

Just the beginning

Starting out on your journey with Jesus

By Sarah Winbow

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WELCOME!

If you have this booklet and do not yet know Jesus personally then please turn to p.38 and read through *Appendix A – is God real?* Do this before going any further.

It is only when we know Jesus and have His Holy Spirit living inside us that we start to understand what it is to journey through life with Him. Now you have discovered Jesus and asked Him into your life this booklet is one tool that will help you as you set off on your journey of adventure; because life with Jesus is an ‘adventure’ of sorts.

DISCUSS:

- » How did you first become aware of the reality of Jesus or God?
- » What was it that drew you to Him?
- » What was going on in your life at the time?

You will need a Bible as you go through this booklet. God uses His Word to speak directly to us. I know that may sound somewhat strange but you will soon see what I mean. There are a lot of modern translations available but to start with I would recommend the New International Version. You may also find it useful to have a notebook and pen to take notes and write down your thoughts as you go along.



The Bible is God's word written down. It is an incredible life changing book full of truth which is still completely relevant for 21st Century life! I recommend that whenever I give the reference

to a Bible passage that you look it up simply because it is good to train yourself to read the Bible! The easiest way to look things up in a Bible is to go the Contents Page at the front. You will find the Bible is split into two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the account of God at work in our world before Jesus came to live amongst us; the New Testament covers the beginning of a new era when God entered into our world through Jesus' birth, death and resurrection.

“*‘All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work’ 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

DISCUSS:

- » Do you have a Bible yet?
- » If so what translation is it?

If you turn to p.41 *Appendix B – word helps*, you will find simple explanations of some of the words used in the booklet. If you want to dig a bit deeper it might also be useful to have a dictionary handy. We are going to start by looking at some words Jesus said to His disciples before He returned to heaven. Note carefully what Jesus promised (in bold type)!

“*‘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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.***’ Matthew 28:19-20

It is important to start building your relationship with Jesus right away. So spend a few moments right now quietly thinking about the promise you have just read; intentionally be aware of Jesus' presence with you.

DISCUSS:

- » How is it possible to become more aware of Jesus' presence with us?

Different personalities connect with God and relate to Him in differing ways: some prefer noise and modern music whereas others find Him in peace and formality of organised liturgy. Sometimes we do this privately at home alone and other times we do this in a group with other believers. We definitely grow in our relationship with God when we meet with other believers on a regular basis.

DISCUSS:

- » Why do you think this is?
- » Do you have an existing church preference or connection?
- » Would you like to be introduced to a church or fellowship group?

As you read the Bible, you will come to realise it is like a mirror that Jesus uses to show you yourself and to reveal Himself to you. This will not only be exciting and challenging but also very rewarding.



Talk to Jesus now in a way that feels comfortable to you. Ask Him to help you to draw nearer to Him. Do not worry that you may not feel or see Him; faith does not follow feelings; just believe that He is with you.

Expect revelation. If you are not sure what that means, then turn to p.41 *Appendix B – word helps*, where you will find it in the list. If you feel a bit awkward talking to Jesus in this way then perhaps read the following prayer out loud:

Dear Lord Jesus, Thank You for everything You have done for me. I really want to get to know You better, so please will You help me? Please give me understanding Lord. Thank You. Amen

Now you have talked to Jesus you may want to read this booklet in one go or take it a chapter at a time; either way – enjoy the journey.

NOTES

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FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU

You have had an encounter with Jesus and your eyes have been opened to understand that there is much more to life than you ever thought or imagined! This booklet is here to help you; it may even take everything that you thought you knew about yourself and about God and literally flip it on its head. Your life may never be the same again.



Think about this: God has a very special plan and purpose for your life. I can say this because He has said it in the Bible.

Turn to the contents page in your Bible and look up the Book of Jeremiah. Once you have found it read chapter 29 and verses 11 to 12.

When, as a new Christian, I first read those verses I was absolutely blown away that Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, should care about me and have made plans for me! Perhaps you may be thinking: '...those words were for people back in history, they don't apply to me'. Yes, that is true at one level but as you go on through this booklet you will discover that God's Word is eternal and also applies to us in the here and now as well .

DISCUSS:

- » What do you think about this?
- » How does it make you feel about yourself?

Take a few minutes to think about your life. Where you have come from, what you have done, what you think defines you, what you like about yourself, what you are not so keen on. You might find it helpful to make a few notes in the space below.

DISCUSS:

- » How do you think of God?
- » Who is He?
- » What does He look like? Etc.

