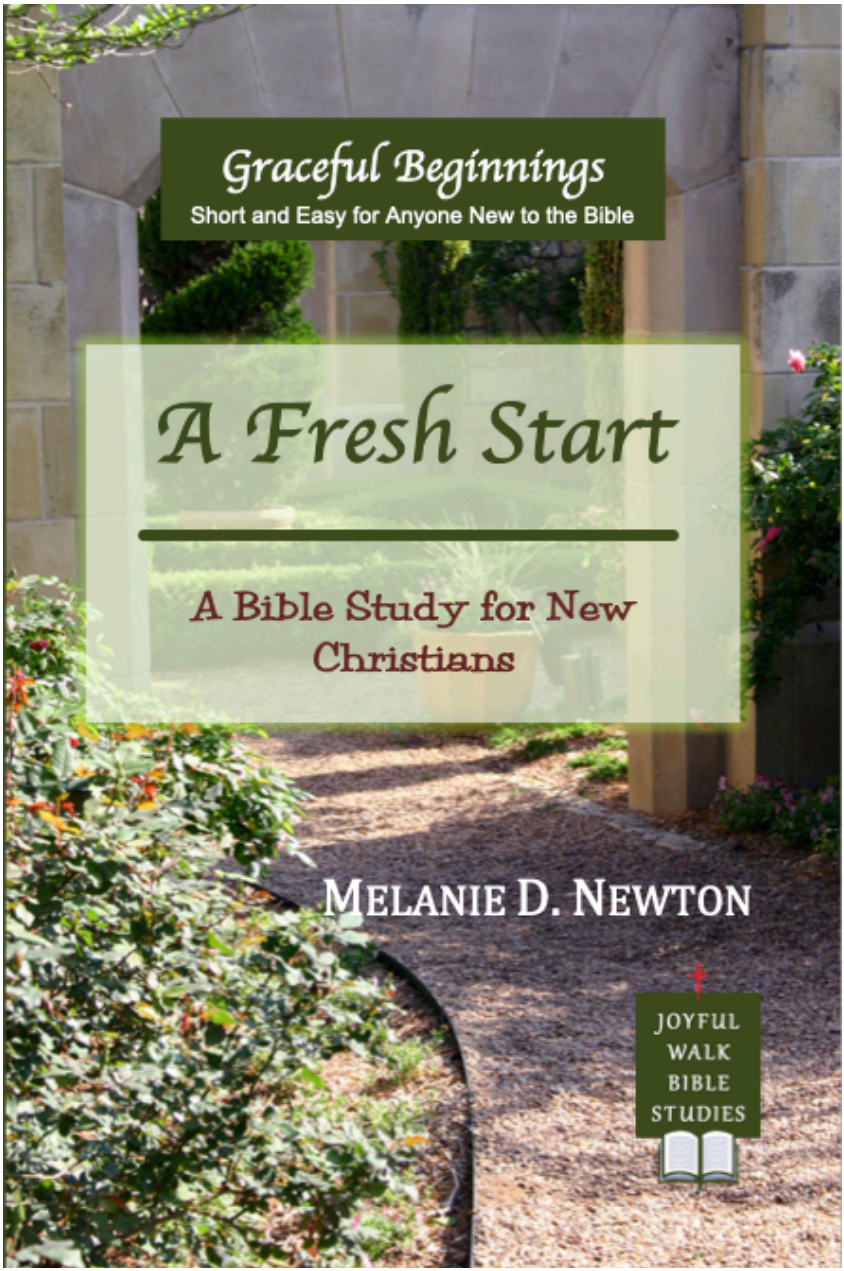

Graceful Beginnings
Short and Easy for Anyone New to the Bible
A Fresh Start
A Bible Study for New Christians
Melanie D. Newton
Joyful Walk Bible Studies

*Graceful Beginnings*

Short and Easy for Anyone New to the Bible

# A Fresh Start

## A Bible Study for New Christians

*Second Edition*

MELANIE D. NEWTON

JOYFUL WALK BIBLE STUDIES

*A Fresh Start: A Bible Study for New Christians*
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Melanie D. Newton is the author of "Graceful Beginnings" books for anyone new to the Bible and "Joyful Walk Bible Studies" for established Christians. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others.

*Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are grace-based studies for women of all ages. Each study guide follows the inductive method of Bible study (observation, interpretation, application) in a warm and inviting format.

We pray that you will find *A Fresh Start* a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with Him.

*Christ-Focused • Bible-Rich • Grace-Based*




Flower Mound, TX



## MELANIE D. NEWTON

Melanie is a Louisiana girl who made the choice to follow Jesus while attending LSU. She and her husband Ron married and moved to Texas for him to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. They stayed in Texas where Ron led a wilderness camping ministry for troubled youth for many years. Ron now helps corporations with their challenging employees and is the author of the top-rated business book, *No Jerks on the Job*.

Melanie jumped into raising three Texas-born children and serving in ministry to women at her church. Through the years, the Lord has given her opportunity to do Bible teaching and to write grace-based Bible studies for women that are now available from her website (melanienewton.com) and on Bible.org. *Graceful Beginnings* books are for anyone new to the Bible. *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are for maturing Christians.

Melanie is a speaker, author, and trainer with Joyful Walk Ministries. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others. Her heart's desire is to encourage you to have a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ so you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

*"Jesus took hold of me in 1972, and I've been on this great adventure ever since. My life is a gift of God, full of blessings in the midst of difficult challenges. The more I've learned and experienced God's absolutely amazing grace, the more I've discovered my faith walk to be a joyful one. I'm still seeking that joyful walk every day…"*

*Melanie*

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A Fresh Start (basics for new Christians)
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Paul's Letters for Children (Christ is everything we need)
Teaching Children the God They Can Know (the character of God)

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# 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* books are Bible studies specifically designed for anyone new to the Bible—whether you are a new Christian or you just feel insecure about understanding the Bible. The short and easy lessons will introduce you to your 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 new 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.**




# Christ — The Focus of Your New Life

*"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)*

## GRASPING TRUTH

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

## JESUS CHRIST – THE PROMISED MESSIAH

You heard the good news of the gospel and believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who gave Himself for your sins so that you could have eternal life just by believing in Him—your Savior. But more than salvation, Jesus Christ calls you into a relationship with Himself! Christianity is Christ! It is not a lifestyle, rules of conduct, or a society whose members were initiated by the sprinkling or covering of water. Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.

Over 1500 years, Israel's prophets had foretold the coming of the Messiah, God's anointed one, who would be both savior and ruler. Nearly 300 specific Old Testament references were made to His coming. The following are just a few. Read the Old Testament prophecy and the New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy.

**Read Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:1.**

***What was promised?***

***How was that promise fulfilled in Jesus' life?***

**Read Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:34-35.**

***What was promised?***

***How was that promise fulfilled in Jesus' life?***

**Read Psalm 22:18 and Mark 15:24.**

***What was promised?***

***How was that promise fulfilled in Jesus' life?***

The odds against one person fulfilling only eight of 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. Jesus fulfilled over 200 of them…exactly! The rest will be fulfilled when He returns. And His sinless life qualified Him as the perfect sacrifice for all of our sins.

Jesus lived as a man, died as a man and rose again with a new human body. You heard the good news about Jesus and trusted in Him.

