

Foundations of Faith: A Guide for New Believers

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Introduction: Welcome to the Family of God

Welcome to the family of God!

We are excited to embark on this journey of faith together and help you understand the incredible transformation that has taken place in your life through salvation in Jesus Christ. As a new believer, you have entered into a relationship with God that will shape and guide you throughout your entire life.

In this book, we will explore the foundational aspects of the Christian faith. Our aim is to provide you with a clear understanding of what just happened to you at the moment of salvation, the role of the Holy Spirit in your life, and how to live as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Our desire is for this book to be a valuable resource as you begin your journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that the pages ahead will inspire and equip you to live out your faith with confidence, joy, and purpose. Remember, you are not alone in this journey. God's love, grace, and presence will sustain you every step of the way.

Please be sure to subscribe to our YouTube channel, and follow us on all social media at @revrobertpresson. And check out our website at cityrevivalnola.com. Links to social media profiles, podcast, our giving platform, and our website are found in the end of the book.

May you experience the transforming power of God's Word, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the love and support of the Christian community. Welcome to the family of God, and let's embark on this exciting adventure together!

Blessings,
Traci Coston
Traci Coston Ministries

Chapter 1: What Just Happened?

Understanding the Gift of Salvation

You just made a decision to commit your life fully to Jesus Christ, or maybe it was a re-commitment. Either way, you may not totally understand what just happened to you and the impact it will have on the rest of your life.

When we experience salvation, something truly remarkable happens within us. It is a transformative moment that changes the course of our lives forever. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we become new creations in him. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 beautifully expresses,

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun.

Before salvation, we were separated from God because of sin. We lived according to our own desires, driven by the brokenness of the world. But when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, a divine exchange takes place. Our sins are forgiven, and we are reconciled to God. In that very moment, we are made new in Christ.

This transformation goes beyond a mere change in behavior or external appearance. It is a profound spiritual renewal that takes place within our hearts. The old self, burdened by sin and its consequences, is crucified with Christ. And in its place, a new self emerges, created in righteousness and true holiness.

As new creations in Christ, we are empowered to live differently. Our lives are no longer characterized by the patterns of this world, but by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. We are filled with the love, joy, peace, and purpose that come from being in a relationship with God. Our identity is rooted in Christ, and our actions and decisions are guided by His truth and grace.

Understanding what just happened to us when we got saved allows us to fully embrace the magnitude of God's love and grace in our lives. It reminds us that we are not defined by our past mistakes or failures but by our new identity in Christ. We can live with confidence, knowing that God has redeemed us and called us His own.

Salvation in Christ is not about just praying a one-time prayer and then going to heaven when you die. It is about following Jesus.

Born again

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again

— 1 Peter 1:3

The Bible calls salvation “being born again.”

For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.

— 1 Peter 1:23

And then it compares us to brand new babies who need to grow. Listen to this Scripture:

Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, now that you have had a taste of the Lord’s kindness.

— 1 Peter 2:2-3 Think about the word picture here. If you’ve ever been around a baby, you know they just want milk, milk, milk! They are constantly crying out for more. They eat several times a day. It’s their life source. So spiritual “milk” for us as Christians is the Word of God, the Bible. It is vitally important to be in the Bible all the time, to talk about it with your friends, and to live by it everyday. When you do that, you will grow up, just like you once were a baby and now you are grown. If you’ll notice, this book is based on the Bible. You will even find Bible resources at the end of the book to help you along the way. Being born again is just that — everything is new. Before a baby is born, all it knows is the womb, but then when they are born everything they experience is new. The same is true for you. J.C. Ryle said it this way:

To be born again is, as it were, to enter upon a new existence, to have a new mind, a new heart, new views, new principles, new tastes, new affections, new likings, new dislikings, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new love to things once hated, new hatred to things once loved, new thoughts of God, and ourselves, and the world, and the life to come, and salvation.

