

Graceful Beginnings Series

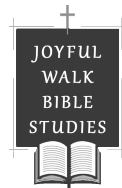
for New-to-the-Bible Christians

A Fresh Start



Enter Your Life in Christ with
Confidence and Joy

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Contents

Introduction	1
Beginning Your New Life in Christ.....	7
Christ — The Focus of Your New Life.....	15
God’s Spirit — Your New Power Source	27
Living in the Father’s Love — Prayer.....	37
Your New Identity in Christ.....	47
A New Life of Obedience	57
Your Life in Community.....	67
Sharing Your New Life.....	79



Introduction

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1 Peter 2:2-3)

GRACEFUL BEGINNINGS

The *Graceful Beginnings Series* of Bible studies are specifically designed for the new-to-the-Bible Christian—whether you are a new Christian or you just feel insecure about understanding the Bible. The lessons are basic, introducing the inexperienced Christian to her God and His way of approaching life in simple terms that can be easily understood.

Just as a newborn baby needs to know the love and trustworthiness of her parents, the newborn Christian needs to know and experience the love and trustworthiness of her God. *A Fresh Start* is the first book in the series, laying a good foundation of truth for you to grasp and apply to your life. The other books in the series can be done in any order.

SOME BIBLE BASICS

Throughout these lessons, you will use a Bible to answer questions as you discover treasure about your life with Christ. The Bible is one book containing a collection of 66 books combined together for our benefit. It is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament tells the story of the beginning of the world and God’s promises to mankind given through the nation of Israel. It tells how the people of Israel obeyed and disobeyed God over many, many years. All the stories and messages in the Old Testament lead up to Jesus Christ’s coming to the earth.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus Christ, the early Christians, and God’s promises to all those who believe in Jesus. You can think of the Old Testament as “before Christ” and the New Testament as “after Christ.”

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters and verses within those chapters to make it easier to study. Bible references include the book name, chapter number and verse number(s). For example, Ephesians 2:8 refers to the New Testament book of Ephesians, the 2nd chapter, and verse 8 within that 2nd chapter. Printed Bibles have a “Table of Contents” in the front to help you locate books by page number. Bible apps also have a contents list by book and chapter.

The Bible verses highlighted at the beginning of each lesson in this study are from the New International Version® (NIV®) unless otherwise indicated. You can use any version of the Bible to answer the questions, but using a more easy-to-read translation (NIRV, NLT, NET, ESV) will help you gain confidence in understanding what you are reading. You can find all these translations in the “YouVersion App” or on www.biblegateway.com.

This study capitalizes certain pronouns referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit—He, Him, His, Himself—just to make the reading of the study information less confusing. Some Bible translations likewise capitalize those pronouns referring to God; others do not. It is simply a matter of preference, not a requirement.

A FRESH START IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

The lessons in *A Fresh Start* emphasize that Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not a lifestyle, rules of conduct, or a society whose members were initiated by the sprinkling or covering of water. It is all about a relationship with Him and what that means to you as you live your life “in Christ” day-by-day.

These lessons will encourage you as a new-to-the-Bible Christian to appreciate and enjoy this new relationship with Jesus Christ that is filled with treasure for you to know and experience. You will delve into your spiritual riches and experience the kind of life our God has prepared for us all.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul writes this to all those who have put their trust in Christ,

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!”*

You became a new creation the moment you put your faith in Christ. All things are new in your life. You get a **fresh start**—a fresh start in the right direction where God is leading you to go. Your fresh start includes many wonderful things flowing out of God’s grace toward you. You can truly enter your new life in Christ with confidence and joy!

At the end of each lesson, we will include three things to help you make a fresh start in the right direction: “Bible verse to learn,” “Response in prayer & praise,” and “Discover Jesus” readings.

1) Bible verse to learn

To renew your thinking and to make part of your life as you begin this new adventure. Memorizing Bible verses is not just something “to do.” You are planting God’s words to you in your mind. The Bible calls it “renewing your mind” with truth about who God is and who you are.

