

# Fresh Start

## Six Lessons to Help Young Believers Begin Their New Life in Christ

If you are a new believer, these six lessons provide basic information to help you get started in your new life with Christ. You will want to have a Bible, a notebook, and one of the lessons will instruct you to get some colored pencils.

Here's an overview of what you will learn:

**Lesson 1: Assurance of salvation.** How do I know if I'm really are a Christian? What if I don't feel like I am?

**Lesson 2: The Bible.** Why is it so important, and how do I approach it?

**Lesson 3: Prayer.** What is it and how, what and when do I pray?

**Lesson 4: Dependence on God.** Does God really want to be that involved in my life? Wouldn't it be a sign of weakness if I ran to God for everything?

**Lesson 5: Victory over sin.** Why do I still do and feel bad things if I'm a Christian? Aren't real Christians better than that?

**Lesson 6: Fellowship with other Christians.** What's the benefit of getting involved with other Christians, and is church really very important?

### Lesson 1: Assurance of Salvation

You've just accepted Jesus Christ into your life as your savior. Now you are saved or born again. Those terms come from the Bible, and that's why we use them.

You have eternal life. Actually, we all have eternal life. It will either be in heaven or hell. If you have trusted Christ as your savior, you should be able to answer the question if asked of you, "Why should God allow you into heaven?"

You know that it's not because you've earned a "C" or better on the grading scale of life. You have eternal life with a future home in heaven because of Christ's good work on your behalf. He died on the cross to take the punishment you deserve for having sinned.

Perhaps the meaning of this decision hasn't sunk in yet. Maybe you've noticed that other believers in Jesus Christ seem excited, and you aren't sure what all that excitement is about.

And perhaps you've wondered a time or two if you really are saved. After all, much of the time you don't feel any different than you did before. Sometimes you get really angry or depressed, and you don't think real Christians ever feel that way.

Well, the good news is that Christ's salvation really has nothing to do with your feelings. It has more to do with the facts.

Let's examine the facts in the Bible that will assure you of your salvation. Throughout these lessons, the Bible is the textbook of truth, and it will be our guide.

## Foundational facts

Before you go any further, make sure that you are trusting Christ alone for salvation. Following is the path of understanding to help you determine if you are trusting Christ. Read the questions on the left and underline or highlight the words that answer the questions in the verses on the right. Make notes of things from the verses that impress you.

Why doesn't everyone go to heaven?	<i>For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)</i>
What is the price we pay for our sin?	<i>For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)</i>
How was your sin debt paid?	<i>But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)</i> <i>All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)</i> <i>For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (1 Peter 3:18)</i>
What does the Bible instruct you do in light of your understanding of the above three points?	<i>That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)</i> <i>For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)</i>

Can you think of a time when you came to understand these points and you asked Jesus to come into your life and forgive you for your sins and you confessed that you now trust him rather than anything else for your eternal salvation?

If you can think of the time, write the date or the month or the year in the front of your Bible. You will need to refer back to that time many times as you grow closer to God and face the doubts that are bound to come.

If you cannot think of a time like that and you aren't sure you ever have turned your life over to God and asked Jesus to come into your life and forgive you for your sins, don't go any further in this study yet. Read the verses again carefully and pray confessing your new understanding of the verses and what Jesus did for you. Ask him to come into your life and forgive you for your sins. Then, be sure to tell a pastor or someone you trust as a Christian. You will want to discuss this with them.

### **Facts versus feelings**

Regardless of how you feel, if you have made that life commitment to Christ and you are trusting him for eternal life, you are a child of God. Following is the key passage to assure you that you are saved.

*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1 John 5:11-15)*

Write the answers to these questions, making sure that your answers come from what you read in the above verses. You may want to highlight the answers as you pick them out of the verses:

1. Based on these verses, how would you tell someone you know that you are saved?

2. If you wake up tomorrow morning and don't feel like you think a saved person should feel, how could you convince yourself you really are saved based on these verses?

3. Which would be better for you to trust, your feelings or what God said?

### **Trust issues**

Understand the biggest lesson you will learn from now on: You have an absolute authority to rule your life now. That will be God and his word, the Bible.

