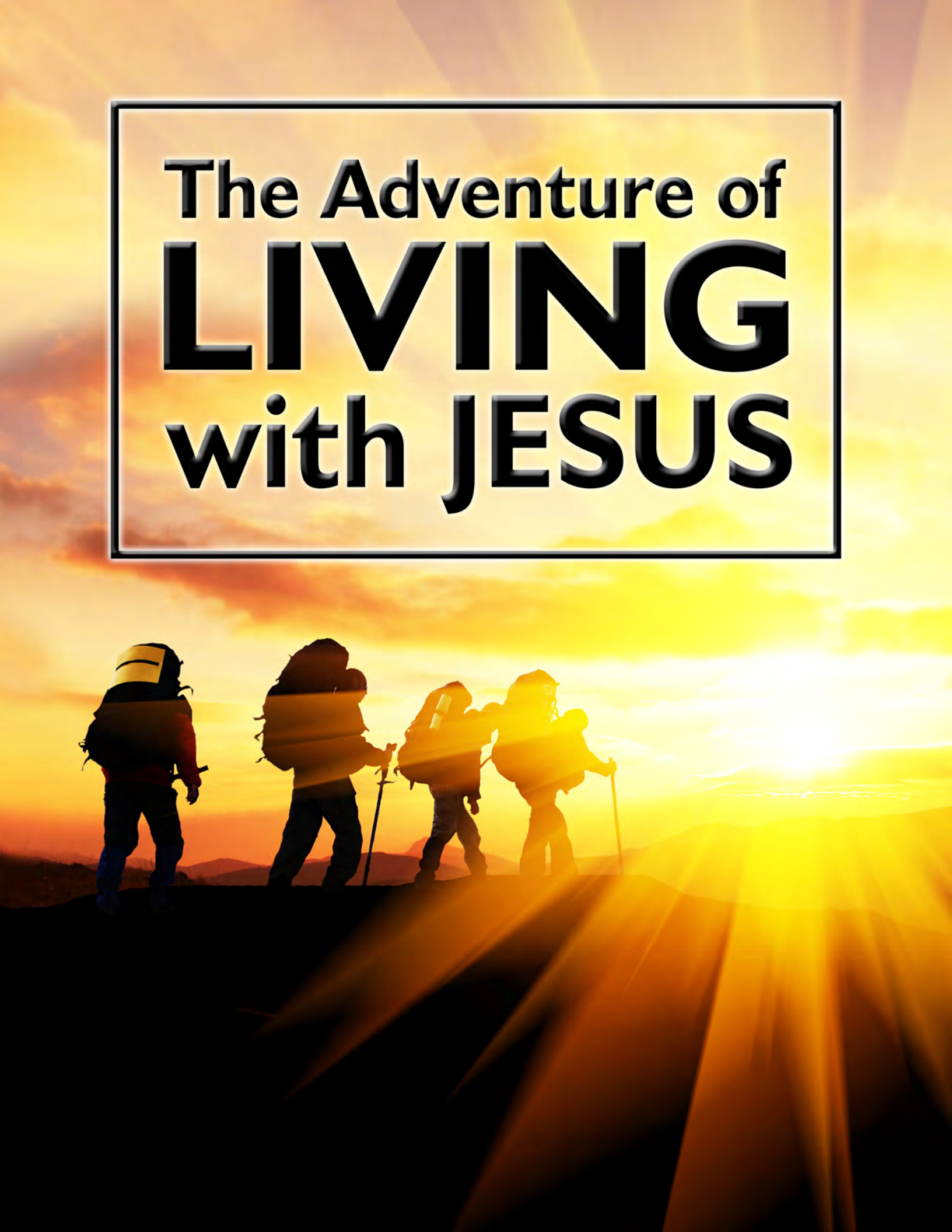
The Adventure of LIVING with JESUS



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The Adventure of Living with Jesus

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Introduction

When you have asked Jesus Christ into your life, it is important to begin to learn about the wonderful life God has planned for you. Jesus promises to take our ordinary, self-centered lives, and make them exceptional and rewarding.

It only makes sense that the One who created us knows what is best for our lives and can fill them with meaning and focus. By letting Jesus direct your life, you will truly experience purposeful living and a life filled with adventure.

In his booklet, *My Heart, Christ's Home,* Robert Boyd Munger wrote about how Jesus can make this difference in our lives. When Munger gave his heart to Christ, he imagined Jesus as the new guest he had invited into his home. Munger explains how his relationship with Christ changed everything else in his life.

Jesus promises to take our ordinary, self-centered lives, and make them exceptional and rewarding.



> "One evening I invited Jesus Christ into my heart. What an entrance He made! It was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real. Something happened at the very center of my life. He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light.
>
> He built a fire on the hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been stillness, and He filled the emptiness with His own loving, wonderful fellowship. I have never regretted opening the door to Christ and I never will.
>
> In the joy of this new relationship I said to Jesus Christ, 'Lord, I want this heart of mine to be Yours. I want to have You settle down here and be perfectly at home. Everything I have belongs to You. Let me show You around.'"

When Munger gave his heart to Christ, he imagined Jesus as the new guest he had invited into his home.

Munger writes of the different areas of his life as "rooms" of a house that Jesus now resided within. He imagines Jesus looking around his house, offering to change each room, "removing the filth and making it warm and clean."

Jesus can bring meaning and purpose to your life as you surrender to Him and apply God's promises to your life.

For example, the "Study" of his heart represents the books and magazines he read. For us today that would include the TV programs that we watch and the Internet sites we visit. Ashamed of the things he had been putting into his mind, Munger writes,

> "Red-faced, I turned to Him and said, 'Master, I know that this room needs to be cleaned up and made over. Will You help me make it what it ought to be?' 'Certainly!' He said. 'I'm glad to help you. First of all, take all the things that you are reading and looking at which are not helpful, pure, good and true, and throw them out!'"

One room, the closet, was so private Munger felt ashamed. But Jesus reminded him that His light can change even the darkest areas of our lives.

Munger's story illustrates how Jesus can bring meaning and purpose to your life as you surrender to Him and apply God's promises to your life. These promises are contained in His Word, the Bible.

The Bible tells us that it is God's will that we grow in our relationship with Christ, and live the tremendous life He planned for us (Ephesians 2:10). As we study and apply God's Word to our lives, we really begin to live a life that finds its purpose in Jesus Christ. This course is all about the adventure we experience in life when we let our relationship with Jesus direct our lives.

If you have made the decision to receive Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, you have begun an exciting journey with Christ that will never end.

Running a Marathon

If you have made the decision to receive Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, you have begun an exciting journey with Christ that will never end.

The Christian life is more like a marathon than a sprint. At the beginning of a race, competitors always feel great and have lots of energy. However, you can't expect the emotions that you are feeling as you begin your walk with Christ to carry you through when the pressures of daily life are upon you.

Running a marathon requires a great deal of time in training. But training time definitely pays off in helping a runner to run a better race.



In order for you to run your best race for Christ you need to spend time in training. Is Christ at the finish line, or is He actually running the race for us? God wants you to glorify Him in the Christian life, and is totally committed to your success, and His Holy Spirit will empower you and help you during each mile you run in life.

Becoming a New Person in Christ

1

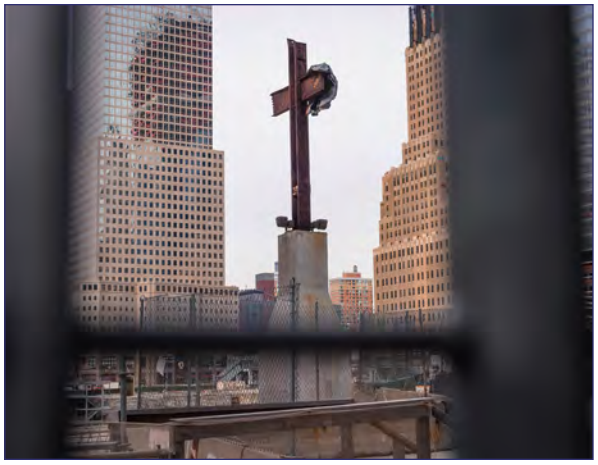
Are you certain you would go to Heaven if you died today? God's Word tells us we can know for sure.

The material in this section will help you determine the certainty of your eternal future with Christ. Even if you have already invited Christ into your life, it is vital to have assurance that you belong to Him forever.

Are you certain you would go to Heaven if you died today?

On September 11th, 2001, nearly 3,000 people died in a violent act of terrorism at the World Trade Center. They immediately faced their Maker. None started his or her day with any clue it would be their last day on planet Earth.

You and I will also face our Maker at some point in the future. Then it will be too late to make a decision to live for God. Are you ready to face your Maker? The Bible says you can be ready. It says that you can be absolutely sure that, as one who trusts Christ, you actually have God's guarantee of His acceptance.



You are no accident!

In order to understand why God created you, why Jesus Christ died, and how you can be assured of eternal life, let's review what the Bible says about God's eternal plan.

How You Got Here

You are no accident! (See Psalm 139:13-18.) The Bible tells us that God created everything from nothing—and the Bible also says that it was mere "finger work" for Him. There are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on the entire Earth, yet God says you are more important to Him than all of them put together. Psalm 139 tells us that God's thoughts about you as a person are more than all the grains of sand. He thinks about you and me all the time!

What You Are Here For

The Bible tells us God is your loving Father, who planned and designed you to be His child for all eternity. He wants you to share in the treasures He has for you in Christ. (See Ephesians 1:3-11.) God could have made you like a robot who had no other choice but to love Him. However, He wanted you to choose to love and obey Him of your own free will. And so God gave you free choice!

Wrong Choices

The first man, Adam, was given the choice to love and obey God. When Adam chose to disobey, he began the sad plight of selfishness and rebellion that's prevalent in our world today. Read Genesis chapter 3 to find out how sin originated.



The problem is that we all have made wrong choices in life. The Bible calls these wrong choices "sin."

The problem is that we all have made wrong choices in life. The Bible calls these wrong choices "sin" which in the original Hebrew language means "missing the mark" … like an archer missing his target. Sin is the reason for wars, terrorism, social injustice, selfishness, greed, jealousy, and addictive behavior, among other things.

Q Read Romans 5:12. What does this verse tell us about sin?

_____

Q What does Isaiah 53:6 say we have done with our choices?

_____

Q What do Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21, and Jeremiah 17:9-10 say about the human heart?

_____

Q In Romans 3:23, how many have sinned?

_____

In spite of our unworthiness, our loving and merciful God found a way to give us hope and favor.

Q Does that include you?