I couldn't have said it better myself! It's all about having a new heart. You will notice soon that you don't enjoy the sinful things you used to enjoy, and you enjoy new things. Jesus changes what we love. From the things we entertain ourselves with and the music we listen to, to how we spend our time, who we spend our time with, to what we say... everything is new! As the Holy Spirit begins to speak to you about areas of your life that need to change, let him work on you. Cooperate with him. Everything about you is changing for the better! Everything is new!

The Gospel

Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before... Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before... Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

— 1 Corinthians 15:1, 4

The word "gospel" means "Good News." It is the message about God's plan for humanity to be brought back into a right relationship with him. Notice in the verse above, it mentions Jesus dying on the cross for us, and being raised from the dead as well. This message of salvation reveals God's plan to redeem us.

When we were in sin, we were separated from God. Sin is not just actions — it is an attitude as well. We were all born with a sinful nature that doesn't want to obey God.

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

— Isaiah 53:6

Notice how this verse says that God laid on Jesus all of our sins. Jesus took our place on the cross.

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

— Romans 3:23

We were unable to meet God's standard. In the Old Testament, God gave the Ten Commandments. He laid out a moral code that everybody would agree is a good way to live. Honor the God who made you, don't steal, don't lie, don't cheat, don't murder, and so on. But the problem is, all of us have broken his law.

For every sin you have ever committed, you will be accountable to God. Every time you have ever lied, stolen, used God's name in vain, dishonored your parents, lusted, etc., you will have to face God's judgment. God is a righteous judge. He punishes sin. It only takes one sin to send someone to hell for eternity, for God cannot be in sin's presence.

For the wages of sin is death

— Romans 6:23

But the awesome thing is that because Jesus had no sin, he was able to take our place and die for our sins.

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

— 2 Corinthians 5:21

People have called this verse "The Great Exchange." Think about what this is like. This would be as if you had committed serious crimes and were facing the death penalty, but on the day of your trial, someone else who had never committed a crime stepped in, wore your orange jumpsuit, and took your place on death row, all the way to the electric chair, so that you could go free. That's love. That's Jesus.

There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

— John 15:13

Sin brought spiritual death, sickness, poverty, shame, and separation from God. Jesus redeemed us from sin and all of its consequences. Now God is your Savior who saves you from sin, your Provider who will bless you abundantly, your Healer who desires total wholeness for you in every area of life, and your Father who will always be there for you. You not only have eternal life in the world to come, but abundant life in the here and now. You spend eternity in heaven instead of hell and have a blessed life now.

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

— John 10:10 KJV

Chapter 2 - The Importance of Church

As a new believer, it is vital to understand the significance of going to church and being surrounded by fellow believers. The church is not just a building; it is a community of believers who come together to worship, learn, encourage, and support one another in their faith journey.

Hebrews 10:25 encourages us not to neglect gathering together, but to meet regularly with other believers. When we gather with fellow believers, we experience a sense of unity and shared purpose. We can find encouragement, guidance, and accountability within the community of believers.

Attending church allows us to participate in corporate worship, where we join our voices in praise and adoration of God. It is a time to honor and glorify him together. Psalm 95:1-2 says, "Come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing psalms of praise to him." Being part of a local church also provides us with opportunities for spiritual growth. Ephesians 4:11-13 teaches us that God has given various gifts to the church to equip believers for ministry and to build up the body of Christ. Through the teaching of God's Word, we can grow in our understanding of His truth, receive guidance for our lives, and be equipped to serve him effectively.

In the church community, we find a network of support and care. Galatians 6:2 instructs us to "Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." When we face challenges or difficulties, our fellow believers can provide comfort, prayer, and practical help. They can walk alongside us in our joys and sorrows, offering encouragement and love.

Moreover, being part of a church allows us to use our God-given gifts to serve others. First Peter 4:10 reminds us that each of us has received a gift from God, and we are to use it to serve one another. Within the church community, there are opportunities to serve in various ministries, such as hospitality, worship, teaching, outreach, and more. Serving others not only blesses them but also enriches our own spiritual journey.

In conclusion, going to church and being surrounded by other believers is of great importance for new believers. It provides us with a sense of belonging, opportunities for worship, spiritual growth, support, and avenues for serving others. You should

value the gathering of believers because it honors God and provides an opportunity for you to connect with people who can greatly help you, and you can help them.