You have transferred your trust from whatever you were trusting before to Jesus alone to save you from sin and its power and consequences. Now you want to take another daily step to trust him and what he said more than you trust your own feelings or intellect. After all, doesn't it make more sense to trust the mind of your Creator God than to trust in your limited understanding? He knows where you've been and where you're going much better than you do.

Remember, your new challenge is to trust what he said more than you trust your own feelings and desires.

At the heart of your new life in Christ is your new belief in him. You may have believed in him intellectually before, but now you really believe him. Another word for believe is "entrust" or "to place full reliance on him."

For example, you may look at a chair and think it could hold you up. That is not true "belief." You show that you really believe it will hold you up if you actually take your weight off your feet and sit in it. In the same way, you can say you believe in Jesus, but that isn't real life-altering belief until you give up your self-reliance and put your full trust in him. It's abandoning what you were relying on before and giving your faith to him.

Given that understanding, read the verses on the left below. Each contains a promise, which is underlined. In the box after each verse, write the conditions a person must meet to receive that promise.

<p><i>He that believeth on the Son <u>hath everlasting life</u>; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)</i></p>	
<p><i>Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, <u>hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.</u> (John 5:24)</i></p>	
<p><i>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him <u>should not perish, but have everlasting life.</u> (John 3:16)</i></p>	

### **Family matters**

One last thing. You were born into God's family when you trusted Christ as your savior. It's called being "born again." (*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3*) You became a son of God (mentioned in John 1:12 above.) That means you're in God's family now. You are his child.

When a child is born into a family, that child is always that parent's child. It's the same way in God's family. You don't have to live in fear that someday you won't be his child anymore. God holds onto his children and doesn't let them go.

So don't ever let a little voice in your head, or anyone else, tell you that you really aren't saved or that you can't know for sure you're going to heaven. The verses you've studied in this lesson tell you otherwise. You will now trust what God says more than you will trust your feelings or what others say.

Read these final promises and write out what kind of assurance these verses give you:

<p><i>And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:40)</i></p>	
<p><i>And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:28)</i></p>	
<p><i>In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; (Titus 1:2 )</i></p>	

### **Personal application**

- Write the date or approximate date you trusted Christ as savior in the front of your Bible so you can refer back to that date when doubts arise.

- Write the verse references from this lesson in the front of your Bible underneath the date you wrote. That way, if you do have doubts, you know what verses to go back and read.

## Lesson 2: The Bible

When you started your new life of faith in Jesus Christ, you started a new relationship. You became a child of God. You may not know what all that means right now, but no doubt, you have some inkling that your future will be different than your past.

You have been adopted into God's family through the death of Christ on your behalf. God, your new father, has much to say to you and teach you. You'll learn about that in this lesson. You have a lot to say to him as well. You do that through prayer, and you will learn about that in the next lesson.

One of the ways God speaks to you and directs you is through the book he left for you, the Bible. It's a supernatural book. God guided 40 authors over a span of 1,500 years to write words supernaturally inspired by him. The Bible is made up of 66 separate books, all providing a balance and full understanding of what God wants us to know historically, prophetically, emotionally and instructionally.

For now, it's important for you to start a new habit of reading something from the Bible every day. This is how you will get God's perspective on any subject of life.

### Familiar comparisons

God compares the Bible (referred to as "his word" from now on) to various things you are familiar with. Read the verses below and underline or highlight what God compares his word to. In the space next to the verse, record why you think God must have compared his word, to the thing he compares it to.

<i>Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalms 119:105)</i>	
<i>As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (1 Peter 2:2)</i>	
<i>For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)</i>	
<i>And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. (Luke 4:4)</i>	

## Instruction manual

One of the benefits of being a child of God is that you have someone to guide you through life. He knows what direction to take you, because he made you. On your own, you stumble around. But he knows exactly where you are and where you need to be.

One of the ways he guides you is through his written word. There are many promises and commands in the Bible, and you would do well to hang on to the promises and observe the commands.

You may want to get some colored pencils and start highlighting verses in your Bible using a color code. (Colored pencils don't bleed through the pages.) For example, you may want to highlight promise verses in yellow, and maybe verses that are commands in green. You can decide your own color-coding. The purpose for color-coding is so that you can find the verses again at a glance. As you read through the Bible on your own and come across a promise or command, take out your colored pencils and start coloring!