Is He a magical mysterious being who sits on a cloud somewhere with a white suit and a long beard! It would not be surprising if some of what you wrote about yourself might appear a bit negative; whatever your thoughts are at this moment, it all pales into insignificance when you find out who God really is and who He created you to be. Having said that, we will never fully know and understand Him this side of eternity!



Ask God what He thinks of you and be sensitive to any impressions or words that come into your mind.

God is a loving Father who never stops talking to us; He wants our relationship with Him to be two-sided not one-sided. Therefore it is necessary for us to deliberately set time aside to listen to what He has to say every day. Do not worry if you do not hear anything at this stage; it can take time for us to recognise His voice and become aware of when He is speaking to us. Even if you do not think you are hearing Him, thank Him in faith for being with you.

DISCUSS:

- » Did you hear anything at all?
- » Was it an encouraging word or negative?

A word of caution: if any of the impressions or words you hear are accusing or condemnatory then they are NOT from God. Deliberately choose not to accept them. God is love and you will discover that His love for you is greater than you could ever imagine.

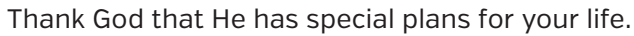
DISCUSS:

- » How are you going to build-in time to your day to communicate with God?
- » What will work best for you?
- » Are you a morning or evening person?

It is good to get in the habit of listening to God after reading a Bible verse or passage. One of the people in the Bible called Paul wrote this:

“*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. and pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*” Ephesians 3:14-19

‘The Lord will fulfil His purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures forever.’ Psalm 138:8



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW

Taking time to connect with God and deepen our relationship with Him is a very important part of being a Christian. God is very different from us; in fact He is so absolutely morally pure and perfect in love and holiness that He is separated from us by His uniqueness.

DISCUSS:

- » What do you understand about God's holiness? Is it something you have ever thought about?
- » Do you find it difficult to imagine someone being that good or perfect?

But God is perfect and this is what Jesus said to us:

“*Be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” Matthew 5:48

Most of us are all too well aware that we are far from being holy and are definitely not perfect! The bad news is that we can never meet God's perfect standard: we are all imperfect and unholy in our thoughts, words and actions. The short word for this is 'sin'. Sin is the reason we are separated from Him and why we cannot understand fully what it means for Him to be holy. The Bible puts it this way:

“*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” Romans 3:23

Read Genesis 1.

This chapter makes it clear to us that everything God created, including humanity, was good. So what went wrong?

Read on in Genesis, this time chapters 2 and 3.

God gave us free will so that we could choose whether to love Him, trust Him and obey Him or not. He did not make us robots or puppets; we all have the ability to reason and make decisions for ourselves. Satan or Lucifer was an angel created to be with God in heaven but he became proud and rebellious and so was evicted. The Bible tells us that Satan roams the earth. He is very wily and extremely good at twisting the truth and therefore, sadly for all of us, instead of obeying God, Adam and Eve allowed themselves to be lured into disobeying Him. Through that one act of disobedience, sin entered into God's perfect world and the rest, as they say, is history. God's plans for us are always good whereas Satan's are to interfere, disrupt, block or rob us of God's good plans and to destroy us mentally, physically and spiritually.

DISCUSS:

- » Can you identify this pattern in the story of Adam and Eve?
- » Do you believe in Satan as a real entity? Or is he just a force for evil?



Before you go any further just think for a while. Ask Jesus if there is anything He wants to show you through this.

Because God is love and we are His dearly loved creation, He could not stand the separation sin caused between Him and us so He did something about it: He sent Jesus. He came to live with us, to show us what God is really like and then, to do something that only He could do - to die for us. When Jesus went to the Cross He took upon Himself every wrong [sinful] thing that all of humanity has ever done throughout the ages. Wrongdoing always requires a punishment so when Jesus died He took the punishment that should have been ours - yours and mine - in our place. Everyone who acknowledges Him as Lord of their life is restored into a living vital relationship with God that begins now and lasts for eternity.

Even though Jesus has defeated Satan, our enemy will continually attempt to get us to disobey God because he wants us to fail and give up following Jesus. At times the struggle to keep on track can seem immense. The good news is that even when we mess up [and we will!] God never stops loving us: His love for us does not depend on what we do but on who He is and because He is faithful His love for us never stops, never gives up or fails; He never turns His back on us or walks out of our life because of what we do.

