



Doctrine, Passions, and Practices How do we live the Christian life?

Doctrine

1. The Christian life does not start with faith in Jesus, and then move on to something else. It starts and continues by faith in Jesus Christ.

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

^{ESV} **Galatians 2:20** And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

See also Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23; Philippians 1:29.

2. Everything else God wants us to be and do comes through faith in Jesus:

Love –

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Obedience –

^{ESV} **Hebrews 11:8** By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

Power over Satan –

^{ESV} **Ephesians 6:16** In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Joy and Peace –

^{ESV} **Romans 15:13** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

3. Faith means "trusting all that God promises to be to me in Christ Jesus" (Piper).

Faith means trusting. It is not just agreeing to truths about Jesus. It means personally trusting yourself, your needs, your future to Jesus Christ.

^{ESV} **Genesis 15:5** And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

^{ESV} **Psalms 52:7** "See the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and sought refuge in his own destruction!"

In the Bible, faith focuses on God's promises. If we try to trust God without focusing on His promises, our trust will be vague at best.

^{ESV} **Romans 4:20** No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Faith does not just trust Jesus' promises about forgiveness of sins and avoiding hell and going to heaven; it trusts all that God promises to be to me in Christ Jesus – Lord, Savior, and all-satisfying Treasure.

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 1:20** For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

Spurgeon: God has a promise for every problem.

Faith means trusting the person of Jesus to be to me what He's promised; I don't just trust words on a page, or promises in a book. Faith is a heart-connection with the Living Jesus; heart-satisfaction in the Living Jesus.

^{ESV} **John 6:35** Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Faith means trusting Jesus as the one who loves me and gave Himself up for me. Faith is cross-centered. This frees me from self-righteousness; keeps me from pride; displays Jesus' amazing love.

^{ESV} **Galatians 2:20** And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The supreme promise is that if you trust Jesus, then God will orchestrate everything to bring you the full and lasting joy of knowing and worshiping Jesus. We will only want this promise if our hearts have been changed by God's saving power. And this promise will be the foundation for every other promise.

^{ESV} **Philippians 3:8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

^{ESV} **1 Peter 1:13** Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

^{ESV} **Psalms 73:25** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 4:17** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

Passions and Practices

1. First thing in the morning. It's easy to focus on problems, or on "being positive." But instead, set your heart upon Jesus who promises to orchestrate everything to bring you heart-filling and never-ending joy in Him.

^{ESV} **Psalm 118:24** This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 31:3** I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

2. Seeking God through the Word and prayer. The point is to strengthen your trust in Jesus – so you see who He is in God's Word, trust Him for your needs and worries, have your heart satisfied in Him, long to obey Him and glorify Him.

^{ESV} **Psalm 119:18** Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

^{ESV} **Psalm 1:2** ... but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.



^{ESV} **Philippians 4:6-7** ... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

3. Obeying Jesus — by faith. The Christian life means obeying Jesus. So we need to do what He has called us to do. But it's vital that we do this by faith — trusting Him to do all that He promises. Every command He gives us carries an implicit promise that obeying will — by His grace — bring us more of Him. So don't obey just out of duty; pray over Jesus' promises until you trust that He will give you more of Himself as you obey Him.

^{ESV} **John 13:17** If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

^{ESV} **John 14:23** Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

4. Discouraged about my day, relationships, circumstances. It's easy just to say "It will be all right." But that's not biblical faith. Set your heart on Jesus, and pray over God's promises, until you trust Him to be and do all that He has promised.

^{ESV} **Romans 8:31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:11** [God] works all things according to the counsel of his will.

^{ESV} **Psalm 100:5** For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

^{ESV} **Romans 8:28** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 32:41** I will rejoice in doing them good...

^{ESV} **Mark 9:24** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

5. Discouragement about past and present sin. Do you try to make up for sin by doing good? Or try to forget about past sin? Or do you let this make you pull back from Jesus or fellowship? Instead, confess your sins, set your heart upon Jesus, and pray over His promises until you trust that His death has paid for all your sins.