***How much do you really know about Jesus?***

## CONFIDENCE IN THE REALITY OF JESUS

In this section, you will discover truths about your new Savior—what is revealed about Jesus' humanity as well as His deity.

### Jesus Is Fully Human

**Read Matthew 4:2.**

***What is revealed about Jesus' humanity?***

**Read Luke 2:52.**

***What is revealed about Jesus' humanity?***

**Read John 11:35.**

***What is revealed about Jesus' humanity?***

**Read John 19:28.**

***What is revealed about Jesus' humanity?***

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

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)*

## Jesus Is Fully God

**Read John 1:1-3, 14.**

***What is revealed about Jesus' deity?***

**Read Colossians 2:9.**

***What is revealed about Jesus' deity?***

**Read John 10:30.**

***What is revealed about Jesus' deity?***

**Read Philippians 2:6-11.**

***What is revealed about Jesus' deity?***

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

*"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)*

***How confident are you that Jesus (as man) understands how you feel but is powerful enough (as God) to take care of your every need?***

## Jesus Conquered Death

The religious leaders accused Jesus of making statements that only God can legitimately make and convicted Him of doing so. He was beaten, crucified, and buried in a heavily guarded tomb. All hope seemed to be lost. But…He rose from the dead on the third day…just as He had promised His followers (Matthew 16:21). Jesus was seen alive by over 500 people as historical eyewitness records testify (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Other religious founders (Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius) are dead. Jesus Christ is alive! You can enjoy a relationship with Him—now and forever!

**Read Acts 4:12.**

***What is declared about Jesus?***

***Besides salvation, what do you think are the relationship benefits of knowing Christ?***

## JESUS IS THE ANSWER TO EVERY SPIRITUAL NEED

Like Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the gospel of John contains the good news about Jesus—who He is, why He came, and what He offers to those who trust in Him. Jesus used specific phrases as word pictures to describe Himself to those who were listening and to describe the difference He could make in their lives when they trusted in Him. Discovering these truths will make a difference in your life as well.

### Jesus is the bread of life.

**Read John 6:35.**

***God creates every human being with a hunger for a relationship with Him. How have you tried to satisfy this hunger in the past?***

***What invitation does Jesus give in this verse?***

### Jesus is the light of the world.

**Read John 8:12.**

***What is the promise to those who follow Jesus?***

## Jesus is the gate for the sheep.

**Read John 10:9-10.**

***What does Jesus promise to anyone who enters through Him as the gate?***

## Jesus is the good shepherd.

**Read John 10:11, 27-30.**

***Once you trust in Jesus to take away your sin and become one of His followers ("sheep"), is there anything you can do to make yourself not belong to God any longer?***

## Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

**Read John 11:25.**

***What does Jesus promise to anyone who believes in Him?***

***Do you feel confident that death for a believer is like going to sleep on earth and waking up in heaven with Jesus nearby?***

## Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

**Read John 14:6.**

***What does Jesus declare about Himself?***

## Jesus is the vine.

**Read John 15:5.**

***How significant is it for us to maintain a trusting relationship with Jesus?***

**Summary:**

- ✓ Jesus' abundant love satisfies our hunger for a relationship with God.
- ✓ Jesus' light directs us to follow Him.
- ✓ Just as the shepherd provided safety for the grazing sheep, there is safety in following Jesus and doing life His way.
- ✓ As a shepherd knows each of his sheep by name, you can enjoy a forever relationship with Jesus as your shepherd.
- ✓ To His followers, Jesus gives eternal spiritual life now and eternal physical life in a new body after death.
- ✓ Jesus is the way for us to be totally loved and accepted by God our Father.
- ✓ Jesus nourishes us with His life so we bear fruit in our own lives that represents our connection with

him.

What a deal!

## CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST!

In this lesson, you learned that Christianity is Christ—it is all about Him! The following quote says it well.

> *"Jesus Christ gave His life for you so he could give His life to you so He could live His life through you." (Ian Thomas, 20th century teacher)*

As fully God and fully man, you can be confident that Jesus understands how you feel (Hebrews 4:15) and is powerful enough (as God) to take care of your every need (Ephesians 3:20). Through faith in Him, you are completely accepted and loved by God your Father.

**Jesus Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.** He offers a new life that is joyful and fruitful. All the awesome treasures God promises are yours through your faith in Jesus. You can enjoy a relationship with Him—now and forever!

*Why not spend the rest of your life getting to know this Jesus who lived a trusting life with God so you would know how to do the same and died for you so that you could have a new life?!*

## A FRESH START IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

**1) Bible verse to learn:**

> *"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)*

**2) Response in prayer & praise:**

Review each of the truths about who Jesus Christ is. Praise God for each one of them and how Jesus is the answer to your every need. Let Him know that you want to learn to trust Him for that.

**3) Discover Jesus**

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

**Read Mark 3:1-19. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 3:20-35. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 4:1-20. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 4:21-41. Reflect on what you read.**




# God's Spirit — Your New Power Source

*"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)*

## GRASPING TRUTH

- ✓ You are a forgiven child of God with a new life.
- ✓ Jesus Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.

## WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

An amazing transformation has begun to take place since you trusted in Christ as your Savior. You are now beginning to live the Christian life, which isn't a standard of performance nor a code of ethics, but a vital personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Christianity is Christ!

When you run a race, such as a marathon, it is your race to win or lose. Living for Christ is different. Just as our relationship with God is totally dependent on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live a dynamic Christian life also comes totally from God.

A computer has all the potential to do what it was created to do, but it has no power of its own. Similarly, through your new identity in Christ, you have all the potential you need to live as a new creation in Christ. But you must continually draw from the proper power source. When Jesus left the earth after His resurrection, He told His disciples to wait for the "promise" He would send them from His Father.

*"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49)*

Without God's Spirit, living a life that pleases God is impossible. With the Spirit, you can do anything and everything through Christ who gives you strength through the Spirit.

**Read John 7:37-39.**

***What does Jesus promise to those who come to him?***

**Read Matthew 28:19.**

***In whose name are all believers baptized?***

**Read 2 Corinthians 13:14.**

***Who does Paul say is with you?***

We have one God who exists in three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Years ago, someone started using the phrase "the Trinity" to help us understand this truth about God though it still twists our brain to think about it! This is who our God is—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—all one God. Truth!

Even though He is invisible, the Holy Spirit is a real Person and completely God. He is addressed by several titles in the Bible – Spirit of God, Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit.

**Read John 14:16-17.**

***What do these verses say about the Holy Spirit?***

**Read John 16:8.**

***What does this verse say about the Holy Spirit?***

**Read 2 Corinthians 3:17.**

***What does this verse say about the Holy Spirit?***

When you invited Jesus Christ into your life, He actually entered your life—and will be with you forever—through the Holy Spirit living in you. You will never be alone!

## WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE IN YOUR LIFE?

### To give life to you

**Read Ephesians 2:1-5.**

***How is your life before Christ described?***

***What is declared about you now in Ephesians 2:5?***

The Bible describes your life before Christ as being dead in your sins. Think of it as having a disease (sinfulness) that led to death (no life). Christ's death on the cross took care of your disease. God's grace has removed your sin from you. You are healed of the disease. Then, God's Spirit restores life to you.

To give you a new beginning (a fresh start!)

