

Session 1: Why is this study important?

"Only 43 percent of Baptists believe that works don't earn salvation and 66 percent believe Satan isn't a real being, according to a new study released by the Barna Research Group and reported by the Florida Baptist Witness."

The numbers were better for Baptists than for the whole sample, but not by much. Of the Baptists surveyed, 57 percent believed works play a part in salvation, and 45 percent believed Jesus was not sinless. Only 34 percent of Baptists thought Satan was a real being, while 51 percent believed Christians have the responsibility to witness to others. Sixty-six percent of Baptists considered the Bible to be totally accurate, 81 percent considered their religious faith to be important and 85 percent believed God is the all-powerful creator of the universe.

...when you interview people about what kind of Baptist church they attend, a large proportion of them either don't know or they will give you information that's inaccurate," Barna told the Florida Baptist Witness.

"This should not be too surprising," Roberts said. "We have 16 million members [in the Southern Baptist Convention] and I think it's a fair estimate that less than half actually attend church on Sunday. It's pretty hard to believe that Christ was not sinless and call yourself a Christian." -- Phil Roberts, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"The Christian body in America is immersed in a crisis of biblical illiteracy," Barna said. "How else can you describe matters when most churchgoing adults reject the accuracy of the Bible, reject the existence of Satan, claim that Jesus sinned, see no need to evangelize, believe that good works are one of the keys to persuading God to forgive their sins, and describe their commitment to Christianity as moderate or even less firm?" ("Baptists Adrift In Doctrinal Confusion", Tim Ellsworth)

Facts about the Southern Baptist Convention

"Since its organization in 1845 in Augusta, Georgia, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has grown to 15.8 million members who worship in more than 40,000 churches in the United States. Southern Baptists sponsor about 5,000 home missionaries serving the United States, Canada, Guam and the Caribbean, as well as sponsoring more than 4,000 foreign missionaries in 126 nations of the world.

The term "**Southern Baptist Convention**" refers to both the denomination and its annual meeting. Working through 1,221 local associations and 39 state conventions and fellowships, Southern Baptists share a common bond of basic Biblical beliefs and a commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world." (Southern Baptist Convention web site, www.sbc.net)

What is the Baptist Faith and Message?

It is a statement of what Baptists believe, first written in 1925, then revised in 1963, 1998, and 2000. Each revision has changed the original statement of faith to address certain needs of that generation. IMPORTANT: What we believe has not changed, but the statement of those beliefs needed to be more complete.

There are five things to know about the Baptist Faith and Message:

1. The Baptist Faith and Message is not intended to add anything to the simple conditions of salvation.
2. We do not regard the Baptist Faith and Message as a complete statement of our faith. It is not final or infallible. We are free to revise the statement at anytime.
3. Any group of Baptists may draw up their own version of the confession.
4. The Baptist Faith and Message is not authoritative: it is only a guide in interpretation.
5. It is a statement of religious conviction, not to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life.

What does the Baptist Faith and Message address?

The Baptist Faith and Message is broken down into eighteen sections:

- I. The Scriptures
- II. God
 - A. God the Father
 - B. God the Son
 - C. God the Holy Spirit
- III. Man
- IV. Salvation
- V. God's Purpose of Grace
- VI. The Church
- VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- VIII. The Lord's Day
- IX. The Kingdom
- X. Last Things
- XI. Evangelism and Missions
- XII. Education
- XIII. Stewardship
- XIV. Cooperation
- XV. The Christian and the Social Order
- XVI. Peace and War
- XVII. Religious Liberty
- XVIII. The Family

So what do we need to know?

Point 1: We must know Jesus.

Here's what the Bible says:

- (Rom 3:23 NIV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- (Rom 6:23 NIV) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- (Rom 5:8 NIV) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- (Rom 10:9 NIV) That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- (John 14:6 NIV) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Put simply:

1. We are all sinners.
2. The penalty for our sin is death—not only physical death, but spiritual death.
3. Even though we are sinners, Christ died for us.
4. If we confess with our mouth that "Jesus is Lord" and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved from spiritual death.
5. Is there more than one way to salvation? No! Jesus himself said "No one comes to the Father except through me."

There are no loopholes, there are no "do overs". Before each of us die, we will all answer this question: "What will you do with Jesus?"