The people we choose to surround ourselves with have a significant impact on our lives. Proverbs 13:20 advises, "Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble." Our associations shape our character, attitudes, and behaviors. Similarly, 2 Timothy 2:22 instructs us to "run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts." These verses remind us that the company we keep influences us greatly.

By actively participating in a church community, we surround ourselves with believers who live according to God's principles. Their influence can inspire us to pursue righteousness, grow in faith, and prioritize Christian character traits like love and peace. In the fellowship of believers, we find support and accountability to stay on the right path, avoiding the snares of worldly temptations. Being part of a church community helps us develop godly character, deepen our understanding of God's Word, and strengthen our commitment to follow Christ faithfully.

What to Look For in a Church

When seeking a church, there are key aspects to consider that align with the teachings of Scripture. Here are some essential elements to look for:

Emphasis on the Holy Spirit

A Spirit-filled church places a strong emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Look for a congregation that recognizes the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, acknowledges the gifts of the Spirit, and seeks to cultivate an atmosphere where the Holy Spirit is welcomed and active. I would strongly advise against going to any church that teaches that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today.

And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit... (Acts 2:4)

A spiritual gift is given to each of us... (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit... (Ephesians 5:18)

Worship and Prayer

Seek a church that values vibrant and heartfelt worship, where believers are encouraged to express their love and adoration for God. Look for a congregation that values both personal and corporate prayer, believing in the power of prayer to bring about transformation in individuals, families, and communities.

Come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come to him with thanksgiving... (Psalm 95:1-2)

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God... After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:24, 30-31)

Bible-Based Teaching

A Spirit-filled church should have a strong commitment to teaching and preaching the Word of God. Look for a church that upholds the authority and truth of Scripture, with pastors and leaders who faithfully communicate God's Word and apply it to daily life. They should prioritize teaching that leads to spiritual growth, biblical understanding, and practical application.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly... (Acts 20:27)

Sound Doctrine

A good church not only teaches from the Bible, but teaches sound doctrine from the Bible. Sound doctrine means accurate teaching — preaching about things that line up with the Bible and not teaching things that contradict it. Some of the most common false teachings these days are universalism (the idea that there is no eternal hell), progressivism (not taking the Bible literally and allowing for lifestyles the Bible condemns), Calvinism (the idea that God is the author of sin who controls all things to every detail, and that he chose individuals who will be saved and who will be lost before the foundation of the world), once-saved-always-saved (the idea that you can never forfeit your salvation and end up in hell, even if you go back into sin and even

renounce the faith — if you prayed the prayer once you will be in heaven no matter what). On a personal level, I would also never go to a church that teaches that the gifts of the Spirit are not for today, that God doesn't want to bless people financially, or that women cannot be in ministry. I would personally advise against joining these churches.

*But speak thou the things which become **sound doctrine**: (Titus 2:1 KJV)*

For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Discipleship and Spiritual Growth

Look for a church that emphasizes the importance of discipleship and provides opportunities for believers to grow in their faith. This includes small groups, Bible studies, mentoring relationships, and discipleship programs. A Spirit-filled church will encourage believers to pursue a deeper relationship with God and equip them to live out their faith in their daily lives.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit... (Matthew 28:19-20)
So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us... (Colossians 1:28)

Community and Fellowship

Seek a church that values genuine community and fellowship among believers. Look for a congregation that fosters a sense of family, where believers can build relationships, support one another, and encourage spiritual growth. A Spirit-filled church recognizes the importance of unity and the power of believers coming together in love and fellowship.

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)
Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together... (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Missions and Outreach

Consider a church that has a heart for missions and a desire to reach the lost with the love and message of Jesus Christ. Look for opportunities to engage in local and global outreach, demonstrating God's love through acts of service, evangelism, and compassion.

And then he told them, 'Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.' (Mark 16:15)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Remember, while these aspects are important, the most critical factor is seeking a church where you can connect with God, grow in your relationship with him, and be part of a community that supports and encourages you in your faith journey. Pray for guidance, seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, and trust that God will guide you to a church where you can flourish spiritually and fulfill your calling in Christ.