There is more to this too: although you might look the same on the outside, live in the same place, wear the same clothes and eat the same food as you did before becoming a believer some huge changes have taken place in the spiritual realm over your life that affects who you are today. The Bible says:

“*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Read Philippians 2:1-13, then Galatians 2:20 and finally 2 Peter 1:3

DISCUSS:

- » How is it possible to be a new creation?
- » Who is living in you to help you start living a godly life?
- » Who are you now?

For a while you may continue with some old habits or patterns of behaviour but as God’s child your identity is no longer as a sinner, you are someone who is made holy by the presence of the Holy Spirit living inside. You are adopted into a new family, with a new Father and new family members. In fact you are a whole new creation with a brand new spiritual DNA!

Recommendation: If you have watched the film ‘The Passion of the Christ’ you will have seen a very powerful dramatization of what Jesus went through when He was crucified. If you have the DVD I suggest you watch it again as now that you know Jesus, you will see it through very different eyes. If you have not seen it, I recommend you try to get hold of a copy.

“*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” John 3:16



Tell Jesus just how grateful you are.

NOTES

A PERFECT FATHER'S LOVE

In the previous chapters we have read a few things that have referred to God as 'Father'.

DISCUSS:

- » What image is brought to your mind by the word 'Father'?

You may have struggled with the idea of God being some kind of Father figure to you. God **IS** your spiritual Father even if you do not want Him to be! However you may find it hard to relate to Him as your **loving** Father if your view of what a Father should be has been shaped (or marred) by the experience of your earthly parents or guardians. Even the very best parents, and thankfully there are many, cannot fully show God's Father-like character because we are very human, and God is just so completely the opposite; holy and perfect.

If our own experience of a parent has been someone mean, cruel, demanding, abusive or unloving then we naturally tend to think of Father God in the same way - because that is all we know. However, this perspective is skewed and unless it is corrected can seriously hold us back from being able to fully understand just how much we are loved by Him.

Whilst our bad experiences of earthly parents might all too sadly be true, it is certainly in no way, shape or form, true of our heavenly Father so please do not let those experiences hold you back from aspiring to get to know your perfect Father God and embracing His love for you.

Working at your relationship with God!

Think of someone you have a close relationship with: maybe it is a parent, a spouse, or a friend. What does that relationship involve? What is a true friend? Jot down your thoughts below:

Good relationships do not happen overnight; they are something that must be worked at. Friendship is built on trust and honesty where there is openness, honesty and no secrets. This is the definition of a true friend. Father God wants you to reach a place like this in your relationship with Him: a place where you can share all your private thoughts with Him but also a place where He can talk to you about the things that are important to Him too. Relationships of this quality do not happen overnight, they are built over many years.

Write down some reasons why relationships fail.

Jesus tells a story in the Bible of two sons and one loving Father.

Where did the son end up? In his father's arms!

DISCUSS:

- » Where did the son end up?
- » What were some of the Father's qualities or things He did when the son came home?

Whatever bad experiences have been true for you, the characteristics and behaviour of the people involved are NOT those of your heavenly Father. God loves you and He never stops loving you. The father in the story had been waiting patiently every day for a glimpse of his son so he could pick him up, swing him around, rub his hair and just love him the way a father should love a son.

This is a wonderful picture of Father God's heart towards you! Think about this: before you had even given Him so much as a thought He was already waiting for you! What Father God wants for you more than anything is that you not only feel and respond to His love but also experience it!

DISCUSS:

- » Think of some reasons why parent-child relationships can be difficult or even fail.

If you think back to that story of the rebellious son, where was the place where he actually knew that he had reached home? It was in his father's arms! This is exactly the place God longs for you to be! In a place where you have assurance and know the strength and security of His love for you personally!

Once we start to realise we are really loved and accepted by God, it begins to change the way we see things; it is a two way relationship which needs to be worked at by both parties. In order to grow in our relationship with God we must make the choice to spend time with Him every day.



Using this word in relation to God would have really shocked the early believers because it would have seemed disrespectful to them that they could call Almighty God 'abba'.

[illegible]

FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

As you read the scriptures, hopefully you are realising more and more just how much you are loved by Father God and are experiencing the assurance of His love flooding through you as you spend time with Him. The incredible truth is that if you were the only person on earth Jesus would have still died just for you; that is how much He loves YOU.



Think on the the last sentence.

God is the safest person in the world for us to pour out our hearts to because His love is unconditional which means it does not depend on us and our behaviour!

DISCUSS:

» How does this make you feel?

