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December 10, 2025

**DRAFT**  
**How to Become a Christian**  
**(A Brief Overview)**

John 14:6 *Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*<sup>1</sup>

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**1 Introduction**

There are a great many religions in the world, but Christianity is exceptionally *Unique* among all religions. For one thing, to paraphrase the late great Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

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*You can make yourself an agnostic, an atheist, a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Muslim, or any of countless other false religions. However, you cannot make yourself a Christian. — Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

Indeed, it is possible to join or create any human religion on Earth. However, it is not possible to become a Christian. Nevertheless, becoming a Christian involves a personal choice. This apparent paradox will be the subject of our exploration in this series and its subsequent teachings.

Analogy of a building: Becoming a Christian is not a superficial transformation, akin to applying a new coat of paint or replacing a facade. Our former natural selves are similar to a condemned building, a place of corruption and decay, crack-house whose very walls are tainted with poison and sin. In contrast, being born again entails the demolition of the old building and the construction of a new foundation on up. This process results in a new creation, made in likeness of Jesus Christ.

One complication of Christianity is the presence of false or fake Christians. The Bible refers to these individuals as *False Believers* and *Judaizers*. They focus on the letter of the law and love to lord it over people. Notably, false Christians outnumber genuine Christians in the world and are enemies of the cross. While these individuals may exhibit religious fervor, they are exactly like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, their beliefs about Christianity are fundamentally incorrect because they are devoid of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, there are false churches led by false Christians who propagate *False Doctrines*. (See my teaching *Problems in the Church*).

My sincere prayer is that you will take the time to thoroughly review the teachings presented in this series and the New Testament. May these guide you on your journey towards becoming a genuine Christian and may you experience the profound blessings of Jesus Christ in every aspect of your life.

## 2 Two False Doctrines

Regrettably, at least two prominent schools of thought have emerged since the *Protestant Reformation*. These schools are *Arminianism and Calvinism* (see that teaching for a more detailed discussion). They continue to be prevalent today, with Arminianism often associated with the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches and Calvinism with the Reformed and Evangelical churches. (For further information, please refer to my teaching titled *Denominations*.)

Interestingly, if you read a book promoting Arminianism, you will likely think to yourself, "Ah, Arminianism is the correct doctrine." Similarly, if you read a book promoting Calvinism, you will think, "Ah, Calvinism is the correct doctrine." Many authors are quite vehement in their defense of these erroneous doctrines. These are the teachings of seminaries, resulting in a world full of pastors who lack a comprehensive understanding of Christianity. To my knowledge, David Pawson's book, "The Normal Christian Birth" [6], presents the most accurate and biblically grounded doctrine.

Both of these doctrines contain elements of truth, but they also have "problem verses" as there are passages in Scripture which conflict with these doctrines. This is one of the reasons why it is crucial to read the entire Bible, as any doctrines must be in

harmony with scripture (see my teaching titled [Why Read the Bible?](#)). Since they are not consistent with Scripture, they are comparable to attempting to fit a square peg into a round hole. We should never attempt to force doctrines out of Scripture to align with our opinions or wishful thinking. For more information on how to read the Bible, please refer to my teaching [How to Read the Bible](#). It is important to remember that Scripture is and must be our highest authority in all theological matters.

Compounding the issue is the historical propagation of these erroneous doctrines. Martin Luther, a Calvinist, and John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, both adhered to these beliefs. This situation becomes problematic when churches follow well-intentioned yet flawed individuals. Consequently, it is imperative that we eliminate intermediaries and return to Scripture, which serves as the definitive authority of Christianity. Therefore, let us abandon these false teachings and seek truth in Scripture.

### 3 The Conversion-Initiation Complex

Although the title may seem obscure, its significance will be elucidated shortly. Despite its enigmatic name, it is imperative that all Christians comprehend this doctrine. The conversion process, formally referred to as the “conversion-initiation complex,” comprises four distinct stages (or potentially more) that lead to the attainment of a born again Christian.

1. [Repent](#) — A change of heart, turning away from sin and a turning back to God.
2. [Believe](#) — in the Gospel, the atoning death and resurrection of our Lord and savior Christ Jesus.
3. [Water Baptism](#) — the baptism of the believer in water, usually by immersion.
4. [Baptism of the Holy Spirit](#) — the pouring out of the Holy Spirit into our hearts, giving us a new heart and a new life. Something the Bible calls “regeneration”, thus we are born again.