If you cannot find a Bible-based, Spirit-filled church near you, please contact our ministry at tracicostonministries@gmail.com and let us know what city and state you live in, and our team will do our best to help you find a good church.

Chapter 3: Sanctification and Repentance

Embracing the Call to Holiness

In our journey of faith, we are called to embrace the pursuit of holiness. God desires that we set ourselves apart from the ways of the world and walk in accordance with His holy standards. As the apostle Peter wrote,

But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy
— 1 Peter 1:15

Holiness is not an optional add-on but an essential aspect of our identity as believers. Understanding the significance of sanctification is crucial in our pursuit of holiness. Paul exhorted the Thessalonian believers, saying,

For this is the will of God; your sanctification
— 1 Thessalonians 4:3 KJV.

Sanctification involves a continuous process of transformation where we allow God to cleanse us from sin and conform us to the image of Christ.

Repentance: Turning from Sin to God

Repentance is a vital aspect of our journey towards holiness. It involves recognizing our sinful nature and turning away from it, seeking forgiveness and restoration through Christ. The early church experienced the power of repentance firsthand. In his sermon, Peter declared, "Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away" (Acts 3:19). Repentance brings about a radical change of heart and mind, leading us to a renewed commitment to follow God's ways. Paul emphasized this truth when he wrote to the Corinthians,

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death

— 2 Corinthians 7:10

Genuine repentance leads to a life marked by freedom, restoration, and a deeper intimacy with God. As we turn away from sinful mindsets, habits, and attitudes, we grow in our love for God and experience a new nearness to him. This commitment to holiness is necessary for living a victorious life, and necessary for inheriting the kingdom of God (see Hebrews 12:14 and Mark 8:34-38)

The Process of Sanctification

Sanctification is not an instantaneous event but a lifelong process. As we yield to the Holy Spirit's work within us, we are continually transformed into the image of Christ. Paul described this ongoing process, saying,

And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into His glorious image

— 2 Corinthians 3:18

It is a journey of cooperation, where we actively participate in our spiritual growth and maturity.

Pursuing a life of holiness requires cultivating a heart of obedience and surrender to God's Word. Paul urged the Romans,

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.

— Romans 12:1-2

It is through the renewing of our minds and the daily surrender of our lives that we experience the ongoing process of sanctification. You should be willing to turn from all sin, to deny your own desires, and live God's way. That's repentance and holiness. As we embark on this journey of sanctification and repentance, we can find encouragement and hope in God's promises. He is faithful to complete the work he has begun in us (Philippians 1:6), and as we walk in obedience and seek him wholeheartedly, we can trust that he will transform us into vessels of his holiness.

Chapter 4 - Water Baptism

The Significance of Water Baptism

Baptism by immersion in water is a meaningful step in the life of a believer. It serves as an outward sign of an inward faith, demonstrating our commitment to follow Jesus Christ. It's important to understand that baptism itself does not save us; it is through faith in Jesus that we are saved. However, baptism is a powerful symbol of our identification with Christ and our obedience to His command.

In Acts 2:38, Peter urged the people to

repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

This verse highlights the connection between repentance, forgiveness, and baptism. It emphasizes the importance of baptism as a public declaration of our faith in Jesus and our decision to turn away from sin.

Dunked or Sprinkled?

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

— Romans 6:4

This verse beautifully captures the significance of baptism as it symbolizes our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Through immersion in water, we visually depict our participation in His redemptive work.

Scripture makes it clear that immersion is the proper mode of baptism. Acts 8:38-39 recounts the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism, where both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and came up out of it. This immersion signifies a complete identification with Christ's death and resurrection.

In Whose Name?

Additionally, Matthew 28:19 instructs us to baptize "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," affirming the trinitarian nature of God. Some people teach that you should be baptized "in the name of Jesus." In other words, the person who is baptizing you declares as you are being immersed, "I baptize in you in the name of Jesus," instead of "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The reason for this is that in the book of Acts, every time they baptized someone it was said to be done "in the name of Jesus." However, when we consider that during the Lord's first command to baptize people in Matthew 28:19, he said to baptize people in the name of the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit." We have to realize that when it says they baptized people in the name of Jesus in Acts it means "by the command of Jesus," or "by the authority of Jesus." We baptize them because Jesus said to do it! That's what "in the name of Jesus" means."