So far I have talked about how Father God loves us no matter what. I have also talked about Jesus who died for our sins. But there is one other important aspect to who God is: the Holy Spirit.

Now read Deuteronomy 6:4

This verse and others in the scriptures make it clear there is only one God! However there are three different ways in which we can know Him: as God the Father, God the Son [Jesus] and as God the Holy Spirit.

How did the presence of God appear to Jesus in these verses?

What does God say to Jesus in these verses?

DISCUSS:

- » Why do you think it was so significant that all three members of the Godhead appeared together at Jesus' baptism?
- » What do you understand of God being three distinct persons yet still one God? Do you 'get' it?

To make it clearer, look at it another way: my father is not only my father; he is also a son to his parents and husband to my mother. He means something different to each one. This is exactly the same with God: He is one person but with three separate expressions of who He is and each one helps us relate to Him in different and distinct ways.

The three parts, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all make up the one true God but it is the Holy Spirit who reveals the truth about God's love to our hearts.



Was there just one expression of God at the creation or were all three there at the very beginning? If you look in your English Bible, it will just say 'God', which does not help answer the question. The Hebrew language, which most of the Old Testament

was first written in, makes it much clearer. The Hebrew word translated in Genesis 1:1 as the single word 'God' is actually a special type of PLURAL that is only used when there are MORE THAN TWO. Therefore even though the English translation might simply say 'God', the Hebrew proves the whole godhead (also known as the Trinity from tri-[3] in-unity!) were all there right together at the very start of the world - Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

DISCUSS:

- » What does this fact teach us about the intricacy of God's plan of salvation?

Read Genesis 1:1-2 and Colossians 1:15-17

It is vital that you remember not to separate the different aspects of the godhead. They are all one and they are all focused on cheering you on to be the best you can be. To accept the existence of the Trinity is a step of faith but nevertheless a vital part of being a true believer.



Re-read Colossians 1:15-17. Let the truth of what is written sink into your spirit. Worship God: Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

“*The heavens are Yours, and Yours also the earth; You founded the world and all that is in it.*” Psalm 89:11

NOTES

[illegible]

THREE IN ONE – WHO ME?

Just as our heavenly Father is three in one so are you, because you and I are created in the image of God.

Read Deuteronomy 6:5

What are these three parts?

Now read 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12

Whenever the Bible uses the words 'spirit, soul and body' this is just another way of saying 'heart, soul and strength'!

The 'strength' or 'body' is the physical part: the bit we look at and recognise in the mirror every day! 99% of the human body is made up of six elements: oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium and phosphorus, 70% of us being water! The Bible talks of us being fearfully and wonderfully made and how true that is.

Read Psalm 139

DISCUSS:

» How does what you have read make you feel?

Whenever I read this Psalm I am inspired to praise and worship our wonderful heavenly Father for His incredible creation.



Allow the truths to penetrate into your heart. Worship Him.

The 'soul' consists of the place where we think [mind], make choices [will] and where we feel [emotions]. It is the non-physical part of us, which is immortal and where we form our sense of identity and self-worth. Jesus taught:

“*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*’ Matthew 10:28-31

Our heavenly Father even knows the number of hairs on our head!

DISCUSS:

- » What do you understand about your being made up of three different parts?
- » Have you ever thought about this before?
- » In what ways has this helped you to realise just how precious you are to God?

The 'heart' or 'spirit' is not separate from the soul but the most important part of it because it is how we came to be alive!

Read Genesis 2:7

God breathed His breath into our spirit when He first created us in our mother's womb.

Read Ephesians 2:1-5

Before we came into a relationship with God through Jesus our spiritual connection with God was dead so we lived every day controlled by our own thoughts, feelings and choices or the influences of those around us. These things can fluctuate enormously.

DISCUSS:

- » What do you understand by the following phrases:
 - » The 'ways of this world'? What might it mean?
 - » The 'ruler of the kingdom of the air'? Who might this be?
 - » Gratifying the cravings of the sinful nature, following its desires and thought'.
- » Can you identify any specific way in which you have been influenced by one of these things?

As soon as Jesus came into your life, your spirit was reconnected with God and brought to life. So now you are a living breathing entity that has the ability to connect heart to heart with the Spirit of God. Whereas once you were 'on your own' in trying to make decisions, now the Holy Spirit is present in your life to help and guide you. He does this by speaking God's Word and His thoughts into your heart. This is why we need to learn to walk every day guided by, and in step with, the Holy Spirit.



