Getting Started

The first part of any game is learning the basic rules. There has to be a place to start. In fact, the very first words of the Bible are: "***In the Beginning***".

Setting up the board correctly is one important step. Just think of the confusion in any game if the rules always changed from one time to the next.

God is the same today as He was yesterday, and as He will be tomorrow.

The first step in getting to know God is to recognize you are a sinner in need of forgiveness. This is called *repentance*.

*We have all sinned and fall short of the Glory of God* (Romans 3:23).

But what is sin? In general terms, sin is anything that doesn't please God.

The Bible tells us that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). When we *earn* something it is because we deserve it. We earn money for the jobs we do; we earn the grades we get in school; we earn the punishment from our parents when we fail to do as we are told; and the wages we earn for our sins is death. The problem today is we have come to believe right and wrong are relative terms. We see others around us and compare our 'goodness' to their 'badness'. This is also false since man cannot compare himself to other men.

*There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*  (Proverbs 14:12).

Just as there are rules for chess, God has an absolute view about obedience and the Bible instructs us:

*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* (James 2:10).

Sin can take two forms:

**1) Doing what you should not be doing:**

 Stealing, lying, murder or thoughts such as pride, lust, hatred and envy.

**2) Not doing what you should be doing:**

 Not Praying, Not reading the Bible, Not loving your neighbor.

**It is hard to escape the fact – we are ALL are sinners.**

However, God loves us and he offers us the free gift of eternal life.

*For while we* ***were still sinners****, Christ died for us.*

 (Romans 5:8)

God did not say we had to ‘clean up’ our act and get everything together before we could start to know Him.

He came to us *while we were still* sinners and gave us the gift of eternal life.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

**So, what does SIN have to do with setting up the board?**

Since the chess board is a square, you can turn it and face any direction and it will appear to be the same? Right?

WRONG! Even though you can set up the pieces and play the game, it will not be the same.

It may appear to be the same, but it is not! This is how it is with God.

If we try to apply our thinking to God's view, we can be doing what we think is correct, but have it all turned around from God's perspective.

**The first thing to learn about setting up the chess board is:**

**The light square is in the right hand corner**.

Jesus is often called the **Light** and the Way.

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.* (John 8:12)

You will go the ***right*** way with the ***light*** of Jesus.

*You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand*. (Psalm 16:11)

*Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them*.

 (Hosea 14:9)

Some chess boards have letters and numbers around the edges.

If the board has these ***notation*** aids, the letter '**a**' should be in the left (as WHITE is looking at the board). This is to help *record or notate* the moves of the game so it can be replayed and analyzed.

This way, you do not have to remember everything.

As my pastor often used a famous quote,

 “*The dullest pencil remembers more than the sharpest mind.”*

Always be ready to write down things you have learned, or things you want to learn. Be open and receptive to new things. Listen to what is being said.

Every game of chess is a new opportunity. Past games and past performances have no impact on the game that is about to be played. Start each day as a new game. Better yet, start each hour as a new game. We often start and end our day with a prayer and then fail to include God in everything else we do. Confess to God your sins and begin anew. Don't wait until it is too late. Many times I've heard of people who have never had another opportunity to know God.

**Pray your heart and mind will always be ready to learn.**

In 1442, there was a Church Council of Florence that looked at various Scripture and writings and made a decision that The Bible is divided into two parts or sections called the OLD and NEW Testament.

The Protestant Christian Bible has 66 Books starting with Genesis and ending with Revelation.

The Catholic Bible has an additional seven Old Testament books called the APOCRAPA.

The Book of Matthew is the 1st book in the New Testament. Each Book has been broken into chapters and within the chapters, the verses have been numbered. Early Bible scrolls did not have Chapters and Verses; these were added so we could learn about God’s truths and to be able to go back and find them, read them, memorize them and talk about them.

Just as we can reference and talk about the Bible (as you have seen so far in this book), every square on the chess board can also be referenced by a "FIRST" and "LAST" name.

The *"First Name"*  is a letter: **a, b, c, d, e, f, g, or h**.

 These are also called 'Files' on the board. (Columns)

The *"Last Name"* is a number: **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8.**

 These are also called the 'Ranks'. (Rows)

There are 64 squares on the board and they each have their own name.

*In older chess books you will find another form of chess notation that was used to describe the pieces relative to each player and in reference to the King and Queen. This is sometimes called Descriptive Notation.*

It Takes Time

**Learning to play chess is something that does not happen right away.**

There is so much to learn you can not learn it all at once. It would be like trying to learn the entire contents of the Bible at one time. It cannot be done!