The late pastor David Pawson (1930–2020) derived and elucidated these steps from Scripture in his esteemed book titled “The Normal Christian Birth” [6]. He designated this as a “normal” birth because the steps typically transpire in the sequence outlined above, although this sequence may not always be strictly adhered to. Occasionally, the steps can occur in rapid succession, almost instantaneously, while at other times, they can be dispersed over several years.

Other theologians have coined the term “Conversion-Initiation Complex” and have written extensively about it in their scholarly works, such as [3].

#### 3.1 How we find the steps

*Soteriology*, the doctrine of salvation, has become a complex and intricate concept, with theologians throughout history contributing their interpretations and perspectives. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of salvation, it is imperative to return to the foundational source, the Scriptures. We must refrain from basing doctrines on human

philosophy, personal opinions, or wishful thinking. Additionally, we must exercise caution when accepting doctrines imparted by human authorities, as throughout Christian history, heretical doctrines have been propagated. Several letters attributed to the Apostles during the apostolic era were composed to address false doctrines and teachings prevalent in their time. Heresies prevalent today include the "*Prosperity Gospel*" and "*Christian Nationalism*".

We begin by asking ourselves, "What does the Bible say about how to become Christians?" This is essentially what pastor David Pawson did and he wrote his book regarding this question [6], which I highly recommend.

Allow us to briefly examine a few Bible passages:

Matthew 4:17 *From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."*

Mark 1:14–15 *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

John 6:28–29 *Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*

Matthew 28:19–20 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Acts 2:38 *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 8:15–17 *When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

Other theologians refer to this process as *Regeneration* or *New Birth*. The term "born again" is commonly used today, but it is often misused. Many Christians lack a clear understanding of what it means to be born again, and unfortunately, some who believe they are born again are not.<sup>2</sup>

Only one passage in Scripture makes mention of all four steps of the conversation-initiation process:

Hebrews 6:1–2 (NET) *Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity, not laying this foundation again:*

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<sup>2</sup> [Matthew 7:21–23](#)

*repentance from dead works and faith in God, teaching about baptisms (plural), laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*

It is important to acknowledge the timeframes and applicability of the various sections within the Bible. The Gospels were composed during the period spanning the advent of Jesus Christ in human form and the ascension of the risen Christ into heaven. The epistles and the Book of Revelation were addressed to established Christian disciples. Notably, the Book of Acts provides the most comprehensive account of the process of becoming a disciple of Christ. It was only after the Pentecost event, as described in Acts chapter 2, that the Holy Spirit was given, enabling individuals to embrace Christianity.

## 3.2 Additional Steps

Employing Pawson's methodology, which adheres to the principles of Scripture, I have identified additional requirements that I believe are necessary for regeneration, as outlined below.

### 5. *Proclaim Christ*

*Romans 10:9–10 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

If we fully comprehend the profound impact that Jesus Christ has had on our lives, we cannot help but shout our unwavering conviction from the rooftops that Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

### 6. *Forgive Others*

*Matthew 6:14–15 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

We must recognize our own sinfulness, and the immense love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace that God has bestowed upon us. In turn, we must extend these qualities to others.

### 7. *Give Thanks*

*1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?*

*1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Having received God's boundless love, unwavering forgiveness, compassionate mercy, grace, and Christ's selfless sacrifice on the cross to atone for our transgressions, we should express an eternal expression of gratitude.

8. *Evangelize*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.*

We are to lead others to the love of Christ. Note that we are not to be God's police department nor are we to force Christian morality onto unbelievers.

John 12:47 *"If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.*

9. *Deeds/Works*

James 2:14–17 *What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

### 3.3 Other False Doctrines

As previously discussed in Section 2, Arminianism and Calvinism fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the process of becoming a Christian. In this section, we will explore several other erroneous doctrines that are still prevalent in contemporary religious discourse.

