

Episode 08. "The Spiritual Basics."

Tuesday, March 16, 2021. 46 Minutes Long.

The details for "getting back to the basics" of Christianity, and for living the kind of supernatural life that the Early Christians lived. The three ground rules for living the "Early Christian Lifestyle" – and the biggest mistake Christian teachers make today, with the five words that many Christians can't define.

John (00:00):

John Shields opens the episode by saying:

John (00:13):

Well, hello friends and listeners! Can you believe this is *Episode 08* in our bi-weekly series of the "Saving Christianity" episodes? We're coming to you every-other-Tuesday from Christian Family Online. And I'm your host, John Shields. Today, in this episode, we're going to continue discussing how to have more peace, healing, and hope, in our life and in the lives of our loved ones. And to do that, we want to dig deeper into the principles of original Christianity as described in the book, *Saving Christianity*. Now this episode is titled, "The Spiritual Basics." That's right, "The Spiritual Basics." Think of it as the A-B-Cs of Christianity. And we're going to explain why so many Christians today don't understand how Spiritual growth works. So I think this is going to be a very interesting episode for us! But, before we start, let's pause here to introduce my sidekick of 30 years and the co-host of the podcast, Owen Allen.

Owen (01:33):

Well, hello, John! And hello to all of our friends. And I want everybody out in Podcast Land to know that I never get tired of talking about how incredibly satisfying what we're calling the "Early Christian Lifestyle" is! (That) brings an interesting thought to mind, doesn't it? (It sure does!) How is the Christian lifestyle *then*, different from the Christian lifestyle *today*? And why would that be true? Anyway, I never tire of telling how living this original type of Christian life changed me years ago ... and my family ... and my friends over the years. And you know, we say so often, John and I and Shannon, here in the studio: Our goal is to live a few minutes of heaven here on earth, instead of waiting until – as they say in Ireland – "We're on the other side of the sod." But now John, why don't we just pick up where we left off last time? That was back in Episode 07.

Owen (02:41):

But before we start, we need to make an announcement and tell our friends that we're in the process of building a new website for the podcast. And also a new website address. Now of course, you've all been using www.CFOpods.com for weeks now. But our new address is going to be, or already is: **www.goSCpod.com**. So that would be ... "go SC" ... which obviously

stands for "Saving Christianity." www.goSCpod.com. That takes you to our website. And there you can scroll back and see, and listen to, the previous episodes. But more importantly, you can look at the pictures of all of us. John is especially handsome and so is Shannon. And we also not only have the pictures, but most importantly, the *transcripts* – a verbatim transcript of what we've been saying in these recordings. But anyway, John, it's time to turn now to "The Spiritual Basics."

John (03:57):

Yeah, okay! Let's do that. And I'm excited about that. And just to remind everyone, in previous episodes, we were talking about how to have the "Deeper Christian Walk." And to do that, how we said we needed to "get back to the basics" of *original* Christian Spirituality.

Owen (04:19):

Well, that's right! And the key word is *original* isn't it? (Chuckles.) In fact, way back in Episode 06, we mentioned that we're now moving into Part Two of the book, *Saving Christianity ...* sort of a guidebook that we're following here in these podcast episodes. And that Part Two was headed, "The Early Christian Basics." That's interesting, isn't it? What would the "basics" be of early Christianity? And those of you that remember Episode 07 – we had a round-table discussion with the radio and TV host, Manwell Grady. And we were asking ourselves, "Is it even *possible* to have a deeper walk today ... to go deeper into Spirituality today as a Christian?" And we decided in that episode that it *is* still possible to live like an original Christian, even though today's environment is so hostile and so confusing.

John (05:27):

And yeah, we agreed that it is. And I want to emphasize the "is." It *is* still possible. And we agreed that today's Christians can – and do – live with the same peace, healing, hope, and miracles that the Early Christians had.