_____

Separation from God

The Bible says that God is absolutely pure and holy, and cannot allow unforgiven sinners to pollute His holy presence (Habakkuk 1:13; Isaiah 59:2).

Paul told the Roman believers what God's attitude is toward open rebellion and sin:

"For God's [holy] wrath and indignation are revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who in their wickedness repress and hinder the truth and make it inoperative" (Romans 1:18).

Jesus actually comes into our lives and takes up permanent residence.

Q In Romans 6:23, what is sin's penalty?

_____

If we were to stop at this point, life would be hopeless and full of despair. But, in spite of our unworthiness, our loving and merciful God found a way to give us hope and favor. And … He paid the ultimate price to do it … His only Son!

Jesus Christ fulfilled over two hundred of those prophecies written in the Old Testament ... exactly!

Jesus Christ–God's Solution

Here are just a few Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah which were fulfilled by Jesus. Look them up, and write down the specific prophecies that were fulfilled.

OLD TESTAMENT:	NEW TESTAMENT:	FULFILLMENT:
Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1	
Isaiah 9:6-7	Luke 1:31-33	
Psalm 22:1	Matthew 27:46	
Psalm 22:18	Matthew 27:35	
Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:35	

Being a Christian means you have a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not a "religious system" or a list of rules.

The odds against one person fulfilling merely eight conditions in these prophecies would be the same as a blindfolded person picking one special silver dollar from a two-foot high stack of silver dollars over an area the size of Texas (greater than the entire nation of France). Yet, Jesus Christ fulfilled over two hundred of those prophecies written in the Old Testament ... exactly! Jesus' sinless life qualified Him to be God's perfect sacrifice for all of our sins (Hebrews 9:14).

Q Who is Jesus Christ to you?

_____

Read "Was Jesus the Messiah?" on Jesus' fulfillment of prophecies at **Y-Jesus.com.**

Jesus Claimed To Be God

Jesus claimed that He was the "I AM" that God had called Himself in the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14-15; John 8:57-59).

Jesus also made other "I AM" statements of Himself:

- "I AM the bread of life" (John 6:35).
- "I AM the light of the world" (John 8:12).
- "I AM the good shepherd" (John 10:11).
- "I AM the door" (John 10:9).
- "I AM the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).
- "I AM the way…truth…and the life" (John 14:6).
- "I AM the vine" (John 15:1).

Who is Jesus according to the following verses?

When we accept Christ's sacrifice for our sins, we will experience an abundant life on earth, and then eternal life continuing in Heaven.

John 1:1-14 _____

John 14:9 _____

Colossians 1:15-20 _____

Hebrews 1:1-8_____

John 10:30 _____

Philippians 2:6-11_____

Colossians 2:9 _____

Revelation 22:12-16 _____

All the evidence points clearly to the fact that Jesus Christ is God!

Jesus rose from the dead on the third day…just as He had promised!

Sometimes it's hard for people to accept the fact that Jesus is God because they can't see Him. One of Jesus' disciples, "doubting Thomas," was like that. Read his story in John 20:24-29.

Q What convinced Thomas?

_____

_____

Q What convinced you?

_____

_____

Read "Did Jesus claim to be God?" for evidence about Jesus' claim to be God at **Y-Jesus.com.**

Jesus told His disciples: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Jesus Died On The Cross

The religious leaders knew Jesus was making statements that only God could make, and accused Him of blasphemy against God (John 10:33). In an unlawful trial they convicted Him, and turned Him over to the Romans to have Him executed. Jesus then was beaten mercilessly, nailed to a cross between two thieves, and buried in a heavily guarded tomb. All hope seemed lost.

Jesus Conquered Death!

The truth is that Jesus Christ paid for all your sins on the cross … and has given you direct access to God.

But, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day…just as He had promised. (Matthew 16:21). Historical records from eyewitnesses testify that Jesus Christ was then seen alive by more than 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). He is alive today!

Read "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" for the evidence about Jesus' resurrection at **Y-Jesus.com.**



- Buddha is dead.
- Muhammad is dead.
- Confucius is dead.
- JESUS CHRIST IS ALIVE!

Jesus' disciples fled in fear when He went through the torture of the cross, but they became men of great courage when they saw Him alive after three days! They lost all fear—even when, later, they too were tortured to death for their faith. Wow! Isn't that incredible? Jesus Christ is alive today!

The Bible calls Jesus the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:11-16).

And, it states that Jesus Christ will return to the earth in power and great glory (see Zechariah 14:4 and Luke 21:27).

Eternal life is a gift from God. You cannot do anything to earn it!

"There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus told His disciples: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

God's Free Gift

The truth is that Jesus Christ paid for all your sins on the cross … and has given you direct access to God. God's perfect justice is totally satisfied by the blood of Jesus. He "bought" you, and there are no "returns" (Hebrews 7:25; 9:12).

Becoming a Christian is putting your faith in Jesus' death for you on the cross, and in His resurrection for your eternal life.

But, you may be wondering, "What about all the good things I've done in my life?"

What do the following verses tell us about who is responsible for your salvation?

Romans 5:8_____

_____

Ephesians 2:8-9_____

_____

Titus 3:5-6_____

_____

1 Peter 3:18_____

_____

Eternal life is a gift from God. You cannot do anything to earn it.

However, like any gift, you can choose to accept or reject it. It's your free choice.

Jesus wants to change your life from being self-centered into a purposeful life that pleases Him.

How to Join God's Family

Q If you had been one of the victims at the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, what would you have said to God if He had asked you, "Why should I let you into heaven?"

_____

Q According to 1 John 5:11-13, and John 3:15-18, what is the one requirement of having eternal life in heaven?

_____

In the original Greek language, the word "believe" means to: trust in, cling to, rely upon. In other words, "believe" in the original Greek language is an active faith … much like the faith rock climbers have in the rope to hold them secure. Becoming a Christian is putting your faith in Jesus' death for you on the cross, and in His resurrection for your eternal life.

Faith versus Feelings

Christianity is a relationship with Christ—based on faith alone! Your faith is to be based on the facts in the Bible … not feelings (See 2 Timothy 3:16). Faith in Christ may result in feelings … and often does. But, emotions are changeable, and you can't depend upon them. You can only depend on what God says in His Word!

Accepting God's Forgiveness

The most important decision you will ever make in life is to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. Coming to Jesus is about giving your life to Him and accepting God's forgiveness by faith.

However, as Robert Munger discovered, Jesus wants to change your life from being self-centered into a purposeful life that pleases Him.

Personal Invitation



In order to receive God's forgiveness for your sins, you must personally invite Jesus Christ into your life (John 1:12). God knows your thoughts and motives. He desires you to come to Him in faith and humbleness, thanking Him for His death for you on the cross. You receive Jesus Christ into your life by admitting your sinfulness and by accepting His forgiveness for your sins through His death on the cross.

As God's child He will always love you—even when you fail Him.

Q Have you ever personally invited Jesus into your life? If so, when?

_____

_____

If you haven't ever invited Jesus into your life, simply pray the following words, trusting Him to answer you.

"Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for all my sins. Thank you for giving me eternal life, which you made possible by your death and resurrection. I receive You as my Savior by faith, and desire You to be Lord of my life."

Date: _____

Where Are You Going After You Die?

Q Read 1 John 5:11-13. If you have Jesus Christ in your life, what are you sure of?

_____

_____

Your growth in Christ and your victory over temptation will depend on you following God's growth plan.

Q Once you have put your faith in Christ, is there anything that can separate you from God's love? What does Romans 8:38-39 tell us?

_____

_____

Q Will Christ ever leave you? What does Hebrews 13:5 have to say?

_____

_____

Q For how long will God forgive your sins? Read Hebrews 8:12.

As a Christian, you are granted an inheritance.

_____

_____

As God's child He will always love you—even when you fail Him. He will never give up on you—even when you give up on Him. Never quit running the race!

Your Inheritance in Christ

As a Christian, you are granted an inheritance. Take time to read the following verses that tell you about your inheritance in Christ, and thank God for giving it to you.

- Your sins are completely forgiven (Colossians 2:13-14).
- You become a child of God—forever (John 1:12).
- Christ actually comes into your life (Revelations 3:20).
- The Holy Spirit is your guarantee (2 Corinthians 1:22).
- Christ gives you His nature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

As you learn to trust God's Word and grow in Christ, you will experience more and more victory over the enemy's attacks. Your growth in Christ and your victory over temptation will depend on you following God's growth plan.

Growth is God's Plan for You

God's growth plan for you as a Christian is as follows:

1. Walk in the Holy Spirit
2. Trust God with your life
3. Know and trust God's Word
4. Pray to God
5. Fellowship with other Christians
6. Obey Christ

It is important to grow in your new relationship with Christ. Spend time going through the remainder of this booklet—looking up the Bible verses—and telling God you want to live the adventure He has planned for you.

The Holy Spirit: God's Gift to You

2

Without the Holy Spirit, living for Christ is impossible.

With Him, you can do anything and everything through Christ!

When you run a race, such as a marathon, it is your race to win or lose … without any help or encouragement. Living for Christ is different.

When Jesus left the earth after His resurrection, He told his disciples to wait for the "promise" He would send them from his Father. "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised" (Luke 24:49).

The Holy Spirit is called many things in the Bible, but His main role in your life is to be your "Encourager and Comforter" as you embark on your new journey with Christ (see John 16:7-15).

Without the Holy Spirit, living for Christ is impossible. With Him, you can do anything and everything through Christ (Philippians 4:13)!

The Indwelling Holy Spirit

When you invited Jesus Christ to be your personal Savior and Lord, He actually entered your life–and He will be with you forever. You will never be alone! Ephesians 3:16-17 tells us, "He [will] strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

As Munger discovered, your invited guest and Lord, Jesus, desires to "settle down" in each "room" of your "house." He brings warmth, light and music. Christ lives in you through the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

Even though the Holy Spirit is invisible, He is a real person—the Spirit of Jesus (John 14:16-21).

Read the following verses to find out more about the Holy Spirit:

Q Acts 5:3-4 _____

_____

Q John 14:16-17 _____

Q 1 Corinthians 6:19_____

_____

Yes, the Bible states clearly that just like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is God; one God in three persons.

The Holy Spirit will take each area of your life which you commit to Him and make it meaningful and purposeful. It won't happen immediately, and there will undoubtedly be setbacks, but, "He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

You may not always feel…or act new. But in God's eyes you are totally new!

A New You

"Those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

You are now a totally new creation just like a new butterfly, which was formerly a caterpillar.

You may not always feel…or act new. But in God's eyes you are totally new!