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.**

***What is declared about you?***

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

To teach you

**Read John 16:13-15.**

***What will the Spirit do for you?***

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-12.**

***What will the Spirit do for you?***

### To free you from sin's power

**Read Galatians 5:16.**

***The lure of life's pleasures and old habits will tug at you. Your own hormones and desires will crave to be filled. What freedom does the Spirit give to you?***

### To bring your needs to the Father

**Read Romans 8:26.**

***What is promised?***

***How does this make you feel?***

### To transform you into the likeness of Christ

**Read Romans 8:29 and 2 Corinthians 3:18.**

God's awesome plan is to change you to become more like Jesus Christ in your character. Jesus' Spirit living in you has begun this change, and He will continue His work throughout your life (Philippians 1:6).

***Is this something you desire for your life?***

To produce fruit in you and through you

**Read Galatians 5:22-23.**

***These qualities of Jesus' character will grow in your life. Which of these qualities would you most like the Spirit to begin developing in your life right now?***

**Read Acts 1:8.**

***What else does the Spirit enable you to do?***

To be a witness means to share with others what you have seen and experienced yourself.

God's awesome plan is to transform your life into something beautiful and Christ-like. Sadly, not every believer experiences the power to live this life as God intended. Some are unaware of the treasure of the Holy Spirit living inside them. Others choose to ignore the Spirit's work in their lives and follow their own desires instead. Living by the Spirit is a choice…

## LIVING BY THE SPIRIT IS A LIFE OF FAITH

As long as you live on earth, you will not only have the Holy Spirit living inside you, but you will also have your own flesh still 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.

The Holy Spirit is a greater power than your old nature. Choosing to listen to the Spirit and follow His leading will always be the right choice!

**Read Ephesians 5:18.**

***What is the choice given?***

The word "filled" means to be directed and controlled. Just as a soccer player freely chooses to let her coach direct her so she can do her best to win the game, we must choose to yield to the Holy Spirit's direction in our lives.

Faith is how you received Christ and His Holy Spirit giving you new life. Faith is how you turn your life over to the Spirit and trust Him on a daily basis. The Spirit-filled life is trusting God to produce in you the fruitful life He promised.

You must by faith yield to the Holy Spirit to control your life—recognizing your tendencies to be self-centered and then desire for Christ's life to grow in you and overcome those selfish tendencies. Consider praying this prayer of faith:

*"Dear Lord, I want you to change my life from being self-centered into one that is Christ-centered. I no longer desire to follow my sinful thoughts and actions. I give you, Holy Spirit, control of my thoughts, attitudes, words and behavior today. Fill me with yourself and show me how to live a life that pleases Christ."*

***When you think of what God has done for you—and how much your God loves you—is there any other choice?***

Many believers have mistaken the Holy Spirit's power for an emotional feeling or "high." Sadly, when the feelings depart, they think they have lost the Spirit's power.

God's promise is to "never leave or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5)!

*The Spirit-filled life is one of adventure with Christ. Are you ready for the adventure?*

The **Holy Spirit is God's empowering presence in your life**. In this lesson, you learned that when you trusted Christ…

- ✓ God's Spirit came to live inside you forever (you are never alone!).
- ✓ God's Spirit empowers you to live your new life of faith.
- ✓ God's Spirit produces the character of Christ in you.

## A Fresh Start in the Right Direction

**1) Bible verse to learn:**

*"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)*

**2) Response in prayer & praise:**

Review the truths about who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in your life. Thank God that each one of these is now true about you. Praise God for giving His Spirit to be God's empowering presence inside you, changing you from the inside out.

**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 5:1-20. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 5:21-43. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 6:1-29. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 6:30-56. Reflect on what you read.**




# Living in the Father's Love — 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)*

## GRASPING TRUTH

- ✓ You are a forgiven child of God with a new life.
- ✓ Jesus Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.
- ✓ The Spirit is God's empowering presence in your life.

## A LIFE OF PRAYER

You learned that the Holy Spirit brings to you much more than emotions or feelings…although they may be part of it. He brings you His power so that you can live the awesome life Christ has planned for you.

Power to overcome temptation and sin, to love others, and to live a life of obedience, freedom and joy is yours through your relationship with Jesus Christ. Christianity is Christ's life in you!

The Holy Spirit also provides the way for you to enjoy a life of prayer with your Heavenly Father. The moment you believe in Jesus, you are adopted into God's family (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-2). You have a Father God who loves you dearly.

Even if you didn't have a good earthly father, you can by faith believe that you have a good Heavenly Father who loves **you** dearly and delights in your relying upon Him through prayer. Jesus taught His followers to think of God as their Heavenly Father.

Prayer is communicating with your Heavenly Father and hearing back from Him. It is conversation with Someone who loves you dearly. What a privilege for the believer…to go directly into God's presence and talk

with Him about whatever is on your heart. He desires to hear from us, and He promises to listen!

> *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him." (1 John 5:4-15)*

The Holy Spirit helps you to pray (Romans 8:26) and teaches you how to pray in faith—learning to trust in God's goodness in how and when He answers your prayers. As you study God's words to you in the Bible, the Spirit will teach you who God is and how to enjoy your prayer relationship with Him.

The next section will focus on God's character. Then you will know who your Heavenly Father is…and why you can trust Him.

> ***What words come to mind when you think about the character of God?***

> ***Do you think of Him as someone you can know?***

## THE GOD YOU CAN KNOW

God's greatness is far beyond human understanding. But His Word does reveal to us part of the picture…He is an awesome God! Take time to think through each of the following characteristics of God and how each one affects your view of God…and your relationship with Him.

### God is sovereign.

**Read 2 Samuel 7:22.**

> ***How is God described?***

God is the sovereign ruler over His creation. He rules it with supreme authority and power.

***Are you willing to recognize God's authority over you—to trust that He knows what is best for you?***

## God is all powerful.

**Read Ephesians 1:19-20 and 3:20.**

***Did you notice that God uses His power to work both for us and in us?***

***God is more powerful than anything or anyone else in the entire universe. Do you feel confident that you can ask Him to work in your life, and He will do it?***

## God is present everywhere at the same time.

**Read Psalm 139:7-10.**

***Can you go to any place where God is not with you or cannot hear your prayer to Him?***

***How does this make you feel?***

God is all knowing.

**Read Psalm 139:1-4.**

***What does God know about you?***

**Read Psalm 139:13-16.**

***What else does God know about you?***

***If God knows everything there is to know, does anything good or bad in your life escape God's notice or surprise Him?***

God is love.

**Read 1 John 4:7.**

***How is God described?***

God's love is patient, kind, forgiving and considers what is best for the one being loved.

***How does knowing this make you feel as you share your heart with Him?***

### God is good.

**Read Psalm 119:68.**

God is good all the time—in the tough times, in different ways for each person, and in what He allows or does not allow into our lives.

***As you talk to your Heavenly Father, are you willing to trust His goodness in the way He chooses to answer your prayer?***

## PRAYING TO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

Now that you begin to see how great your Heavenly Father is, you may be afraid to approach Him in prayer. Yet, as His child, you are always welcome in His presence. Go to Him…boldly!

*"Let us then approach the 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)*

### You can talk to God anytime and anywhere.

You can talk with God throughout the day, telling Him your needs, asking Him for guidance, and thanking Him for all of His many blessings.