'The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.'

Romans 8:16

ONE OF THE FAMILY

Read Romans 8:16 slowly and carefully several times

What or who does this verse say you are?

DISCUSS:

- » What is your reaction to being a child of God? How does that make you feel?
- » Try to identify the key element that connects you to each side of your two natural families. How might this also be true in your spiritual family?

Through Jesus you are a member of a new blood family: the family of God!

DISCUSS:

- » How are natural family units arranged? Do you have the same depth of relationship with every member of your family?

This is also true for your new spiritual family.

DISCUSS:

- » How do you think the family traits and characteristics in God's family might differ from those in your natural family?
- » Read Ephesians 2:19-22. Have a go at identifying some of the differences there are between being part of an earthly family and God's supernatural family.

Read Acts 2:42-47. [You can look up the word 'fellowship' in Appendix B - word helps p.42]

This is a beautiful picture of what shared life should be like when we genuinely love and care for one another as part of God's family. We are not meant to be isolated, needy or struggling to cope with things alone: Father God places us in believing family units so we can learn to relate together, as we share our lives and what we have with one another. God's family is where we grow deeper together in love, mutual care and faith. This is not just a local thing: we are also part of an extended international family that covers not only the whole earth but also fills heaven itself!

I have a friend who was once doing a long-distance walk in France and Spain. He was walking alone, did not have much money and never knew from one night to another where he would eat or sleep. But He prayed! Almost every night along the route Father God provided a hot meal and cosy bed in the home of one Christian family or another; people he had no idea existed until that moment! After about 100miles he suffered a leg injury and eventually collapsed from exhaustion and heat stroke.

At that point he was taken into another believing family home and treated like royalty for a whole week until he had recovered enough to be able to fly home. This is the power and extent of the love and care of the new family bloodline we share in Jesus.

A word of caution: the Bible sets out the ideal. Please try to remember we are not yet perfect, which means we do not always get it right!

Sadly, we unintentionally hurt one another or cause offence; we are not as unselfish with our possessions as we might hope to be or, because of our own hurts or misunderstandings about what it means to be ‘family’ together, we place unrealistic expectations on others. It is not surprising we feel let down or get disappointed when we fail one another.

Thankfully, because of Jesus, we have the ability to admit our mistakes, offer and receive forgiveness and commit to loving one another again. So please be patient with members of your new ‘family’.

“*‘A Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, He leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.’* Psalm 68:5-6



Thank God for the privilege of being part of His great family. Spend some time quietly; ask God to help you to see the ‘bigger international picture’. Move into praise and worship.



Read Romans 8:14-16.

Sometimes you will read the phrase ‘sons of God’ [v.14] rather than ‘children of God’ [v.16]. In each case the word used in the original Greek language is an inclusive term that could be non-gender specific. The Bible is not intentionally sexist; it is the translator who has made it appear so. Everyone who trusts in Jesus is a child of God regardless of whether we are male [a son] or female [a daughter]!

NOTES

PRAYER: WHAT IS IT?

One way we build and deepen our relationship with God is through reading the Bible, the other is through prayer.

DISCUSS:

- » What do you understand by prayer?

It is simply talking [communicating] with God; listening and talking to Him as we would to anyone else. As believers we can pray from our heart, freely, spontaneously, and in our own words. Keep it simple. No good relationship is built when only one half does all the talking so we must also take time to listen to what He might want to say to us in return!

DISCUSS:

- » Try to think of some of the different ways you might listen to God.
- » Is God interested in the very small details of your life or just the big things?

To begin with you may wonder whether you are hearing from God but as you spend time daily with Him you will soon get to recognise His voice. When we pray we bring our lives, our concerns, our hopes, our families to God; absolutely anything and everything. We are not just mouthing meaningless words but engaging with God, spirit to spirit, heart to heart.

DISCUSS:

- » Does it matter which part of the godhead you pray to?
- » Read John 17:1; Romans 8:26 & 34 [You can look up the word 'intercede' in Appendix B – word helps p.41]

Jesus prayed to Father God. Now Jesus and the Holy Spirit are praying for us and helping us as we pray. This means that if we pray to Jesus our prayer gets through to Father or if we call out to the Holy Spirit to help us pray, our prayer still gets through to Father! We pray TO God the Father, THROUGH the Son IN THE POWER of the Holy Spirit. Remember - God is actually one God, which means all three are inter-related, inter-connected and working together in harmony all the time, so just pray!