The Father sees you as one whom his dear Son has purchased with the price of his own blood. You are His royal child! (Hebrews 2:9-11).

Your Best Friend

The Bible tells you that Jesus is your best friend.

Ashley's Story

"I always put my friends above God. In fact, my life revolved around my friends so much that I began to get involved in reckless behavior just to seem 'cool' to others.



"Pretty soon I got involved in drugs, sex and alcohol. My life got out of control, and I felt worthless, with no purpose other than to get 'high.' Then I even lost my friends, who called me 'trash.'

"One day someone told me that Jesus Christ not only created me, but wanted to be my best friend. I couldn't believe it at first. Later, I decided to ask Him into my life. Since then, God has given me a new purpose in life and helped me break my addictions. I now have many new friends, but the greatest of all is Jesus Christ. He accepts me for who I am, and tells me that 'He will never leave or forsake me'" (Hebrews 13:5).

Ashley discovered what millions of others have discovered about Jesus: He is our best friend. No other friend loves you so much or will stick with you so closely (Proverbs 18:24). Jesus is totally loyal and faithful (Proverbs 20:6).

More like Christ

God's plan is to change you into Christ's image (Romans 8:29). Jesus' Spirit living in you has begun this change, and He will continue his work throughout your life (Philippians 1:6).

God's plan is to change you into Christ's image.

Q Whose work is it according to Philippians 2:13? _____

_____

_____

Q What qualities do you look for in a friend? _____

_____

_____

Battle of the Will

We all are assaulted daily by images and desires that are outside the will of God. This includes temptations such as sex outside of marriage, gossip, anger, addictions, and other destructive behavior (Galatians 5:17).

Life will be a continual battle between the desire to do things your way…or Christ's way.

You will be tempted to put other things ahead of Christ. Although there is nothing wrong with money or material success, it is very easy to get so focused on possessions and success, that God becomes secondary to personal ambition. God wants to be your first and highest focus in life … and you will only be truly satisfied when you give Him his rightful place. (Matthew 6:33).

The apostle Paul writes about the struggle to live for Christ. In Romans 7, Paul writes about how he had the desire to live for Christ, but how he kept failing his Lord. He learned that this battle of his flesh versus the Spirit can only be won when we surrender our wills to the Holy Spirit. Paul explains in Romans 8 how he was able to achieve victory through the Holy Spirit.

As long as you live, you will also have your own flesh with you, and its desire for self-gratification. Life will be a continual battle between the desire to do things your way…or Christ's way.

Q What does Galatians 5:16-18 say about this warfare? _____

_____

_____

Choosing to listen to the Holy Spirit and follow His leading will always be the right choice!

Q According to Galatians 5:16-23, contrast the two different lives:

The Self-Controlled Life	The Spirit-Controlled Life
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

God's plan for you is to mold you into the image of Christ. This life-long process is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The "Filling" of the Holy Spirit

The Bible says: "So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves" (Galatians 5:16).

The word "filled" means to be directed and controlled. A basketball player voluntarily puts himself under the control of his coach. He does this so he can play his best … and win the game.

The player is not a robot. But he freely chooses to let his coach direct him, because he wants to play well … and win!

Q What does Ephesians 5:18 tell us? _____

_____

_____

A New Way to Think

God's plan for you is to mold you into the image of Christ. This life-long process is the work of the Holy Spirit…as you give Him control of your life (Romans 8:29). There is tremendous freedom in giving control over to Him. You will no longer be imprisoned to self-centered cravings and passions. If they reappear in your life, remember that the Holy Spirit is always there to help restore you to fellowship with Christ.

The Holy Spirit will gradually conform us into the image of Christ as we submit ourselves to Him. Of course, we will never be totally like Christ until we are with Him in Heaven.

Two Types of Christians

The circles below represent two types of Christians and the thrones represent who is in control.



Self-Directed



Christ-Directed

The circle on the left depicts a Christian who has given his/her life to Christ, but has chosen to rule his/her own life. All activities, interests, desires, and choices are self-directed, leading to a life of spiritual frustration and defeat (represented by the arrows). Galatians 5:19-21 describes the Christian who has self at the center of his life.

The key to yielding your life to the Holy Spirit is "think right."

The circle on the right depicts a Christian who has put Christ as the focus of his life. All activities, interests, desires, and choices are directed by Christ resulting in harmony with God's plan. This is the abiding life, which results from being obedient to the Word of God. Galatians 5:19-23 describes the vast difference in a Christ-directed life and a self-directed life. The key to yielding your life to the Holy Spirit is "think right."

"I plead with you to give your bodies to God … When you think of what He has done for you, is that too much to ask?" (Romans 12:1).

It is God's great love for you that should be your motivation to trust the Holy Spirit completely with your life. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

It is God's great love for you that should be your motivation to trust the Holy Spirit completely with your life. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Todd's Story

"For three years I had been consumed with the desire to join the elite club for 'cool' guys in my high school … the 'Mavericks.' Before coming to Christ, I would have 'sold my soul' to have been asked to join. Although I was a Christian, I thought it would still be okay … even though it was a drinking club.

"I began to seriously think about going all out for Christ, and putting aside things that were self-destructive. Finally I decided to make a decision by the end of the week.



"It was during that week that I got asked to join the Mavericks! I immediately knew that the stakes were high, and that Satan was trying to derail my decision. I didn't give him the pleasure: and turned my life completely over to God. God gave me true freedom … and a purposeful life!"

A New Way to Live

As Romans 12:1 says, giving your life to the Holy Spirit is a decision … a free choice for you to make. It is done by simply putting your life into the hands of a trustworthy God.

Just as you came to Christ by faith for the forgiveness of your sins, you must by faith ask the Holy Spirit to control your life.

When you think of what He has done for you … and how much He loves you … is there any other choice?

In response to Christ's love for you, simply pray the following:

"Dear Lord, I want You to change my life from being self-centered into one that is Christ-centered. I confess my sinful thoughts and actions, and give You, Holy Spirit, control of my life right now."

Q What does this commitment mean to you? _____

_____

_____

Jesus will take you just as you are … and begin re-weaving the strands in your life … when you come back to Him in confession and repentance. God's Word says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Faith:
The Key to Walking in the Spirit

3

It is by faith that God's power to live for Christ and walk in the Holy Spirit is available to you!

Q What does Hebrews 11:6 say about faith? _____

_____

God tells us that living for Christ is not accomplished by doing what Jesus did, but rather by letting Him live His life through us—by faith.

Many people think that living for Christ means helping the poor, feeding the hungry and living morally. However, as C. S. Lewis points out, "Mere morality is not the end of life. You were made for something quite different from that … The idea of reaching 'a good life' without Christ is based on a double error. Firstly, we cannot do it; and secondly … we have missed the very point of our existence."



Lewis explains that the point of our existence centers on the tremendous inheritance we have in Christ as His children. Living for Christ is not our duty as His slaves, but our privilege as His sons and daughters. In other words, God accepts us perfectly regardless of our performance.

God tells us that living for Christ is not accomplished by doing what Jesus did, but rather by letting Him live His life through us by faith. Helping the poor, feeding the hungry and living morally should be done from a heart of gratitude rather than out of compulsion. We are to live by faith–not works.

As we live by faith, Jesus' love will shine through us. Faith in Christ, over time, will result in obedience to God's Word, even though there will be ups and downs (James 2:17).

Your faith will continually be tested. The Bible says the Christian life is like a battlefield with three specific enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil (Satan).

Paul tells the Ephesian believers that the only way to defeat these enemies is to trust God and depend upon His Word, the Bible.

Q Read Ephesians 6:10-18. What are the keys to winning the battle over these enemies?

_____

_____

Many believers have mistaken the Holy Spirit's power for an emotional feeling or euphoria.

Emotionally Charged … But No Power

Jesus was giving his disciples final instructions before He went back to His Father. They were all emotionally charged after His resurrection … and ready to give up everything to follow Him.



But Jesus knew they were not ready. Even after three years of His training and teaching them, they didn't have the strength to live the life He had called them to live. They would fail miserably if they tried to live for Christ in their own strength!

Sadly, when the emotions and feelings depart … they think they have lost the Holy Spirit's power.

Jesus knew they needed His power. He told them, "But you are to be given power when the Holy Spirit has come to you" (Acts 1:8).

Feelings Are Fickle

Many believers have mistaken the Holy Spirit's power for an emotional feeling or euphoria. Sadly, when the emotions and feelings depart … they think they have lost the Holy Spirit's power. They don't believe God's promise: "I will never leave or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

Q Why are feelings not enough? _____

_____

_____

The power the Holy Spirit brings to you is much more than emotions or feelings … although they may be part of it. Trying to live for Christ without the Holy Spirit is like driving a Ferrari without gasoline–powerless. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit gives us:

- Power to abide in Christ and love others.
- Power to overcome trials.
- Power to overcome temptation.
- Power to overcome sin.
- Power to produce fruit.
- Power to obey Christ.

Jesus does not give you a list of rules to follow. Rather, He empowers you by His Holy Spirit to live a life of obedience.

Belief Causes Behavior

If you accept God's Word as truth, and follow Him, He will give you desires that are in alignment with His will.

How we act and behave is motivated by what we think. If we think we have a better plan for our lives than God does, we will chase after self-centered pursuits.

Many people fill their lives by chasing after money, sex, or toys, thinking it will bring them happiness. They think, "He who dies with the most toys, wins!" As a result, they waste their lives.

Other people leave God out of their lives because they believe life will be boring. They believe God is against fun … and doesn't care about their dreams. They don't want to trust Him with their future.

The Bible says that God loves you so much that He desires and plans the very best for your future. The psalmist tells us: "Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desires" (Psalm 37:4).

If you accept God's Word as truth, and follow Him, He will give you desires that are in alignment with His will.

Q What does Romans 8:32 say about God's trustworthiness? _____

_____

_____

Q Are you ready to make the truth of God's Word the foundation of your beliefs?

_____

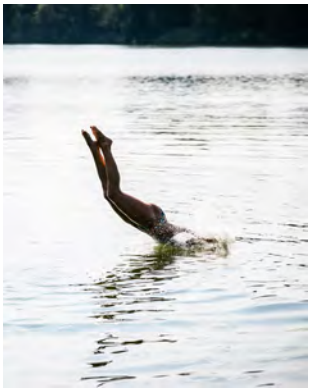
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Overcoming Doubt

Joni's Story

Joni Eareckson was an attractive, athletic teenager who had everything going her way in life–until she dove head first into a shallow lake … breaking her neck.

Joni had trusted Christ for salvation in her youth group, but most of her hopes and dreams were for self-fulfillment. Suddenly Joni's world totally fell apart. She would never walk, or be able to use her hands again!



