TAKING THE NEXT STEP

A GUIDE FOR NEW CHURCH MEMBERS

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Recently you took an important step in your
development as a Christian. You united with a
church. This book is intended to help you take the
next step toward meaningful involvement in the life
and ministry of your church and Christ’s kingdom.

This book will help you understand who you are and
where you are going as a new Christian and/or new
church member; what the church is and what it does;
how a church is organized to do its work; what you
can do; and where you can start to be involved in the
life and ministry of your church.

Becoming a Christian is the beginning of a journey.
No one accepts Christ and is suddenly spiritually
mature. Peter spoke of persons coming to Christ as
newborn babes who should desire the pure milk of
the word so that they could grow (1 Pet. 2:2).

Everyone begins the journey of spiritual growth at
the same place—asking, “What does it mean to follow
Jesus?” Charles Sheldon wrote a wonderful book
entitled In His Steps. The heart of this book deals
with Christians in a particular church asking What
would Jesus do? before every decision they made.¹
What a wonderful measuring stick!

We have asked God to guide us in the formation of
this study for new members so that not only will you
have better understanding of the simple truths that
bring salvation and victorious faithful living but you
will have an even greater affection for our Lord who
loves you! God wants His church to be the source
through which you find the keys to spiritual growth.
We want you to have the wonderful benefits that God
intends.
Purpose
To help you understand what it means to be a new Christian and/or a new church member.

You Are God’s Purposeful New Creation

• Genesis 1:27 says God created persons in His own ______. The word image means likeness or the same. We were created to be like God to reflect His character and to accomplish His purposes in His world. We were created for relationship with God. Sin creates a barrier in our relationship with God.

• According to Romans 6:23a, the wages of sin is ______. The death described in this verse is spiritual separation from the God who created us. By faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord the barrier is removed and we receive eternal life.

• Now read Romans 6:23b: The gift of God is eternal _____ in Christ Jesus our Lord.

• Romans 8: 1-3 tells us: Therefore, there is now no __________ for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of ____ and _____. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own ____ in the likeness of sinful man to be a ____ offering.
When you became a Christian, God gave you a new life. 

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-19).

A Christian has received forgiveness for sins, repented, and trusted Christ as Savior and Lord. Consider each of the following steps to think about how you have come to the point of becoming a Christian:

1. Being convicted of your sin (John 16:8)
2. Confessing your sin (Rom. 10:9-10)
3. Experiencing repentance and faith (2 Cor. 7:10; Gal. 2:20)

To repent means to turn away from your sin and surrender with your whole heart to love and follow Jesus.

• Which of the following choices best completes the sentence?
  Biblical repentance is:
  a. feeling sorry for your sin.
  b. making up to God for what you have done.
  c. being baptized to clean up your life.
  d. having a change of mind, heart, will, and the way you live.

After you accepted Christ as your Savior and repented of your sin, you followed His example and were immersed in the waters of baptism.

• In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist says, I baptize you with water for ________. But after me will come
one who is more powerful than I. Jesus said, in Mark 16:16, *Whoever _____ and is baptized will be saved.*

Placing your life and trust under the control of Christ makes the difference between being a Christian and merely doing good works.

**LIST SOME GOOD THINGS BEING DONE BY PERSONS WHO AREN’T CHRISTIANS.**

Doing good things is not what gives you a right relationship with God. God restored you to Himself completely and gave you new life because He loves you. Ephesians 2:8 states, *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.*

*My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them* (Proverbs 1:10).

**YOU ARE SECURE**

The Bible teaches that once you enter into a relationship with God in faith, you can count on God to continue molding you into His perfect image.

- Read Hebrews 10:14: *Because by one sacrifice he has _______ ______ those who are being made holy.*
- John 6:37: *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will _____ _____ _____.*
Salvation means that you are saved from every enemy of your relationship with God. The Scripture assures you of being secure in Christ against all of the enemies of your soul. For those who would claim that they are their own worst enemy, in Christ you have been saved even from yourself.

You are assured to be in Heaven upon your death (Rev. 21:1-6; 22:1-5). You have the presence of God in your life wherever you go, whatever you do, and in whatever circumstances you may find your life. (2 Cor. 4:6-8, 17-18).

The assurance that we have as Christians is that even though we may stumble or fall down in our efforts to live with Christ, we will never fall out of Christ’s secure hold on our lives. We fall where we are and God provides the help to get back up and begin our upward growth again. You will be treated as a child of God even when you sin. There may be discipline and correction, but you will never lose your status as a child of God.

Many people make the decision to become a Christian, are baptized, and become involved as a church member, but sometime later doubt if they really are saved. The Bible provides promises that you can keep in your heart, to verify your experience. God will keep all of the promises He makes to those who trust Him for salvation. Here are some of God’s irrevocable promises:

- *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the ___ ___ _ ___ set me free from the ___ ___ ___ and ____. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering* (Rom. 8:1-3).
• God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever ________ in him shall not perish but have _____ _____ (John 3:16).

• Being confident ... that he who began a good work in you will _______ __ __ __ _________ until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6).

• I give [my sheep] eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can _______ ___ ___ ___ _______ (John 10:28).

Growing spiritually doesn’t mean that you will become more saved as you become more like Christ in your behavior and thinking. It means that because you have been saved by His grace you will now become more like Him. This is the work of the Spirit. Spiritual growth is not merely conforming to an expected way of doing things; it is a spiritual transformation that begins from the inside. Simply conforming to a particular behavior presents only what we can do. The transformation of our Spirit results in outward righteousness and demonstrates what God can do.

• Read 2 Corinthians 3:18: We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being ____________ into his likeness with ever-increasing glory which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

**You Are an Important Member of a New Family**

As a new church member you have been adopted into a family of faith! With this new family, you will worship, pray, and fellowship; you will partake of the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis. All of these activities help to bind church members together. For a family unit to run smoothly and harmoniously each member
should make a positive contribution to the whole. The same is true of your church family—it is important that you participate in the life and ministry of the church. As a result of your participation and commitment, your church will benefit and you will grow on the road to spiritual maturity.

**YOU ARE A WITNESS**

Your salvation experience is personal. No one else can tell your story like you can.

![Write a brief description about how you became a Christian.](image)

Christ has commanded you to be a witness to His saving power. Who could benefit from knowing about your salvation story? Consider your immediate family, extended family, business associates, business acquaintances, and friends. As you read your Bible and pray this week, pray for God to give you opportunities to know with whom to share your story.

**People who would benefit from my shared story:**

________________________   _________________________

________________________   _________________________

You are a witness of Christ’s love through your daily living as well as through your shared story.
• Read 1 Peter 2:21: To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow ___ ___ ___.

Asking the question, “What would Jesus do?” before we do or say things is a powerful corrector of our course in life. This is the proper question to ask before decisions at home, with friends, or in the work place, as well as in church.

List some things that have happened recently in your life that would call for you to ask, What would Jesus do?

Would you have responded differently if you had asked that question before each experience? What do you think Jesus would have done in your situation?

Each of us needs help in growing to be a Christian who is consistent and courageous—consistent in doing what Jesus would do in every situation and courageous in doing what Jesus would do whatever the price.

In the next session you will explore the purpose and meaning of the church in the life of a Christian. It is in the church that you will find the support to develop the balance of ministry and spiritual growth that brings joyful Christian life and service.