If your Bible is a different translation from the one given in *Graceful Beginnings—A Fresh Start*, feel free to memorize the verse from your Bible rather than what is given. The point is to begin a habit of memorizing Scripture. You will be surprised at how soon it just flows from your mind.

2) Response in prayer & praise

To help you begin regular conversation with your God who loves you dearly.

You will be encouraged to talk to God about anything and everything. Tell Him what you are thinking and feeling. He is someone you can trust.

You will be encouraged to praise God for who He is and what He does. Praise is appreciation of God and giving Him credit for who He is.

3) Discover Jesus

Bible reading of the life of Jesus as told in the gospel of Mark. Christianity is Christ so spend a few minutes each day reading the verses and reflecting on Jesus—His life, relationships, and teaching. Get to know this One who loves you dearly.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

The eight lessons cover these truths for you to know:

- ✓ **BEGINNING YOUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST.** You are a forgiven child of God with a new life.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

- ✓ **CHRIST - THE FOCUS OF YOUR NEW LIFE.** Jesus Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:31)

- ✓ **GOD’S SPIRIT - YOUR NEW POWER SOURCE.** The Spirit is God’s empowering presence in your life.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

- ✓ **LIVING IN THE FATHER’S LOVE – PRAYER.** Your good Heavenly Father loves you dearly and delights in your relying upon Him through prayer.

“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

- ✓ **YOUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST:** You are in Christ, a child of God, one of God’s saints, completely loved and accepted by God.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

- ✓ A NEW LIFE OF OBEDIENCE. By faith, we learn to obey Christ and experience a life of freedom and joy.

*"I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
(Galatians 2:20)*

- ✓ YOUR NEW LIFE IN COMMUNITY. You can enjoy relationships and spiritual growth within the Church community.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

- ✓ SHARING YOUR NEW LIFE WITH OTHERS. Let Jesus' life in you overflow to others around you.

"But how can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?" (Romans 10:14 NLT)

You get a fresh start in the right direction where God is leading you to go. You can truly enter your new life in Christ with confidence and joy!

Enjoy!



Beginning Your New Life in Christ

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Hooray! You have trusted in Jesus Christ. Someone shared the good news of the gospel with you. You recognized your need, you wanted this good news for yourself, and you accepted it by faith in Christ. You began a new life, one based on a relationship with Jesus Christ and filled with treasure that is yours to know and experience. In this series of lessons, you will delve into your spiritual riches and learn how to experience the kind of life your God has prepared for you. You can enter your new life in Christ with confidence and joy!

First, let us review what this gospel “good news” is.

THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is all that God has done, is doing, and will do through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This “Good News” of Jesus is the power of God to eternally save people from the penalty of sin and to unite believers with Christ so that His resurrected life is lived out through them. This revolutionary truth centers a believer’s life on the heart-transforming work of Jesus Christ both for now and eternity.

This is the “Good News” that you have chosen to believe:

- ✓ God created us to enjoy a relationship with Himself.
- ✓ Our sin has separated us from a holy God and caused spiritual death in us.
- ✓ God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, who became human, lived a perfect life, died, and was resurrected to pay sin’s death penalty.
- ✓ We receive God’s gift by trusting in Jesus as the Son of God who died to take away our sin.
- ✓ Our new relationship with Christ gives us His presence forever and a new purpose in life.
- ✓ As a follower of Christ, we are united with other believers forever.

SOME BIBLE BASICS

If you received a special letter or email from Jesus telling how much He loves you and giving guidance you need for your daily issues, would you read it? Of course you would!

That's what the Bible is—God's love letter to you! The Bible is God's words for you and to you. It is the source of truth about your new life in Christ. Like reading a love letter increases your love for the author, reading and studying the Bible will help you to know your God better. You will discover many treasures in your new relationship with Christ.