It is also essential to note that sprinkling or pouring does not fulfill the biblical requirement of baptism. Immersion in water is the valid and meaningful way to express our faith and obedience to Christ. Baptism serves as a public testimony of our new life in him and our commitment to follow His teachings. If you were baptized by sprinkling or pouring as a baby, or were baptized as an adult that way, you should be re-baptized by immersion in obedience to the Bible.

Remember, baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith. It does not save us, but it is an important step in our spiritual journey. Through baptism, we proclaim our faith in Jesus, identify with His death and resurrection, and publicly declare our commitment to live for him. Let us approach baptism with reverence and understanding, embracing the biblical model of immersion and the significance it holds in our walk with Christ.

An Added Bonus

One awesome feature of baptism is that it is a testimony to the watching world. It is a great way to invite your friends and family who are not saved to come to church and see you give your testimony. Many people have been saved because they saw a loved one baptized. You will also look back on your baptism as a huge milestone in your life. You can remember for the rest of your life when you identified with Christ.

Chapter 5 - The Power of the Holy Spirit

But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

—John 14:26

The Holy Spirit is an important and life-changing presence in the life of every believer. In this chapter, we will explore the significance of the Holy Spirit, how we can receive the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit's role in guiding and empowering us as Christians. The Holy Spirit is not an “it.” The Holy Spirit is a “he.” He is a person. He is God himself — the third member of the Trinity. He lives inside of you as a believer and he wants to help you live this Christian life.

In the Scripture at the beginning of this chapter, John 14:26, Jesus was speaking at the Last Supper. He was about to go to the cross, and he wanted to tell the disciples that they would not be alone. The Holy Spirit would be Jesus’ representative — you could say his “replacement” — on the earth.

Maybe you have thought about what it would be like to be right next to Jesus as he walked on the earth doing miracles, teaching the disciples, and revealing the love of God to people. But let me tell you — you have something better! You have the Holy Spirit — Jesus’ replacement — living on the inside of you! Jesus also told his disciples at that Last Supper:

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives **with** you now and later will be **in** you.*

— John 14:16-17

The Holy Spirit had been **with** the disciples in the ministry of Jesus (Isaiah 11:1-2; 42:1; Acts 10:38), but now he would be **in** them!

The Holy Spirit in You

When we receive Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us. This indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, given to every believer. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans,

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)

— Romans 8:9

And as he told the Ephesians —

And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

— Ephesians 1:13-14

Through the Holy Spirit, we are transformed and made new, with the assurance of our salvation.

The Spirit's Guidance

One of the remarkable aspects of the Holy Spirit is his role as our guide. Jesus promised His disciples,

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future

— John 16:13

The Holy Spirit speaks to us through Scripture, enlightening our understanding and revealing God's will for our lives. He prompts our conscience, helping us discern right from wrong, and directs our steps as we seek to live in obedience to God's Word.

The Spirit's Purpose

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live the Christian life victoriously. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we also receive spiritual gifts that enable us to serve God and edify the body of Christ. Paul reminds us, "A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other" (1 Corinthians 12:7). These gifts, such as prophecy, healing, and discerning of spirits, are bestowed by the Holy Spirit according to his will. Additionally, the Holy Spirit produces fruit in our lives – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). As we yield to the Holy Spirit's work within us, our character is transformed, reflecting the nature of Christ.

The Spirit's Empowerment (The Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the Initial Physical Evidence of Speaking in Other Tongues)

One of the significant experiences for believers is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This baptism is distinct from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that takes place at salvation. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a subsequent encounter that empowers believers for a life of spiritual vitality, boldness, and effectiveness in their Christian walk.