The verses below are just a small sampling of the fabulous promises God has made that you can take to heart. As you grow older in the faith, you will learn how to trust God more to fulfill these promises. Just as when you first meet others, you are reluctant to trust them, so you might be reluctant to trust God to keep these promises since you don't know him well and haven't known him very long. But over time, you will be able to automatically trust him and avoid the automatic worry or fear that may sometimes plague you.

Read the following verses, paying attention to the promise, which is underlined. Highlight or underline the condition you must meet, according to the verse, for the promise to be fulfilled.

*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* (Matthew 6:33)

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

While discovering God's promises provides you an opportunity to trust God, discovering his commands provides an opportunity to obey God. Trust and obey. Those are so foundational to having a close relationship with God.

Following are some commands he gives. He doesn't dish those out arbitrarily. There are reasons and benefits for obeying what he says. Even if you don't fully understand now, develop the attitude that you want to do whatever he asks you to do.

Read the following verses and notice the verbs (or action words) underlined. They are the commands. Write beside the verses why you believe it's important to follow that particular command.

*And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.  
(Ephesians 4:32)*

*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.  
(Philippians 2:3)*

*And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. (1 John 3:23)*

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.  
(2 Timothy 2:15)*

## **Reading schedule**

Examining individual verses as you just did is valuable to your understanding of God, but what will help you most is to read through whole books of the Bible with a notebook and pen. That way you can get the context of what God is trying to say and you can write down your impressions, like a journal. It may help you remember what you read. And you can read back through your notes at any time.

So where should you start reading? Should you start with the very first book and plow on through? You could do that. But as a new Christian, you might want to start with the books of the Bible that talk about Jesus. That would be Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These books are called "The Gospels." They were written by four men who walked with Jesus and recorded what they saw and heard. Much of the information in these four books is the same, but from a slightly different perspective. Looking at Christ's life four times is like having a multidimensional view of Jesus. Many suggest that you start with the Gospel of John (this is different than the small book of 1 John in the back of the Bible.) Start with John and notice what Jesus was like and how he handled people. Notice how strongly he stood up for the truth, but how compassionate he was toward those in need. Look at what he said about himself and why he came. This will help you understand and appreciate your salvation much more.

After you have read the four Gospels, you may want to read the books written by the Apostle Paul. There is much practical instruction in these New Testament books, which are Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

## Go the distance

Every effort you make to understand the Bible will probably do more than anything else in helping you learn more about God and how to live and trust him. Again, you've just started a new relationship with the Creator of the universe who has a plan for your life. You're going to find that plan largely in the Bible.

Besides reading God's word, you want to be sure to meditate on it. Other words for meditate are *mull over*, *think deeply* about, *ponder*... God promises benefits to those who meditate on his word. According to the verses below, what are the benefits of meditating on God's word? Underline the benefits.

*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (Joshua 1:8)*

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (Psalms 1:2-3)*

And so, how do you meditate on his word? One way is to read a verse or passage several times, then stop and think about how it applies to your life. You might ask yourself: Is there a command I should obey in here? Is there a promise I should trust? Is there a sin I should avoid? Did someone do or say something here that would be a good example for me to follow? You could think these things, but for some people, it might be a good idea to write these things in a notebook. Take notes when you read of things that impress you. You could even write prayers asking God to help you obey what you read or help you understand it better, or help you apply it.

And finally, a great way to make sure you grow in your understanding of God's word and to help you meditate on it is to memorize verses. In fact, that suggestion comes from his word. Read the following verses and underline why the writers said they memorized or "hid God's word" in their heart.

*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psalms 119:11)*

*I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. (Psalms 40:8)*

*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts. (Jeremiah 15:16)*

A good way to memorize verses is to write them out on 3- by 5-inch cards and carry them with you. Review them several times during the day. When you move on to the next verse, keep reviewing the one you already memorized. After about seven days, you'll have them down well if you review every day. Then keep adding verses, and keep reviewing your old ones.

### **Personal Application**

- To read a one-paragraph summary of each of the books of the Bible, go to [www.mastertruth.com](http://www.mastertruth.com) and click on "Bible overview" on the right.

- Get a notebook that you plan to have beside you when you read and study the Bible so you can take notes. This notebook will also come in handy for the next lesson.

- Get some colored pencils so you can highlight meaningful verses.