The Bible is one book containing a collection of 66 books combined together for our benefit. The Bible is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament tells the story of the beginning of the world and God's promises given to mankind through the nation of Israel. It tells how the people of Israel obeyed and disobeyed God over many, many years. All the stories and messages in the Old Testament lead up to Jesus Christ's coming to the earth. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus Christ, the early Christians, and God's promises to all those who believe in Jesus. You can think of the Old Testament as "before Christ" and the New Testament as "after Christ."

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Throughout these lessons, you will use a Bible to answer questions as you discover treasure about your new life with Christ. Read each Bible verse and think through the answers. Let's get started!

CONFIDENCE IN YOUR NEW LIFE

You might be thinking to yourself, "Can a person who trusted in Christ know with certainty that she will spend eternity with God?" Great question! Here's the great answer: You **can know** that you have a secure and personal relationship with God. You **can be confident** in your new relationship with Christ because you have been completely

forgiven and accepted by God. Only Christ's death on the cross is sufficient to provide you with this proper relationship with God.

Three important words explain the basis of our acceptance before God. Let's define them.

- **GRACE:** Unmerited favor, an undeserved gift
- **SAVED:** Rescued, spared from disaster
- **FAITH:** Belief, trust, commitment of mind and heart

Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

What is declared in these verses?

What role did grace play in establishing your relationship with God?

What do you think is meant by saying you are saved? From what are you rescued?

What does faith have to do with receiving Christ?

Grace provided this relationship with God. You didn't deserve it nor did you earn it by any good works. Rather it is a free gift from God that you accepted when you received Christ through faith.

You have been saved from death and separation from God because that is the final result of sin. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” When you received Christ, you put your trust in Christ and His death for your sin. You have been rescued from death and eternal separation from God.

Simply put, faith is placing your trust in God and His Word. It is a full commitment to Christ. When you received Christ, you put your trust in Christ and His death for your sin. Instead of believing in your own ability to earn God’s favor, you now trust that you have been reconciled to God through what Christ has done for you.

Suppose you were standing before God and He asked you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” What would you now say?

DISCOVERING TRUTH ABOUT YOUR NEW LIFE

Many exciting things are true in your new relationship with Christ. Discovering these truths will help you build a firm foundation to your faith.

You are forgiven.

Read Colossians 1:13-14 and 2:13-14.

When you trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, all your sins were forgiven...past, present, and future.

What difference does it make to you to know that your sin is forgiven?

You are a child of God.

Read John 1:12 and 1 John 3:1-2.

When you received Christ, you began a loving relationship with God as His child.

How important is that to you?

You have been given a new life.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

When you trusted Christ to be your Savior, you began a new spiritual life. God will increasingly produce many new qualities in you as you respond to Him.

What does it mean to you that God has made all things new for you?

You have Christ in your life forever.

Read Hebrews 13:5.

Under what circumstances might Christ leave you?

Based upon what you read in all these verses so far, how many times is it necessary to receive Christ?

You have eternal life.

Read 1 John 5:11-13.

On what is eternal life based?

When does a person's eternal life begin?

When will it end?

If you were to die tonight, are you now sure that you would spend eternity with God?

You are a forgiven child of God with a new life. These wonderful truths you just discovered are based on what Jesus Christ has done for you. None of these benefits can be earned. You received them the moment you placed your faith in Christ. Grasp them as true about your life as you grow in Christ.

Which of these truths are especially meaningful to you right now?

A FRESH START IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

1) Bible verse to learn:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

2) Response in prayer & praise:

Review the truths about your new life in Christ. Thank God that each one of these are now true of you. Praise Him for His wonderful plan!

3) Discover Jesus

Christianity is Christ so spend a few minutes each day reading the verses and reflecting on Jesus—His life, His relationships, and His teaching. Get to know Him well—this One who loves you dearly.

Read Mark 1:1-20.

Reflect on what you read.

Read Mark 1:21-45.

Reflect on what you read.

Read Mark 2:1-17.

Reflect on what you read.

Read Mark 2:18-28.

Reflect on what you read.