^{ESV} **Romans 8:33** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

^{ESV} **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

6. Hopelessness about recurring sin in my life. Don't give up. Understand that saved people do have sin in their lives. But don't focus on the sin, and don't make empty resolutions. Instead, confess the sin directly to Jesus; and set your heart upon Jesus, who paid the penalty for that sin and broke the power of that sin.

^{ESV} **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

^{ESV} **Romans 6:6** We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin.



Then, seek to destroy the root of that sin: counter its lie of heart-satisfaction with the superior pleasure of beholding Jesus. Ask others to help you keep seeing Jesus, keep trusting Jesus.

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 3:18** And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

^{ESV} **John 4:13** Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

7. Working in the home or at my job. Trust Jesus' wisdom and goodness in calling you to this work, and trust Him to reward you for it with great joy in beholding Him.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 6:5** Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

8. Lacking motivation, passion, zeal for Jesus. Fight this by trusting Jesus:

For what He promises to do for us:

^{ESV} **Psalms 13:3** Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

^{ESV} **Philippians 1:6** And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

^{ESV} **Romans 12:11** Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

For what you already have in Him:

^{ESV} **Hebrews 10:34** For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

For what He promises to give you as you follow and obey Him:

^{ESV} **Galatians 6:7** Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.



For what He warns could happen if you don't follow and obey Him:

^{ESV} **Mark 9:47** And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,⁴⁸ 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

9. When you face temptation. Do you find yourself saying "I can (or can't) overcome this? Set your heart to trust Jesus and what He promises to be to you when you are tempted.

Trust Him to keep you from temptations you can't handle.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Trust Him to have broken the power of sin in you.

^{ESV} **Galatians 6:14** But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Trust Him to satisfy you more than this sin ever will.

^{ESV} **Psalms 16:11** You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

10. When I'm struggling to be loving. Do you find yourself settling for this, or blaming the person, or making empty resolutions? Instead, confess to Jesus your lack of love, and set your heart on Jesus' promises until you trust Him to be and do all that He has promised.

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

^{ESV} **Philippians 2:1** So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

^{ESV} **Colossians 1:4-5** ... the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

11. When I'm fearful or worried. When I'm fearful or worried I'm not trusting Jesus. I might be trusting that He has paid for my sins and that I will go to heaven. But I'm not trusting Him to fulfill His other promises. So prayerfully set your heart on Jesus and His promises until you trust that He will do what He has promised.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 41:10** Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

^{ESV} **Genesis 50:20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

^{ESV} **Philippians 1:21** For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

12. When I'm going through a trial. Don't focus mostly on the trial; focus mostly on Jesus and who He promises to be to you in every trial.

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 4:16** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.



^{ESV} **1 Peter 4:12** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

13. God has given us means of grace through which He will strengthen our faith in Jesus. Use the means God has given you: the Word, prayer, fellowship, worship, sermons, teaching, Bible-soaked Christian books.

For further discussion

1. Does it make sense that the Christian life starts and continues with faith in Jesus? Why or why not? Have you ever thought that you should be moving on to something "more" than faith?
2. Most all of us agree that faith means trusting Jesus to pay for our sins so we can go to heaven. Do you agree that faith also means trusting Jesus to meet our financial needs (Matthew 6:33)? To satisfy our hearts with Himself (John 6:35)? To deliver us from problems (Psalm 50:15)? Why or why not?
3. If you are worried about a problem — are you trusting Jesus? If your highest joy is something other than Jesus — are you trusting Jesus? If you are not obeying Jesus — are you trusting Jesus? Why or why not?
4. Do you find yourself focusing on a promise more than on Jesus himself? Is that good or bad? Why? Is it possible to focus both on Jesus and on His promise? How?
5. Why do you obey Jesus? Are you comfortable with obeying Jesus because you will get more of the joy of beholding Jesus? Why or why not?
6. What is one area of your life in which you want to work on trusting Jesus? Share this with your home group, and have them pray for you about it, and then share next week how it went.

For further study

Bunyan, John. The Pilgrim's Progress.

Machen, J. Gresham. What is Faith?

Marshall, Walter. The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification.

Mahaney, C. J. The Cross-Centered Life.

Piper, John. The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in Future Grace.

Ryle, J. C. Holiness.

Schreiner, Tom, and Ardel Caneday. The Race Set Before Us.