- Pick out a verse or two from the first lesson, and a verse or two from this lesson to memorize and write them out so you can carry them with you. Start to memorize, and remember to memorize the verse references with the verses so you'll know where to find them when you want to read them straight from the Bible or tell someone else about them.

## Lesson 3: Prayer

You know you have started a new relationship with your Creator God and his son Jesus Christ, and that eventually, you will get to know him so well, it will be second nature for you to trust him and make him a part of your every day life.

Just as you keep your relationships going and growing through communication/conversation, it's no different in your relationship with God. He speaks to you through his word. Part of that understanding you gain from reading the Bible comes from the fact that when you trusted Jesus Christ, the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, came to live in you and now helps you to understand the Bible in a way you never understood it before. Perhaps you've already noticed that the Bible makes more sense to you than it used to.

You communicate with God through prayer. Until now, you may have thought of prayer as a desperate way to get what you want. But there is much more to it. You don't talk to those you love just to get something out of them. You communicate what you are thinking; you express your love; you sometimes ask questions. In a conversation, you listen and respond and explain what you think.

Now imagine how that applies to prayer. When you read the Bible and God impresses your heart with a promise, a command or an example, you immediately respond. It might be a simple sentence of thanks for that promise or a simple sentence of affirmation-telling God you want to do just what he said. You don't have to save up all your thoughts for the end of the day to say just before you go to bed. Talk to God throughout the day.

### God's thoughts about prayer

Notice how God views prayer from these Bible verses. After reading the verses below, underline the reason, assurance or promise the writer gives for praying.

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)*

*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)*

*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (1 Peter 5:7)*

### Unanswered and answered prayer

Sometimes you will pray and become discouraged when the prayer isn't answered. There are reasons why some prayers are not answered. Read the verses that follow and highlight the

reason given. Then note what you could do to remedy the situation.

*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. (Psalms 66:18)*

*He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. (Proverbs 28:9)*

*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:2-3)*

God loves to answer prayer. He likes it when we humbly come to him with our true needs and desires.

In the verses below, underline the assurances or promises God gives us about answering prayer.

*The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous. (Proverbs 15:29)*

*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. (Jeremiah 33:3)*

*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1 John 5:14-15)*

### **Key prayer factor**

These last verses (1 John 5:14-15) talk about praying according to God's will. One of the best ways to pray according to his will is to find scriptures that tell you what his will is and pray them back to God. For example, find some promises or statements about God, and ask God to show you those promises and to fulfill those statements. You know they are his will because he already said they are his will.

Here's an illustration. Look at Isaiah 26:3: "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*" What you know about God's will from this verse is that he wants you to have peace, and you can have peace if you keep your mind on him. He honors with peace those who trust him. So here's a sample prayer you might pray - knowing that you're praying according to his will, "God, my heart is agitated and in turmoil lately. Help me to be at peace as I turn my mind toward you and trust you rather than trust in my circumstances."

Here is another sample. Psalms 62:8 says, "*Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.*" What you know about God from this verse is that he wants you to pour out your heart before him, and that he is a refuge, or safe haven. Are you feeling anxious and adrift? Here's a heart cry to God that you might express after reading this verse: "Thank you that you are a refuge and a safe place I can go to right now. I admit that my natural inclination is to fret, and my stomach is in knots. But you say to trust in you at all times. I pour out my anxiety to you right now, and I come to you to rest for a few minutes. Please help me to trust you more."

So, now you see that Bible reading and prayer go together like a hand in a glove. Your best prayers will always be those that you pray in response to reading the Bible. Remember, it's this two-way communication that's so vital in any relationship, and it's the assurance that you are praying according to his will.

And don't worry about how you find those verses to pray back to God. In time, you'll see that nearly anything you read in the Bible can spark a prayer. If you're reading about the mistakes the Israelites made in the Old Testament, you can stop and pray, "God, help me not to make those mistakes." If you're reading verses of thanksgiving in the book of Psalms, finish reading the chapter and stop and thank God for the same things the Psalmist thanked God for. You can be assured that God will listen to those prayers because they are in response to what he said.

Here's an assignment. Go back to lesson 2 about the Bible where you looked at promises and consider what you could pray from several of these verses. Write out those prayers. (By the way, writing prayers is very helpful to some people. Consider starting a notebook of prayers.)

