

S T U D Y G U I D E

BUILD ON SOLID GROUND



The **BASICS**
of the **CHRISTIAN LIFE**

SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON

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The Basics of the Christian Life

Sinclair B. Ferguson



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

Renew your Mind.

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Introduction

What is a Christian? What does it mean to belong to a church? How can we grow in grace? And how do we live the Christian life to the very end? How we answer these questions has a huge impact on the course of our Christian lives. In this series, Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson carefully explains the basics of the Christian life and helps us know what it means to be a Christian and how to live abundantly to the glory of God.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind you of what you have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p>How to use: Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging with its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge each lecture is communicating.</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that are intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p>How to use: Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The timestamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.</p>
PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at Ligonier.org.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p>How to use: Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through *The Basics of the Christian Life* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 14-Week Plan	Standard 12-Week Plan	Abbreviated 6-Week Plan	Intensive 4-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1	1–3
2	1	2	2 & 3	4–6
3	2	3	4 & 5	7–9
4	3	4	6 & 7	10–12
5	4	5	8 & 9	
6	5	6	10 & 11	
7	6	7	12	
8	7	8		
9	8	9		
10	9	10		
11	10	11		
12	11	12		
13	12			
14	*			

* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

Becoming a Christian

INTRODUCTION

Every believer can benefit from thoughtfully considering the basics of the Christian life. One of the most basic questions we should ask ourselves is, What does it mean to be a Christian? Sometimes, answering a question like this requires us to know what a Christian is not. In this lesson, Dr. Ferguson draws from John 8 to provide an overview of the spiritual condition and characteristics of the unbeliever so that we can ask if we are walking in the darkness or in the light.

LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Recognize the benefits of reviewing the basics of Christianity for ongoing spiritual growth
- Understand the historical and cultural context of Jesus' teaching in John 8
- List the three defining characteristics of the unbeliever

KEY IDEAS

- Every Christian should regularly revisit the basic principles of Christianity.
- All who are separated from Christ dwell in spiritual darkness, no matter how religious they may appear.
- Christ alone is the only means of salvation for sinners.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- Why are you undertaking this study about the basics of the Christian life? What do you hope to gain from it?
- Do you think that mature Christians should bother with reviewing the basics of the faith? Why or why not?

Scripture Reading

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

—John 8:12

- According to this passage, what is the proof that a person has the light of life and is not walking in darkness?

During the Video

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

The Background of Jesus’ Teaching

0:00–12:30

- Where did the Jews live during the Feast of Booths and why?
- What were the two elements of symbolism on display during the Feast of Booths?

The Response to Jesus’ Teaching

12:30–23:17

- How did the Jews respond when Jesus said that He could set them free?
- When the Jews claimed that God was their Father, how did Jesus reply and provide for us a way of knowing if God is our Father?

After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- How were the symbols of water and light during the Feast of Booths supposed to serve as reminders to the Jews?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss the ways in which recalling God's saving acts in the exodus could have been beneficial to the Jews as they celebrated the Feast of Booths. For practical application, consider discussing the following: How can recalling God's past works—both in the world and in our own lives—strengthen our faith, courage, and hope in our current circumstances? Be specific.

- What are the three characteristics of unbelievers, as seen in Jesus' teaching in John 8?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss whether they think that unsaved people view themselves in these ways. Consider asking group members to recall their own conversions. Did they see themselves in the way Jesus described? Why or why not?

- According to John 8:43–44, who does Jesus identify as the true father of His hearers? Why was that the case?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss the following: Is there any such thing as spiritual neutrality, or is every person either a son of God or a son of Satan? Are very moral and religious unsaved people in a neutral category? Why or why not?

PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God's Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God that He has provided the way of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- Confess ways in which you choose darkness over light in your daily actions, speech, and attitudes.
- Thank God for transferring you from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.
- Ask God to grant you fresh insight and opportunities for spiritual growth as you consider the basics of the Christian life.

REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. What was significant about the final day of the Feast of Booths?
 - a. No water was drawn.
 - b. The lights were not lit.
 - c. Water was drawn, and the lights were lit.
 - d. Water was not drawn, and the lights were not lit.
2. What truth does Jesus communicate to the Jews in John 8:12–20?
 - a. They are failing to obey the Ten Commandments.
 - b. They are engaging in idolatry.
 - c. They are walking in spiritual darkness.
 - d. They are neglecting the widow and orphan.
3. What aspect of the Jews' condition does Jesus address in John 8:21–30?
 - a. Moral failure
 - b. Roman oppression
 - c. Corrupt religious leaders
 - d. Spiritual deadness
4. What does Jesus tell Nicodemus in John 3:3 regarding the requirement for entering the kingdom of God?
 - a. He must sell his belongings.
 - b. He must repent of his sin.
 - c. He must obey God's law.
 - d. He must be born again.
5. The Jews assumed that they were spiritually alive.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. When Jesus tells the Jews that they are slaves to sin, whose sons do they claim to be?
 - a. Abraham's
 - b. Isaac's
 - c. Jacob's
 - d. Joseph's

Answer Key—Becoming a Christian

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

Scripture Reading

- According to this passage, what is the proof that a person has the light of life and is not walking in darkness?

The proof that one has the light of life, according to John 8:12, is that he follows Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke these words during the Feast of Booths, and in these words, Jesus was telling the people what it meant to become and to be a Christian.

During the Video

The Background of Jesus' Teaching

- Where did the Jews live during the Feast of Booths and why?

During this time, the Jews gathered in Jerusalem and lived in makeshift tents. Living in these tents served as a reminder of how God had brought His people out of bondage in Egypt, as Israel had lived in tents while they wandered in the wilderness for forty years on the way to the promised land.

- What were the two elements of symbolism on display during the Feast of Booths?

The use of water and light served as symbols during the feast. Water and light were both significant aspects of the Israelites' experience during the exodus as they traveled through the desert from Egypt to the promised land.

The Response to Jesus' Teaching

- How did the Jews respond when Jesus said that He could set them free?

The Jews replied that they had never been in bondage to anyone (John 8:33). According to Dr. Ferguson, this was a typical and distinctively Jewish response. Their response to Jesus indicated that they were, in fact, in spiritual bondage.

- When the Jews claimed that God was their Father, how did Jesus reply and provide for us a way of knowing if God is our Father?

Only those who love the Son truly have God as their Father, because the Father Himself sent the Son to earth. Jesus replied to them, "If God were your Father, you

would love me, for I came from God and I am here” (John 8:42). One cannot have the Father without also embracing the Son.

After the Video

- How were the symbols of water and light during the Feast of Booths supposed to serve as reminders to the Jews?

The water was a reminder of how God had given them water in the desert, and the lights were a reminder of how God had led them by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night during their forty years in the desert.

- What are the three characteristics of unbelievers, as seen in Jesus’ teaching in John 8?

Unbelievers walk in spiritual darkness, live in spiritual death, and are held in spiritual bondage. Jesus discusses spiritual darkness in John 8:12–20, spiritual death in John 8:21–30, and spiritual bondage in John 8:31–36.

- According to John 8:43–44, who does Jesus identify as the true father of His hearers? Why was that the case?

In this passage, Jesus says, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.” All who are not children of God are children of the devil. There is no neutral category, even for those unbelievers who are highly moral and do good works for others. Only those who listen to Jesus’ words and believe His words to be the truth are children of God.

REVIEW QUIZ

Lesson 1

1. **D.**

During the final day of the Feast of Booths, neither water nor lights were included in the celebration. This fact makes Jesus’ invitation to come to Him and drink, as well as His claim to be the Light of the World, even more dramatic when compared to the absence of water and light on the final feast day.

2. **C.**

In John 8:12–20, Jesus tells the Jews that apart from Him, they are walking in spiritual darkness. These words would have been especially impactful since they were spoken on the last day of the Feast of Booths. On this day, none of the brilliant feast lights were lit, and the contrast between this darkness and the previous light would have been obvious.

3. **D.**

Jesus makes clear that the Jews are spiritually dead, and unless they believe in Him, they cannot be saved, as He says, “Unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

4. **D.**

Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. In saying this, Jesus indicated that the natural condition of man means that he walks in spiritual darkness and is unable to see and understand the gospel.