Over time, you will find everything is interrelated, but it takes time and prayer to understand.

Learning to play chess is also like learning a new language, playing an instrument, learning a sport or subject in school. You may be able to learn the words in the vocabulary and learn the rules for sentence structure but still not be able to speak the language very well. Even though we have learned how to spell, read, and write, this does not mean we will all become great authors.

There are many great scholars and teachers who have knowledge about many things. Many people know of Jesus, but they don't KNOW Jesus. God wants you to learn about His gift but you have to be able to first open your heart and let Jesus be your Savior and your Lord.

Without a believing faith, it is impossible to know God.

*We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.*

*The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him* (1 John 2:3-4).

You can try to learn chess from books on your own, just as many people try to read the Bible on their own. You may have some success, but you need a teacher and mentor to make the words come alive. To learn about God, you need to call on the power of the Holy Spirit to help and guide you.

*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* (John 14:26)

*As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit-- just as it has taught you, remain in Him.* (1 John 2:27)

Be ready to do battle once you turn your life over to God.

Even though Satan has lost the war, he will try his best to keep you from developing a relationship with God.

Be very careful not to let chess (or anything else) interfere with your relationship with God. Learning new things requires discipline and practice.

Do not get discouraged when you do not understand things right away.

Anyone can play chess. Just as there are no barriers to enter God’s kingdom, there are no barriers to playing the game. The only thing you should look at is the board. The age, sex, race, grade, or background of the players has no meaning. Some players have had more practice than others and some do seem to learn faster than others, but everyone can play. Learning an instrument, painting, cooking, or speaking another language are other skills you may learn, but some people will be better than others.

We should help each other grow and learn something new each day.

We all seem to be born with same special talents and skills that make us unique. When we are born into the Kingdom of God, we are also given one or more Spiritual Gifts that we are to use for the kingdom (1 Corinthians 4:7).

But being different is what makes each of us special!

**We each have skills, talents, and gifts that make us unique.**

*Pray to understand the gifts you have and how they may be used to glorify God.*

*Learn to play chess,*

*and you can find others all over the world*

*to play with.*

*Learn to love Christ,*

 *and you will find brothers all over the world*

*to pray with.*

It Is Not a “Black” and “White” Thing

The first thing many students notice is that the game is played with pieces of two different colors.

The light colored pieces are referred to as WHITE,

and the dark colored pieces are referred to as BLACK.

This should not be made into a grand issue of WHITE vs. BLACK.

It should also NOT be looked at as Good vs. Evil. It is just a game!

The board and pieces could have been called anything:

 Stripes and Dots, Silver and Gold, Sticks and Stones, Rocks and Shells.

The squares on the board are also called White and Black.

It doesn't matter what they look like. (However, the color combination of Red/Black used for a checker board is not considered a Legal board for a game of chess!)

People come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, too.

Do not judge a person by what he looks like.

 *For those who love Christ will love one another.*

 *(John 13:34-35*)

We are also told*,*

*He dies for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Live in peace with each other. Be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back a wrong for a wrong but always try to be kind to each other.*

 *(1 Thessalonians 5: 10-15.)*

**Pray we can overcome our differences and prejudices and see every human being with complete love, just as Jesus sees us.**The Conflict

Please understand that chess is not about Black verses White;

it is just a game where the two sides need to be distinguished!

Life is not about being Black or White. We are all on this earth together and we can all be united and join the family and the kingdom of God.

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.* (John 1:12)

On the chess board we need to identify our pieces and those of the opponent. We have many opponents in life. Some of these are internal and some are external. Internally we are filled with sin and have to fight the enemy and God gives us the peace and strength to fight this opponent:

*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.* (Romans 7:18-25)

There are also external opponents in the world, but God is stronger:

*For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.* (I John 2:16-17)

**The real battle is to share the love of Jesus**

**so all may know Him.**

**The forces against us are great**

**but the victory will be sweet.**

God doesn't care about our color or social status; He only cares about our heart.

*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

(I Corinthians 12: 13)

*Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.* (I John 3:10-24)

**When you look for differences in people, you might overlook what you have in common. Jesus did not die and rise again for only one type of person.**

**God came to earth so that ALL should be saved and have eternal life.**

**The Bible tells us:**

*That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.* (I John 3:15-17)

**God loves us and He wants us to know Him.**

**Pray for yourself and for others**

**to come to know God in a more personal way.**