## **Types of prayers**

Remember that every prayer isn't asking God for something, just like your conversations with others don't always include asking for things. Notice types of prayers from the following verses. Underline the things that impress you.

Praise prayers. God proves that he is awesome in many ways. One type of prayer is to acknowledge something about God and let him know you love that about him.

*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. (Psalms 139:14)*

*O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. (Psalms 104:24)*

*I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. (Psalms 118:21)*

Can you see yourself praying prayers like that? God would love it if you spontaneously praised him for something awesome he did.

Specific personal requests. Learn what God says about your physical and emotional needs from the following verses, then you will know how best to pray according to his will.

*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:27-34)*

*The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. (Psalms 34:15-17)*

Praying for others. If your needs will be met by God through prayer, so will the needs of others. From these verses, highlight what you learn about what to pray for others. Notice that the most important thing to pray for others isn't necessarily their health and happiness.

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; (1 Timothy 2:1-3)*

*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;* 14

*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; (Colossians 1:9-11)*

## **The practice of prayer**

Prayer is a life-altering habit to develop in your life. Besides the quick prayers you breathe throughout the day in response to what is happening at the moment, it's a good idea to set aside some time to humbly come before God with the requests that are important to you. This could be right after the daily time you set aside to read the Bible. As you have a Bible-reading journal, it's a great idea to have a prayer journal where you write the prayer topics for each day, and next to them you can write the date they were answered. This will give you something to look back at to show you God's faithfulness.

As part of your prayer journal, you might want to start a "thankful" section. That is, each day, write two things you are thankful to God for. This will help you develop an attitude of gratitude, which will help prevent you from developing a negative attitude.

Your life will change, and it will be obvious to all, when you develop habits of reading your Bible, trusting God, being thankful and praying about your needs.

Here's a parting verse to memorize: John 16:24, *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

## **Personal application**

- Get a prayer journal. It could be part of your Bible notebook. Make sure to include a "thankful" section in it.
- Select a time of day and place where you will meet with God each day for a personal session with him.

## Lesson 4: Dependence on God

The last two lessons (Bible and prayer) were concrete things to work on in your new relationship with God. This lesson is more about the proper attitude and response toward God as you grow. If you can develop the right view and response to God early, you will be well on your way to a solid relationship with him.

Think of this as the parent/child relationship that it is. Wouldn't every parent love to have an obedient child rather than a strong-willed child who bucks at every suggestion and idea? It's the same with your heavenly father. When he teaches, he wants you to listen.

But your heavenly father is raising you with a different goal. Your earthly parents raised you to be independent so that you could eventually live on your own. God raises you to be dependent on him. He wants you to turn to him continually for guidance, assurance, love and support. He created you to have a close relationship with him - forever. He made you. He is your owner, and his word is your owner's manual. He knows what's best for you. Let this idea sink in. Your goal from here on is not to try and make it on your own, but to try to understand and trust God more.

### God is in control

As you get to know God better, you'll learn more of his awesome characteristics. Eventually, you'll be able to rely on him for those qualities. For example, he is merciful and gracious. He is also patient, while at the same time he is just. Those are only a few of his qualities. But for this study, it's important to know that he is all knowing and all wise, therefore, he has everything under control and is in charge. You will go a long way more quickly when you understand that and learn to relax and not feel you have to be in control yourself.

Read the following verses and underline or highlight what impresses you. The word counsel in the first two verses means advice or purpose.

*The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*  
(Psalms 33:11)

*There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.* (Proverbs 19:21)

*A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.* (Proverbs 16:9)

### Trust promises

Part of God being in control and directing your steps is that he has a purpose for you. Perhaps, before you accepted Christ as your savior, you didn't have a purpose. Well, now you do. Your purpose is to learn to trust and follow God's purpose for you more and more. Ultimately, you want to learn to trust and follow him automatically, even when you don't see your way ahead. God offers promises to those who trust him. To the right of the verses below, write out the promise he makes to those who trust him.

*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;  
and lean not unto thine own understanding.  
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he  
shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

*Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust  
also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.  
(Psalms 37:5)*

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,  
whose mind is stayed on thee: because he  
trusteth in thee. (Isaiah 26:3)*

### **Humble pie**

The easiest path to trusting God with all concerns of your life is to learn to be humble and admit that God knows what is best and you don't. This is called being humble. It's the opposite of being self-willed.

