

A
Guide for Your First
Steps as a Christ Follower

A Note about this Book

If we're not careful we can begin to think of the decision we just made as a kind of end: when, in fact, it is actually a beginning. The Christian life has been described over the past two-thousand years using many metaphors; however the most famous of them all is that of a journey. You're embarking on a journey that will last a lifetime. In Scripture Jesus never commanded the Church to go and get people to "ask Jesus into their heart," or "make decisions." Jesus commanded His Church to "go and make disciples." A disciple is someone who is serious about learning (not just head knowledge) a way of life. The way we do that as followers of Christ is by spending time with God through His Word (the Bible), spending time in prayer (not just talking, but also listening), and spending time worshipping and even having fun with other Christ followers. It is a life filled with joy and challenge.

This book is designed to help you start your journey in a way you can sustain for the duration of your time on this earth following Jesus. On the following pages is a spiritual health and growth plan. Please take the time to fill it out and share it with someone from your church: your

pastor, sponsor, mentor, or a Christian friend you know and trust.

Numerous studies over the years have shown that we do what we write down. By writing this down you will etch it on your mind and will more than likely end up doing it. Additionally, experts also say that anything we do for 21 days will probably become a habit. This guide should help you begin forming a habit of spending time with God each day and becoming a disciple of Jesus.

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Spiritual Health & Growth Plan

Scripture Reading

I will read my Bible on _____ at _____AM or PM

This will not be easy. Every time we try to commit to something that will help us grow toward God the enemy will try to stop us. Your phone will ring, there will be distractions, your schedule will be changed. Satan will do all he can to stop you from getting to know God better. Do your very best to find a quiet place where you can be alone with God. Oh, and by the way, some great things to have with you are: some paper, a highlighter, and a pen or pencil. You will be blown away by the things God will begin to show you as you commit to spending time in His Word on a regular basis.

Prayer

I will talk to God throughout the day, but I will make time to listen and talk to Him regularly at _____AM or PM each day.

The devil will fight you again by trying to keep from doing everything but praying. During this time think about what you have been reading in God's Word, and ask him to help

you understand before you read. Also, take time just to be silent during prayer, because God will also speak to you if you are willing to listen.

Accountability

I will talk to _____ and ask them to be my accountability partner by telling them some of the things I struggle with and giving them permission to ask me questions about my life that may be very personal.

Church

I will make it a point to attend _____ church at _____ (time) on _____ (day) and will also get involved with Sunday school or Small Groups. I will make spending time with other Christian people a priority, especially when it comes to worshipping with them weekly and being part of Christ's Church.

Using the Daily Devotions

K.I.S.S.- Keep it simple, silly was a saying I heard a lot growing up, and there is a great deal of wisdom in doing things as simply as possible. This guide assumes nothing about you (the reader). People are coming to Christ from all different backgrounds and more and more people are putting their trust in Jesus who have never before been to church, read a Bible, or prayed before. In respect to those who have no background in the Christian Faith, this guide will explain almost everything it says. This section will explain how the daily “time with God” guides flow and what each section means. Of course your pastor, mentor, or a Christian friend can help you with getting this daily discipline started as well.

1. Every reading will start with a quote for you to think about for just a moment. Christ often asked His disciples and the religious leaders in the Gospels to think about things. Hopefully a short quote will also challenge you to start thinking.

2. The next thing you will find is a Scripture. For instance, Day One’s passage is Romans the tenth chapter (10) and verses eight through thirteen (:8-13). It will look like this “Romans 10:8-13.” If you are unfamiliar with the Bible and how to look up books and chapters, a simple way to remember is that the big bold number (in most Bibles) is the chapter and the smaller numbers are the verses.

3. It helps to have someone shed a little light on what you have read. In the **Something to Consider** section this guide will get you thinking about what you have read and

why it is important. Every day this guide will seek to inspire and encourage you with these thoughts about God's promises.

4. **Prayer** is simply having a conversation with God. It is not creepy or weird though some people may be a little intimidated by the idea. God wants you to get to know Him. It is important to keep in mind the Christian faith is not just a religion but a relationship with the Living Lord. You don't have to use special words and you don't have to do all the talking. Some have even said, we pray as we look to the Bible expecting God to show us things in His word as we regularly read it. Another feature to help you in your prayer life is ***Prayer Tips** which explain ways we can pray and helps us understand the importance of praying for others, as well as what prayer is all about. Don't stop praying where the guide leaves off, you can open yourself to God throughout the day by simply keeping your mind on the fact He is always present and may be teaching you through other people and things you encounter during the day. Prayer is the most vital part of our relationship to Christ.

5. **Bible Reading**, in this section two chapters (the big numbers) are suggested for you to read each day. As you read, think about what you are reading and ask God to teach you from His Word as you read.