And your prayers do not have to be especially long. You can shoot up an "arrow" prayer to God anytime: "Father, I need your peace," or "Please comfort me right now." You can talk to Him at work, while you drive in the car, even when you are talking with other people! He loves you that much.

### You can talk to God about anything.

Your Heavenly Father loves you very much and wants to hear what is on your mind. When you talk to Him about your thoughts and needs, it shows Him that you trust Him. You can call out to Him, and He promises to answer—what a wonderful guarantee!

Your prayers do not have to be anything fancy. God is pleased with honesty, not impressed with formality. Just start today by telling God what is on your mind and asking Him to speak to you through His words in the Bible.

### You can talk to God expecting an answer.

God has given His words in the Bible to teach you what His will is on many areas of life. You can pray with confidence when you pray according to His will.

> *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us. And if we know that He hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of Him." (1 John 5:14-15)*

And you can ask God what to do in other situations and trust that He will guide you. Pray with humility, wanting to be dependent on Him and learn from Him.

> *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5)*

## DEVELOPING A LIFE OF PRAYER

As a Christian, you can approach prayer as a conversation with Someone who loves you dearly. As with any relationship, living in the Father's love takes regular time together with Him. Plan a daily time that works for you to have focused time with your Heavenly Father. Many Christians call this a "Quiet Time." It helps to have a place with few distractions. Jesus, as our example, got away from the people surrounding Him so that He could spend time talking to His Father.

> ***In your daily life, when could you carve out focused time to meet with your Heavenly Father? How would you minimize distractions?***

You can start talking to your Father in the morning before you even get out of bed. For example:

- "Good morning, Lord. Today, before I get going, I just want you to know I love you…and want to live for you today!"
- "Lord, today, I am going to trust you to direct my paths as I choose to live my life your way."

## God's perfect timing

Do not be discouraged by prayers that seem to go unanswered. God in His goodness may choose to delay the answer. Countless Christians will tell you stories of God's faithfulness in answering prayers after many years of continual praying.

God delights in your bringing Him your requests since doing so is an act of faith and obedience. Keep asking Him for things that are within His will as revealed in the Bible. He promises to answer those prayers…still, in His time!

## Remember to be thankful!

God has done so much for you that your heart should want to thank Him in prayer and adore Him because of His greatness and His unending love for you.

> *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)*

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 on the cross made it possible for you to talk directly with God as your Heavenly Father. He wants you to seek His guidance, comfort, peace, and companionship always…not just when you want things. And He is a God you can know. Because of this, you can think about Him rightly as you pray.

You have a good Heavenly Father who loves you dearly and delights in your relying upon Him through prayer. When you talk to your Father:

- ✓ Approach Him with humility and respect for His absolute authority.
- ✓ Humbly realize He can do anything. And although He cares about every detail in your life, think about how small your problems are compared with how awesome He is!
- ✓ Remember that wherever you go…He is already there. Even in the worst situation or location, He is not blocked out.
- ✓ Think about how He knows what is going on deep in your heart. And He knows what is best for you!
- ✓ Remember that He is good all the time—in the tough times, in different ways for each person, and in what He allows or does not allow into our lives.

*So begin talking to your awesome Father!*

## A Fresh Start in the Right Direction

**1) Bible verse to learn:**

*"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)*

**2) Response in prayer & praise:**

Review the truths about who your Heavenly Father is and how you can trust Him as you pray. Thank Him for who He is and that Jesus' death on the cross made it possible for you to talk directly with God as your Heavenly Father. Praise God for this privilege!

**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 7:1-23. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 7:24-37. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 8:1-21. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 8:22-38. Reflect on what you read.**




# Your New Identity in Christ

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

## GRASPING TRUTH

- ✓ You are a forgiven child of God with a new life.
- ✓ Jesus Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.
- ✓ The Spirit is God's empowering presence in your life.
- ✓ Your good Heavenly Father loves you dearly and delights in your relying upon Him through prayer.

## THE BASIS OF YOUR IDENTITY

In our world, identity drives everything about life. You carry some kind of identity card with you—a driver's license or a work-related card—that includes your name and picture plus some identifying characteristics about you. If someone asked, "Who are you?" you could answer with the information on that card. Identities tell us who we are and where we live. This is also true in your new life as a Christian.

The world is not going to validate our new identity. From a worldly point of view, you and I are the same as we've always been—all our "baggage" is still hanging around our necks. But God, our authority now views us differently. It's what He has done for us and to us that counts.

***What are some ways that you tried to establish your identity before trusting in Christ?***

**Read Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:22.**

***What was true of your life before Christ?***

From God's point of view, there are two kinds of people in the world: (1) those who are "in Adam" and (2) those who are "in Christ." Everyone is born "in Adam" and inherits his sin nature.

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.**

***What happened to you when you believed?***

The moment you believed, the old self that was born in Adam died; a new self with the same body but a new interior started life as a new person with a new nature "in Christ." Reborn. You can never go back to not being in Christ!

**Read Romans 6:5.**

***With whom are we united?***

Being united with Christ means that you become fused together with Him. At the moment of fusing, you are no longer on your own, but Jesus' transforming life-giving power now lives in you. We are continually fused together with Him and can live to enjoy the benefits of being in Him.

*"Never think of yourself apart from Christ." (John Wesley, 18th century Methodist preacher)*

***Consider items that are fused together. Does the fusing usually create something stronger or weaker than the original items?***

So far in this study, you have learned how your faith in Jesus Christ sets you free from your previous sin-stained existence to enjoy a new life. But your ability to live out this freedom depends upon your understanding of who you now are. How you see yourself directs how you live out your faith walk. Every Christian is a new creation with a new identity in Christ. And this new identity sets you free to live a radically new kind of life—a joyful life.

How you see yourself will influence how you think and live.

***Are you now seeing yourself as something new in Christ rather than just another one of the billions of human beings walking around on our planet?***

## BENEFITS OF YOUR NEW IDENTITY

Your new identity in Christ contains at least 35 benefits. You get all of these benefits at once, the moment you trusted in Christ. These benefits are unconditional. The burden of performance is upon God, not upon you. Let's look at just a few of those benefits. Read the phrase describing what is true about you, look up the verse reference and reflect on what that means to you now.

### Made at peace with God

**Read Romans 5:1-2.**

Jesus' death on the cross full satisfied God's righteous anger against your sin. You are no longer one of God's enemies because of your sin. You are at peace with God.

***What does this mean to you now?***

## Reconciled to God

**Read Colossians 1:19-22.**

You were once alienated from God because of your sin. Now, the barrier of sin has been taken away, and a bridge has been built through your faith in Christ. You can now enjoy a relationship with God.

***What does this mean to you now?***

## Redeemed by God

**Read Titus 2:13-14.**

You were once a slave to sin (your old master). Jesus' blood paid the price for you to be released. You have a new master with greater power living inside of you, the Spirit of God Himself, who can give you freedom from any entrapping sin.

***What does this mean to you now?***

## Forgiven

**Read Colossians 2:13-14.**

Every one of your sins has been forgiven—past, present, and future.

***What does this mean to you now?***

## Justified, declared righteous

**Read Romans 3:21-24 and 2 Corinthians 5:21.**

Because Jesus paid the penalty for your sin in your place, God can declare you "not guilty" of your sin and declare you "righteous" as He places Christ's righteousness on you.