*For thus saith the high and lofty One that  
inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I  
dwell in the high and holy place, with him  
also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to  
revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive  
the heart of the contrite ones. (Isaiah 57:15)*

What does God do for the humble?

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is  
good; and what doth the LORD require of  
thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and  
to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8)*

Why walk humbly with God?

*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he  
saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth  
grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves  
therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he  
will flee from you. (James 4:6-7)*

How do you make yourself humble?



## Lesson 5: Victory over sin

By now in your Christian life, perhaps you are experiencing times of nothing special, especially when you compare yourself with other Christians. While they might look happy and like they are doing well and have it all together, you may feel that deep down, you still have many of the same struggles and bad attitudes you had before. You may not feel charitable toward others, and you still sin. It may even cause you to wonder if you really are a Christian. After all, aren't Christians better than this? You expected better things than challenges and defeat.

Well, you're not alone. Most Christians start out this way. The reason you feel these struggles so keenly now is because your conscience is heightened. Before, it didn't matter to you that you sinned. It was normal and didn't seem like any big deal. Now you are more aware of wrongdoings and it pricks your heart when you do some of the things you did before. It's going to take some time to get rid of some bad habits and attitudes.

But there are some promises that will help assure you that change will happen. In fact, if you think about it, maybe you already have noticed some changes. Maybe you didn't used to particularly like people who were outspoken Christians. Now you seek them out to talk to them. Or perhaps you've noticed the sky seems bluer and the trees and flowers more beautiful. The creation just impresses you more. It's because you've met the creator!

Here's a verse that tells you what that is all about:

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

Write down any changes you've noticed in thought, attitude or action since you've become a Christian.

### Holy Spirit

Another reason you are more keenly aware of your sin since becoming a Christian is that when you accepted Christ, you received the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Godhead came to reside in you.

The Bible says that now you are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)*

*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)*

Now that you have the Holy Spirit inside you, you have help figuring out when you've sinned, because the Holy Spirit convicts your heart when you sin, and you have help overcoming that sin.

*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)*

When the Apostle Paul prayed for others, he prayed that the Holy Spirit would work in their hearts. Notice what he prayed.

*...That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; (Ephesians 3:16)*

Though you have the Holy Spirit living in you, you also have your natural self that wants to please "me" rather than God. So there is inner turmoil - The Spirit of God vs. your human flesh.

One of your paths to victory will be to yield to God's Spirit when he convicts you of sin rather than give in to your natural desires. In the verses below, underline or highlight what you are instructed to do.

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (Galatians 5:16-18)*

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)*

## **What to do**

As much as you want to live right, you won't always succeed. You will still sin and disappoint God. Rather than give in to discouragement and frustration over it, learn to confess it right away. What promises does God make for those who confess their sins?

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)*

The Bible talks very directly about the battle you have going on inside you. It's not only a battle with your flesh that doesn't want to obey God. It's a battle with another enemy. Read the following verses and notice what that battle is and how you are to fight. You might want to read it several times.

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (Ephesians 6:10-17)*

The verses talk about the armour you are to wear in this spiritual battle. Notice the one piece of armour meant as your offensive. It's something you can attack with and stave off the enemy. It is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Now imagine how you would use that sword. The best example is how Jesus used the word of God as a sword to fight off Satan.

For this, you will want to get out your Bible and open it up to Matthew 4. Read verses 1-11. This was when Jesus was tempted of Satan three times, and each time, he answered Satan's sinful suggestions with Bible verses.

Let's look at the first of the three temptations here.

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:1-4)*

Notice he was tempted to follow Satan's suggestion where he was most vulnerable. Jesus was hungry. How did he handle that temptation?

And finally, there's another way to use the word of God in handling temptation. Remember in the lesson on prayer you learned about taking God's promises and praying them back to him? That is a way of using the word of God as a sword to fight off Satan. For example, read the following verse and highlight the promise.

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

Here is a sample prayer you might pray after reading that verse: "Father, I love you, but I'm struggling so much with \_\_\_\_\_. You said you won't let me be tempted beyond what I'm able to deal with. Please make a way of escape so I won't fall into this sin any more." And don't just pray that once. Make it your heart cry.