1. *Easy Believism* or *Free Grace* — is a heresy that asserts salvation is achieved through belief in Jesus Christ, while true, but there must also be repentance and the Spirit baptism. This doctrine is often misinterpreted, particularly in verses like John 3:16<sup>3</sup>, which are used to downplay or ignore other passages in the Bible. A common misconception is that if one believes in Jesus, they can continue living a life of immorality and still be saved.
2. *Faith Alone*—This heresy originates from Reformed Theology, also known as Calvinism, which places an excessive emphasis on verses such as this one:

Ephesians 2:8–9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Reformers and Calvinists frequently assert that salvation is an entirely passive process, with God taking all the necessary actions on our behalf. This

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<sup>3</sup> John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

doctrine, known as “Faith Alone,” became a rallying cry during the Reformation. Ironically, the phrase “Faith Alone” appears only once in the Bible:

James 2:24 *You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.*

Despite their belief in Jesus, the son of God, the devil and his demons remain unsaved. Salvation necessitates the entire sequence of conversion initiation steps. While God initiates the process, we must actively cooperate.

3. **Universalism** — The erroneous notion that God will unconditionally save all individuals, irrespective of their beliefs or moral standing. This misconception often stems from wishful thinking and a misinterpretation of the Scriptures.

## 4 Potential Problems

As individuals embark on the journey towards Christendom, there are potential challenges and obstacles that may arise. This section presents a concise overview of some of these challenges. For a more comprehensive understanding, please refer to my teaching titled [Am I a Christian?](#)

- **Failing to repent** — Many Christians may come to faith in Jesus Christ, however they fail to [repent](#), unwilling to change from their old ways or serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Shallow faith** — Belief in Jesus without trust or obedience.

1 John 2:3–4 *We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.*

- **Not baptized with the Holy Spirit** — An essential but often overlooked step to becoming a Christian:

Romans 8:9 *You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*

- **Trying to live under the Old Testament law** — which impossible for all of us except for our blessed Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Galatians 5:4 *You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*

- **Judging those outside the Church** — We are not to judge unbelievers:

1 Corinthians 5:12–13a *What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.*

Unbelievers are incapable of obeying God's laws:

Romans 8:7–8 *The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

- **Being prideful** — A prideful person cannot repent, a real Christian must have a humble and contrite heart.

1 Peter 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

- **Not loving others** — Loving others is a hallmark of Christianity.

John 13:35 *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

1 John 4:20–21 *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*

- **Loving the world** — The world is the domain of the enemy, namely the devil and his followers, which is fundamentally incompatible with Christianity.

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.*

- **Being deceived by the Enemy** — The devil hinders believers from receiving the gospel and deceives false believers into erroneously believing they are Christians.

2 Corinthians 4:3–4 *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

- **Becoming entangled in the world** — The world, which is the devil's domain, while alluring, can be a treacherous path filled with temptations and distractions.

Matthew 13:22 *The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.*

- **Failing to proclaim Christ** — It is impossible to experience rebirth and maintain secrecy about it.

Luke 9:26 *Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*

## 5 Application

Some individuals may raise objections to these actions, asserting that they constitute “works.” However, this is incorrect. These actions are imperative obligations enshrined in Scripture. I believe that Pastor Zac Poonen elucidated this concept most succinctly:

*“If people did not have to do anything to be saved, then everyone would be saved.” — Zac Poonen*

Becoming a Christian is the greatest possible gift God can bestow upon humanity on this earth. It is God who saves us, yet the Bible unequivocally states that there are actions we must take to cooperate in our salvation; we must choose to accept the gift. As we delve deeper into the process, we will demonstrate that God is the initiator and is deeply involved in our salvation. Consequently, the Bible commands us to perform these actions and simultaneously informs us that God is initiating and controlling our salvation, resulting in a paradoxical understanding of salvation.

Undoubtedly, the doctrine and methods of salvation hold paramount importance for Christians. However, it is perplexing why not all churches impart this knowledge. Firstly, churches tend to place excessive reliance on traditions and the writings of theologians such as Augustine, Calvin, and Luther for their doctrines, rather than adhering strictly to the Scripture, the original source of all doctrines. Often, churches prioritize one of the steps, sometimes to the exclusion of others, rather than giving all steps equal weight. For instance, evangelical churches emphasize faith, while churches that focus on sacraments, such as the Roman Catholic Church, place their emphasis on water baptism; and Charismatic or Pentecostal churches emphasize receiving the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, the process outlined in Scripture is not explicitly detailed. One must thoroughly study the entire Bible, as it lacks an encyclopedia-like structure. The four gospels mention repentance, faith, and water baptism, but they only anticipate the giving of the Holy Spirit, which would not occur until Christ’s ascension and the Pentecost event (Acts 2). The book of Acts explicitly outlines all four steps, but it does so in separate passages. The epistles in the New Testament were written to churches or Christians who had already experienced rebirth, so there was no need to provide a detailed explanation of the process.