***What does this mean to you now?***

## Sanctified (set apart for God's special purpose)

**Read 1 Corinthians 6:11.**

Every believer has been washed and set apart as God's special, beloved possession for His exclusive use. It carries the idea of being opposite of the ordinary and common.

***What does this mean to you now?***

## Adopted as a child of God

**Read Romans 8:14-15.**

"Abba" is similar to "Daddy" in English, referring to a close bond between father and child.

***What does this mean to you now?***

### Secure in God's love

**Read Romans 8:38-39.**

Notice all the things listed. Is anything left out? No! Not even anything you do yourself can separate you from God's love in Christ.

***What does this mean to you now?***

## FREEDOM OF KNOWING WHO YOU ARE

One of the fundamental questions of the human race is that of identity, "Who am I?" Based on what you discovered in the verses you just read, write a short description of your identity in Christ.

"I _____ (your name) am in Christ,

_____

_____

***That's who you are!***

*The one secure, eternal answer is that through faith in Jesus Christ you can say, "I am in Christ, a child of God, one of God's saints, completely loved and accepted by God"—an identity that no circumstance can change!*

As stated before, the world isn't going to validate your new identity. That's why you need to know the truth.

Read the following chart contrasting the world's **lies** about who you are with God's **truth** about who you are. (Adapted from Dr. Timothy Warner, *Resolving Spiritual Conflicts and Cross-Cultural Ministry,* Freedom in Christ Ministries, 1993.)

| The World's Lies (are) | God's Truth (says) |
|---|---|
| • You are still a sinner because you sometimes sin. | • You are a saint (one declared righteous by God) who sometimes sins. |
| • You get your identity from what you have done. | • You get your identity from what God has done for you. |
| • You get your identity from what people say about you. | • You get your identity from what God says about you. |
| • Your behavior tells you what to believe about yourself. | • Your belief about yourself directs your behavior. |

You can know your true identity—what God has done to change you from the inside out. And knowing it sets you free from the world's constraints and expectations, from your past, and from the garbage that others feed you about your failures.

You are in Christ, a child of God, one of God's saints, completely loved and accepted by God. Bask in that!

## A FRESH START IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

**1) Bible verse to learn:**

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

**2) Response in prayer & praise:**

You are learning to communicate with God through prayer and praise. This time respond through any creative means you choose (journaling, prayer, poem, art, song) to illustrate what you have learned from this lesson about your new identity. An extra page is added at the end of this lesson for you. What you create will be your praise to Him today.

**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 9:1-29. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 9:30-50. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 10:1-31. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 10:32-52. Reflect on what you read.**




# A New Life of Obedience

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

## GRASPING TRUTH

- ✓ You are a forgiven child of God with a new life.
- ✓ Jesus Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.
- ✓ The Spirit is God's empowering presence in your life.
- ✓ Your good Heavenly Father loves you dearly and delights in your relying upon Him through prayer.
- ✓ You are in Christ, a child of God, one of God's saints, completely loved and accepted by God.

## THE FORCES AGAINST YOU

The entire Christian life is to be lived by faith, not works. Other religions force their followers to adhere to a list of rules to stay acceptable. Christians should want to obey God out of love and gratitude for how much God loves us and for Jesus paying the ultimate price for our sins.

Yet, we cannot live an obedient Christian life in our own strength. We must live by faith in Christ every day. By faith, we trust the Holy Spirit to enable us to obey what God wants for our lives. By faith, we learn to obey Christ and experience a life of freedom and joy.

But the Bible teaches that in the Christian life, you will face enemies that will try to keep you from being obedient to Christ—the devil, the world and the flesh.

The Devil – Satan (a.k.a. known as "the devil") is a vicious enemy who will aim to keep you away from trusting in Jesus and the promises in God's Word. His weapons are doubt and discouragement. Do not fear Him. Jesus is stronger than he is.

*"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)*

The World – The culture wants to conform you to its way of life. Its aim is to keep you focused on possessions, success and other substitutes for God. Choose not to be conformed to the world but transformed to Jesus' way of living life.

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2)*

The Flesh - While we as redeemed and forgiven believers have new life in Christ, we retain our old bodies in which sin still dwells (called the "flesh" or "sinful nature"). Though born again of the Spirit, our bodies are not born again, and our souls (mind, emotion, and will) are not instantly transformed. It is through this part of us (the "flesh") that sin assaults us. That tendency to sin we inherited from Adam when we were born stays with us until we die. And the world we live in feeds it.

*"For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world." (1 John 2:16)*

## CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH

Grasp this truth: The "flesh" does **not** improve over time. It doesn't go away. It is in continual conflict with the Spirit living inside of you. As a result, you never outgrow your need to depend 100% on Jesus Christ. **Your choices can change over time as you learn to live by the Spirit**

**and not by the flesh.** For simplicity, we will consider living by the flesh as letting your "self" control that part of your life as opposed to the Spirit controlling it.

**Read Galatians 5:16-18.**

***How does Paul describe this continual conflict?***

**Read Galatians 5:19-26.**

***What are the evidences in your life that you are living by the flesh?***

***In contrast, what are the evidences in your life that you are living by the Spirit?***

**Read Colossians 3:5-15.**

***What are the evidences in your life that you are living by the flesh?***

***In contrast, what are the evidences in your life that you are living by the Spirit?***

Living by the flesh is pretty ugly, isn't it? Would you say there is a stark contrast between the two lifestyles? Actually, at any point in your life you will be living by the Spirit in some areas of your life and living by the flesh in other areas. You may be kind and forgiving to others but coveting what you don't have. You may be speaking truth rather than lies but struggling with anger outbursts.

The evidence reveals who you are trusting in—self or Christ. The Christian life is impossible apart from Christ Himself. That's why we are continually exhorted to live by faith in Christ, trusting in His Spirit to enable us to obey Him.

Which evidences of "self-control" in your life jumped out at you when you listed them above? Jesus wants you to trust Him to live by the Spirit in those areas.

## CHOOSING WISELY AS YOU LEARN TO OBEY CHRIST

Sin is ugly, very ugly! Though we have an indwelling sin nature still with us that is at war against the Spirit, we are not left helpless in the midst of the conflict. God's empowering presence in us—His Spirit—is a greater power than sin and enables us to win the battle over sin. But we have a responsibility as well.

**Read Romans 13:14 and Galatians 5:16.**

***In order to live by the Spirit and not by the flesh, what is our responsibility?***

**Read Titus 2:11-14.**

***From verse 12, what does God's grace through His Word and His Spirit do for us?***

***From verse 14, what is the goal?***

**Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.**

***Temptation is not sin, but it can lead to sin. What does God promise regarding temptation?***

Whether or not you are presently tempted in a given area, you are capable of committing any sin (disobedience to Christ) mentioned in the Bible, given the right circumstances, time and temptation.

## Progression of sin

The progression of sin is something like this:

- A received thought produces familiarity.
- Continued pondering produces a loss of repugnance and, eventually, curiosity.
- Desires, sometimes a total surprise, are generated to experiment. The most damaging or dangerous are the ones that blindside you with a desire you didn't even know would affect you! So protect yourself at all times through prayer, "Lord, protect me from myself!"
- Having tried the activity, the flesh (like a goat) can learn to like, and even grow dependent, on any sensual stimulus.

