

# PLANT MY FEET ON HIGHER GROUND

VICTOR M. MATTHEWS



*Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.*

*Plant My Feet on Higher Ground*

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# STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

**P**ersonal Success—That’s the promise of God! “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). This *Freedom* is simply personal success for the Christian. It is the liberty, the ability, and the right to become the kind of person that God had in mind when He created you. Instead of being enslaved by our sin, crippled by ignorance, and bound by tensions—God has promised *Freedom*.

The *Truth* shall make you *Free*! God has revealed the *Truth* to us through the Person of His Son Jesus Christ, and it’s recorded in the Bible. There is no need to stumble, grope, and guess about the *Truth*.

To *Know* the *Truth* will make us *Free*. *Knowledge—Truth—Freedom*—these top the list of any system of values. And that’s the reason for this course. You can *Know* the *Truth* and you can have the *Freedom* of personal success. If you will honestly study the Bible and consistently apply it to your daily life—God will transform you as a person.

This course will challenge you to think about biblical Christianity, its characteristics, and its application to our lives. How then shall we live? This course will show you how.

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## **Course Components**

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

## **How To Study**

This study has eleven chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

## **Exams**

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions. It is important that you read the Bible passages referenced as some questions may be based on the Bible text.

## **How Your Exams Are Graded**

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

# The Nature of Biblical Christianity

## **A Disturbing Question: “Do I Know What Biblical Christianity Is?”**

It is very possible for an earnest Christian to be so poorly taught and to so misunderstand the truths of Christianity that he is unable to adequately practice the Christian life.

One of the major sources of weakness, disappointment, and frustration in the life of the Christian stems from failure to understand the nature of Biblical Christianity. What we do not know we cannot practice or enjoy. True worship is governed by truth and the truth must be learned.

Those who work with the laws of physics must know their field. They must learn the nature and characteristics of the laws which pertain to their area of specialization. It is not sufficient to guess. There is no substitute for knowledge in the life of the engineer, the physicist, the mathematician, or the physician. Nor is it enough for the young man to have a desire to build a bridge. He must learn the laws which govern bridge building and how to put these laws into practice.

The Christian, likewise, must have more than a desire to live successfully. The desire, no matter how great, is not enough. As the engineer, he must learn the truths of Christianity and how to put them into practice. Only then will he have the conditions which will enable him to live successfully.

One important factor which has led to a misunderstanding of Christianity is the failure to distinguish between Biblical principle and “Christian” practice. What Christians and churches practice is not

necessarily the truth. One must learn to evaluate even the proclamation of Christians and churches by the principles and truths of the Bible. Many Christians and non-Christians have been confused by poor teaching and poor practice.

It is well to ask the question, “Do I know what Biblical Christianity is?” There are many who are not willing to ask such a question and there are many more who cannot give an adequate answer.

Any hesitancy in this area can only lead to failure.

## **A Basic Assumption: Christianity Is Based on Divine Revelation**

Christianity has not been given to us as a lump of clay which may be molded into innumerable shapes. God has revealed Himself to us in and through Jesus Christ. This revelation forms the foundation, the structure, and the content of genuine Christianity. It comes to us as final authority.

Since genuine Christianity is the result of an authoritative revelation, it is evident that any tampering with, or any faulty interpretation of, its basic message can only result in the production of a false Christianity. It is obvious, as one looks about the religious world today, that this is exactly what has happened.

The importance of this assumption can hardly be over emphasized. The authority for belief and practice is divine revelation. This authority therefore, does not reside in the church, nor in the leaders of the church, nor in religious experience, whether it be personal or corporate. God is Truth and He has made Himself and His will known. This revelation has been authoritatively recorded in the Scriptures.

To be a genuine Christian and to live a successful Christian life, we must begin, as an engineer, with the acceptance of a final authority. We must bow in complete submission before God and His revelation. No engineer may select the laws which meet his approval and reject the rest. To be successful he must accept all the laws and their authoritative demands. And so it is with the Christian.

Untold damage has resulted due to the negligence of engineers, physicians, and men in similar professions. Far greater damage is to be found in the spiritual realm. Men and women have based their lives and destinies on false interpretations of the Bible. Life, talent, time and money have been wasted. Freedom, power and progress follow the knowledge and practice of the truth. When truth is not known and ignorance is practiced, only harm can follow.

God has made Himself known to us in Jesus Christ, through history, as recorded in the Scripture. This is where we must start. We must be willing to go to this final authority and to test our belief and practice.

God has revealed Himself in two ways—by means of general revelation and by means of special revelation. By *general* revelation we mean those evidences within the creation such as design, stability of law, human values, and conscience which point to the Creator (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20; 2:14–15). God has revealed Himself in His work.

By *special* revelation we refer to the many communications of divine truths whereby God has revealed Himself as the Redeemer of His people. This process of special revelation culminated in the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the living Word, and the completion of the written Word, the Bible (Hebrews 1:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4). Unless otherwise stated, the term *revelation* is used in these lessons to indicate spiritual revelation.