6. **Memory Verse(s)** God changes us as we hide His word in our hearts and it shapes the way we think about the world around us. Memorizing a few verses can go a long way in our growth as Christ followers.

Reading the Bible

The Bible is composed of 66 books written by 40 authors. People wonder all the time how they should read the Bible and this is an especially important question for new believers. If you, like I first did, attempt to read it from cover to cover, the Bible can seem overwhelming and hard to understand. Though reading the whole Bible is certainly something everyone should do, it is not necessarily the goal with which we should begin.

Where Not To Start

People sometimes assume the Bible was written like a modern fiction or biography; in chronological order. It's important to always remember the Bible is not just "one" Book, but is a collection of 66 books, written at different times, with drastically different styles, and by a very diverse group of authors. These "books" are not group in sequential order. Some books in the Old Testament happened simultaneously and some are poetic. For instance Psalms is a book of poetry, not a book of commands, while the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy contain many commands which are not binding on Christians. Though these books give us a good context for understanding how God has dealt with humans from the beginning, they do little to help us know how to live as New Testament followers of Jesus. Some of these books can be tough to understand for new Christians too, as they contain lengthy genealogies with difficult to pronounce names.

Where to Start

The central focus of the New Testament is Jesus Christ, and since Christ is the “Author and Finisher of our Faith (Hebrews 12:12),” it makes sense to start our reading with one of the Gospels. There are four Gospels, three of which are very closely related (Matthew, Mark, & Luke), and one of which has more to do with, Who Christ is to us, and what He wants to do in us (John). Personally, I believe John is the best place for a new Christian, or someone who has not come to faith in Christ to begin reading. Throughout this Gospel Jesus makes several “I Am” statements for each and every person to consider. John’s Gospel also begins with the words, “In the Beginning was the Word (John 1:1),” indicating this happens even before the Genesis account of creation. It establishes the fact that Jesus really is the Beginning and the End.

Where Biblical Knowledge Comes From

The Bible is not just any-old book. It is truly intended to change your life. With this in mind, it is not a book we rush through, it is book we think about and meditate upon. God isn’t impressed with how much you can read in a day; He is concerned about how what you are reading is impacting your life. God does this as the same Holy Spirit that inspired the human authors of the Bible speaks to us and helps us see how the words of Scripture apply to our lives.

A good order to follow as you continue reading your Bible might be as follows:

1. The Gospel of John
2. The Gospel of Mark
3. 1 John
4. 2 John
5. 3 John
6. Genesis
7. Ephesians
8. Galatians
9. The Gospel of Matthew
10. The Gospel of Luke
11. 1 Corinthians
12. 2 Corinthians
13. Romans
14. Psalms
15. Proverbs

This list is not exhaustive, but it should help you get a good Biblical foundation as you begin reading the other books of the Bible.

Read more: <http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/where-is-the-best-place-to-start-reading-the-bible-for-a-new-christian/#ixzz2rEgR1VL0>

Time with God

Day 1

“The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become - because He made us. He invented us. He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be. . .It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.” — C.S. Lewis

⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Romans 10:8-13 (New International Version)

Something to Consider

The trouble we often face after we put our trust in Christ is that the enemy comes and tells us it wasn't real. This is his attempt to keep you from becoming a disciple of Jesus. Today maybe you don't “feel” like God has done anything in your life, but that does not change the fact that He has done what he promised. Paul uses some very strong

language in the last part of this verse as he says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord **WILL** be saved. If you asked Christ to save you and have put your trust in the price he paid for you, there is no question God will keep his promise to you. Though you may not feel like it, trust what he has said.

Prayer

***Prayer Tip-** As you pray remember God is faithful to His word no matter how we feel.

Lord, I thank You for Your work on my behalf. Help me to know that You will honor what You have said and silence the enemy who is a liar and father of lies and who comes only to steal what you have given me, to destroy my hope in You, and ultimately to kill me by getting me to walk away from You in despair and discouragement. Send Your Holy Spirit to strengthen me.

***Prayer Tip-** Who are three other people who have needs you can talk to God about? (sometimes people call this intercessory prayer)

Bible Reading: The Gospel of John (or St. John) in some Bibles read chapters 1 through 2.

Memory Verse: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13

Time with God

Day 2

“No, this is not the beginning of a new chapter in my life; this is the beginning of a new book! That first book is already closed, ended, and tossed into the seas; this new book is newly opened, has just begun! Look, it is the first page! And it is a beautiful one!” — C. Joy Bell

¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—
¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

John 1:12-13 (New International Version)

Something to Consider

The words we find in this passage assure us that we are not servants of God but sons and daughters of God. The “him” that we received was none other than Jesus, as we accepted Him and made Him Lord of our lives just a couple of days ago. This does not mean we have “gotten religion” as some would say. Rather it means we have become children in the household of God. We have a Father in God. Not a father like our earthly fathers who as good or bad as they may or may not have been are really not like our Father God. He is a Father that cares for us and adopts us as His children with all the rights and responsibilities of children and heirs. The next time you are tempted to think of God as distant and removed from you and your life, remember

that you and He are now family members and Jesus the Lord is your Older Brother.