If you accept Jesus Christ's claims about himself and turn your life over to him:

- You will experience God's peace:
(Phil 4:7 NIV) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- You will experience God's power:
(Luke 24:49 NIV) I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."
(Acts 1:8 NIV) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- God's power will enable you to overcome anything:
(Phil 4:13 NIV) I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
- You will pay a price for following Christ:
(Matthew 24:9 NIV) "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.
(John 15:20 NIV) Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.
- But following Christ is easier than falling for the snares of this world:
(Matthew 11:28-30 NIV) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
- No matter what, Christ will always love us and never leave us:
(Proverbs 18:24 NIV) A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
(Joshua 1:5 NIV) No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Point 2: We must know Scripture.

Can knowing the Bible earn your salvation?

No!!

So why is it important for us to know Scripture?

- **Knowledge of Scripture helps us resist temptation.**
(Psalms 119:11) "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

FACT: Jesus quoted Scripture three times in resisting the temptation of the devil.
(Matthew 4:1-11)

- **God Himself inspired the Scriptures.**
- **Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training**
- **God's Word equips us for everything we need to do.**
(2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV) "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

- **It is an essential part of the armor of God.**
(Ephesians 6:17 NIV) Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Point 3: We must put our knowledge into action.

We need to share Jesus with everyone we know.

(Matthew 28:19-20 NIV) “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.”

(1 Peter 3:15a NIV) “ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

We need to “grow up” spiritually.

(1 Peter 2:2-5 NIV) Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

(Ephesians 4:11-14 NIV) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

We need to be reminded of God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness.

(James 1:23-25 NIV) Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.

Words You Need to Know

apologetics – to give a defense of what one believes to be true.

confession – a formal statement of religious beliefs. Used to declare a belief in the doctrines which the Scriptures teach and are foundational to orthodox Christianity.

conviction – a deeply-held belief.

doctrine – the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief

infallible – completely accurate

rebuke – to criticize sharply

Trinity – the doctrine that there is one God in three parts—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. Also referred to as the Godhead.

How to Become a Christian

You're not here by accident. Jesus loves you, and He wants you to have a personal relationship with Him. There is just one thing that separates you from God. That one thing is sin.

People tend to divide themselves into groups - good people and bad people. But God says that every person that has ever lived is a sinner, and any sin separates us from God. That includes you and me.

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

According to man's rules, people should be punished or rewarded according to how good they are, and it might be hard for you to understand how Jesus could love you when other people don't seem to. But I have great news for you! Jesus DOES love you! More than you can ever imagine! And there's nothing you can do to make him stop! Are you thinking that you should make things right in your life before you come to Jesus? Many people feel that way, but that's not what God says!

"God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

For you to come to God you have to get rid of your sin problem. But God says that you can't make yourself right with God by being a better person. God wants to save you JUST BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU!

"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy." Titus 3:5

It's God's grace that allows you to come to Him - not your efforts to "clean up your life" or work your way to Heaven. You can't earn it. It's a free gift.

"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." Ephesians 2:8-9

For you to come to God, your sin must be paid for. God's gift to you is His son, Jesus, who paid the debt for you.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

Jesus paid the price for your sin and mine by giving His life on Calvary's cross. God brought Jesus back from the dead and paved the way for you to have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus.

All that's left for you to do is to accept the gift that Jesus is holding out for you right now.

"If you confess 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 confess and are saved." Romans 10:9-10

God says that if you believe in His son, Jesus, you can live forever with Him in glory. "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

Sinner's Prayer

Are you ready to accept the gift of eternal life that Jesus is offering you right now? If it is your sincere desire to ask Jesus to come into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior, then talk to God from your heart through the Sinner's Prayer:



"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and I do not deserve eternal life. But, I believe You died and rose from the grave to purchase a place in Heaven for me. Jesus, come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins and save me. I am now placing my trust in You alone for my salvation and I accept your free gift of eternal life."

If you have trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, please let us know. We want to rejoice in what God has done in your life and help you to grow spiritually.

Once you've trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you need to join with a local church—a body of believers that will encourage and teach you. West Oaks Baptist Church would be happy to serve that role for you.

We meet at 9:30AM on Sunday morning for Bible Study and 10:45AM for worship. Please come join us!

If you're not close to West Oaks Baptist Church, we encourage you to find a church near to you. You can search for Southern Baptist churches close to you by visiting this web site:

<http://www.sbc.net/search.asp>

If you do not have Internet access, please call this number for more information:

615-244-2355