Owen (05:48):

Well, that's absolutely right, John. So here now, in Episode 08, we're going to dig deeper into: *What does it take?* What is required to live like an original Christian? That is, to live the way Christians lived ... think about this ... when Christianity was *founded*. And the best way to do that, the thing that's needed, is what we keep saying: We need as Christians to "get back to the basics."

John (06:18):

Yeah, right! And as we always say: "If we do what they *did*, we'll have what they *had*!" And that's not just a cliché. And the purpose of the "Saving Christianity" episodes is to show our friends what the Early Christians *had*. And then to show them how they can have the *same* things.

Owen (06:42):

Exactly. That's what we want to have: What *they* had! And to make this clearer John, for our friends out there in Podcast Land, let's ask ourselves a question. "What *was* it? What *was* it that the Early Christians had?" And we think about that a moment, and here's the answer: They had peace, healing, and hope, that were the envy of the world. They had love, kindness, and courage, that stunned other people. And that's how they changed the world Spiritually in only 70 years. Other people saw what they had, and wanted it. And to get it, they became Christians, *too*. And that's how Christianity spread around the world. It was a process of non-Christians observing the *Spiritual behavior* of (the Early) Christians.

John (07:39):

Yeah. But unfortunately that's actually the problem, isn't it? And doesn't that bring us right back to today's Christian *crisis*? Because people aren't seeing – they are *not* seeing – enough Spiritual behavior in today's Christians, are they.

Owen (07:58):

No. Sadly, maybe tragically, they're not! You know, think about this, John: Many people today don't envy Christians – *envy* Christians – think about it, the way they did in the First Century. Today, many people *mock* Christians. Think about that. For example, Hollywood, we all know, portrays Christians as "unsophisticated" – that's a polite word – as out of touch with reality, as comical figures. But they never portray Christians as people to be *envied*.

John (08:38):

That hurts! It's actually painful. But we all know it's true.

Owen (08:42):

Well, and then ... so here's another question for our friends: "*Why* is that happening? *Why* don't people envy Christians today?"

John (08:53):

Well, I think we know the answer, Owen. But we've been saying it now for many episodes. It's because, at least in its simplest form, it's because Christians today ... we aren't living the "Early Christian Lifestyle."

Owen (09:10):

Well, tragically again, that's right. You know (inaudible) I could maybe paraphrase what you said, John. People don't *envy* Christians anymore because Christians today *aren't* living with the Spiritual power that the Early Christians had. May I say it? They're living like non-Christians. We know that's true because of the national polls we've mentioned several times in these episodes, which find that today: *The average Christian is no more Spiritual than a non-Christian.*

So as a friend of mine says, John – "to be deathbed honest" – why *would* people envy Christians today? There's not (chuckles) *much* to envy!

John (09:55):

Wow. This is getting rough Owen!

Owen (09:58):

Well, maybe. But listen. Isn't it time for somebody, somewhere, to start telling the *truth* about today's Christianity? Think about it. institutional attendance is dropping like a stone. We've talked about that. "Church" buildings are being bulldozed. I told in one episode how my wife's home congregation is a *parking lot today*. Some of them, according to the newspapers, are being turned into *bars*. And Christians are comical figures, as we said, in movies ... TV shows ... stage plays. Listen, nobody has stopped ask a simple question. Or if they have, I haven't heard it. And that question is: "*Why?*" And the second question is: "What can we *do* about it?"

John (10:53):

And that's where *we* come in. (Amen!) Our goal is to show Christians ... to show everyone ... how to have the *same* kinds of Spiritual experiences that the Early Christians had. That same peace, miracles, and contentment that they had.

Owen (11:13):

Well, and I think John, that everybody, somewhere deep in the back of their mind, wants that. I mean, who *wouldn't* want to live a miraculous life like we read about in Early Christian literature? So what you're saying is true. And that brings us right back to the subject of this episode. As we said, we're entering Part Two of the book. And Part Two of the book is titled, "The Early Christian Basics." Of course, we've been digging a foundation since the first episode. But now we're starting to build a structure on that foundation.