*Conclusion:* We never outgrow our need to depend 100% upon Jesus Christ. Recognizing this should lead us to have compassion on one another and to not take risks with sinful behavior!

### Good habits to protect yourself

A habit is easier to maintain than it is to start. Faith can be a habit—a good habit. Make wise decisions to protect yourself:

- **Protect your mind.** Desires of the flesh do not go away but are like a fire. They can burn hot or burn down, depending on whether you are feeding them.
- **Don't play with fire.** Make policy decisions to keep your distance from what tempts you.

***What decisions are you making or should you make to protect yourself from what tempts you?***

## THE BIBLICAL WAY FOR OVERCOMING SIN

Most of us cannot go very long without doing something that is a work of the flesh—whether intentional or unintentional. God understands this about us. All sin is covered by Christ's work on the cross, forgiven before it is every committed (see Colossians 2:13-14). Living by the Spirit reveals to us through the Word and through prayer what is sin in our lives and helps our repentant hearts follow through with a desire for change. When you recognize sin in your life, use the following process to help you deal with it.

### View yourself rightly.

Your identity is not "_____" (coveter, greedy, gossiper, whatever it is). You are in Christ, a child of God, who sometimes "_____" (covets, is greedy, gossips).

### Recognize (confess) the truth regarding your sin.

To **confess** biblically means "to agree with God" about what you and He both know to be true. It is not a formula nor does confession require a mediator. It is not saying, "I'm sorry." It is saying, "I agree with you, God. I blew it!"

*For example: while reading Philippians 4:12 (Paul says that whether he is in need or has plenty, he has learned to be content), the Spirit convicts you that you have been coveting rather than being content. You agree with God that your coveting doesn't fit someone who knows God. That's confession.*

### Add repentance to your confession.

**Repentance** means to change your mind about that sin, to mourn its ugliness, resulting in changing your actions. It's saying, "I recognize what I am doing is wrong. This fills me with sorrow because it displeases you, God. Please help me to live differently." He will certainly do that! That's how your life gets transformed.

*For example: You want to stop coveting and be grateful instead. You pray, "Lord Jesus, by faith I ask your Spirit to nudge me when I want to covet. Replace my coveting with contentment and gratitude." That is repentance.*

### Follow repentance with dependence.

**Depend** on the Holy Spirit inside you for that change to take place. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not interested in your compliance (outward conformity) as much as He desires your **obedience** from the heart.

*For example: Memorize Philippians 4:12-13 and any other scriptures that deal with being thankful for God's provision. Be sensitive to the Spirit's nudging when you are tempted to covet. Choose to be thankful instead.*

Here's an interesting contrast regarding dependence. Human parents raise their children to be more independent of them over time (less dependent). God raises His children to be more dependent on Him over time and less independent on their own.

The Christian life is to be lived by faith. Christians should want to obey Christ out of love and gratitude for how much God loves us and for Jesus paying the ultimate price for our sins.

Yet, we cannot live an obedient Christian life in our own strength. We must live by faith—in God's promises in the Bible and in the Holy Spirit inside us who helps us obey what God wants for our lives.

By faith, we learn to obey Christ and experience a life of freedom and joy.

Do not be discouraged when progress in your Christian walk does not 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.
- ✓ Believe that the Holy Spirit will give you victory any moment you choose to obey Him.
- ✓ Continue being obedient, living by faith and trusting in God's promises even when you are going through trials and temptations.
- ✓ By faith, the Holy Spirit gives you the power to overcome those trials and temptations.
- ✓ As you surrender your life to Him out of obedience, He conforms you into the likeness of the Lord Jesus.

*Praise God for how He works in your life!*

## A FRESH START IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

**1) Bible verse to learn:**

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

**2) Response in prayer & praise:**

Have you recognized specific sin in your life that you know is ugly in God's eyes? Follow the steps given above to live in freedom from the ugliness in that area of your life. In this way, you will learn obedience to Christ. Trust the Holy Spirit to give you victory in that area. Praise God for how He works in your life in that area!

**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 11:1-25. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 11:26-33. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 12:1-27. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 12:28-44. Reflect on what you read.**




# Your Life in Community

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

## GRASPING TRUTH

- ✓ You are a forgiven child of God with a new life.
- ✓ Jesus Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.
- ✓ The Spirit is God's empowering presence in your life.
- ✓ Your good Heavenly Father loves you dearly and delights in your relying upon Him through prayer.
- ✓ You are in Christ, a child of God, one of God's saints, completely loved and accepted by God.
- ✓ By faith, we learn to obey Christ and experience a life of freedom and joy.

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

What a privilege it is to enjoy fellowship with God through prayer and fellowship with other believers in God's awesome family on earth—the Church (usually written with a capital "C" to distinguish from local individual churches, i.e. "my church"). You can enjoy relationships and spiritual growth within this Church community.

*"Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:12-13)*

Yes, the moment you became a Christian, the Holy Spirit placed you into a new family called the Church. The Church is spread across the whole world and made up of every culture and language—all believers alive on planet earth. It is not limited to a building, just as a natural family is not limited to their house. As Christ is the head of this family, all members are considered part of the Body of Christ. And this family of God's own children is given an amazing purpose—the privilege of showing the world who God is.

> *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)*

### The local church

While you are part of the universal Church, God wants you to be part of a local church family. It is like having relatives all over the world but living with your immediate family. A local church is a group of believers committed to worshiping Christ, teaching His Word, supporting each other as you follow Jesus together and proclaim the good news to others.

> ***Why do you think it is important for you to spend time with other Christians?***

Discover the benefits of life in this new community …

## THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY

> *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:24-25)*

Just as fireplace logs burn more brightly when placed together, so Christians need each other for warmth and encouragement. The local church provides opportunity for us to enjoy this community. You will see that the benefits are mutual.

### Growth

**Read Ephesians 4:11-14.**

***Who has God planned to help you grow in your Christian life?***

Pastors and teachers help you grow in your Christian life as they feed you the spiritual food of the Bible and help you to know God better.

***In what areas of life do you feel tossed about by every wind of teaching (v. 14)?***

### Protection

**Read Acts 20:28.**

***What is the responsibility of the local church leaders?***

Just as a house keeps people protected from harm, a good local church community can keep Christians safe from false teaching. Leaders that stay true to the Word of God will encourage the church community to stay true to God's Word, also.

***Would you be able to recognize false teaching on your own?***

## Love for Others

**Read John 13:34-35.**

***What is Jesus' new command to His disciples?***

Being part of a church family helps you learn how to love others and their differences. As we do so, we model His love to the world.

***Why do you think Christians loving one another would be such a powerful witness?***

## Spiritual Gifts

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.**

***What is revealed about spiritual gifts?***

**Read Ephesians 4:16.**

***What are the results to church members when spiritual gifts are used as God planned?***

God has given you spiritual gifts to benefit your church family. A local church family can help you discover your gift and learn how to use it to strengthen the Body of Christ. Whether God gave you the

gift of teaching, giving or showing mercy, that role is a crucial one for healthy functioning of the Body of Christ.