Joni's faith was shaken. Joni says:

"In those first few months after my injury, the promises of God seemed anything but true … How could I be expected to believe when everything inside and outside of me screamed just the opposite?"

Joni struggled greatly until a friend from Young Life named Steve Estes encouraged her to trust God. Through time, and hearing God's Word, Joni began to believe God's promises. Joni did overcome her despair by faith–and today runs an international ministry, Joni and Friends, which shares Christ's love with disabled people all over the world.

"Today as I look back, I am convinced that the whole ordeal of my paralysis was inspired by God's love. I wasn't the brunt of some cruel divine joke. God had reasons behind my suffering, and learning some of them has made all the difference in the world." (*Joni, A Step Further)*

Victorious Faith

The Bible tells us that it is possible to live a life of victorious faith. Hebrews chapter 11 gives us examples of men and women who trusted God in spite of great adversity and opposition. Such a life pleases God greatly, and results in a life of victory over our circumstances.

Read Hebrews chapter 11. Write down your thoughts about those who had victorious faith: _____

_____

God has a place of rest for you.

_____

_____

When God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt He performed many miracles, including drying up the Red Sea so they could escape the armies of Pharaoh. They saw God's mighty hand at work, but soon forgot and began to doubt His promise to provide for their basic needs.

God told them through Moses that He had a place of rest for them to dwell in, called the Promised Land, "a land flowing with milk and honey." But all they did was complain and doubt God's promise. (Read Exodus chapters 3 through 20.)

They sent 12 spies to scout out the land and discovered it to be a paradise "flowing with milk and honey." But there were also giants there. When they came back and reported their findings, only Joshua and Caleb were willing to trust God and face the giants. The other 10 scouts were afraid and convinced the doubting Israelites they would be unable to overcome the giants. For the next 40 years they wandered in the wilderness–unwilling to trust God and enter His place of rest. (Read chapters 13 and 14 in the book of Numbers.)

Q What are the giants in your life? _____

_____

_____

Q God has a place of rest for you. Read Hebrews 3:7-4:16. According to this passage, how do we enter God's rest? _____

_____

_____

If you will simply trust the promises in God's Word, you will discover wonderful rest. That is victorious faith!

Q What are we warned against? _____

_____

_____

If you will simply trust the promises in God's Word, you will discover wonderful rest. That is victorious faith!

Is there something in your life keeping you from trusting God? If any of the following areas are keeping you from trusting God—confess them to God, and repent (change your thinking), now—before it is too late.

Every moment of your life, the Holy Spirit is waiting to guide you into purposeful living.

But He always allows you free choice.

	HELPING	HURTING
FRIENDS	☐	☐
RECREATIONS	☐	☐
HABITS	☐	☐
TIME IN GOD'S WORD	☐	☐
THOUGHTS	☐	☐

God can be trusted in all areas of your life.

Spend some time evaluating the list above, and write down any area in which you need to take prayerful action to change.

_____

_____

_____

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is." (Romans 12:2)

Walking in the Spirit is a moment-by-moment decision

Broken Fellowship

Every believer sins and breaks fellowship with the Holy Spirit at times (1 John 1:8). Broken fellowship does not mean your sins aren't forgiven. Jesus paid for all your sins on the cross, once and for all.

Broken fellowship means that you are not abiding in Christ, and therefore are not experiencing God's purpose and plan for your life.

Purposeful Living … Your Choice

"God's way" in life results in purpose, power, peace, and hope.

Every moment of your life, the Holy Spirit is waiting to guide you into purposeful living. But He always allows you free choice.

The apostle Paul (formerly named Saul) had been a strong opponent of the early Christians. As a high-ranking Jewish leader, he was angry at everything Christians stood for … and wanted to abolish Christianity and the worship of Christ, even having Christians put to death.

"On his way to Damascus, Jesus miraculously appeared to him in a vision. When Paul heard and saw Jesus … recognizing Him as Lord … he asked Jesus, 'What will You have me to do?'" (Acts 9:6).

Paul's attitude of willingness to serve Christ is what God wants from you and me.

"God's way" in life results in purpose, power, peace, and hope. God wants to direct your life all the time.

But the sinful part of you will always want your own way … the "self-centered way." A self-centered life may get high on short-term pleasures, but usually ends up in fear, emptiness, loneliness, and finally despair.

However, at any moment of your day, you can get back on "God's Way" and restore fellowship with Him. Simply take the following steps:



"Spiritual Breathing"

To better understand how to walk in the Spirit on a moment-by-moment basis, Bill Bright compares it to breathing. When you breathe, you exhale impurities, and inhale pure air and oxygen. In "spiritual breathing," you "exhale" sin–by confession, and "inhale" the Holy Spirit's control–by faith. (Read *Spirit-filled Life* by Bill Bright.)

Once the Holy Spirit is in control of your life, He gives you power to live for God.

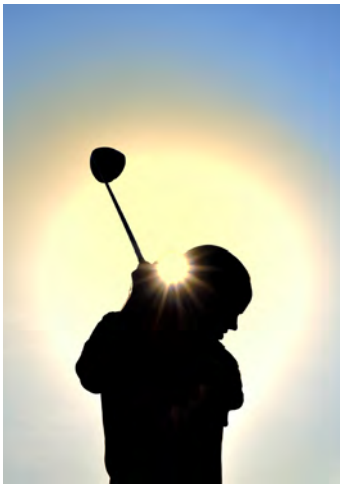
The test of whether or not you are living in the will of God is not that your life is trouble-free, but that you are trusting God in spite of your circumstances.



Power to Overcome Trials

"Whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything" (James 1:2-4).

Lars' Story



As an unknown golfer, Lars Hansen had stunned the Canadian golf community by winning the Ontario Bantam Golf Championship at the young age of 13. With his flashy smile, charming good looks, and winsome personality, it seemed like Lars had what it took to bring happiness.

But an inner void and lack of purpose led him to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. Soon Lars began reading the Bible, and sharing Christ with his friends. After playing collegiate golf in California and graduating in mathematics, Lars began working for a major corporation.

At age 28, Lars began feeling weak, and was diagnosed with severe kidney failure. He eventually lost his kidneys, his eyesight, and finally his life, at age 35.

During the seven years that Lars' athletic body, sight, and mobility deteriorated, his faith in Christ actually deepened. He listened to Christian radio broadcasts, and never asked, "Why?" Even in his deepest pain, he believed that God loved him, and had some unknown purpose for his trial. On his last night, Lars weakly prayed to his heavenly Father, trusting Him with his future.

...the Holy Spirit has promised to give you the power to withstand temptation.

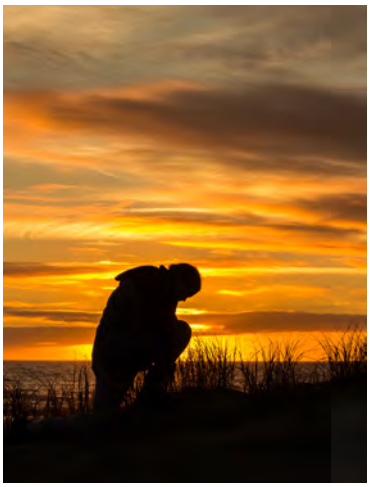
Q Read Romans 8:28. What is God telling you in this verse that you can trust Him for? _____

_____

Just because you are living in to obedience of God's Word, does not mean you life will be trouble free. The real test is weither you are trusting God in spite of your circumstances.

Power over Temptation

We all face numerous temptations daily. Being tempted is not a sin; it is normal.



When tempted, your choice is either to give in or to trust God. Giving in to temptation is sin, and breaks fellowship with God.

Read the following verse carefully, and apply what it says to any temptations you are currently facing.

> "The temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In this verse, God tells you how to overcome temptation:

- Trust God … that your temptation is normal.
- Trust God … for the ability to withstand it.
- Trust God … to give you a "way out."

Q In what ways are you trusting God to help you overcome temptation?

_____

_____

Don't ever say, "The temptation is too strong," and give in to it. If you are abiding in God, the Holy Spirit has promised to give you the power to withstand temptation.

Darrel's Story

"I was involved in a sexual relationship with Tori whom I had been dating for two years. When I got back from Young Life Camp, I wanted to please my Savior. But I tried to rationalize my behavior–thinking that God might approve. I thought God would understand my needs.



"But, because I wanted to please Christ, I read the Bible to see what it said about sexual purity. I realized the importance of obedience to Christ, and that sex outside of marriage was wrong. I knew though, that I didn't have the strength to break off the relationship with Tori.

"So, by faith, I asked for the Holy Spirit to empower me to obey Him. The temptation to have sex with Tori was so strong, that I realized we needed to quit seeing each other.

"When I chose to obey Him and quit having sex with Tori, the Holy Spirit gave me a tremendous peace and joy. Since that decision, life has been truly awesome!"

If you are involved in a battle over temptation, sin, or addiction to a substance or lifestyle, the power of the Holy Spirit is able to lift you out and give you total victory. Choose to trust Him!

Darrel took God seriously, and "ran" from the temptation that could have entrapped him and hindered his walk with Christ. By faith Darrel chose to obey God … and he won a great victory! (See John 14:21.)

Q What are some steps you can take the next time you are tempted?

_____

_____

Power over Sin

Sin can become addictive, but if you yield to the Holy Spirit, He will give you His power to overcome that bondage.

Matt's Story

"Although I was a worship leader in my church, I led a double life. I became addicted to pornography at eleven years of age. As my addiction grew, my cravings became more vile and ugly. Soon I was having all-night sessions on the Internet, and even fantasizing about rape. I was out of control.

"When a godly man told me about the Holy Spirit's power to break my addiction, I began looking into God's Word and memorized its promises. I discovered God's awesome power to overcome my addiction.

"My breakthrough came when I began believing and claiming God's promises. Whenever I am tempted, I think about a promise in God's Word that applies to that particular temptation.

"I then simply focus on His Word, and pray for the Holy Spirit to give me strength to overcome.

"There are really four keys to my victory over the bondage of sin:

When you get up in the morning, do you call on God's power to help you through the day's challenges?

"First, I needed to take the time to memorize and meditate on God's promises. I discovered a treasure of God's many promises throughout Scripture that are vital to victorious living.

"Second, I confess my sins whenever my thoughts are wrong. According to 1 John 1:9, I take Him at his Word that I am forgiven. (Exhale … See "Spiritual Breathing.")

"Third, I surrender my thoughts and actions to the Holy Spirit by telling Him I want to please Him. (Inhale … See "Spiritual Breathing.")