John (11:51):

And it's time to actually take break in our discussion of the Roman emperor Constantine. And to take a break in our discussion of Institutional Christianity. And it's time now to focus on the lifestyle of the Early Christians who lived *before* Constantine was born.

Owen (12:13):

Yeah. And that's the operative phrase, John: *Before* Constantine was born. Let's remember way back, the title of Episode 01 was "The Time Capsule." And our theme in that whole episode was that the most *accurate* evidence – the most *accurate* evidence – available about the original Christians and how they lived is found in the letters ... the symbols ... the paintings ... the artifacts ... and the ruins that they left behind in a specific time zone or specific framework: From the Middle of the First Century, to the Middle of the Second Century. About a brief 100-year snapshot in world history.

John (13:02):

Which means for us: If we're going to talk about "getting back to the basics" of Christian Spirituality, then we must talk about what the *original* Christians said and did in *that* time period, between two Goal Posts of the First and the Second centuries. Isn't that right?

Owen (13:24):

I think that's vital, John. Because listen. Think about this. If we talk about what Christians said and did after – *after* – the Middle of the Second Century, we're not talking about the *original* Christians. Remember, we talked in one episode about the families, of the "three generations" of your typical "immediate" family. And that's what we're talking about here. Sadly though ... sadly though ... many Christians today *don't* study the original evidence. They study *other* sources.

John (14:03):

That's right. Many, many, today only talk about their institutional leaders ... what they're saying and doing right *now*.

Owen (14:15):

Well, that's right. But in my view there's simply not enough *historical* focus in Christianity today. Ask yourselves out there in Podcast Land, "When was the last time you heard another Christian mention something that Christians said and did in the *Second Century*?" Probably never, right?

John (14:38):

I'm sure that's true. It's critical – *it's critical* – that we stay within those two Goal Posts of history. And staying within the First and Second Centuries puts "boundaries" around us. And quite honestly, we shouldn't "step out of bounds."

Owen (14:56):

That's right. And you know, let's stick this in sideways, John: I don't know of another podcast doing that. But we *want* to be unique. We set *out* to be unique. And so as part of staying now within those Goal Posts, we come to an extremely important technique. And it's a technique that I taught for many years in management classes. And the purpose of this technique is to help us understand the basics of Spiritual growth.

John (15:30):

And I can't stress enough how extremely important this is. This might be the most important technique we'll discuss. And so, as our teachers used to tell us when we were in school, "It's time to put on our listening ears!" It's time to tell our friends now about "Defining Key Fuzzy Words."

Owen (15:58):

Yes, and I've had people laugh for many, many years about that term, John. "Fuzzy" words. I remember I used to teach in Mexico and they called them "*fusi palabras*." So but ... "FUZZY" words! And before we explain now what a Fuzzy word is, let's make the broader point. The one thing I've learned down through the years as a Christian is that there are three *Ground Rules* that are going to help us understand Spiritual growth better. And think about this. In the same way that baseball and football need *Ground Rules*, I believe that Spiritual growth needs Ground Rules, too.

John (16:38):

For sure. And in fact, even *more* than baseball and football do!

Owen (16:43):

That's true, that's true. So here's the first of our three Ground Rules. We've already mentioned it. But Ground Rule #1 is: *Defining Key Fuzzy Words* in Christianity.

John (16:56):

I think that this rule is more than a necessity. In fact, it's an absolute requirement.

Owen (17:04):

Absolutely too, yeah. The truth is we can't understand Spiritual growth *without* it. And if you read that backwards, that's one reason a lot of us are *not* growing Spiritually. So here we go. We've all heard people say things like, "Aww, you're just talking in warm fuzzes." And we all *do* that. But what does the word – quote – "Fuzzes" actually mean?

John (17:30):

Yeah, our friends know that it means "not clear," and "confused." But let's talk about it in the context of *Spiritual growth*.

Owen (17:41):

All right. Well, here's how it applies to Spiritual growth. As humans, we often talk to one another in a way that gives other people a *feeling* that we want them to *know* something, or we want them to *do* something. But we never tell them specifically what it is that we want them to *know* or to *do*.