*The key to success:* accept and obey the revelation of God as final authority.

## **An Important Perspective: Christianity Revolves Around a Person, Jesus Christ**

In the Old Testament days it was the pre-incarnate Christ who said to Abraham, “. . . *I* am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Genesis 15:1). He said to Moses, “. . . certainly *I* will be with thee . . .” (Exodus 3:12). He spoke to Israel by Hosea and said, “. . . in *Me* is thine help” (Hosea 13:9). Through Jeremiah He spoke to Judah and said, “. . . they have forsaken *Me* the fountain of living waters . . .” (Jeremiah 2:13).

The message of the New Testament is the same. The Lord Jesus Christ said to Peter and Andrew, “. . . Follow *Me* . . .” (Matthew 4:19). He said, “Come unto *Me* . . . and *I* will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He also said, “. . . *I* am the light of the world . . .” (John 8:12); “. . . *I* am the resurrection, and the life . . .” (John 11:25); “. . . *I* am the way the truth, and the life . . .” (John 14:6); “. . . without *Me* ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The same emphasis is found in the apostolic interpretation of Christianity. John said, “But as many as received *Him*, to them gave *He* power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe *on His name*” (John 1:12). It was Peter who said, “According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of *Him* . . .” (2 Peter 1:3). Paul taught that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings “. . . *in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:3), and he prayed that the Christians might be illuminated and grow, “. . . in the

knowledge of *Him*” (Ephesians 1:17). Of his own spiritual life Paul said, “. . . *Christ* liveth in me . . .” (Galatians 2:20); “For to me to live is *Christ* . . .” (Philippians 1:21); and “That I may know *Him* . . .” (Philippians 3:10).

The identical message is proclaimed in the doctrinal explanation of Christianity. Jesus Christ is the object of faith (Acts 16:31); the source of all wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3); the Savior of mankind (1 John 4:14); the Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22); the believer’s peace (Ephesians 2:14); his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30); his power (1 Corinthians 1:24); and the One in whom all believers are complete (Colossians 2:10).

Christianity is surely a belief, a group of doctrines, a relationship, an ethic, a way of life, a form of service, a living hope, a demanding imperative, and a transforming deliverance, but all of these are rooted in and revolve around the Person of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Christianity is first of all Jesus Christ.

## **A Serious Warning: Christianity Is Often Perverted**

Religious perversions are not produced by agnostics or atheists but by well-meaning Christians. In the attempt to cure some failure in practice, one facet of Biblical Christianity has often been overemphasized. When this facet is made the central factor in Christianity, a perversion results. There are at least four common perversions taught in the church today.

(1) One of the most common perversions is the misconception that Christianity revolves around the church. Though even a casual reading of the New Testament will indicate the importance of this divine institution, God did not bring the church into existence to be the center of our lives. That place must be reserved for and filled by Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. There are many today who have given the place of Christ to the church. In misplaced zeal these have taken that which is secondary and made it first.

When the church is made the central factor in Christianity it is utilized in at least three ways. The church is used as a source of spirituality, as the means whereby spirituality is maintained, and as the basis of measuring spirituality. In reply to the question, “How can I become a spiritual person and then maintain my spirituality?” the answer is given, “Attend church regularly.”



Spirituality is not the automatic by-product of church attendance. Nor is it, in itself, the measuring rod for distinguishing between those who are spiritual and those who are not. The church has its divinely ordained place of importance. It is not, however, a panacea. One may be constantly in church and yet miss Him who is the Head of the Church.

(2) A second popular perversion of Christianity is legalism. In this zealous misinterpretation of the Bible, rules are placed at the center of Christianity and all must revolve around certain practices of life. The “don’ts” of this type of “Christian” life receive undue emphasis. The Christian is one who has stopped doing certain things!

The key to spirituality, for this way of thinking, is the wholehearted acceptance of certain rules as absolutes. Obedience to these rules is a guarantee as well as the mark of spirituality.

There is no question about the emphasis of the Bible upon obedience. And there are many commandments in the Scripture which the Christian must obey. However, these commandments are not an end in themselves. They have been given to us as the means whereby we obey God. The Christian is not to obey the commandment alone. He is to obey God by keeping the commandment. This is the reason why love and obedience are inseparably related in the Bible (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; 2 John 6).

The legalist is almost never content to stop with the commandments of the Scripture. New rules must be invented which are somehow twisted into becoming the application of Biblical principles. God, love, and personal freedom are soon eclipsed. It is frightfully easy to obey all the rules of the legalist and even the commandments of the Bible and yet not give first place to one’s Lord.

(3) A third perversion of Christianity may be called emotionalism or the overemphasis on religious experience. A certain type of experience may be proclaimed as the secret of spirituality and as the distinguishing mark of spiritual people. In this way a personal subjective authority is substituted for the authority of divine revelation. To have an inner feeling of spirituality and to be able to produce at will some manifestation of religious zeal may be a great comfort to some people but it is not described in the Bible as being of the essence of Christianity.