"Finally, I spend time with my mentor and other Christians who hold me accountable and encourage me in my walk with Christ.

"As I've applied God's Word to all areas of my life, I have been free from bondage to sin and addiction. God has blessed me with a wonderful Christian wife and family. My wife and I are now teaching others how memorizing God's promises can help overcome sin and addiction. I feel so free and joyful now that I have turned my life completely over to the Holy Spirit's control."

In the New Testament we read, "In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan" (Ephesians 6:16).

If you are involved in a battle over temptation, sin, or addiction to a substance or lifestyle, the power of the Holy Spirit is able to lift you out and give you total victory. Choose to trust Him!

Power to Bear Fruit

The Holy Spirit will empower you to bear fruit when you are trusting Him, and abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ means walking in the Spirit.

In John, Jesus told his disciples: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Fruit of the Spirit

Jesus compared your life to a branch that is totally dependent on the grapevine. The purpose of the vine is to produce big juicy grapes. The more fruit … the more the farmer is pleased.

The Holy Spirit wants to produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life, which is identified as:

You can ask the Holy Spirit to give you His power for all the details of your life.



The Fruit of the Spirit results in a heart that God uses to reach others for Christ. (Read John chapter 15.)

Your Daily Power

When you get up in the morning, do you call on God's power to help you through the day's challenges?

Q Who are you depending on in each area below:

DAILY ISSUES	MY POWER	GOD'S POWER
RELATIONSHIPS	☐	☐
HEALTH/FEARS	☐	☐
TRIALS/TEMPTATIONS	☐	☐
EMOTIONS	☐	☐
SCHOOL/WORK	☐	☐
GOALS/DREAMS	☐	☐

You can ask the Holy Spirit to give you His power for all the details of your life. God gives you this great promise that you can make yours every single day:

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear … but of power, love, and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Q In this verse, what does God tell you is not from Him, and what does He promise to give you?

_____

_____

_____

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Q What are you trusting God for right now?

_____

_____

_____

The Bible: God's Love Letter to You!

4

If you received a special letter or email from Jesus … telling you how much He loves you … and giving you the guidance and direction you need for your daily issues … would you read it? Would you keep it, cherish it, memorize it, and continually think about it?

That's exactly what the Bible is … it's God's love letter to you! God's Word is as important to your Christian growth as milk is to a new baby.

The Bible provides the "road map" for your journey with God.

Before You Start

Begin by obtaining a Bible with good references and helps. You may find a modern translation easier to understand. Several websites, such as Biblegateway.com, offers online Bibles for free in different languages.

The Bible is God's "Road Map" for Your Life

If you were trying to drive to a distant small town you had never been to before … would you drive by your emotions and instincts … or would you look at a GPS or road map?



While the road map won't tell you what's just around the curve, or how bumpy the road is … it will keep you from heading in the wrong direction, giving you guidance for your trip.

The Bible provides the "road map" for your journey with God. It gives you God's wonderful promises for each step of the way. As you read through the next few pages, you will learn how to use this map to help you grow and become more mature in Christ.

Changing Habits

Every day you do things out of habit. You get up, eat breakfast, shower, get dressed, go to school, go to work, etc.

In order to make God's Word part of your life–you need to make it one of your daily habits. Pick a time, (mornings work best for many people), then pick a quiet spot and spend time reading the Bible and thinking about how it applies to your life. Once you have done it for thirty days, you will have established a habit that will change your life!

God's Viewpoint

The Bible gives you God's answers to all of life's most important questions:

- God's Nature
- Your Purpose
- How To Grow In Christ
- Moral Decisions
- Relationships / Sex
- Emotions / Comfort
- Trials / Death

Every moment of every day, your mind is flooded with information … most of it the world's viewpoint.

"For the Word of God is full of living power…It exposes us for what we really are" (Hebrews 4:12).

Your Mind…A "Vat"



Every moment of every day, your mind is flooded with information … most of it the world's viewpoint.

Your life, and the decisions you make are greatly influenced by what goes into your "Vat"!

In order for God's viewpoint to prevail in your life, you must get a good "dose" of God's Word … not just a few minutes each day.

Matthew Henry once said: "If you want to get close to God, you must study His Word."

Q How does Colossians 3:16 apply to you personally?

_____

_____

When reading the Bible, it's best to read it slowly and thoughtfully.

There are five basic ways for you to get fed on God's Word:

1. HEAR IT TAUGHT
2. READ IT
3. STUDY IT
4. MEMORIZE KEY VERSES
5. MEDITATION ON ITS PROMISES

Getting Fed

All of these ways to make God's Word a bigger part of your life are important. Let's look at each of them.



1. How to Hear God's Word

There are several ways to hear God's Word taught:

- At Church
- Bible Teachers/Schools
- Christian Seminars
- Bible Web Pages
- Bible Studies
- Bible Tapes CDs/DVDs
- Christian Radio
- Christian Books/Audio Books

Q How are you hearing God's Word taught, and what can you do to hear it more often?

_____

_____

Q Hearing God's Word should make you want to read and study it for yourself. What does Acts 17:11 say?

_____

_____

Whenever you hear God's Word taught, attempt to learn what the Holy Spirit is trying to teach you personally, taking good notes, and writing down your thoughts.

2. How to Read God's Word

When reading the Bible, it's best to read it slowly and thoughtfully. Have a good pen or marking pencil handy to write down your thoughts and underline key verses.

Make it fun. Go on a "hunt" to find insights God has for you. Then write down the references so you can locate them later.



If this is your first adventure in reading the Bible, it's best to start in the New Testament, reading at least one of the four Gospels. Many teachers recommend starting with John.

The book of Acts tells about the actions of the early Christians. Acts is a "must read" for all Christians.

After Acts, you'll find the letters to the first Christian churches, which give instructions and guidance for daily living.

The reason you need to study God's Word is to gain insight into who God is, and what He wants to do in your life.

And finally, in the book of Revelation, you will see how Christ is going to end all things in this world, and begin ruling as "King of kings and Lord of lords." It's amazing!

> "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipping for every good thing God wants us to do" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Q What book in the Bible are you currently reading? What are you learning?

_____

_____

_____

3. How to Study God's Word

There are several ways you can study the Bible:

- Study an Individual Book (e.g. Acts)
- Study a Passage or Chapter (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5)
- Study a Biblical Theme (e.g. Love)
- Study a Verse (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Study a Biblical Doctrine (e.g. Redemption)

The reason you need to study God's Word is to gain insight into who God is, and what He wants to do in your life.

Here is one example of how you can read and think about God's Word (from Bert Harned):



A Study of "Discouragement"

"Do you get 'discouraged, depressed'? I have found an instant cure for it! YES! It is in Psalm 118:6-8. The NLT says, 'The Lord is for me so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? Yes, the Lord is for me. He will help me.'"

It was a beautiful cloudless morning when I noticed these verses, and took the time to think on them. I wrote one word at a time down on the left margin, and took time to think as deeply as I could about each word, making notes as I went. Start like this:

It is awesome and exciting to contemplate "me" having such intimacy … with God Himself!!

The Lord:	the mighty, almighty, creator, sovereign, loving, glorious God. That's who is for me!
Is:	means right now…presently, an absolute certainty!
For:	means He knows me, has my best interests at heart, is not against me, He is on my side, and knows what is best for me.
Me:	means personally, not in general, but specifically, by name.

It is awesome and exciting to contemplate me having such intimacy … with God Himself!!

"Now it's your turn; find a quiet place and mentally chew your way through these verses for yourself."

Here is another way you can study God's Word on a daily basis (with a scripture passage included for you to use as well).

Read 2 Corinthians chapter five, in at least two versions of the Bible if possible, and write what 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 means to you personally:

_____

_____

4. How to Memorize God's Word

"How can a young person stay pure? By obeying Your Word and following its rules … I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:9, 11)

The "Topical Memory System" is a proven way to memorize God's promises. You can start with the "Beginning with Christ" packet of five key verses produced by The Navigators (www.navigators.org). We also recommend you select some key verses in this Bible study to memorize. You might want to write them down on small cards that you can take with you and review daily.

One reason to memorize Scripture is because our memories are short.

After 24 hours, you may accurately remember:

- 5% of what you hear
- 15% of what you read
- 35% of what you study
- 57% of what you see and hear
- 100% of what you memorize

Noted author and counselor, Henry Brandt, in his book, *The Heart of the Problem*, says: "I still consider Bible memorization the single most important aid in my Christian life and in my counseling."

It's actually easy to memorize verses:

- Start with one verse.
- Repeat it several times.
- Explain it in your own words.
- Say it to a friend.
- Test and challenge each other to apply it.

Once memorized, review it without looking for 30 days. It will be yours to take with you wherever you go!

> "How can a young person stay pure? By obeying Your Word and following its rules … I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:9, 11)

5. How to Meditate on God's Word

Meditating on God's promises throughout the day will help you walk in the Spirit. Whenever something stressful happens (and it will), think about a verse that applies to your situation.

Q What does Philippians 4:6-7 say?

Power over Bondage

In 1977, New York City was in turmoil because a troubled twenty-four-year-old man, David Berkowitz, whom the media labeled, "Son of Sam," went on a killing spree. His target was young women, and before he was finally caught, five young women and one man were dead.

During his time in prison, he was approached by a young prisoner named Ricky Lopez, who told David that regardless of what he had done, Jesus loved him and died for him.

Ricky gave David a Bible. As David Berkowitz read the Bible, God's power began breaking him of his addiction and bondage. In time, the Word of God brought him to a point of complete repentance—and the "Son of Sam" surrendered his life completely to Christ.

Today, David Berkowitz is the Chaplain's Assistant at Sullivan Correctional Facility. (Read this, and other stories of God's transforming power in *Fresh Power* by Jim Cymbala.)



David Berkowitz was transformed because he replaced man's viewpoint with God's viewpoint. And, He believed God's viewpoint! He put the right "stuff " in his VAT.

Getting rid of the "junk" in your VAT, and replacing it with God's Word takes time. The amount of time you commit to the Bible is probably the single best indicator of your walk with Christ, and the best predictor of your future growth in Christ.

"Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts, and make you wise. Use His words to teach and counsel each other" (Colossians 3:16).

Q Read Psalm 1:1-3, and write your thoughts:

_____

_____

As you run the race God has set ahead of you, make sure your roots are deeply planted in God's Word.

Prayer:
Talking to Your Heavenly Father!

5

Suppose you were having lunch with a friend one day, and your cell phone rang. You answer, and an unfamiliar, powerful voice calls out your name.



You ask, "Who is this?"

