus and how would you counteract these doubts? Read the passages that attend them to help you discover the answers to the questions:

- **Your foe** (2 Corinthians 11:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8-9)
- **Your feelings** (Romans 5:1; 10:9; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 11:1; Colossians 2:6)
- **Your failures** (Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:14-24; 1 John 1:9)

### **Read it and write it...**

- Take some time everyday to read the Bible (I recommend that you begin with the Gospel of John).
- And then journal your thoughts, feelings, and questions. Talk to God everyday out loud, in your head, and on paper (or on your computer screen). Be honest and intimate in your conversations with Him. Expect Him to communicate with you with honesty and intimacy as well.