John (18:04):

Yeah, that's right. For example, I'm thinking a Sunday school teacher might say to (his or her) class: "Hey, pay special attention to Lesson Six this week." And that gives the class a *feeling*. But it doesn't tell them specifically what it is that they're supposed to *know* or *do*.

Owen (18:21):

Exactly. And see normally, *speaking* authorities, and *speech* teachers, call that "small talk." Or talking in "generalities." But whatever we call it, speaking and writing in Fuzzy words does *not* give people the specific *facts* that they need to learn. Or the specific *behavior* that they need to follow.

John (18:48):

And I just want to remind our listeners, our friends, that Fuzzy words – in and of themselves – aren't a *bad* thing socially. We all use them every day. But that's just part of being human.

Owen (19:02):

That's exactly right. Socially, they're fine. In fact, they save time and effort. They can even be fun. If you think about it, poetry ... one of my daughters is a poet ... poetry is built on Fuzzy words. So Fuzzy words can be good. Except for one thing: Fuzzy words are dangerous when we're teaching something *important*. And that means they're dangerous when we're teaching how to *grow Spiritually*.

John (19:32):

And we need to be able to see this clearly. We're only saying that Fuzzy words are dangerous when we're trying to *grow Spiritually*. In everyday social life, Fuzzy words are okay.

Owen (19:46):

That's right. So now, let's *define* a "Fuzzy" word for our friends. And here's the definition:

"A Fuzzy word is a word, any word, that has more than one meaning – of course most words *do* – and therefore can indicate more than one behavior. But the person who's speaking or writing doesn't tell us *which* meaning or *which* behavior that he or she is referring to."

John (20:16):

Well that's heavy, Owen. Because it means that many of the words and phrases that we use to teach Spiritual growth are *actually* Fuzzy words. So let's just give a few examples of that.

Owen (20:29):

Yeah, that'll be – that's a great idea. Let's imagine that we're sitting in a coffee shop, or something, with another Christian. And we ask this friend, "Listen, how can I grow Spiritually?" Here's a typical answer that he or she might give us. He or she might say, "*Well, you just need to spend more time in your prayer closet.*"

John (20:53):

Hmm. That's a good one, and a common one. Or they could say, "*You just need to pray through!*"

Owen (20:59):

(Chuckles.) I hear that one a lot. Or, this dear sweet friend might say, "*Well, just stand on the Word and you'll be fine.*"

John (21:07):

Here's another one, "*You need to pray until you touch the hem of His garment.*"

Owen (21:11):

Glory, that's a biggie. (Chuckles.) Well let's stop here, because most of us have heard this kind of advice all of our lives. But notice something important. This kind of advice is *full of Fuzzy words*. How do we know that? Well, the words "pray through" and "stand on the Word" – what do they actually *mean*? But even more specifically. What *behavior* do they indicate for us? If you tell me to "spend more time in my prayer closet" ... or to "stand on the word" ... what does that *mean*? I once saw man put his Bible on the floor and stand on it, and say he was "standing on the Word." But I don't know that anybody in the room became more *Spiritual*.

John (21:59):

Right. These are certainly great examples of Fuzzy Christian teaching. And the thing (is that) it's so common that it's almost become the norm. So now, let's tell our friends, our listeners, what is something we can *do* about it. Let's talk about the technique that is used to *define* "Fuzzy" words.

Owen (22:21):

Great. Great, John. And the technique is so simple that it's almost laughable. But here's the crisis. Today's Christian teaching is *full* of Fuzzy words. And I don't mean that in any ugly way. But if you watch a TV program, or radio program, these days of a Christian speaking in public – and their words are almost *all* Fuzzy. So what do we do? What is the technique? Simply, we ask a simple little *question*. I taught this to management groups for years and years. And here's that little question:

"What does [BLANK] mean?"

In other words, you insert the Fuzzy word in that hole there. So – "What does [BLANK] mean?" And to check that, how that works, let's use the one that you mentioned a minute ago, John: "*You need to pray until you 'touch the hem of his garment'.*" How would we use that, sitting with our friend in the coffee shop?