You are totally shocked when the answer comes back, "I'm your Heavenly Father. I'm calling to talk with you because you're my child … and I haven't heard from you for a while."

What do you think your reaction would be?

Would you feel special … scared … excited … nervous … convicted?

God wants you to know Him so well that you will always feel like talking to Him … even when you sin and have broken fellowship with Him. Read about how loving and forgiving your Father's heart is in the story of the "Prodigal Son" in Luke 15:11-32.

Prayer is vital to growing in our relationship with God.

Prayer is vital to growing in our relationship with God. Prayer is one of the most incredible privileges you have as a believer … to come directly into God's presence and talk with Him about whatever is on your heart. And, He promises to listen!

Relationship ... Not Rules

When you invited Jesus into your life, you began a relationship with God that is very personal and intimate. All relationships need good communication to be healthy.

Jesus' death for you on the cross made it possible for you to talk directly with your Father in heaven. Your Father wants you to seek His guidance, comfort, peace, and intimate companionship at all times…not just when you want things. He actually desires your companionship! (See Galatians 4:6.)

- THE HOLY SPIRIT helps you pray.
- FAITH makes your prayers effective.
- GOD'S WORD teaches you who God is and how to pray.

Ask Christ to make Himself more real to you.

> "You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy" (John 16:24).

Think about each one of God's characteristics.

Knowing Your Father

The first part of this study focuses on God's character. Once you know who your Father is, it's much easier to talk with Him.



Before you begin trying to grasp how totally amazing your Heavenly Father is … you need to know that his greatness is far beyond human understanding. However, His Word does give us part of the picture!

Attributes of God

- God is Sovereign (In Charge)
- God is Eternal (Always Existed)
- God is Omniscient (All Knowing)
- God is Omnipresent (Everywhere)
- God is Omnipotent (All Powerful)
- God is Immutable (Unchanging)
- God is Holy (Righteous and Set Apart)
- God is Just (Absolutely Fair)
- God is Love (Unconditional Acceptance)
- God is Truth (Totally Trustworthy)

When you talk to your Father, approach Him with humility and respect for His absolute authority.

Think about each one of God's characteristics listed below, and how each attribute affects your view of God … and your relationship with Him.

God is Sovereign (In Charge)

God alone is Ruler of the universe. He has complete authority to do whatever pleases Him.

When you talk to your Father, approach Him with humility and respect for His absolute authority.

Q Read Job 1:6-12. Throughout this conversation, who was in control at all times?

_____

_____

Q Whom can you trust at all times?

_____

_____

Q What does Romans 8:28 mean to you personally?

_____

_____

God is Eternal (Always Exists)

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that wherever you go… He is already there.

You live in a time dimension. God doesn't. God has always existed, and He always will exist. When you join God in heaven, you will live forever with Him. He gives you eternal life!

When you talk to your Father, think about the time ahead when you will be with Him forever and ever!

Q What else has God told us is eternal? (Isaiah 40:8)

_____

_____

Q How long will God rule? (Psalm 45:6)

_____

_____

God is Omniscient (All Knowing)

And, He knows what is best for you!

God knows everything in the past. He knows everything that is going on in the universe now. And He knows everything that is going to happen in the future.

Read Psalm 139, and write down your thoughts:

_____

_____

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that He knows what you are going to say … before you say it. He even knows what is going on deep in your heart. And, He knows what is best for you!

God is Omnipresent (Everywhere)

This universe is about thirty billion light years across … and contains at least ten trillion stars (more than all the grains of sand on earth). Yet God is present on every star, and in every inch of space.

Write down your thoughts on Psalm 139:7-8:

_____

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that wherever you go … He is already there. Even during your darkest time … you can count on his being there.

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that because He never changes … His love for you also never changes.

God is Omnipotent (All Powerful)

Since God is all-powerful, nothing is difficult for Him. Even the enormous power to create the universe was just "finger-work" for Him (Psalm 8:3).

The prophet Jeremiah said: "O Sovereign Lord! You have made the heavens and earth by Your great power. Nothing is too hard for You!" (Jeremiah 32:17).

When you talk to your Father, humbly realize He can do anything. And, although He cares about every detail in your life, think about how small your problems are when compared with how awesome He is!

God is Immutable (Unchanging)

Since we are always changing our minds or moods…it is hard to imagine a God that is always the same, "yesterday, today … and forever!" (Hebrews 13:8).

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that because He never changes … His love for you also never changes. It doesn't fluctuate with your emotions or deeds. It is also important to understand that because God never changes … His Word will never change!

When you talk to your Father, think about His holiness and righteousness...

God is Holy (Righteous and Set Apart)



God has never thought an unrighteous thought … and never will! He is absolutely pure and perfect in every way! (See Psalm 145:17.)

Sin is the exact opposite of God's nature … and without Christ's death for you on the cross, you would be totally rejected from His presence. God's holiness is beyond explanation.

Read Revelation 20:12-15, and write down your thoughts:

_____

_____

When you talk to your Father, think about His holiness and righteousness … and how Jesus has made it possible for you to come directly into His awesome presence.

God is Just (Perfectly Fair)

God is the Supreme Judge of the universe. He cannot make a mistake … and is always totally fair. There is no "Court of Appeals" (See Jeremiah 9:24.) God cannot "look the other way" regarding your sin.

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that He will always be fair by His perfect standard. You need to trust Him even when you think He has been unfair. (See Genesis 18:25.)

When you talk to your Father, thank Him for the promises in the Bible.

God is Love (Unconditional Acceptance)

God will never love you less … and He cannot love you more! The Bible tells us that God doesn't just have love … "He is love" (1 John 4:16).

The fact that your Father sent Jesus to suffer and die for you on the cross illustrates the depth of His love for you (1 John 3:1).

When you talk to your Father, think about the high price He paid for your salvation, even though you will never fully understand it or appreciate it.

Then thank Him!

God is Truth (Totally Trustworthy)

God cannot lie. Everything He says is true (Titus 1:2).

Q Who claimed to be the "truth" in John 14:6?

_____

_____

Q What does Jesus say is the "truth" in John 17:17?

_____

_____

When you talk to your Father, thank Him for the promises in the Bible. Review the promises … one by one … with Him. Tell Him you want to trust Him!

Read and pray David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:11-13.

Praying Boldly

Now that you begin to see how awe-inspiring your Heavenly Father is, you may be afraid to approach Him in prayer. God's Word tells you that as His child, you are always welcome in His presence. Go to Him … boldly!

"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it" (Hebrews 4:16).

Praying with Humility

Although God wants you to talk to Him at all times, it is important that you approach Him with a humble heart (1 Peter 5:5-6). God opposes human pride, and wants you to be totally dependent upon His resources.

Praying with Confidence

• *Pray According to God's Word*

Learn the following prayer principles and look up the Scripture reference that goes with each one and then … pray expectantly!

Now that you know Him, you can be confident … if you are abiding in Him … that He will answer any prayer that is according to His perfect will.

• *Family Only*

God answers the prayers of His children. He also hears and answers prayers of non-Christians when they come to Christ in faith for the forgiveness of their sins (John 16.24).

• *Abiding Answers*

Jesus said that an abiding Christian can be confident in his prayers being heard … and answered according to God's will.

Q What does John 15:7 say?

_____

_____

Q What does Psalm 66:18-20 say?

_____

_____

• *"Thy Will Be Done"*

Jesus modeled the attitude you should have when you come to your Father. You should desire His will above yours, even though it may be difficult to accept. (Read Mark 14:32-40)

"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14).

Now that you know Him, you can be confident … if you are abiding in Him … that He will answer any prayer that is according to His perfect will.

If you want your relationship with Christ to grow, plan to meet Him every morning.

• *God's Perfect Timing*

Don't give up on prayers that don't get answered right away. One of the signs of a Spirit-controlled Christian is "patience" (Galatians 5:22).

Countless Christians will tell you stories of God's faithfulness in answering prayers after many years of continual prayer.

• *Your Prayer Life*

You began your prayer life as a member of God's family when you invited Jesus into your life.

Q How has it been going since?

_____

_____

Q What is different about your prayers since you asked Jesus into your life?

_____

_____

• *Beginning Your Day*

If you want your relationship with Christ to grow, plan to meet Him every morning. Many Christians who are abiding in Christ begin their day with a "quiet time." You can start talking to God "before your feet hit the ground," as you get out of bed. Say something like this:

"Good morning Lord! Today, before I get going, I just want You to know I love You … and want to live for You today!"

• *Claiming His Promises*

Take some of God's promises with you, and claim them for your day. Here's a great verse to get you started:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Pray: "Lord, today, I am going to trust You to direct my paths, and I am going to seek Your will for my life in each situation."

• *Restoring Fellowship by Confession*

When you slip and fall, and feel like no one cares, run to your Lord's waiting arms. He will comfort you and dry your tears. (Read Romans 8:26-27.)

To restore fellowship with the Holy Spirit, simply tell Him that you have sinned, (name it), and choose to let Him control your life. He will then restore you to fellowship with Him (see 1 John 1:9).

• *Thank, Praise, and Adore Him*

God has done so much for you that it is important to take some time to thank Him, and think about His love and grace. Read the Psalms, and as you read the many praises…stop and make them your own. Think about God's greatness and His great love for you … and adore Him. (Begin with Psalms 95, 107, 145-150.)

• *Requests*

God wants you to bring Him your requests. In fact, He delights in your requests since it is an act of faith and obedience. Never quit asking Him for things that are biblical and within His will. He promises to answer those prayers … in His time!

Suggestion: For the next 30 days, start a prayer list. Add to it each day.

Write down the following:

- Your personal growth in Christ
- Specific issues you are dealing with
- Needs of friends and family
- Non-Christians you desire to know Christ
- Other Christians you can help grow

If you are reading God's Word, and allowing the Holy Spirit to control your life…you will naturally talk with Him more.

Citizens of Heaven: God's Family … and You!

6

It doesn't matter what color your skin is, how smart you are, how pretty you are, what gender you are, or how wealthy or important you are…you are part of Christ's body with believers from all time. You are a full citizen in God's Country … heaven!

The apostle Peter told the early believers to think of themselves as part of a building … with Jesus being the "chief cornerstone."

"And now God is building you, as living stones into His spiritual temple … You are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, His very own possession" (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

God is saying wonderful things about you as one of His children. He is saying that you and all other believers are:

- Living Stones in His Spiritual Temple
- A Chosen People
- A Kingdom of Priests
- His Very Own Possession
- Citizens of God's Holy Nation

It doesn't matter what color your skin is, how smart you are, how pretty you are, what gender you are, or how wealthy or important you are…you are part of Christ's body with believers from all time. You are a full citizen in God's Country … heaven! (See Ephesians 2:19.)