The book of Acts provides us with accounts of believers receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were gathered together when suddenly the Holy Spirit descended upon them in a powerful way. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4). This supernatural manifestation of speaking in other tongues is often recognized as the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Speaking in tongues is a spiritual language given by the Holy Spirit for communication between the believer and God. It is a means of edification, prayer, and worship that bypasses the limitations of human language. The apostle Paul affirms the significance of speaking in tongues and encourages its practice within the context of the church. He writes,

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you

— 1 Corinthians 14:18

Speaking in tongues builds up the individual believer and can also serve as a means of spiritual communication, both in personal prayer and in corporate worship.

A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally.

— 1 Corinthians 14:4

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not limited to the early church; it is available to believers today. Jesus himself instructed his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). This promise of power is available to all believers who desire to receive it. As Jesus said,

So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him

— Luke 11:13

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not meant to divide or create a hierarchy among believers, but rather to equip and empower them for service. It is an invitation to experience a deeper intimacy with God, to receive spiritual gifts, and to be bold witnesses for Christ. As believers open their hearts to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, they can expect a greater sensitivity to God's presence, a deeper understanding of his Word, and a boldness to share the Gospel.

To receive this gift, simply ask Jesus to give it to you. He is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). As you begin to praise God in your native language, and open your heart to receive this release of his presence, you can expect that the Holy Spirit will take over your words and fill you with sounds and syllables that come from heaven. You will receive your prayer language.

You can also go to a church that believes in the power of the Holy Spirit and ask the leadership to lay hands on you to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-17). Understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives is vital for our growth and effectiveness as believers. By receiving the Holy Spirit, we experience a radical transformation and become new creations in Christ. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth, directs our paths, and empowers us to serve God and others. Let us embrace the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, seeking to walk in step with Him and allowing his transformative power to shape our lives. May the Holy Spirit's presence and influence be evident in our words, actions, and attitudes, as we strive to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6: Growing as a Disciple of Christ

The Necessity of Daily Bible Reading

Feeding on the Word of God is an essential aspect of our journey as disciples of Jesus. The Scriptures are not just a collection of ancient texts; they are the living Word of God, filled with wisdom, guidance, and nourishment for our souls. In Matthew 4:4, Jesus himself emphasized this truth when he said,

People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

So if the Bible is like bread, we should be taking it in at least once a day! I like to eat every day to strengthen my body, and so according to God's Word, I should eat the Word every day to strengthen my spirit! Let this phrase come to your mind every day: "No Bible, no breakfast." In other words, put the Bible first and even if you don't feel like it or don't have much time, do not miss a day! Get in the habit of opening your Bible and reading at least one verse every day and you will grow from there. By engaging with the Bible daily, we open ourselves to the transformative power of God's Word. The Scriptures have the ability to renew our minds and transform us from the inside out. As the apostle Paul encourages us in Romans 12:2,

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

In addition to renewing our minds, the Bible serves as a lamp to guide our steps on the path of life. Psalm 119:105 declares,

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

When we immerse ourselves in Scripture, we gain divine wisdom and direction. God's Word illuminates our way, providing guidance and clarity in the midst of life's challenges and decisions.

Moreover, the Bible helps us to know the heart of God and understand his will for our lives. It reveals his character, his promises, and his instructions for righteous living. Through the Scriptures, we encounter the stories of men and women who walked with

God, learning valuable lessons from their experiences. We gain insight into God's faithfulness, love, and sovereignty, which strengthens our faith and deepens our relationship with Him.

Perhaps you have tried to read the Bible before and had a hard time. Maybe you thought it was boring or hard to understand. Apart from the revelation of the Holy Spirit, it can seem that way! But with the Holy Spirit's help, it's anything but boring and God himself will speak to you and give you understanding!

The Bible is full of principles for living. By prioritizing daily Bible reading, we start to learn God's principles and walk in his ways. As we connect to him in relationship, he reveals the proper way to have relationship with him and everybody else. In addition to being a revelation of who God is, the Bible has something to say about everything. By consistently being in the Bible, we gain understanding of God's principles and his ways very quickly.