Owen (23:27):

We'd just simply say, "Oh great, and ...

what does [**touch the hem of his garment**] mean?" (Repeats.)

That's not offensive. That doesn't hurt anybody's feelings. And that person says, "Oh well, you know. Remember back in Matthew 8, in verses 43 through 48, where the sick woman had so much faith that she stuck her hand through the crowd and she touched the hem of Jesus's garment, and she was healed? And so, then what would that phrase mean? It would mean: *Pray until you have enough faith to start growing Spiritually.*"

John (24:13):

Hmm. That's a big difference between those two sentences, isn't it? And that's why so much Christian teaching – we've concluded – is ineffective today. It's full of Fuzzy words. And Christians don't understand, unfortunately, what they're being told. Or what they're supposed to do.

Owen (24:33):

Tragically, tragically. So Ground Rule #1 then, is: "Define Key Fuzzy Words" as we're going here through these episodes.

John (24:44):

Okay, now. So now, let's tell our friends out here listening, some of the Christian Fuzzy words we're going to define for them in the coming episodes.

Owen (24:55):

I think this is really important, John. (Yeah.) In the field of *Spiritual growth*, there are five very, very important key words that most people never stop to define. They just assume that everybody knows what they mean. What are some of these words? Let me list them:

- Christian
- Baptism
- Spiritual
- Worship
- Small Group

Now imagine if we used our magic question: "What do you mean by [**Christian**]?" Or "What do you mean by [**Baptism**]?"

John (25:28):

Yeah, they are (chuckles) ... they are biggies, aren't they? (Absolutely.) I mean, every Christian, you would think, we should be able to define those words right off the top of our head. But I wonder ... I wonder ... how many can actually do it?

Owen (25:46):

Hmm. If I had to guess, it would probably be the answer, "Not many." I know that for years, I couldn't! Now, listen. All of these words: **Christian ... Spiritual ... worship ...** give you a feeling that you *think* you know what they mean. And you *think* you know what behaviors are indicated. But factually, truthfully, what do they *really* mean? And what are the real behaviors that "worship," and "Spiritual," and "Christian" would indicate?

John (26:16):

Yeah, and those are profound questions. And that's why we're talking in this episode about the "basics" of Spirituality. After all, how can we *be* Spiritual, if we don't even understand the basic *words* of Spirituality?

Owen (26:35):

Ouch. That hurts. Well, and I think too, John, that's why so many Christians are *unspiritual* these days. Their Christian teachers – if they have any – *assume* that they know the meanings of these words. And *assume* they know what behavior is indicated if somebody says "worship," or "Spiritual."

John (26:55):

Yeah. But we know that's not true. They don't. And the worst part of it is, that their teachers often don't know what the words mean either!

Owen (27:05):

Very true. I know for years I stood in the public, and had no idea what I was telling them. Well so, if we're going to define these words now – these key Christian words – the next weird question is, "Where would we get the *dictionary*? What type of *dictionary* would we use to look up those definitions?"

John (27:29):

Well I know one thing, Owen. We aren't – we are *not* – going to use Webster's! We aren't going to use Google. Or any other modern source of definitions.

Owen (27:40):

That's right. I mean we keep ... I keep beating my little tin drum ... that we've got to go *back* to the First and Second Centuries. Today John, this is a weird thought. If we're looking for a dic-

tionary for Christian words, the big problem is that there are too *many* of them! Think about that a second. So let's list some of the dictionaries that Christians use today.

John (28:03):

Yeah, you're going to like this. Because this is an important principle.

Owen (28:08):

Sooo ... let's say that we're going to ask ourselves, "Where does the average Christian today get his or her understanding of the most common Christian words?" And the first place is: Many of them take their definitions, their understanding, of Spiritual growth from the books, radio programs, (and) TV shows produced by the pastors of what we call the "mega-churches" today. And they do that because they think, "Well, mercy, this person is a pastor of a church that averages 2,000 people per service. So they must be right."