Your thoughts:

_____

_____

_____

Christ's Local Body

You, along with all other Christians of all time make up the body of Christ, the Church. The Bible also calls a local gathering of believers a "church."

Jesus made a promise to you and me. When we come together, with Him as our focus … He is there: "For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20).

The Early Church

The book of Acts describes the establishing of the early churches, which met primarily in homes. The Letters of the New Testament are the instructions written to those churches by the apostles. Everything the Holy Spirit commanded and instructed the early believers also applies to the church today.

Everything the Holy Spirit commanded and instructed the early believers also applies to the church today.

The commitment of the early church was so strong, and their love for one another so great, that within 300 years, Christianity had spread throughout the entire Roman Empire. Jesus used them to change the world!

The Example of the Early Church

To get an understanding of how committed the early Christians were to one another, read the Book of Acts in the New Testament.

Q What stands out the most to you in your reading of the book of Acts?

_____

_____

Q How important were the other believers to Paul, Peter, and the other Apostles?

_____

_____

Q How important are other believers to you?

_____

_____

Q What are you doing to develop relationships with other believers?

_____

_____

Getting Connected

One of the main reasons so many Christians live defeated lives is that they have isolated themselves from other believers. Paul told the early Christians that they were each vital "parts" of the "body of Christ."

Every part of your body is important. If your little toe hurts, it can make your day miserable. The invisible parts, such as the heart, liver, and kidneys are vital for the life of the entire body. It is similar in the body of Christ.

You are a unique creation of God.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-27 and write what Paul said about each part of the "body":

Q Who is the "HEAD"?

_____

Q Who are the "MEMBERS"?

_____

Q Are any "MEMBERS" insignificant?

_____

Q What are some of the most important "PARTS"? (v.22)

_____

When you are joined together with other believers who are growing in Christ, you encourage one another, and keep each other "fired up" in your mutual faith. You enjoy one another's company and build meaningful relationships together.

Coming together with other believers in Christ's name is similar to hot coals, which keep each other hot when lumped together. However, a coal that is separated from the others will soon grow cold. If you aren't already attending a Christ-centered, Bible-teaching church, ask God to lead you to one. He will help you find the right one.



Unique Gifts

You are a unique creation of God. He has given you unique gifts that are needed in the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Paul tells you some vital things about your gifts:

Q Who gave you your gifts? (v. 11)

_____

Q Which gift is most important? (vv. 21-23)

_____

Q What are you warned against? (v. 25)

_____

Q What are you to do for others? (v. 26)

_____

Sadly, many leave the job of doing God's work to those with gifts that are more obvious … such as the speaking gifts. However, God's Word is clear that each gift is vital to His Kingdom.

Love is the key to all of our relationships …

The entire body of Christ is commissioned and gifted to accomplish Jesus' Great Commission … to "go into all the world and tell the Good News to everyone."

In one way, your role in the church is similar to a player on a basketball, football, or soccer team. Unless each player uses his skill and talent to play, the game could be lost. To win, each player must do his job well. He has gifted you to play your part in building God's Kingdom.

The Key to Loving Relationships

Jesus knows your heart. He knows the difficulty we all have at times with one another. As humans, we all are tempted to gossip, judge, get angry, and accuse one another.

And yet, Jesus truly desires for us to love one another … and model His love to the world. Listen to what He told his disciples in some of His last comments to them:

> "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples" (John 13:34-35).

How many times have we failed Jesus by disobeying this command? Unfortunately, far too often.

Love is the key to all of our relationships … but how do we get it? God gives us the answer in Paul's letter to Timothy: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Q According to this verse, where does love come from?

_____

God's Word tells us what love really means, and the fruit it produces in your daily interaction with others. (Read Galatians 5:22.)

The Corinthian Church was full of "baby" Christians whom Paul called "carnal," or "fleshly." They had accepted Christ's love for them, but treated each other largely from a selfish point of view. They were jealous, and continually griping and arguing (1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

Q What do you think is the solution to that kind of behavior?

_____

Paul told the Corinthians what Christ's love is like when we're controlled by the Holy Spirit:

> "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

"Love is patient and kind..."

Read the entire 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and write down your thoughts:

_____

_____

Remember when we were studying the Holy Spirit? It is the Holy Spirit that gives you power to love with Christ's love by faith. You can't generate it on your own. Love is the result of abiding in Christ.

Loving by Faith

Corrie ten Boom was one of the few women who survived the torture and humiliation of Ravensbruck … a Nazi prison camp during World War II.



Corrie's faith in Christ had remained strong, even during times of degradation when she and all the other women were paraded naked in front of heckling male prison guards.

The war was now over, and Corrie had devoted herself to speaking in churches of Christ's love and forgiveness.

One day, at a church service in Munich, Corrie was startled to see the SS man who was her former prison guard when she and the other women were herded into the showers like cattle.

Corrie recalls the incident in her book, *The Hiding Place:*

> "He came up to me. 'How grateful I am for your message … to think that, as you say, He has washed all my sins away!'
>
> "His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often … the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more?
>
> "'Lord Jesus,' I prayed, 'forgive me and help me to forgive him.'
>
> "I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so, I breathed a silent prayer. 'Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness.'

"As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

"And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His.

"When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself." (*The Hiding Place*, Fleming H. Revell Co.)

Take some time alone with God to confess your inability to forgive, and ask the Holy Spirit to forgive others through you.

No matter how hard Corrie tried she didn't have the power in herself to love this former enemy who had humiliated her.

Yet she knew that Christ had commanded her to love everyone, even her enemies.

By faith, Corrie confessed her sin, and turned the matter over to God. Her faith resulted in the power to obey. And, her obedience resulted in the great joy and peace that only comes when we abide in Christ.

Q Can you think of people in your life you can't forgive?

_____

_____

Q What does God tell us to do in Ephesians 4:32?

_____

_____

Take some time alone with God to confess your inability to forgive, and ask the Holy Spirit to forgive others through you. As you abide in Him, He will give you the power!

Q Jesus was our greatest example of forgiving others. Who did He forgive in Luke 23:34?

_____

_____

Joining Others

If you aren't already connected with others who love Jesus Christ, you are missing out on God's best for your life. He wants us to be part of a body where we use our gifts to build His Kingdom.

How to get started:

- Ask God to direct you to other believers.
- Attend a Bible-teaching and outreaching church.
- Join a small Bible study and prayer group.
- Use your gifts to reach others for Christ.
- Find a mature believer who will "disciple" you.
- Ask God for someone you can disciple.

"If we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other" (1 John 1:7).

Q Read Hebrews 10:24-25. How can you apply these verses to your life?

_____

_____

Obedience: Running to Win

7

In John 15, Jesus tells us that an abiding life is essential if we are to produce fruit for Him. Jesus also tells us that the only way to abide in Him is to be obedient to His commands.

> "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

Christian growth is a lifelong process.

If you are truly running to win the prize God has for you, then aim to please Christ by obeying His commands. Jesus said, "If you love me, obey my commandments" (John 14:15).

Jesus is not saying that we are saved by obedience. Neither is He saying that we will lose our salvation when we disobey Him. Many people think that God loves us more when we obey Him than when we disobey Him.



Nothing could be further from the truth.

However, just as a loving parent disciplines a disobedient child, God will discipline us when we disobey. His love is expressed by discipline, not rejection. He wants the best for us, and that means He wants us to trust and obey Him.

The entire Christian life is to be lived by faith, not works. Other religions give lists of rules to follow. But when we see how much God loves us, and that Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins, we will want to obey Him. Trusting the Holy Spirit with your life will result in a life of obedience to his Word.

Don't be disappointed when progress in your Christian walk doesn't happen as quickly as you want. Christian growth is a lifelong process. God is patient with you, and will never take His love away from you. Remember, the Holy Spirit will give you victory any moment you choose to obey Him.

Many Christians say they trust God with their lives, but refuse to obey His Word. James calls their faith "dead." The abiding life however, is to be lived by faith, trusting in God's promises even when we are going through trials and don't understand how God is answering our prayers. Remember the two circles we looked at earlier?



Self-Directed



Christ-Directed

Q Which circle represents your life?

_____

If Christ is directing your life, it will result in a transformation of both your walk and your talk. In other words, your character will become more like Christ's character, and your words and actions will sound and look like Him.

The Walk

We have already seen that a life of obedience to Christ is based upon faith in His Word. You and I are totally unable to live the Christian life in our own strength. However, by faith in His promises, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to overcome trials and temptations. As we surrender our lives to Him, He conforms us into His likeness.

Jesus is totally unlike us. Let's take a look at just a few of the differences:

JESUS IS:
- Holy
- Loving
- Humble
- Forgiving
- Obedient

MAN IS:
- Sinful
- Unloving
- Proud
- Unforgiving
- Disobedient

In spite of the differences, the Holy Spirit is continually conforming us into Christ's image. What does Paul tell us in Galatians 4:19?

_____

_____

Personal Holiness

One of God's attributes is holiness, which means He is morally pure and righteous, set apart from any unclean thought or deed.

The Holy Spirit is working in our lives to remove all filthiness and lustful thinking.

Nancy DeMoss writes, "True holiness starts on the inside–with our thoughts, attitudes, values, and motives–those innermost parts of our hearts that only God can see. It also affects our outward and visible behavior: 'Be holy in all your conduct.'"

Q What does Peter say in 1 Peter 1:15-16?

_____

Q What does Paul say in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20?

_____

Love for Others

... the Holy Spirit gives us the power to overcome trials and temptations.

The Holy Spirit is actively at work in giving us His supernatural love for others. His love is forgiving rather than judgmental, patient rather than irritable, and compassionate rather than easily angered and embittered towards others. Corrie ten Boom was only able to love the prison guard who demeaned and abused her when she made the choice to love him by faith.

Many Christians are able to put on a good front, which appears loving, while holding deep grudges and resentments inside. Christ's love is totally different; it begins on the inside.

Since it is impossible for us to simply improve our sinful natures, our act of obedience is to surrender our lives to the Holy Spirit, and allow Him to make us like Christ.

Q What does Paul say in Galatians 3:3?

_____

_____

Q What is Paul's solution in Galatians 2:20?

_____

_____

Q What does a Christ-centered life look like in Galatians 5:22?

_____

_____

Q What areas of your walk with Christ have changed to become more like Him?

_____

_____

Q What areas have not changed that still need to be surrendered to Him?