### **In summary**

This has been a heavy lesson, but important. The main point is that when you became a Christian, you became a new creation. You also received the Holy Spirit to help you live the Christian life. But you still have your old nature that doesn't necessarily want to do what God wants. You also have riled up Satan, who doesn't want to see you get closer to God.

So there's a battle that you probably never expected or experienced before. This is normal. The best way to fight these battles is to stay close to God in prayer and trusting him, hanging onto the promises you find in the Bible. When you sin, confess it immediately and move on.

### **Personal application**

Write down the verse or two from this lesson that meant the most to you. You may even want to start writing verse references in the front of your Bible so that when you are desperate for specific truth that you know you learned, but you can't remember where, you can look in the front of your Bible.

## Lesson 6: Fellowship with other Christians

After Bible study and prayer, the thing that will help you grow most in your new Christian life is the fellowship you share with God and other Christians. They will become your closest confidants - even closer than your own family. That's because God and other Christians are your new family. God is your new heavenly Father, and other believers are your brothers and sisters in Christ. You share a oneness with them.

You may have noticed since you accepted Christ that you are drawn to other Christians. Over time, you will find that you want to spend more time and become closer friends with other believers than with those who don't share in this interest for spiritual things. This is normal. The Bible calls this affinity for other Christians brotherly love, and it is not only a natural outcome of knowing Christ, it is proof that you are a Christian.

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death. (1 John 3:14)*

*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35)*

*But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. (1 Thessalonians 4:9)*

*And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. (1 John 3:23)*

Of the four verses above, underline the one that impresses you most.

### What about church

With all this in mind, you can see why it is important to find a good church. It's not only a great place to get to know other Christians, it's one of the means God will use to help you grow spiritually.

Someone once said that going to church is like gathering a bunch of coals together and lighting them on fire. They stay warm while they are together, but spread them out, and they quickly lose their heat.

Church is not only a place to be with other Christians, it provides the opportunity to learn more about the Lord and spiritual things. If it's a strong Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church, you will get the oxygen you need to carry you through another week. The perspective you get from the preaching and teaching will help you stay on track - along with the time you spend reading the Bible throughout the week. You will need the godly perspective in order to keep you from giving in to thoughts and ideas that are contrary to the way God thinks.

And one more great thing about church, it gives you a chance to participate and be an active member of a larger community. The Bible calls it the Body of Christ with Christ being the head, and all the members are different parts of the body, like hands, feet, eyes and ears. All the parts work to function together. And when they do, everyone is benefited.

*But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (1 Corinthians 12:18-27)*

*What do you learn about the idea of being part of a body from these verses?*

The body of Christ will benefit you greatly, but keep in mind, you will also benefit it. It's a great place for you to be.

Now, a word about the church that you select. There are so many churches you could choose. How do you know if it's a really good one? It's important that you find one that teaches from the Bible and that uses it as its foundation. If there is a person who was instrumental in leading you to Christ, you might want to see what church he/she attends. If it's not possible to attend that church, ask that person to help you find a church.

## **Separation**

As we wind up these beginning lessons to help you get on solid footing in your Christian life, let's look at one final thought on fellowship. Not only will you want to get closer to other believers, you will find that things, ideas and people you once loved will lose their attraction. That's normal, and it's also a sign that you have passed from your old life to a new life in Christ.

Read the following verses and notice what you are to separate from and why.

*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*  
Ephesians 5:11

*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:6-7)*

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)*

These verses provide a reason why you will want to attach yourself with other believers. If you don't, you may find yourself caught half way between where you're not comfortable with your old group of friends or with Christians because you are shy about joining in with them. Jump in, even if you don't know what to expect.

Your final assignment is to pray and ask God to show you the group of believers/church you need to become involved with. Following are some closing verses with sample prayers you can pray.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalms 133:1)*

Prayer: Lord, how I would love to experience that unity with other Christians. Please lead me to the right church where I can fit in and grow spiritually.

*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)*

Prayer: Lord, I would love to have friends who are sharp in you and who can help me become sharp. Please lead me to those friends.

*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*

Prayer: Father, I can see from these verses that it's very important that I become involved in the lives of other believers and for them to become involved in my life. Please guide me to the right group....

### **Personal application**

Write down the most important thing you learned from this lesson and how you plan to apply it to your life.