Religious experiences and emotional feelings are surely a part of Biblical Christianity. These, however, are the results and not the causes of the work of grace. A person is not necessarily right with God simply because his emotion so testifies. Non-Christians have been known to produce elaborate and sustained religious experiences.

When Christianity is made to revolve around emotionalism or religious experience, and not around the Person of Jesus Christ, there is the ever present danger of shifting the standard of authority from God and His revelation to ourselves and our experiences. One may be so preoccupied with his experience that he may bypass Christ, the believer's sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30).

(4) A fourth illustration of how Christianity may suffer from perversion is the overemphasis on Christian service. A certain type or types of service may be placed at the center of Christianity. Here Christian service becomes the source of spirituality and the manner whereby it is maintained. The spiritual people are those who perform a stereotyped service which usually revolves around the church.

There is no question but that the Scriptures pronounce a commission over every Christian. To be a Christian is to be a worker. However, what was said above about obeying God may be said here. Christian service is not an end in itself. This is only one way whereby God is loved, worshipped and obeyed—in practice. It is all too easy to be intensely engaged in service and yet not be serving God. Many times it is the church which is being served, or the pastor, or even our own conscience.

Christianity does not revolve around a form of service; it revolves around the Person of Jesus Christ. It is possible to be taken up with a great variety of Christian services and yet not be committed to the Lord of the harvest field.

As Christians we must take a very firm stand against ourselves and against the perversions of Christianity. It is easy but sinful to transfer our love and devotion from God to something associated with God. When this happens we are more in love with religion than with God! Only He may be the object of our affection.

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## EXAM BOOKLET AK '05 (2 UNITS) PFHG

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STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

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ADDRESS

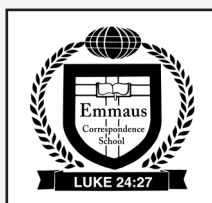
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CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

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INSTRUCTOR



*Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.*

## A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

### MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| A. blue  | C. yellow |
| B. green | D. orange |

    **B**    

### WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

### RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

**DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THESE EXAM PAGES**

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CHAPTER 1 EXAM

THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

EXAM GRADE

*Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.*

*Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.*

- 1. The basic essential for living the Christian life is
  - A. the desire to live it
  - B. the desire to live it and the knowledge of the principles which govern it
  - C. willingness to accept defeat philosophically
  - D. membership in a Bible-teaching church

\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. The great bedrock underlying true Christianity is
  - A. an attractive ethic
  - B. a moral code
  - C. dynamic psychology
  - D. an authoritative revelation

\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Which of the following best expresses the rule for belief and practice in the Christian life? Christianity
  - A. is highly plastic in character and can be molded to suit any culture, temperament or situation
  - B. is based on certain basic truths which can and should be interpreted according to the presuppositions of the interpreter
  - C. must rest upon the Bible and no one must tamper with its content, meaning, or authority
  - D. is subjective and its ultimate court of appeal is the experience of the individual or the corporate experience of the group

\_\_\_\_\_

4. As a Christian, the place at which to start in putting to the test one's beliefs and practices is with \_\_\_\_\_
- A. an ecstatic experience
  - B. the historical Christ made known in the Bible
  - C. a thorough examination of the doctrines of the church
  - D. a study of comparative religion
5. The Lord Jesus insisted that Christianity \_\_\_\_\_
- A. is a matter of keeping the law of Moses on a high, spiritual plane
  - B. involves a personal relationship with Himself
  - C. is a noble ideal but conceded that such precepts as those found in the Sermon on the Mount are beyond the possibility of daily practice under normal conditions
  - D. is largely a matter of code and creed, rite and ritual
6. A person becomes a child of God by \_\_\_\_\_
- A. joining the church
  - B. being baptized and taking communion
  - C. being good and helping others
  - D. believing on the Lord Jesus and receiving Him into their life
7. "The way to maintain spirituality is to attend church regularly." Such a statement \_\_\_\_\_
- A. shows a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of the church
  - B. expresses the basic truth that dynamic Christian living is necessarily linked with constant Christian fellowship
  - C. gives the church the place God intends it to have in the believer's life
  - D. deliberately, willfully and unpardonably perverts the truth
8. The legalist is \_\_\_\_\_
- A. right because rules belong at the very heart of Christianity
  - B. wrong because the New Testament lays down no rules for living the Christian life
  - C. right because God insists on obedience
  - D. wrong because legalism results in a negative kind of Christianity foreign to the New Testament

- 9. Religious feelings and emotional experiences are
  - A. part of Christianity, but are the results, not the basis of it
  - B. entirely foreign to New Testament Christianity
  - C. the sole evidence that one is in the will of God
  - D. native to Christianity and foreign to other religions \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 10. Christian service
  - A. is what Christianity is all about for “to be a Christian is to be a worker”
  - B. may be a snare for it is possible to be serving something or someone else and neglecting God
  - C. should be neglected since it can all too easily become a snare
  - D. is an acceptable substitute for personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

Have you been snared by any of the misconceptions discussed in this lesson?  
If so, what do you think now?

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