_____

_____

Your Greatest Investment

Have you ever thought of your life as an investment? Jesus did. He continually compared your life with an investment of money. Jesus wants you to invest your life for the greatest possible return. He wants you to help build His Kingdom.

Q How are you currently investing your life?

_____

_____

The Holy Spirit is actively at work in giving us His supernatural love for others.

The Three Servants

Jesus told the story (in Luke 19) of a prince who had left his three servants a huge amount of money to invest for him. He would settle with them when he returned years later. When the time came to settle, and reward them for their faithfulness, the prince asked them for an accounting. The first servant said, "Master, I doubled your money."

The prince was elated, and said, "Great job! Because you've earned me so much on that small investment, I'm going to put you in charge of ten cities!"

The second servant said, "Master, I made a fifty percent return on your investment." The prince said to him, "I'll put you in charge of five cities."



The third servant said, "Master, here's your money, safe and sound. I kept it hidden in the basement since I was afraid to lose it. I know you … don't put up with fools."

The prince was extremely disappointed… and told him, "You're right that I don't put up with fools…and you have been a fool! Why didn't you at least invest the money in a savings so that I would have gotten a little interest on it?"

Then turning to the others standing nearby, the prince ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who earned the most.' They objected, and said, 'But master, he already has double…"

The prince then said, "That's what I mean: Risk your life and get more than you ever dreamed of. Play it safe and end up holding the bag" (Luke 19:12-27, *The Message*).

Jesus told His disciples this story to give them the picture that God expects a return on our lives. In other words, He wants our lives to "count" for Him.

Life on earth is short. Soon it will be over—then it will be too late to invest your life for Christ.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that when your life is over, you will have the great honor to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and receive rewards for your faithful service to Christ. (See 2 Corinthians 5:10.)

All believers will give an account of their walk with Christ, but unfortunately not all will receive rewards.

Q What does Paul say in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15?

_____

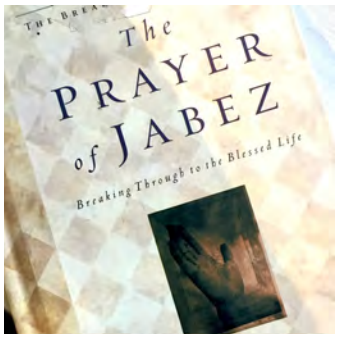
_____

Have you ever thought of your life as an investment? Jesus did.

Jesus wants you to invest your life for the greatest possible impact for His Kingdom. Like the prince who rewarded the first servant who doubled his investment, Jesus greatly desires to reward you.

Expand Your Territory

In *The Prayer of Jabez*, author Bruce Wilkinson relates how a relatively unknown man from the Old Testament, Jabez, asked God for "expanded territory" (1 Chronicles 4:9-10). Jabez wanted to be special for God. He wanted to invest his life for the greatest return. (This book will greatly challenge you.)



D.L. Moody was a man who asked God to expand his territory. He made this statement: "The world has yet to see what one man who is totally sold out to Jesus Christ can accomplish. By God's grace, I want to be that man!"

Q What "expanded territory" are you asking God to give you?

_____

_____

Ambassadors for Christ

In the same passage of Scripture that Paul tells the Corinthian believers about the Judgment Seat of Christ, Paul tells them another important fact:

"We are Christ's ambassadors" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

A country selects an ambassador to represent them in the highest manner to another land. Great care is made by the King or President to select the finest representative.

Your King has selected you to represent Him. You are God's choice to reach others for Him. You are Christ's "witness."

Your witness for Christ takes two basic forms:

- Witness by your "walk"
- Witness by your "talk"

Walk Before You Talk

One reason to grow in your relationship with Christ is so others can see Christ in the way you live. This can have a huge impact on others. Jesus said: "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16).

Write down your thoughts on being Christ's Ambassador:

_____

_____

_____

Work in Progress

Jesus wants you to invest your life for the greatest possible impact for His Kingdom.

Don't let the fact that you are a "work in progress" stop you from sharing Christ with others. Satan would love for you to keep silent about your new relationship with Christ.

However, if you are not living for Christ, that behavior will be obvious, and sharing Christ will appear hypocritical to others.

Q Is there anything holding you back from sharing Christ with your friends and others?

_____

_____

Telling Others the Good News

Have you ever thought about how many people you know, or rub shoulders with, who are hurting … and are disillusioned with life? In fact, some get so despondent that they consider ending it all.

Q Can you think of some people you have the opportunity to share Christ with?

_____

How to Share Christ with Others

You don't need to be an expert in the Bible, or have years of experience with Christ to witness for Him. There are several ways you can verbally share Christ on a daily basis.

Informal Sharing

Don't let the fact that you are a "work in progress" stop you from sharing Christ with others.

You don't have to make a complete presentation of the Gospel to make an impact for Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to someone who is open to hearing more about Christ:

- Invite a friend to church or a study group which you attend.
- Give your personal testimony.
- Ask someone to join you at a Christian event.
- Introduce a friend to other Christians.
- Give out a Christian book or tract.
- Refer someone to Y-Jesus.com or another Christian website.

The key to informal witnessing is to be available … and to ask God to lead you. He will! He has been waiting for you to ask Him!

Presenting Christ's Claims Directly

Everyone needs an opportunity to hear the complete story of how much God loves him/her personally. Once you have established a relationship with a person, and "earned the right to be heard," pray for an opportunity to share Christ with them.

We recommend you read, "Is Jesus Relevant Today?" at **Y-Jesus.com** and take time to print it out. You might want to give an extra copy to the person with whom you are sharing Christ. This article emphasizes the fact that Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ rather than a set of rules to follow.

Most people reject Christianity because they really don't understand what it is all about, or they misunderstand and think it is just "religion." They don't realize that it a relationship with their Creator … Jesus Christ! The best way to witness … so that people really understand what the Bible says … is to make a concise presentation of the Gospel with your testimony and biblical references.

In the following area briefly write out your testimony about how you received Christ, and how He has changed you (use another sheet of paper if necessary).

_____

_____

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_____

Here are some additional ideas on preparing and sharing your faith with another person:

Pray
Go to God about your friends … before you go to your friends about God. Ask God to prepare the person's heart and to control you by the Holy Spirit.

Use a Gospel Tract
In order to be concise and not get side-tracked, use a good Gospel tract, such as *The Four Spiritual Laws* by Bill Bright (New Life Publications), or *The Bridge* (Navpress).

Use a Bible
Carry a small Bible with you that has key verses underlined. It's best to use a modern translation, such as the *New Living Translation*. Try to memorize the key verses for each point of the Gospel.

Most people reject Christianity because they really don't understand what it is all about, or they misunderstand and think it is just "religion."

Share Your Personal Testimony
Write out your personal testimony, and review it with a friend until you can present it naturally in 3 to 5 minutes. Keep focused on how Christ has changed your life … and how much He means to you. Be enthusiastic … but not phony. Be transparent … and let them know this is real for you.

Stay Focused
You fight a spiritual battle when you share Christ with an unbeliever. There may be unusual interruptions … or the person might try to evade the real issues and get you off track. Pray, and keep focused on Christ's love … and His death for them on the cross. Emphasize how important they are to God.

Ask For A Decision
When you have shared Christ with someone, and he or she is open to the message, don't be afraid to ask for a decision. As the Holy Spirit leads, expect God to be working in their heart. Ask one of the following questions:

- "Does this make sense to you?"
- "Would you like to accept God's Gift?"
- "Would you like to make sure?"
- "Would you like to ask Jesus into your life?"

If the person you are sharing with is ready to receive Christ, pray with him or her, using the prayer in your tract, or the one that was included earlier in this booklet.

The Next Step

Once a person has come to Christ, it is vital that you share with them how they can grow in their relationship with God. Schedule a time to go through this booklet with them.

It is also vital that they immediately get connected with other Christians … preferably people with whom they can relate.

Passing the Baton

When you lead a person to Christ, you are "passing the baton" to them. Teach them from God's Word the discipleship principle Paul taught Timothy, so they will pass it on to others: "Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others" (2 Timothy 2:2).

When you lead a person to Christ, you are "passing the baton" to them.

For those who take God's Word seriously and want to be discipled, it is strongly recommended that you schedule regular meetings (at least every other week), to get deeper into the Bible. Both a small group Bible study and one-on-one discipleship are recommended for a new believer.



Run to Win!

Your race goes on … and there are many miles to go!

Marathon runners often get weary during the long race. Some quit. Those who finish strong are focused on the finish line, the satisfaction of doing well, and the prize ahead.

God's Word tells you how to finish strong:

> "Let us strip off every weight that slows us down … And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish" (Hebrews 12:12).

Q What weight is slowing you down?

_____

_____

Q What changes have you made to assure a well-run race?

_____

_____

Q What's the most important thing you have learned in this study?

_____

_____

When Christ is the center of your life, everything will be different. Your life will be full of joy and peace. You will want to please Him. God will give you love for other people, even your enemies. He can take ordinary people and make our lives purposeful and fruitful.

"By His mighty power at work within us, He is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope" (Ephesians 3:20).

Are you ready to risk it all for Christ? He is completely trustworthy … and will be with you in every mile of your race … even when you are weary and feel like quitting. Memorize these verses and hold on to God's purpose for your life!

"But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

"It is the will of God that you keep on running. Run well, and receive the prize!" (1 Corinthians 9:24-26).

"I know what I am planning for you," says the LORD. "I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Additional Resources

New Life in Christ

As a new believer, you need a basic understanding about your new life in Christ. These Bible study lessons will help you grow in your relationship with God. You will discover how faith, prayer, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit will help you live an adventurous and purposeful Christian life.
[Go to JesusOnline.com/eds/new-life]

Download Bible

Want to study the Bible, but don't have one of your own? You can now get free Bible downloads of the New King James Bible, the New International Version Bible, and many other Bible versions in more than 100 languages.
[Go to JesusOnline.com/follow-Jesus/Gods-word/download-bible]

Devotionals

These insightful online devotionals will help make your daily Bible study more effective and meaningful.
[Go to JesusOnline.com/follow-Jesus/Gods-word/devotionals]

Bible Study Tools

Could you benefit from the ability to search in the Bible for specific passages or phrases as you study the Bible?
[Go to JesusOnline.com/follow-Jesus/Gods-word/bible-study-tools]

Frequently Asked Questions

- God
- Jesus and the Evidence
- Jesus and His Claims
- Reliability of the Bible
- Next Steps in Your New Relationship with Jesus
- Help with Personal Circumstances

[Go to JesusOnline.com/email]

Websites

- Y-Jesus.com
- JesusOnline.com
- ExtremeLivingGuide.com
- BiblicalCounselingInsights.com

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