I have heard two pastors assert that there were false Christians in their congregations who either had not repented or had not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that you have completed all the necessary steps, even if you believe you are already a Christian.

There is a wonderful old hymn that you may want to sing or pray:

## Lord I Want to be a Christian

1. *Lord, I want to be a Christian  
in my heart, in my heart.  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.*
2. *Lord, I want to be more loving  
in my heart, in my heart.  
Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.*
3. *Lord, I want to be more holy  
in my heart, in my heart.  
Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.*
4. *Lord, I want to be like Jesus  
in my heart, in my heart.  
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.  
In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.*

As outlined by Pawson, mature Christians are to be akin to midwives, guiding others through the transformative process of becoming genuine Christians. This involves guiding individuals through the necessary steps, enabling them to complete the journey and experience rebirth.

I strongly recommend that you read all the teachings in this series so that you may become a mature Christian prepared for every virtuous endeavor. Collectively, these steps provide a solid foundation upon which to develop as a Christian.

1. [Why Become a Christian?](#)
2. [How to Become a Christian](#) (This teaching)
3. [Repent](#)
4. [Believe](#)
5. [Water Baptism](#)
6. [Baptism of the Holy Spirit](#)
7. [Proclaim Christ](#)
8. [Forgive Others](#)
9. [Give Thanks](#)
10. [Evangelize](#)
11. [Dangers to New Christians](#)
12. [Am I a Christian?](#)

Recall that upon becoming a fully committed Christian, you undergo a transformative process, becoming a new creation!

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

## 6 Prayer

*“Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Scripture to help us better know you and your will. Thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus, in whom we have eternal life, and that we can become like him as Christians. Please lead us through the steps to Christendom so that we might become truly born again Christians, able to serve faithfully in your kingdom on Earth. We pray in the name of your son Jesus. Amen.”*

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May God bless you, your family, and your friends.  
Your brother in Christ,  
Kevin

## Appendix A—References & Further Reading

- [1] Avila, Charlie; *How to Become a Christian: What it Means to be Saved and go to Heaven*; Clovis Christian Center; 2020. (Not cited.)
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- [3] Dunn, James D. G.; *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit(2nd Edition)*; SCM Press Limited; 2011. (Cited on page 3.)
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- [6] Pawson, David; *The Normal Christian Birth: How to Give New Believers a Proper Start in Life*; Hodder & Stoughton; 2013. (Cited on pages 2, 3, and 4.)
- [7] Pawson, Dave; *EXPLAINING: The Key Steps to Becoming a Christian: Second Edition*; Anchor Recordings Ltd; 2019. (Not cited.)

## Appendix B—Scripture References

**Matthew**

4:17; [4](#)  
6:14–15; [5](#)  
7:21–23; [4](#)  
13:22; [8](#)  
28:19–20; [4](#)

**Mark**

1:14–15; [4](#)  
16:15; [6](#)

**Luke**

9:26; [9](#)

**John**

3:16; [6](#)  
6:28–29; [4](#)  
12:47; [6](#)  
13:35; [8](#)  
14:6; [1](#)

**Acts**

2:38; [4](#)

8:15–17; [4](#)

**Romans**

8:7–8; [8](#)  
8:9; [7](#)  
10:9–10; [5](#)

**1 Corinthians**

5:12–13a; [8](#)  
10:16; [5](#)

**2 Corinthians**

4:3–4; [8](#)  
5:17; [11](#)

**Galatians**

5:4; [7](#)

**Ephesians**

2:8–9; [6](#)

**1 Thessalonians**

5:16–18; [5](#)

**Hebrews**

6:1–2; [4](#)

**James**

2:14–17; [6](#)  
2:24; [7](#)

**1 Peter**

5:6; [8](#)

**1 John**

2:3–4; [7](#)  
2:15; [8](#)  
4:20–21; [8](#)