John (28:51):

Yeah, that's true. We see and hear programs produced by the – quote – "mega-churches" – end of quote – every day. And we accept their definitions. In fact, we don't really have anything to compare it to. So we accept it, their Christian words, their definitions because they are from the "mega-churches."

Owen (29:12):

You got it. But let's say we get smart. And we say, "Look it, I'm just going to go deeper than what my local pastor is telling me." And so other Christians take their definitions from the group called "The Great Evangelists" of the 1700s and 1800s. These were the people like Dwight L. Moody and John Wesley. And they do that because they say, "Well, okay. These people were so popular in their day. They had thousands of people lined up in a pasture to listen to them. So they must have been right."

John (29:48):

Yeah, that's true again. For example, I know these "Great Evangelists" are required reading in many Sunday schools, and even seminary classes.

Owen (29:58):

Absolutely, they are. (But) let's say a person says, "Naah, I want to go a lot deeper." So there are other Christians who take their definitions from "The Great Reformers" of the Middle Ages. These were the people like John Calvin and Martin Luther. And they do that because they say, "Well, these Reformers were so brave in their day. They were facing being tortured for what they were teaching. They must have been right."

John (30:26):

Yeah, right again. "The Great Reformers" are also required reading. I feel like I'm a broken record, Owen!

Owen (30:33):

(Chuckles.) Yes, indeed. Sooo, well. But then again, we go through ... let's say a person said, "Look, I want to go absolutely as deep as I can go." So some Christians then are taking their definition from the so-called "Church Fathers" of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries. And these are writers like St. Jerome and St. Augustine and St. Gregory. And they do that because they say, "Well, look. Those people were so philosophical in their day. So learned in their day. They must have been, right."

John (31:10):

Yeah. I've known Christians who took definitions from all these sources. But I also see a pattern here. It's this: Very few Christians today are taking their definitions, their understanding of key Christian words, *from the original Christians*.

Owen (31:30):

Exactly. Go back to the *inventor*! Go back to the *founder* every time! And that's exactly the problem that we want our friends in Podcast Land to see in this episode. Not enough of us today are taking our definitions of the key Christian words – the key Christian *Fuzzy* words – from the writings ... and symbols ... and paintings of the original Christians in the First and Second Centuries. Well, who were these people? These were the Christian writers, these names may sound familiar to you: Peter ... Paul ... James ... John ... Luke in the First Century. And then, lesser known: Clement ... Ignatius ... and the others in the Second Century.

John (32:21):

Yeah. That's so, so, very interesting. And actually, it's the underpinning of everything that we are talking about. So let's tell our friends once again why this is such a *bad* thing.

Owen (32:35):

Well remember, we said back in Episodes 01 and 02, where we were talking about "The Time Capsule" in the First and Second Centuries: That was the period of time when the most *accurate* evidence existed on what Christianity was, and was meant to be. In other words, the fundamentals of it. The foundations of it. And after that, the further we go away from there, through into the Fourth Century and beyond, that *accurate* evidence just simply fades away.

John (33:11):

So, that means that Christians who take their definitions from writers who wrote – or who are writing – *after* the Fourth Century, we can conclude, do *not* have the most accurate definitions for their words. Am I understanding that correctly?

Owen (33:32):

Yeah. And I mean, that's tragic. Because they *mean* well. It's not *their* fault. They were taught that too. (Right.) But think about it. Any writer who wrote – or is now writing – after the Fourth Century, is either a member of now ... or a former member of ... Institutional Christianity. And so, no matter how hard they try, they're heavily influenced by the structure and traditions of Institutional Christianity.

John (34:08):

Uh-huh. It's the lens they're always looking (through). So Christian writers today, what you're saying is, they can't *help* speaking and writing from the viewpoint of their denominations or traditions. And they define their Fuzzy words the way their *denominations* define them. Because their reputations and income depend on it. And we might add, they literally – and we don't mean this condescendingly – don't know any better.