Prayer

***Prayer Tip-** As you pray remember God is your Father not some far off dictator you have to convince of doing something.

Father, I thank You that You have made me part of Your family. Help me to realize the sheer privilege of being Your son/daughter. Help me to realize that as a son/daughter I am part of Your household and have access to all that is Yours. Help me to realize this is the case simply because You have loved me and I have just trusted in that love.

***Prayer Tip-** Who are three other people who need to know about God's love for them? (sometimes people call this intercessory prayer)

Bible Reading: The Gospel of John (or St. John) in some Bibles read chapters 3 through 4.

Memory Verse: ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12)

Time with God

Day 3

“Sometimes...

Sometimes doubt is the opposite of faith, but sometimes doubt can be a pathway to faith. Sometimes weakness is the opposite of strength, but sometimes weakness can be the pathway to strength. Sometimes addiction is the opposite of sobriety, but sometimes addiction can be the pathway to sobriety. Sometimes infidelity is the opposite of fidelity, but sometimes infidelity can be a pathway to fidelity. Sometimes failure is the opposite of success, but sometimes failure can be the pathway to success.”
— David W. Jones, *Enough: and Other Magic Words to Transform Your Life*

³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:36-40 (New International Version)

Something to Consider

We often come at our Christian life and think of it as a list of do’s and don’ts, and certainly there are things which are not profitable for a Christ follower to do; and at times we may even fail in our attempt to be like Jesus. The good news is: Christ offers us grace when we fail to love God

supremely and fail to love our neighbor rightly. What we have to do is simply confess our failures to Jesus, ask for strength to overcome this failure and keep putting one foot in front of the other on our journey with Christ. Remember you aren't doing this alone, Christ is with you and there are many people in your church family that will walk with you too.

Prayer

***Prayer Tip-** As you pray remember God offers us grace when we fail, not condemnation.

Father, thank You that your word says there is nothing I can do to make you stop loving me. As I find my feet in this new journey please help me to overcome the condemnations of the enemy and give me grace that brings me through each day victorious.

***Prayer Tip-** Ask for God to give you strength to share His love with the people you are praying for but keep praying for them too.

Bible Reading: The Gospel of John (or St. John) in some Bibles read chapters 5 through 6.

Memory Verse: John 22:37-39

Time with God

Day 4

Today Jesus Christ is being dispatched as the Figurehead of a Religion, a mere example. He is that, but he is infinitely more; He is salvation itself, He is the Gospel of God. –Oswald Chambers

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 22:36-40 (New International Version)

Something to Consider

We arrive again at the Lord’s command to “make disciples.” A disciple is someone who is closely identified with their teacher and our teacher is Jesus, “But,” you ask, “how can I be identified with him?” For centuries the church has been identified publically as those who are baptized as Christ commands in this passage. This is an act of publically telling everyone who witnesses it that you belong to Christ and are part of His Church, truly a disciple for the entire world to see. The Christian faith is a public faith and there is nothing more public than baptism. But it is also a celebration of new life as Christ has made you alive. Baptism does not save us, but it is important.

Prayer

***Prayer Tip-** As you pray, consider how closely you want to be associated with Jesus.

Precious Father, I thank You that You want to be identified with us. That in the act of being dipped in some water You want me to proclaim to the world that I am with You and You are with me. I thank You for the people I get to be part of in this act, for You have used them to change the world.

***Prayer Tip-** Pray about what impact your public baptism might have on your family and how God might use it to bring them to faith in Christ.

Bible Reading: The Gospel of John (or St. John) in some Bibles read chapters 7 through 8.

Memory Verse: Romans 6:4-5

Time with God

Day 5

“I think that if God forgives us we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise, it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him.” — C.S. Lewis

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9 (New International Version)

Something to Consider

Realizing that success is built upon the mountain of failure is recognizing reality. The truth is we will fail many times in our attempt to follow Christ’s example, but when we do we must not become discouraged. This Jesus that we follow says He has “overcome the world.” When we fail Him we must simply seek Him with a sincere heart and we will be forgiven. God is not a hard-nosed taskmaster waiting for us to fail so He can “get” us. He loves us in our failures, and hurts alongside us when we are disappointed and discouraged, but take heart for He offers us a clean slate and new start; all we have to do is ask. His grace is amazing!

Prayer

***Prayer Tip-** As you pray if you feel you may have messed up at different points this week just bring them to God. (this is called confession)

God of grace, I thank You that You know my weaknesses and my failures and it doesn't make you love me or desire my friendship one iota less than when I perform perfectly. Please keep me close to Your side and give me strength, by Your grace, to overcome the world just as You have done. Thank You that I am assured of Your forgiveness and cleansing by Your Word.