In our fast-paced and ever-changing world, making time for Bible reading may seem challenging. However, by intentionally setting aside a specific time and creating a sacred space for this practice, we demonstrate our commitment to growing in our relationship with God. It is in these moments of quiet reflection, study, and meditation that we allow God's Word to penetrate our hearts and transform us from within.

As we embark on the journey of Bible reading, let us rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance. Jesus promised the disciples the Holy Spirit, who would teach them everything and remind them of his teachings (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit serves as our divine teacher, unveiling the depths of God's Word, helping us understand its truths, and empowering us to apply them in our daily lives.

There are many good translations of the Bible in English. I highly recommend using the New Living Translation (NLT), which is a very easy to understand translation. It is the one primarily used in this book. Other good translations include the ESV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, and KJV, if you can understand it.

A good way to get the Bible into your life is to listen to preaching podcasts on your phone. Use your podcasting app or YouTube and listen to anointed preaching all day. This way, you have the Word explained to you, which is easier than learning it yourself. There are also countless Bible reading plans and Bible apps out there. We want you to access these things so that you can be more consistent. Please see the end of this book for a list of resources that will help you. We have an easy one for you.

The Power of Daily Prayer

In prayer, you become one with God. You are unified with him. Prayer is a direct line of communication with God, and it plays a vital role in the life of a disciple. It is an intimate conversation with our Heavenly Father, where we pour out our hearts, express our gratitude, seek guidance, and find comfort and strength. Prayer is not a complicated ritual; it is simply talking to God, sharing our deepest thoughts and desires with him.

In prayer, we have the incredible privilege of approaching God's throne of grace with confidence, knowing that he hears us and responds to our heartfelt petitions. Hebrews 4:16 reminds us, "So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." Prayer is not about impressing others with eloquent words; it is about humbly coming before God, acknowledging our need for and trusting in his faithfulness.

Through prayer, we build a personal and intimate relationship with God. It is a way for us to draw near to him, to align our hearts with his will, and to experience his presence in our lives. James 4:8 encourages us,

Come close to God, and God will come close to you.

As we spend time in prayer, our bond with God grows stronger, and we become more attuned to his voice and leading.

Prayer is not just about presenting our requests and desires to God; it is also about listening to his voice. In the stillness of prayer, we open ourselves to hear his gentle whisper, his guidance, and his words of comfort. Jesus himself set an example of seeking solitude and communing with the Father in prayer. Mark 1:35 tells us, "Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray." When we prioritize prayer, we create space to encounter God's presence and receive his direction.

For those who may feel uncertain about how to pray, Jesus provided a model prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, known as the Lord's Prayer. It serves as a guide and template, highlighting key elements of prayer such as acknowledging God's holiness, surrendering to his will, seeking provision and forgiveness, and asking for deliverance from evil. This simple prayer teaches us the essence of approaching God with reverence, humility, and a heart that aligns with His purposes.

Prayer is not limited to a specific time or place. It is an ongoing conversation that we can have with God throughout our day. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul encourages us to “Never stop praying.” We can cultivate a spirit of constant communion with God, offering up short, heartfelt prayers as we go about our daily activities. Whether it's a whispered plea for strength during a challenging moment or a whispered word of gratitude for a beautiful blessing, every prayer matters to God.

As we embark on the journey of prayer, it is essential to remember that God desires an authentic and sincere connection with us. It is not about the eloquence of our words or the length of our prayers but about the posture of our hearts. God longs for us to come to him in childlike faith, trusting in his goodness and relying on his wisdom and provision.

Let us approach prayer with humility, knowing that we can boldly come before our loving Father. Let us pour out our hearts, share our joys and sorrows, and seek his guidance and strength. Through prayer, we can experience the transforming power of God's presence in our lives, finding peace, comfort, and hope as we journey with him.

Sharing Your Faith (Soul-Winning)

But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned to me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God

— Acts 20:24

C.S. Lewis said that “nothing is fully enjoyed until it is shared.” You will never know the fullness of the Christian life — the “abundant life” that Jesus talked about (John 10:10) — until you share your faith with other people. “Abundance” means “overflow,” more than enough. There’s enough Jesus in you to spill out onto other people! This is what Jesus was primarily talking about when he said that “rivers of living water will flow from [their] heart” (John 7:38). There is an overflow of your faith. You want to share what happened to you to other people. The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon said, “Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you’re not saved yourself, be sure of that!”