Spend a bit of time praying right now:

Thank God for all that He has done for you through the blood of Jesus. Let Him know how grateful you are.

Write down some prayer requests in the space below. Make them specific, that way you will know when your prayers are answered.

Thank God for any way in which He has already answered your prayers.

Prayer is not about the position we pray from (i.e. stand, sit, kneel or lie flat on our faces) but much more a matter of the attitude of our heart. When we pray we are coming for a meeting not only with our heavenly Father but also with the Creator of heaven and earth who is awesome in power and great in love. So when we pray we must let the Holy Spirit guide us: if you feel prompted to kneel then kneel, if you feel prompted to raise your hands heavenwards then raise your hands, if you feel prompted to dance then dance. Prayer is not a religious exercise but you, a child of the living God, communicating with your heavenly Father. Sometimes that communication will involve laughter and joy, sometimes it may be tears and deep cries from your heart but whatever form your prayer takes, be assured He is listening to you.

It is a really good idea to keep a written record of your prayer requests so that you can note down on the same page every time one is answered. As you see God at work in your life your faith will rise and you will be filled with praise and thanks.

NOTES

CHANGED PRIORITIES AHEAD!

If we are going to become serious followers of Jesus then our aim should be to give God first priority in our life every day, just as Jesus did.

DISCUSS:

- » What is your reaction to the last sentence?

I have learned that making my relationship with God a priority first thing each day makes a huge difference to how my day turns out: for example, when I start a new day by praising God, thanking Him for His wonderful love, reading His word and committing the day into His hands, I find that the affairs of the day tend to fall into place.

As a result, my day goes smoothly. But if I hop straight out of bed and just start doing whatever needs to be done then things tend not to go quite so smoothly! When my family were younger, I set the alarm for half an hour earlier than usual so that I could deliberately spend that precious time with my Father God.

DISCUSS:

- » As God is always with us does it matter if we take time to specifically invite Him to be with us or not?



Ask Father God what He would have you do. What are the practicalities of this?

Of course it is not obligatory to get up before dawn to pray but as you fall deeper and deeper in love with Jesus, you may find that your lifestyle changes and things you once enjoyed no longer hold the same attraction or are replaced by other things.

DISCUSS:

- » Can you identify any specific changes you have already made in your lifestyle as a result of following Jesus?

Jesus tells us:

“*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*” John 10:10b

Therefore, please try not to limit Him or yourself; you are now God's child living in His kingdom. I pray you will embrace the challenges, receive more and more of His love and have the desire to follow the Lord wherever He leads.

A word of caution: it is very easy to become so caught up in this exciting new life with God that we unintentionally neglect our families and friends. Be loving and considerate: your heavenly Father wants them to know how much He loves THEM and He will want you to be a living demonstration of that love to them.

Memory verses

One of the first things I learnt in my journey with Jesus was that He wanted me to learn to consider carefully and thoughtfully the words written in the Bible. You too will find that He wants you to have His Word embedded deep inside your heart, so have a go at doing just that by committing a verse to memory.

DISCUSS:

» What do you think the benefits might be of memorising scriptures?



Ask Jesus to show you the verse that will be most helpful for you to think about and learn.

It may be one of the verses you have read in this booklet; it could be a verse God has highlighted to you as you have read the Bible or it might be one of the great promises of God to us all (see p.46 Appendix C – God’s promises for you).

Write your chosen memory verse out in full below:

It might seem a bit daunting if you have never tried to memorise anything before but if you take it line by line and keep going over it then it is not that difficult.

THE NEXT STEP...

I hope you have enjoyed your journey with Jesus so far and are falling more in love with Him every day.

This booklet has not even scratched the surface of all that your heavenly Father wants you to know about Him and living in His kingdom so what is the next step? Here are some important keys to help you continue to grow in your relationship with God:

1. Spend time reading your Bible, talking and listening to Father God on a daily basis.

DISCUSS:

- » How are you getting on with developing your relationship with Father God?
- » Are you reading your Bible and praying regularly?
- » Do you set aside time every day?

2. Join a group of fellow believers. These people will become your believing family who will love you and help you to continue growing.

DISCUSS:

- » Have you found a group of believers where you feel part of the family?