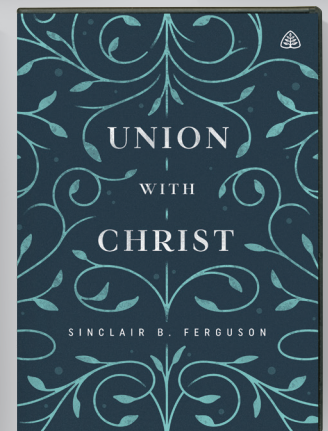
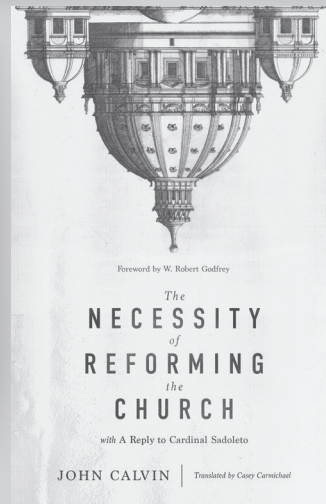
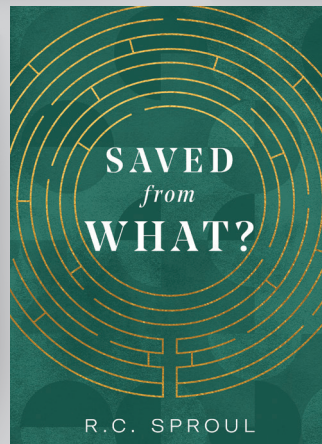
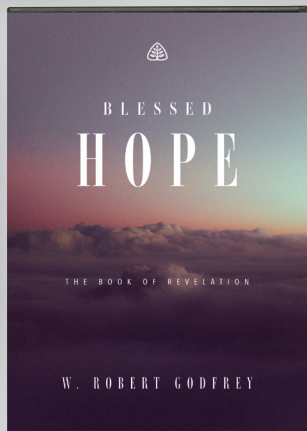
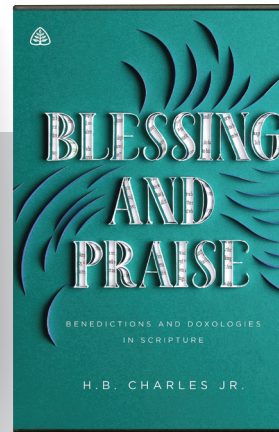
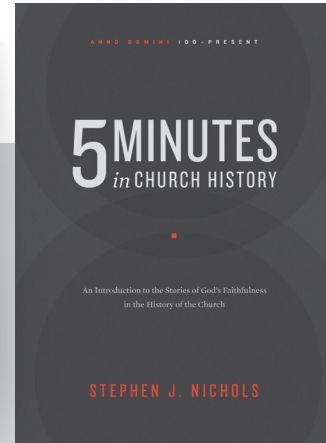
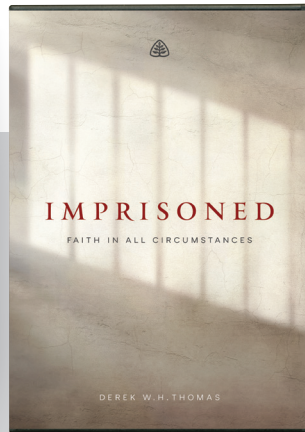
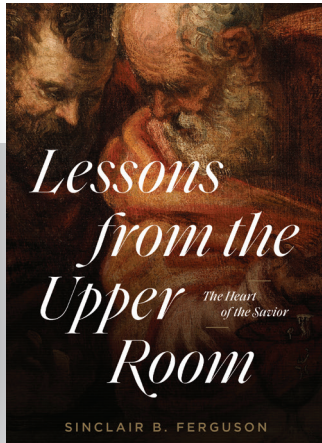
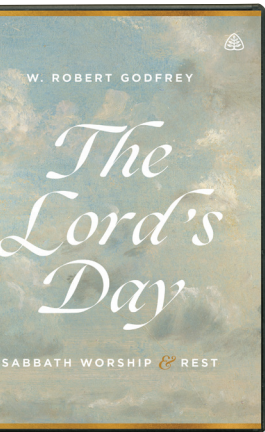
5. **A.**

The Jews assumed that God was their Father despite the fact that they were rejecting the Son who had been sent by the Father. They appealed to their physical heritage and status as God's chosen nation, but spiritually, God was not their true Father.

6. **A.**

The Jews claimed to have Abraham as their father, but Jesus pointed out the contradiction in John 8:39–40 that they did not do the works that Abraham did, thus revealing they were not Abraham's children from a spiritual standpoint.

We want to see men and women around the world connect
the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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