Owen (34:40):

Yeah, that's true. As you say so often, John: "You don't know what you don't know." And I think that's a very (chuckles) insightful comment. But look it, what that means is their definitions for Christian Spiritual worship are 1,700 years removed from the definitions of those words by the *original* Christians. Here's something we need to remember, John. The denominations, as we know them today, were founded in the *Middle Ages*. They were *not* founded by the original Christians. Now, I know there are some denominations – I'm thinking of one specifically – that claim that they were founded by the Early Christians in the First Century. But they *weren't*. We know they were founded by Constantine in the Fourth Century.

John (35:34):

Yeah. And I know, as you're listening to this, that this ... especially for the first time ... may sound just a little heady. But we can't emphasize enough that the point of all of this is simple. It's simply this: If Christians don't, if we don't, understand the basic *words* for Spiritual growth, how are we ever going to *learn* about – not only learn but *live* – Spiritual growth?

Owen (36:06):

Experience it. That's right, exactly. And you know, John. I too, join you. I hope this doesn't sound too harsh. But back in Episode 01, we said it was important to learn from people who had known *Jesus*. Or people who had known *people* who had known *Jesus*. And that's exactly what we're talking about, by taking our definitions from the Middle of the First and Second Centuries.

John (36:34):

Yeah. No, Owen, I don't think this principle – *excuse me* – I *think* this principle is so important that we can't – we *can't* – be too harsh with it.

Owen (36:45):

Yeah. Well, so let's summarize what we've said, then. **Ground Rule #1** is: "*Define These Key Fuzzy Words.*" **Ground Rule #2** is to: "*Define Them Using Only First and Second Century Definitions.*"

John (37:02):

And I think our first two ground rules, "Define Fuzzy Words," and "Use First and Second Century Definitions," make perfect sense. And I don't see why anyone would not ... we would not ... want to use them as our resource.

Owen (37:19):

Yeah, because what would be holding us back? What would we be afraid of? Well, so now here's **#3**. Here's our last and could be (our) most important **Ground Rule**. And it's this. These word meanings that we're talking about are: "*Models for Behavior.*"

John (37:39):

Hmm. Wow. I think that's going to be a biggie, Owen. Very few Christians use Early Christian word meanings as *models* for daily behavior.

Owen (37:50):

Yeah, think about it. I mean that's sad, but true. To be again "deathbed honest," most Christians just behave the way each day that the *non-Christians* around them are behaving. And you know, we'll talk about *Peer Group Pressure* – a great big subject – in another episode. But that is exactly the reason why the national polls show no Spiritual difference between Christians and non-Christians. So a big part of Defining Fuzzy Words is knowing what behavior, what daily *behavior*, they're indicating for us Christians. Like we've said, Christianity is a supernatural experience. It's a religion of supernatural behavior. It's not a religion of intellectual ideas for us to sit around and debate.

John (38:48):

Yeah. And as we've said so often, that's why Christianity spread worldwide in only 70 years. Non-Christians saw the supernatural *behavior* that the Christians had. And they wanted it too. I'm sure they did. That's why we're doing this. And so they became Christians to get it.

Owen (39:12):

Yeah, John. And let's read that backwards. Think about this. If Christians had *not* had supernatural behavior in the First Century, Christianity would *not* have spread worldwide, and there wouldn't be any Christians today.

John (39:29):

Huh. A lot of us have never thought of it that way! I think that's a vital principle.

Owen (39:34):

So ... let's go even deeper with that. One of the reasons why Christianity is in crisis today is because it no longer teaches that Christianity is *supernatural behavior*. When have you ever heard somebody tell you that? Today, it's largely a "Debate Club." We sit around with tea and cookies and we debate. And we tell one another what we think we *can* do and *will* do, and *don't* believe and *do* believe.

John (40:07):

Yeah, we sit around and ask one another *opinion questions*. I understand completely. Things like: "Do you think these are the end times?" And "Do you think people in heaven can see what we're doing?"