3. Consider joining New Beginnings Discipleship Training School. The school is for all who wish to:

- » Grow in their personal relationship with Jesus
- » Are excited about learning to share their faith with others
- » Want to understand more of what it means to live in the Kingdom of God
- » Connect with others who are on the same journey

In part 1 a small group meets each week for a meal and Bible study. In part 2 the same small group meets weekly for worship, teaching, sharing and prayer with a certain amount of personal study at home using the Disciples Daily Study Notes. New Beginnings is a fast track to spiritual maturity as the material is so comprehensive. It has taken me years to learn what you will be learning in a few months so I highly recommend it.

To find your nearest group log onto **www.newbeginningsdiscipleship.com** and complete the Contact details and we will get in touch with you.

DISCUSS:

- » What is the next stage for you?


NOTES

APPENDIX A - is God real?

Is this life all there is? Or is God real and there is a life after this one? And if God is real, how do I get to know him? Below are some simple but life changing steps to guide you through.

1. Believe that God exists: it is a simple choice and one that millions of people have made over very many years. Choosing to believe that God exists is the first step in getting to know Him.

2. Believe that God Loves You: The Bible says:


 *‘For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.’* John 3:16

God loves you very much; more than you could ever imagine and He is longing for you to receive His love.

3. The Bad News: ALL OF US have said, done, or thought things that are wrong. The Bible calls these things ‘sin’ and, whether we like it or not, sin separates us from God.


 *‘For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.’* Romans 3:23

God is perfect and holy and though we might like to think we are too, we are not. The penalty [the Bible uses the word ‘wages’] for our sin is separation from God forever:


 ***'The wages of sin is death.'*** Romans 6:23

If that seems terribly harsh, now read the good news...


4. The Good News: God sent Jesus...Jesus is the Son of God. He lived a sinless, perfect life and then died on the Cross to take the punishment for your sins so that you would not have to:

 ***'But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'*** Romans 5:8


Jesus died on the Cross and His body was sealed up in a tomb for 3 days. Miraculously, after 3 days it was discovered He had been gloriously raised from the dead. And He still lives in Heaven to this day. Because He was raised from death we too can receive the gift of eternal life and know the joy of living with Him forever in heaven if we acknowledge what happened is true and we are willing to trust Him as Lord [master] and Saviour [the one who has saved us from death]. Jesus said:

 ***'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me.'*** John 14:6

The Bible is clear that Jesus is the only way into a relationship with God:

 ***'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to humanity by which we must be saved.'*** Acts 4:12

God reaches out in love to you now and wants you to become His child:

 ***'Yet to those who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.'*** John 1:12

5. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ: do you realise you are sinful? You can choose to ask Jesus to forgive your sins and come in to your life as your Lord and Saviour. If you know inside you this is true then ask Him to be your Saviour and Lord right now. Below is a prayer to help you. I recommend you read it all the way through first before praying it out loud to God:

'Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died on the Cross to save me. I admit that I am a sinner and have sinned against You by... [If you want to expand on this please do so. It is important you make this a prayer from your heart]. I trust that Your death on the Cross has paid the punishment for my sin and I accept Your free gift of eternal life. Take my life and use me for Your glory. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.'

The Bible says:



'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Romans 10:13

If you have just asked Jesus to be your Lord and Saviour make a note of this very important date. This is GOOD NEWS and good news is for sharing, so go and tell someone!

APPENDIX B - word helps

Useful Word helps. On this new journey you are going to come across words that maybe you have not come across before, so here is a short list to get you started.

Atonement: when someone makes amends for a wrong done by them they make atonement. We have sinned but Jesus took the punishment for us. Therefore He made atonement so that we can be cleared of the wrong [sins] we have done and continue to do.

Blood of Jesus & phrases like ‘washed’ [clean] in the blood, ‘saved’ by the blood: these phrases sound very strange to us as they are not part of our normal language. However, Jesus did shed His blood for us when He was beaten and crucified and it is by His blood sacrifice that we are cleansed from sin and saved.

“*‘But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.’* 1 John 1:7

Church: in everyday language this can refer to a building used for Christian worship or a group of believers. The true church is simply a group of believers gathered or called together before God who may or may not be using a church building. This group could be small or large.

Communion (also called Eucharist or the Lord’s Supper): believers are commanded by Jesus to remember His sacrifice on the Cross by sharing

a simple meal of bread and wine (sometimes grape juice) together. The bread represents His broken body and the wine represents His blood.

“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

Luke 22:19

Faith: in the Dictionary faith is...

‘A belief with strong conviction; a firm belief in something for which there may be no tangible proof; a complete trust in or devotion to something or someone.’

Faith is the opposite of doubt. The Bible tells us that ‘without faith it is impossible to please God’ (see Hebrews 11:6). Therefore faith is essential to a relationship with God.

