

NEW BEGINNINGS

A GUIDE FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

I'm a Christian. What next?

It's so great to hear that you have become a Christian. It is the most awesome decision you will ever make. But if you are honest, you may have been thinking to yourself, *"Did God really hear me when I asked Him into my life? How can I be sure?"* Well, take time to read through these amazing promises from the Bible:



In **Revelation 3:20** Jesus makes this offer: *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. **If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.**"* Did you open the door of your heart? Then what does he say he has done?

In **John 6:37** Jesus says, *"All those the Father gives me will come to me, and **whoever comes to me I will never drive away.**"*

In **John 10:27-28** Jesus says, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; **no one will snatch them out of my hand.**"*

Why is it such good news?

Jesus died on the cross for our sins, so that we could have a relationship with him. He's definitely not indifferent about it. He went to amazing lengths to bring us into a relationship with him. Jesus took our sins on himself and covered us with his righteousness, meaning that we can be completely forgiven and fully accepted by God. We can't earn God's favour by our good lives, our religious rituals or by begging him! It is a free gift...all we do is receive it.

1 Peter 3:18 says, *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."*

In other words, when our sin was a barrier, separating us from God; and when we deserved to face God's fierce judgment for all the wrong things we had done - Jesus opened up the way for us to be made right with God. He died in our place and took the punishment we deserved. His perfect life was substituted for our sinful life. Because of that amazing sacrifice, our sins are forgiven and we are able to know God personally.

What happened when I became a Christian?

When a person gives their life to Jesus, they are asking him to take control: **"Jesus, I am no longer my own. I give you access to every area of my life. I now belong to you and choose to follow you."** It is a decision to let God *call the shots* from now on – not just believing that God is real, but letting him have his way in your life. Being a Christian is recognising that God is God...and that he kinda knows best!

When you do give your life to Jesus, it is exciting to know what God says has changed. Look at what the Bible says:

- **You are at peace with God**

Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

- **You are a child of God**

John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, **he gave the right to become children of God...**"

- **You are no longer living in darkness**

Ephesians 5:8 says, "For you were once darkness, but **now you are light in the Lord**. Live as children of light..."

Colossians 1:13-14 says, "He has **rescued us from the dominion of darkness** and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

- **You are forgiven**

Acts 10:43 says, "All the prophets testify about him that **everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins** through his name."

Ephesians 1:7-8 says, "In him we have redemption through his blood, **the forgiveness of sins**, in accordance with the riches of God's grace⁸ that he lavished on us."

1 John 4:9-10 says, "This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and **sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**"

- **You have been given eternal life**

John 5:24 says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me **has eternal life and will not be judged** but has crossed over from death to life."

1 John 5:11-13 says, "...**God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son**. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

- **You have the Holy Spirit living in you**

Ephesians 1:13 says, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, **you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.**"

How do I grow in my relationship with God?

1. **Talk with him!** Prayer isn't about sounding religious and saying the right things. God is far more interested in what is going on in our hearts. Prayer doesn't have to be stuffy and formal – check out the Psalms to see real honesty in prayer. We can pray to God wherever we are, however we're feeling – it's all about developing a close relationship. Have you ever heard of a healthy marriage where there was little or no communication? Prayer is vital in developing a close relationship with God. You might like to use the following acronym (A.C.T.S.) as a guide to help you when you pray:

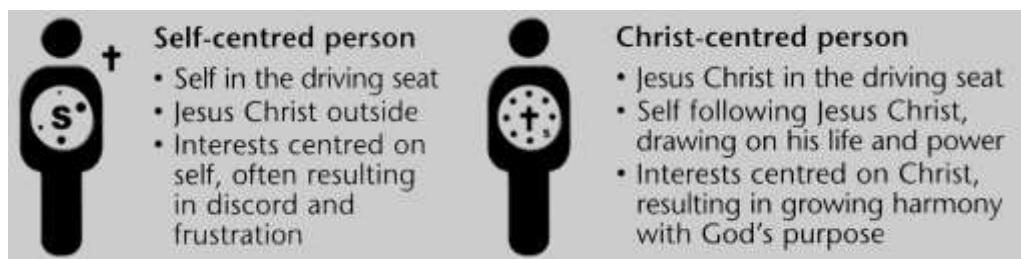
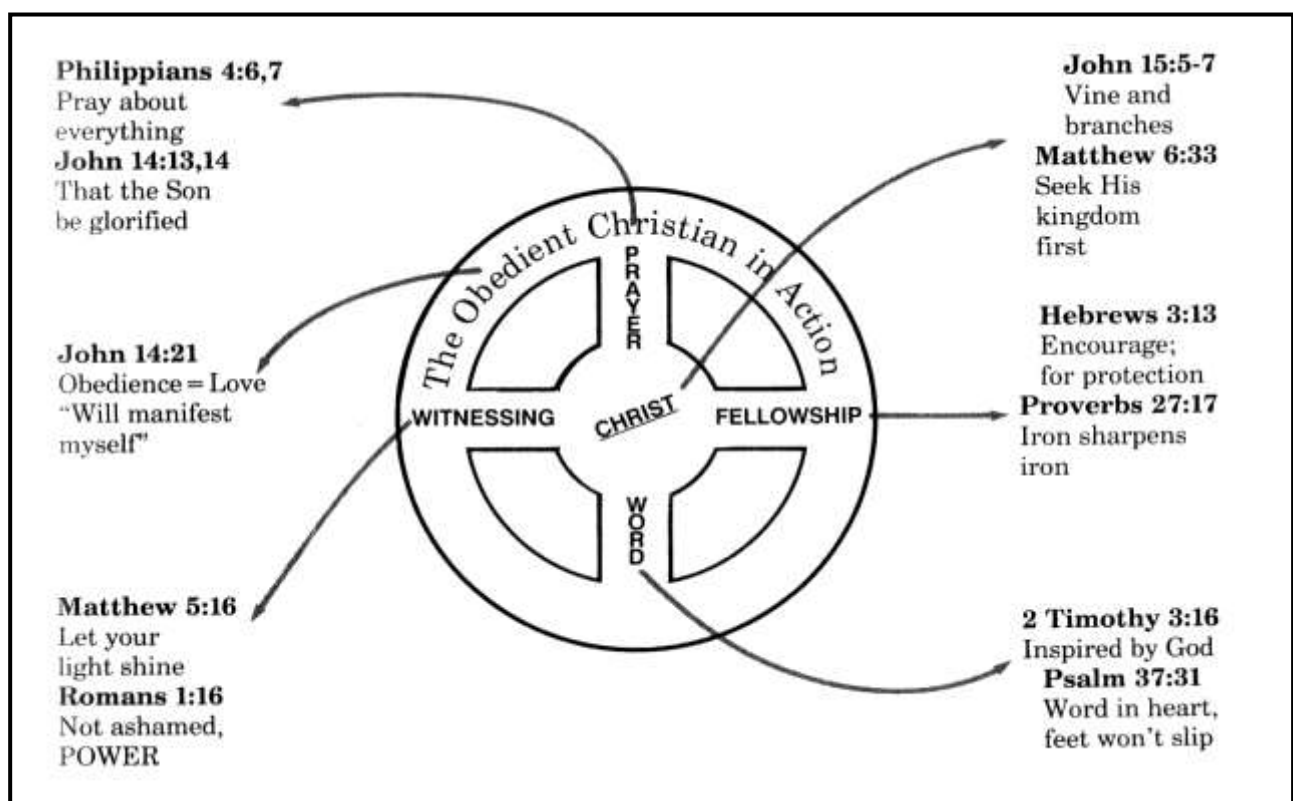
- A ADORATION** Spend some time worshipping God and recognising how amazing he is. Think about his creation and the wonder of his universe.
- C CONFESSION** God already knows what is going on in our lives. We don't have to hide our mistakes. Be honest. Admit it when you slip-up. The great news is that every time we say sorry, God gives us a brand new start. Repentance is about admitting our mistakes and turning our lives back to God.
- T THANKSGIVING** Too many people are pre-occupied with negative stuff. God doesn't want us to be like that in case we miss all the good things that are going on in our lives. Take time to think about how God has blessed you...and then thank him for those things! You'll be surprised at how quickly you gain a new perspective.
- S SUPPLICATION** This is a fancy word for 'asking'. God is your heavenly Father and cares about what is going on in your life. If you have a need, ask God to meet that need. If you are struggling in a certain area, ask God for help. If you are aware of a situation affecting someone else, ask God to intervene on that person's behalf. God loves to answer our prayers...and don't forget to thank him when he does.

2. **Read the Bible.** Don't forget that this is the best-selling book ever! It is full of action: murder, mystery, battles, relationships, shipwrecks and miracles. But the most important reason to read it is because God has given it to us. When you want to fix a car, you read the maker's manual and when you want to make your computer work properly, you read the maker's instructions. God is our Maker, and the Bible is his instruction manual for our lives – it helps us make sense of things and shows us how God intended us to live. It is the only collection of writings that has the power to change human hearts. So spend time reading God's Word every day. John's biography of Jesus' life (the 4th book in the New Testament) is a great place to start.
3. **Spend time with other Christians.** God designed us to live in the context of relationships. In other words, we need each other! Just as a coal that is taken from a fire will quickly lose its heat, so Christians need to spend time with other Christians to help them stay 'on fire' for God. God designed his Church (the people, not a building) to be a community where lives are shared and people are mutually encouraged in their walk with God. So make sure you get plugged-in to church life quickly and consider joining a one of our Life Groups.
4. **Serve others.** Most lakes have an inflow of water; but there also needs to be an outflow of water otherwise the lake will become stagnant. It is the same with Christians – we are designed to give away the blessings we have received by serving others. The Holy Spirit

has given every believer gifts and talents to build-up other Christians and help them grow in their faith. These gifts can also be used to reach-out to and serve those who don't yet know Jesus. The Church is described in the Bible as 'the Body of Christ' – the idea is that every Christian needs every other Christian. The different parts of the human body all have different functions, but still make up one body...so every believer has a unique and vital role in making the Church (God's people) function and grow as it should. We are designed to serve, and the amazing thing is that we are actually serving God when we serve others. What a privilege!

How do I live an obedient Christian life?

Some people find the following diagram useful. It shows a wheel with four spokes. Christ is at the centre and the four spokes are: **1.) Prayer, 2.) The Bible, 3.) Fellowship, and 4.) Serving.** It might be good to use this to give yourself a spiritual M.O.T. from time-to-time. Maybe you could meet with a Christian friend and discuss with each other your progress in each area.



It is good to continually ask the question: "Is Jesus at the centre of my life?" To help you assess whether that is the case, perhaps you could use the above illustrations. Which of the two does your life most resemble? Which of the two would you most like your life to resemble?

If you have any questions, or would like to learn more about living as a Christian, please contact Adam Boud (adam@hopecorby.org) or Damian Carr (damian@hopecorby.org). Alternatively catch them on Sunday.