Some people call it “evangelism,” some call it “witnessing,” some call it “outreach,” which are all accurate terms to describe the same thing. The Bible also calls it “soul winning.”

He that winneth souls is wise

— Proverbs 11:30

Jesus promised that the power of the Holy Spirit would help you tell people about him.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere...

— Acts 1:8

The idea of talking to people about Jesus can be intimidating. It can be awkward. You may be afraid, but you can do it! If you are saved, you want other people to be saved. So it is not a desire issue — it’s a confidence issue. You need confidence that comes from training. So I want to give you a few tips on how to share your faith, and also point you to some resources at the end of the book.

Conclusion: Starting Strong as a Disciple of Jesus Christ

If you follow the principles in this short book, you will be off to a great start in your walk with God. I would say “You got this!,” but instead I should say “He’s got this!” If you simply surrender your will to God, and walk in his ways, he will never let you down.

“And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

— Matthew 28:20

To sum it up:

- Learn who you are in Christ
 - Find a church where you can be baptized and connect with other believers
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit
- Be committed to living a holy life
- Learn how to pray and fill your life with the Word of God
- Share your faith with others

And you will be a victorious Christian, living a solid, sold-out, Spirit-filled life.

Additional Resources for New Believers

Online Resources, Apps, and Bible Study Tools

Apps:

The YouVersion Bible App available on all platforms | BibleHub App | Scripture Memory

Bible Reading Plan on YouVersion Bible App:

<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/2531-the-pursuit-chasing-after-your-new-life-in-christ>

Bible Study Websites:

biblehub.com | biblegateway.com | blueletterbible.org | gotquestions.com

Daily Devotionals:

first15.org | billygraham.org/devotionals | odb.org

Study Bibles:

The Thompson Chain Reference Bible | Dake's Annotated Reference Bible
Spirit-Filled Life Study Bible | FIRE Bible | ESV Study Bible | Life Application Study Bible NLT
Illustrated Study Bible | The Evidence Study Bible |

Podcasts:

Supernatural Breakthrough (Mike Signorelli)
The Encounter Podcast (David Diga Hernandez)
Revival Lifestyle (Isaiah Saldivar)
The Ted Shuttlesworth Jr. Podcast
The Jonathan Shuttlesworth Podcast
The River At Tampa Bay (Dr. Rodney Howard-Browne)
Jesus Image with Michael Koulianos

YouTube:

All of the ministers listed above plus Joshua Selman at Koinonia Global.
And one for end times Bible prophecy — Tiff Shu

Our ministry's YouTube channel is @tracicoston — there you will find a growing library of resources to help you walk with the Lord. Make sure to subscribe!

Soul Winning Resources

The Romans Road (Romans 3:23, 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; 10:13) — copy and paste these scriptures from one of the Bible websites above, and put them in your Notes App on your phone. You can show people the verses and ask them to read them and say “What do you think about that?” And then ask if they are ready to receive Christ as their Savior.

Soul-Winning Tools from Dr. Rodney Howard-Browne:

<https://www.revival.com/soulwinningtools>

The Soul-Winning Script (Also from Dr. Rodney Howard-Browne) :

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/inajvb35crjbwaa/English-3-up.pdf?dl=0>

Gospel Tracts:

tractplanet.com

10 Bible Verses Every New Christian Should Know

John 3:16 — For God so loved the world...

Mark 12:30-31 — Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself...

John 15:5 — Abide in Christ, apart from him you can do nothing...

Galatians 6:9 — Don't grow weary in doing good, don't give up...

James 1:2-4 — Count it joy when you faith trials, your faith has a chance to grow...

Romans 8:28 — All things work together for God for those who love God...

1 Corinthians 10:13 — There is an escape from every temptation...

1 John 1:9 — Confess your sins to him. He is faithful to forgive you and cleanse you...

Matthew 6:33 — Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...

Mark 16:15 — Go into all the world and preach the gospel...

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