Fellowship: this means having a close shared bond of camaraderie, solidarity, partnership or friendship with other believers at a very deep level that results in a genuine unity and loving non-competitive cooperation. This is the ideal but true fellowship rarely happens without the working of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives.

Grace: is when God gives us limitless proportions of His love, forgiveness, patience and kindness; all of which we have done nothing at all to deserve! There is nothing you have done in your past nor can ever do in the future to earn this favour: it is a totally undeserved and free gift from God.

‘For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.’ Ephesians 2:8

Hallelujah (sometimes written ‘alleluia’): this means ‘God be praised’. It is an expression of worship or rejoicing.

Hosanna: a shout of praise and adoration. It comes from a Hebrew word meaning 'to rescue, save'.

Intercede/Intercession: is a particular type of prayer where an intermediary brings your needs or the needs of others to God. For example:

“*‘...We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.’* Romans 8:26

Justification: this is an old-fashioned word which simply means because of Jesus' sacrifice you have been made just as if you had never sinned [see also definition for Redeemer below].

Kingdom of God: this was first established by God in heaven and then through the perfection of creation on the earth before Adam & Eve's disobedience. God has given the authority to rule and reign over His Kingdom to Jesus. All disciples of Jesus become citizens of God's Kingdom; this is revealed on earth wherever His disciples are walking in obedience to Him.

Lord: you will often read God referred to as 'Lord' in the Bible. The Greek word 'Lord' literally means owner! 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says:

“*‘...You are not your own; you were bought at a price...’*

The price paid was Jesus' life-blood! Another way of saying this is that God 'bought us back' from a life separated from Him through sin so that we could know what it is to have a loving relationship with our Father and Creator. The biblical word for this is 'redeemer.' Look this word up on p.44 below.

Praise: to God is commanded in the Bible. Praise is recognising who God is what He has done and giving Him thanks for all of that! We can praise

with our breath, our bodies, with instruments or with anything really – all that we have!

Psalms: a poem or song written down many years ago. The Psalms are found in the Old Testament and have been a source of help and inspiration to believers for thousands of years.

Prophet: someone called by God to speak out or write down specific messages from God for His people

Redeemer/Redemption: redemption is the act or price paid for buying something back that once belonged to you. God is our Creator therefore when we are born we all belong to God. But we disobey and turn away from Him. Through Jesus' death on the Cross He paid the price for us to be restored into fellowship with our heavenly Father. Therefore, Jesus is our Redeemer.

Repentance: to change your thinking or perspective on something that leads you to change your behaviour. In order to be saved we have to come to a place of recognising our need of Jesus and then admitting our sinfulness to God. This is the first step of repentance. One of the results of genuine, faith based repentance is when we chose not to continue in a particular sin.

Revelation: the process by which God speaks to us. He might reveal something about Himself, His will or wisdom for us. This might come through studying the scriptures, hearing a sermon or talk or receiving a picture, impression in your mind or on your heart (we call this a 'word') a dream or vision.

Salvation: this is God's way of saving us from sin and spiritual death through faith in Jesus Christ and the outworking of repentance. By faith in Jesus Christ, believers are saved from God's judgment of sin and its consequence—eternal death.

Sin: we are all imperfect and unholy in our thoughts, words and actions. The short word for this is 'sin'. Sin is the reason we are separated from God and why we cannot understand fully what it means for Him to be holy.

Worship: this is to express a great love, admiration, adoration, devotion, exaltation, reverence, respect and awe for God. Worship can be done out loud in song or spoken words or in silence. Prayer and Bible reading are also forms of worship as we connect heart-to-heart with God as we do these.

APPENDIX C - God's promises for you

The Bible is full of God's wonderful promises for those who love Him wholeheartedly learn to follow Him obediently. Here are just a few for you as you set out on your journey with Him:

Romans 8:1 'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...'

Psalms 147:3 'He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.'

Deuteronomy 7:9 'Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands.'

Romans 8:28 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.'

Psalms 121:7-8 'The LORD will keep you from all harm - He will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.'

Psalms 34:4 'I sought the LORD, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.'

“Lamentations 3:25 *'The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him.'*

“Isaiah 41:10 *'So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'*

“Proverbs 3:5-6 *'Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.'*

“John 14:27 *'Jesus said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid".'*

“Psalm 145:13b *'The LORD is faithful to all His promises and loving toward all He has made.'*