***Did you know that you are meant to play a crucial part in God's family?***

***How do you think someone discovers her spiritual gift?***

Participating in your church community can help you to discover your spiritual gifts and learn how to use them to serve your church family well. Listen to what your heart is drawn to do.

The Holy Spirit will guide you to how He wants you to use each gift that He has given to you.

## Finding Community in a Local Church

God knows you need the guidance of a pastor, the care of other Christians, and the safety and support of a good church to help you grow as a Christian.

What makes a good church? No church is perfect just like no family is perfect. But as stated on the first page, a healthy church is committed to certain things. Look for a church that…

### Worships Christ

A healthy church presents Jesus as the Son of God and faith in Him alone as the only way to be saved from your sins and have a relationship with God.

### Teaches His Word as truth

A healthy church honors the Bible as God's Word, completely true, and the guidebook for life and decision-making.

### Grows believers to follow Jesus together

A healthy church encourages you to personally follow Jesus as His disciple and grow stronger in your faith—what you read in Ephesians 4:11-14 earlier in this lesson. When you are joined together with other believers who are growing in Christ, you each encourage one another and keep each other "fired up" in your mutual faith.

> *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*

### Encourages believers to proclaim the good news

A healthy church is actively obeying Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19 to share the good news about Jesus with those who don't know Him yet. This is the main purpose of the worldwide Church—to tell others about Jesus that they, too, may be saved and added to God's family. Look for a church that reaches out to non-Christians in your town.

> *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:19)*

> ***Do you feel personally included in Jesus' command to tell the world about Him and make disciples everywhere?***

Pray and ask God to help you find the local church He wants you to join. He has promised to provide for you, so you can trust Him to answer your request. When you find a healthy church that is committed to the four values listed above, thank God! Ask Him how you can serve there.

## LIVING AS PART OF THE FAMILY

Enjoying community as part of a church family is called fellowship (from the Greek word meaning "sharing in common"). The sharing of our lives requires sincere love, kind speech, continuing encouragement, heartfelt forgiveness, and selfless generosity. All these qualities are possible because of the Holy Spirit living inside each member and binding us all together.

Relationships among believers should be marked by love for each other, which is the very thing that attracts those who do not have a relationship with Jesus.

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

Jesus knows our hearts. He knows the difficulty we all have at times with one another. Our relationship with Him does not prevent us from experiencing misunderstandings or differences of opinion. Sometimes these relational challenges tempt us to harbor grudges against someone with whom we differ or tempt us to isolate ourselves from the whole community. Neither of these is healthy for a believer.

### Reconcile relationships quickly

Jesus helped His disciples through their conflicts with one another. By faith in Christ, we are not only commanded to love but are given His love to give to others. God's Spirit enables us, as we trust Him to do so. We can say, "I can't, Jesus, but you can through me."

**Read Matthew 5:23-24.**

> ***How should we respond to a broken relationship with a fellow believer?***

You are not responsible for the other person's response.

You are responsible for your own efforts to initiate reconciliation. Pray for help, do your part, and leave the rest in God's hands.

## Stay connected

One of the main reasons some Christians live defeated lives is that they have isolated themselves from other believers. Coming together with other believers in Christ's name is similar to hot coals, which keep each other hot when lumped together. A coal that is separated from the others will soon grow cold. Isolation will lead to stunted spiritual growth and a lack of joy in your life.

**Read Hebrews 10:24-25.**

***Why is it important to stay connected to other believers?***

You, along with all other Christians of all time, make up the Body of Christ, the Church. While you are part of the universal Church, God wants you to be part of a local church family. As stated above, it is like having relatives all over the world but living with your immediate family. A local church is a group of believers committed to worshiping Christ, teaching His Word, supporting each other as you follow Jesus together and proclaim the good news to others.

In this lesson, you learned that **you can enjoy relationships and spiritual growth within this Church community** (local and universal). Your local church community can benefit you in these ways:

- ✓ Help you to grow strong in your faith and to know God better.
- ✓ Keep you protected from being swayed by false teaching.
- ✓ Teach you how to love others and model Christ's love to the world.
- ✓ Help you to discover your spiritual gifts and learn how to use them to serve the church family.

- ✓ Act as a source of encouragement to you.

*Someone once said, "Believers are 'Jesus in the flesh' to one another." It is truly awesome to fellowship with others who love Christ…and are living for Him!*

## A FRESH START IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

**1) Bible verse to learn:**

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

**2) Response in prayer & praise:**

Praise and thank God for adopting you into His family and giving you a new community (the Body of Christ) in which to enjoy your new life.

If you do not belong to a local church right now, ask Jesus to lead you to a church community where you can learn God's Word and continue to grow in your faith. While waiting, join a small Bible study group.

**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 13:1-27. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 13:28-37. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 14:1-26. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 14:27-42. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 14:43-72. Reflect on what you read.**




# Sharing Your New Life

*"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)*

## GRASPING TRUTH

- ✓ You are a forgiven child of God with a new life.
- ✓ Jesus Christ calls you into a close relationship with Himself.
- ✓ The Spirit is God's empowering presence in your life.
- ✓ Your good Heavenly Father loves you dearly and delights in your relying upon Him through prayer.
- ✓ You are in Christ, a child of God, one of God's saints, completely loved and accepted by God.
- ✓ By faith, we learn to obey Christ and experience a life of freedom and joy.
- ✓ You can enjoy relationships and spiritual growth within the Church community.

## TELL THE WORLD ABOUT JESUS

How did you first hear about Jesus? Someone told you, right?

Did you know that you have also been sent by the Lord to reach others with the good news about Jesus?

You and I as followers of Jesus Christ have the awesome privilege of sharing the good news of eternal life with others. There is tremendous joy in reaching out to those who do not know Jesus and introducing them to Him so they can know Him just as you now know Him.

This amazing task is called the "Great Commission." It's what Jesus told His followers right before He left earth to go to Heaven. "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). When Jesus gave that command to His followers to go and make disciples, it was not to ordained preachers, hired church staff or missionary organizations. He spoke those words to everyday kind of people like you and I are. "All nations" includes your sphere of influence, wherever that is.

Think of it this way: Imagine you had cancer and were chosen to be part of a special test group for a new cure. The treatment cured all of your cancer completely free of charge. What is the first thing you would do after you were healed? You would want to tell all of the other cancer victims about this great cure! Well, sin is a cancer affecting every single person. And you have been cured—forgiven of your sins—by Jesus Christ. Do you remember how you felt before you believed in Jesus? Maybe you felt lonely, guilty, and without hope. The entire world is lost without Jesus. We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). He has selected us to represent Him and reach them with His love and forgiveness.

> ***Are you willing to be Christ's ambassador to those in your sphere of influence? If so, tell God right now that you are willing.***

## THE GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS

> *"Jesus Christ **laid down** His life **for** you so that he could **give** His life **to** you so that he could **live** His life **through** you." (Ian Thomas)*

Relating the good news to others takes two basic forms: your walk and your talk. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, others can see Christ by your walk (life). As the quote above says, Jesus living His life through you is one way He draws people to Himself.

> *"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)*

But as you read above, you must also **tell** the good news of the gospel so others may believe in Christ. The Gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ coming to earth to save us from our sins. If you have opportunity to tell someone one thing, tell her about Jesus.