Owen (40:20):

I heard that this week! (Chuckles.) But listen, John. As my wife's mother used to say, "In the light of eternity, what do these questions matter?" The fact is, they don't help us have *supernatural behavior* each day. You know what? They probably *detract* from it.

John (40:41):

Yeah, I think so. So here's the point. That one of the emphases of our podcast is: Christianity isn't an *opinion*. Right? It's a *supernatural* experience. And that means the more "Opinion Questions" we ask each other, the more like a "Debate Club" we become.

Owen (41:03):

(Chuckles.) That's a good lesson, John. You know, again, I say back in Episodes 01 and 02, we were talking about *behavior* in those episodes. And you know what? We said that the Early Christians were originally called, Followers of The Way. They were not called, "Followers of The Opinion." (Right!) So John, here's the principle: The definitions that the Early Christians wrote about – and their definitions were definitions of Spiritual *behavior*. They were tools for teaching Spiritual *behavior*. We don't often see that. And that's why those same definitions are so necessary today.

John (41:49):

Yeah, and that's why our episodes are – that's what they're all about. And we're excited, because we're going to talk about what those original Early Christians, how they defined this.

Owen (42:04):

That's right. Absolutely. Well John, here we go again. I see from the big clock on the wall that it's almost time to close. But let's summarize. So we've talked about "The Spiritual basics."

And we've said that there's a lack of understanding of the Spiritual *basics* today. And that's causing, that's the reason why, so many Christians are confused about Spiritual *growth*.

John (42:36):

Yes, and now we know *why* people are confused. It's because no one is giving them the *original* definitions for Christianity's key: What we call "Fuzzy words." So we're doing that in these episodes.

Owen (42:56):

That's right. And you know, here's this important fact again. When defined correctly, these Christian words, like "worship" ... like "Spiritual" ... like "Christian" are *behavior* words. They're not opinion words. And that's why, John, we say so often, you said it at the top of the show: "If we do" – that's *behavior* – "if we do what they *did*, we'll have what they *had*."

John (43:26):

Yeah, and Owen, I just recently (had) a conversation with someone who made the statement ... it's just so true ... that *actions* always trump our words. They will always carry the day. Our *actions* over what we say. So we can't – we *cannot* – overemphasize the importance of that. Christianity is a matter of *behavior*. Of *actions*. Not opinions and words. Spiritual growth is a *behavior*. It's a lifestyle. It's not opinion.

Owen (44:02):

That's so, so, well said, John! Well, so look. As we come to the close of the episode, let's review. There are three Ground Rules. Because listen, we're going to use them from now on:

- **Ground Rule #1:** *Define Our Key Fuzzy Words.*
- **Ground Rule #2:** *Define Them With First and Second Century Definitions.*
- **Ground Rule #3:** *Use Those Meanings as Models for Behavior...*

... not as goals or items of debate. So we're going to stick to these now in our future episodes, and not say probably much more about it. We're just going to do it. So, I don't know, John. I think as we close, this has been one of our most important episodes.

John (44:53):

Yeah, it clearly has been. And our friends should remember that this is Episode 08, and that pictures, a script, and a recording of it, all of these, are on our podcast website, along with all the other episodes in the series.

Owen (45:12):

That's right. And remember, as we said earlier, our new podcast address is: www.

goSCpod.com. And that's G-O-S-C-P-O-D, goSCpod.com. Of course, the old address that we've given you in earlier episodes, CFOpods.com, is still good. And also, listen. Remember that these episodes are a *series*. And we're giving a new episode every-other-Tuesday. But the episodes are connected *sequentially*. So they build on one another. And we hope and pray that you'll go back, if you haven't, and listen to the originals – some of the earlier episodes that build up to this one.

Owen (46:05):

But anyway, for now, this is Owen Allen ...

John (46:08):

... and this is John Shields, together with our producer, Shannon Wolfe ...

Owen (46:13):

... saying: May the God of our fathers bless you, and keep you, and guide you, and protect you, until we meet again.

Owen and John (46:34):

Owen and John end the episode.