***Prayer Tip-** You can confess anything to God and if you ask for His forgiveness and mean it, He will forgive you.

Bible Reading: The Gospel of John (or St. John) in some Bibles read chapters 9 through 10.

Memory Verse: 1 John 1:9

Time with God

Day 6

Lowliness and holiness. Keep fast hold of the intimate connection. Lowliness is taking the place that becomes me; holiness, giving God the place that becomes Him. If I be nothing before Him, and God be all to me, I am in the sure path of holiness. Lowliness is holiness, because it gives all the glory to God.” — Andrew Murray, Holy in Christ

²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24(New International Version)

Something to Consider

The truth about you and me is that we would never even think a thought about God if it were not for His grace working in us to create a hunger for Him. When He does this it is not because we are superior to anyone else, it is because His desire is to “do a good work in us” as Paul told to church at Philippi. God does not want to see us constantly making the same wrong turns and going back to the same empty wells to try and get ourselves fulfilled. He wants to give us strength to rest in His grace and find strength to be overcomers. The problem many of us face is our stubborn independence of wanting to do this on our own, but God wants to do this work in us so that He gets the glory, not us.

Prayer

***Prayer Tip-** As you pray begin asking God to show you things you may need to surrender to His Lordship and seek His grace to overcome.

Almighty Father, it is You who is our Strong Tower. Help us to trust in Your powerful grace to heal us from our sin and the sinful patterns that enslave us. Help us to put all our weight on Your grace and help us to overcome those things the enemy wants to use to drive us away from You. We know it is You who give the grace and Who fills us with Your Holy Spirit, just help us to see our need to give you every area of ourselves as we walk with You day by day.

***Prayer Tip-** Ask God to show you how you can respond differently when you face temptation and then ask Him not to give you the strength, but His grace, to overcome temptation.

Bible Reading: The Gospel of John (or St. John) in some Bibles read chapters 11 through 12.

Memory Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:24

Time with God

Day 7

“Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, there a church of God exists, even if it swarms with many faults.”- John Calvin

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24(New International Version)

Something to Consider

As we have already said our faith is not just a private matter, being a disciple is something we must do in community. The community provides support, comfort, and accountability to our spiritual lives. Life is tough and choosing to follow Christ does not exempt us from trouble. In some cases it may even be a factor that adds complications to our lives. Having people stand beside us in these times is essential to our wellbeing. When trouble comes the community of faith is also there as a gift of

comfort. It is great to know you are surrounded by people who love and care about you. Finally, the word accountability brings thoughts of fear to mind, but loving accountability is a beautiful thing. It spurs me on because I know someone else is counting on me, and I on them. We are not supposed to be Lone Rangers, but people who live in the midst of community. Even God Himself exists in community as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so relationships are important to God and are a key factor in our spiritual health.

Prayer

***Prayer Tip-** Pray for your church and begin asking God how you can serve others in your church.

Father, Son, & Holy Spirit I thank You for giving us one another, and I pray You would help me make connections in Your Church and begin serving others.

Bible Reading: The Gospel of John (or St. John) in some Bibles read chapters 13 through 14.

Memory Verse: Hebrews 10:24-25

What's Next

Keep reading your Bible and keep talking and listening to God every day. There are also many great devotional books and websites like biblegateway.com where you can find free material. Your church may even have some devotional books they give away like *Our Daily Bread* which is a free devotion you can order for yourself by visiting the RBC website at ourdailybread.org. If your church has a Sunday school program or small groups find out how you can get involved in these. One of the most important things you can do is get involved in your church. You will probably find out the people are not perfect, but hey, who is? Part of our journey is learning to love people who are not perfect, and if you're like most people you could easily say that God is still working on you too.

Find a mentor. Find someone who has been a Christian for several years and ask them to help you get started off right. If you don't feel comfortable doing asking someone; talk to your pastor, the person that first invited you to church or small group, or the person who led you to faith. There are numerous people who will be happy to walk with you on your journey.

Don't get discouraged. It is not easy following Jesus. People will sometimes hold you to impossible standards and have unrealistic expectations no one could possibly meet. Sometimes, that person will be the one staring back at you in the mirror and sometimes it will be the enemy who plants thoughts in your head telling you what a poor Christian you are. Just keep putting one foot in

front of the other, following Christ and asking for His grace to carry you through each day, by staying open to how He will move in your life. This is where Scripture memorization and prayer really helps, so remember those weapons when you find yourself under attack.

Keep looking up. God will bring you through and deliver you to Himself. Christ promises to never leave us nor forsake us, so rest in His faithfulness and know that He is the Coming King, and you are His prized possession.