- Tell her that God loves her and wants a relationship with her. But sin separates her from God's love.
- Tell her that Jesus is God, who came to earth as a man, and died for the sins of the world.
- Tell her that she can be completely forgiven of her sins and receive eternal life with God solely by believing in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

That is the gospel. Anyone can share it, and everyone needs to hear it. Share the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God.

## PRAY & LOVE

You do not need to be an expert in the Bible or have years of experience with Christ to reach others for Him. There are several ways you can share Christ on a daily basis.

The first and most important thing to do is to pray. Ask your heavenly Father to lead you to someone who is open to hearing more about Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's job to draw people to Christ.

**Pray for each one** whenever you think about or see her.

> *Example: "Father, please send the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of _____ to draw her to Jesus so she will trust in Him."*

**Ask Jesus** to give you His love and compassion for her and to help you understand what she is feeling and needing from Him. Step into her life to display Jesus' love and compassion to her.

> *Example: "Lord, compel me to love her well so that I can't wait to be able to spend time getting to know her."*

**Commit** to make the most of any connection you have to build a relationship with her. Think of when & how you might get together with her.

**Trust in Jesus** to watch where the Spirit might use you in her life while you **live dependently** on His power by faith to introduce her to Jesus through your relationship with her.

**Ask Jesus** to open the door to have a conversation with her and to spend time with her. When you talk to her, ask good questions to determine if she is interested in spiritual things or whether she has already trusted in Christ as her Savior. For example:

- Have you ever been introduced to the real Jesus?
- If you could tell a favorite part of your life story, what would it be?
- What were you taught about God growing up?
- Have you had a spiritual experience that shaped your life?
- Have you ever read or been taught from the Bible?

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to someone who is open to hearing more about Jesus. Share some part of your own faith journey.

## SHARE YOUR STORY

If you trusted Christ recently, you remember what life was like for you before Christ came into your life.

***How did you feel? What triggered your need for Jesus?***

***What did God use to draw you to Him? That may be how God will use you to reach others for Christ.***

Once you have established a relationship with a friend, and "earned the right to be heard," pray for an opportunity to share your story—what Christ has done in your life. Be ready for openings in the conversation where you can share simple statements of what God

has done in your life (including your weaknesses and need of Him). Allow her a peak into the life you have in Christ. Encourage her trust and create curiosity for more.

Most people reject Christianity because they don't "have a clue" what it is all about, or they misunderstand…and think it is just "religion." They do not realize they are missing a totally awesome relationship with Jesus! The best way to share…so that they really understand what the Bible says…is to prepare a short version of your own faith story that includes the Gospel message in it—what you heard and believed.

You will get an opportunity to work on your story in the "A Fresh Start in the Right Direction" time at the end of this lesson.

As the Holy Spirit leads, expect God to be working in her 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 trust in Christ now?

Tell her that she must personally trust in Christ's death on the cross in order to receive God's forgiveness for her sins. If she is ready for a decision, pray with her to trust in Christ. A sample prayer is:

*"Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for all of my sins – past, present, and future. Thank you for giving me eternal life and wanting a relationship with me. I trust in you now as my Savior, and I desire you to be Lord of my life."*

## THE NEXT STEP FOR HER – ESTABLISH

Once a person has trusted in Christ, you can have the privilege and honor of establishing her in the basics of the Christian faith as you have now been established through this series of lessons. Schedule a time to start going through *Graceful Beginnings—A Fresh Start* with her. Soon she will be reaching peers for Christ too.

It is also vital that she get immediately "connected" with other Christians, preferably those who will have common interests and have been praying for her along with you. By joining a community of believers, she can learn from other mentors besides you.

## THE NEXT STEP FOR YOU

To keep growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ:

- ✓ Join a Bible study or small group where you can enjoy fellowship with others who are also learning more about this new life in Christ.
- ✓ Keep telling others about Jesus and personally discipling them in the basics of the Christian faith using *A Fresh Start.*
- ✓ Take the next step of growth through other studies in the *Graceful Beginnings* series. Check melanienewton.com/new-believers for how to access. At the end of this lesson, we've included a preview of the next study we recommend for you.
- ✓ Look for ways you can serve others in your local church or community.

*Christianity is Christ! It's all about a relationship with Him. Jesus Christ gave His life for you by grace, so He could give His life to you by grace, so He could live His life through you by grace.*

Knowing Christ's love for you and the presence of His life in you should motivate you to "live for Him" and to serve Him through serving others. Both are responses to God's grace in your life. Another response is to **let Jesus' life in you overflow to others around you**, particularly those who need to know Christ.

## A FRESH START IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

**1) Bible verse to learn:**

*"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)*

**2) Response in prayer & praise:**

Praise Jesus for leading you to Him and giving you a story to share.

Ask Jesus to lead you to someone who is open to hearing more about Him. Ask Him to give you His love and compassion for her and to help you understand what she is feeling and needing from Him. Ask Jesus for opportunity to share your story with others in your life.

**Shape your faith story using three words**

Here's an example:

*"Before coming to faith in Jesus Christ, I was* ***ME-CENTERED*** *and thought I was in control of my life. If I wanted something to happen (specifically, get a boyfriend!), I had to make it happen! My sisters came to faith before I did, and through them I saw a lack in my own life. When I heard an* ***EVANGELIST*** *on TV present the gospel, I realized what the lack was. It was a Person, Jesus Christ, and I prayed and asked Him to forgive my sins. Now, I am most blessed in relinquishing control to Him,* ***TRUSTING*** *Him with all my heart, leaning not on my own understanding, acknowledging Him in all my ways and allowing Him to straighten my paths.*

What to do:

1. Choose the first word to describe your life, feelings, situation, or thoughts before trusting in Christ. Examples: angry, independent, manipulative, miserable, hopeless, empty, addicted, me-centered, restless, striving, confused, insecure, worried, childlike.

   WORD #1

2. Choose the second word to describe how you came to trust in Christ. Examples: creation, studied, concert, grew, Bible, friend, trouble, observation, evangelist, spouse, loved, teacher, parent.

   WORD #2

3. Choose the third word to describe your life, feelings, situation, or thoughts since trusting in Christ. Examples: *peaceful, loving, trusting, freedom, servant, hopeful, compassionate, confident.*

   WORD #3

   ***Now using your three words, create 1-2 sentences for each word—just a brief explanation how each word relates to your story.***

*"People love to hear stories…Telling your faith story is just that: your personal story about your faith…to speak about the love of God in your life and the love he has for all people…Your life and story is the best tract to be written!" (The Disciplemaking Ministry Guide for Women in Leadership, Engage: page 21)*

**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 15:1-20. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 15:21-47. Reflect on what you read.**

**Read Mark 16:1-8. Reflect on what you read.**

**Optional reading Mark 16:9-20. Reflect on what you read.**

Scholars believe these verses were added many years later. Some verses match what is written in other gospels; some things are not confirmed in other New Testament writings.

# Sources

The following resources were helpful in creating this guide for new-to-the-Bible Christians:


1. *Getting Started in Extreme Living* by Bert Harned and Larry Chapman, accessed at www.extremelivingguide.com.

2. *Graceful Living* by Melanie Newton, accessed at www.melanienewton.com.

3. *New Believers Guide,* accessed at www.godlife.com.

4. *New Believer Study Guide* accessed at www.fellowshipbcwaco.org.