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# YOUR STORY DISCIPLESHIP COURSE 2

## *ABOUT THE METHOD*

### **The Course**

This course is called "YOUR Story" and is to be studied with either new Christians or those who were never grounded after baptism. **The goal is to get each student of Christ to: 1) Look closely at the Word of God, 2) Understand and Remember what is going on in the text, and 3) Do what the text teaches (James 1:21-25).** It is intended primarily as a new Christian's "primer" study that not only opens the Word of God to the new Christian, but also teaches him or her how to study the Bible and implement its timeless teachings. As one author says, "we want to become architects of passion and purpose." This course is to continue the journey which was begun in "God's Story" of helping your friend understand their purpose and become passionate about fulfilling it. My experience teaches that if the facilitator can lead the student to rely upon the Word of God and their reasoning ability, the student will not only continue to fall in love with God, but will be eager to obey His teachings with a willing heart!

This study is designed to be self-directed and requires little reliance upon the "teacher" or discussion leader. Rather than relying upon the teacher for expertise, the seeker is taught to rely upon the Word of God. The facilitator is there to help them find answers to any additional questions and to keep the conversation moving. The facilitator also functions as someone to help hold the new disciple of Christ accountable to the actions the student finds needing to be changed in his or her life from week-to-week as pointed out in the scriptures. While this is usually contrary to what we have been taught, part of being architects of passion and purpose involves letting go of control and learning how to release people. We must help each of our new brothers and sisters learn how to stand on their own and "work out their own salvation" while we offer them guidance and correction. This study is designed to use 1 John as a template for early Christian learning in order to help the student understand how one continually changes their life even after the act of immersion.

### **The Method**

This is a primarily evangelistic study leading each student of Christ to: 1) Look closely at the Word of God, 2) Understand and Remember what is going on in the text, and 3) Do what the text teaches (James 1:21-25). In the very nature of the study, it becomes obvious that a facilitator is there to guide the discussion while the student dives into the Word in search for precious gems of applicable wisdom and understanding. It must be understood that this is not a lecture format and should not be treated as such. Following I will give general guidance as to how one might carry out a session.

#### Items Needed:

1. The study and “homework” pages.
2. Pen or pencil.
3. Two Bibles (although by now the new Christian should have received one at immersion).
4. An observer (it’s always good to take someone with you who can learn how to study with a friend).

#### Parts of the Study Guide:

1. The overview. At the top of each guide, you will see the series name and lesson title followed by the objectives stated, scriptures covered, and homework assigned.
  - The facilitator will discuss only those passages labeled under “Scriptures” while those labeled “homework” are to be done by the student on their own to encourage further growth outside of your meeting. This results in helping establish a personal Bible Study habit.
2. On Your Own. These sections usually contain many of the questions discussed with the group as well as additional questions to be considered at home. Often times, it is helpful for the facilitator to have these sheets in hand to help guide the discussion. These questions are to be answered on the sheet and brought back at the next meeting time.
3. Next Meeting. At the end of each sheet there is a place to write when the group will meet next including the time, date, and place. It is very important to fill this out before anyone leaves.
4. Prayer and Share. At the end of each lesson, find out any need that you can pray for to help the new Christian learn how to pray. Also, pray that God will bring people into their life that they can share the good news with and that they will be given the words to do so.

#### Beginning the Study:<sup>1</sup>

1. Group Interaction—Begin by “checking in” on your group members by asking questions like “What are you thankful for this week?”, “What needs do you or others have?”, or “How was your week?” This helps get everyone comfortable and leads to a time of Prayer and thanksgiving.
2. Prayer—Begin in prayer and specifically mention any thanksgivings, concerns, and struggles that came up in discussion. If others are comfortable, allow them to say their prayer as well.
3. Review Last Lesson (if applicable)—Find out what they learned last week and how they are doing at being accountable to God. Express

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<sup>1</sup> Note that many of these suggestions are found in David L. Watson’s introduction to the “Discovery Bible Method.”

- the expectation of change by asking what changes in behavior or thought last week brought about in their life. Make sure to encourage them that they are not alone and we are all here to help each other get closer to God and love Him as He loves us!
4. Sharing Reports—Ask how it went throughout the week telling their friends about the study and what they are learning from the Word of God. Sharing these experiences provides support, accountability, expectation, new ideas, and encouragement.
  5. Dive into the Word—It's now time to explain the study of the week. Begin by having them turn to the selected passage and move through the facilitator guide/homework guide.
  6. Homework—Hand out the homework sheets with corresponding charting sheets and encourage them to do it and bring it completed to the next meeting.
  7. End with plans for sharing the study throughout the next week and set up the place, time, and date of your next meeting *before* anyone leaves.

I pray this study will bless you and your students as much as it has ours. Remember that we sow and God grows. It's important to allow God's Word to change and empower the individual and not only our lecturing. May God be with you as you seek people of peace to share the power of His Word with!

For further studies and information go to [www.lakewoodlight.org](http://www.lakewoodlight.org) or email Josh at [joshfreeman01@gmail.com](mailto:joshfreeman01@gmail.com).

## **“YOUR STORY”: SERIES 2 COURSE OVERVIEW**

### **LESSON 1: YOUR STORY OF RESURRECTION**

- ❖ Objectives:
  - To understand that you now live a new life.
  - To learn how one lives this new life and practices truth.
- ❖ Scripture:
  - Romans 6:1-23
- ❖ Homework:
  - 1 John 1:1-10

### **LESSON 2: YOUR STORY OF TRANSFORMATION**

- ❖ Objectives:
  - To realize that transformation is necessary to purge the old life (habits).
  - To learn that transformation is a response to forgiveness and grace.
  - To understand that transformation means becoming less worldly.
- ❖ Scriptures:
  - John 8:1-11
  - Romans 12:1-21
- ❖ Homework:
  - 1 John 2:1-27

### **LESSON 3: YOUR STORY OF GLORIFICATION**

- ❖ Objectives:
  - To understand we must live a life that gives praise & glory to God.
  - To understand the life of a Disciple seeks to lift God up.
  - To understand love for others glorifies God.
- ❖ Scriptures:
  - 1 Corinthians 10:23-33
  - 1 Peter 2:1-12
- ❖ Homework:
  - 1 John 2:28-3:24

### **LESSON 4: YOUR STORY OF PROCLAMATION**

- ❖ Objectives:
  - *To understand how Paul proclaimed his story and how we can too.*
  - *To learn to identify people of peace whom God has prepared us to meet.*
  - *To understand that in proclaiming God's love, God abides in us.*
- ❖ Scriptures:
  - Acts 26:1-27
  - Luke 10:1-12
- ❖ Homework:
  - 1 John 4:1-21

### **LESSON 5: YOUR STORY OF RELATIONSHIP**

- ❖ Objectives:
  - To understand the need of Christian community.
  - To understand your function as a member of the body of Christ.
  - To understand the importance of building & keeping relationships.
- ❖ Scriptures:
  - Acts 2:42-47
  - Acts 4:32-37
  - Hebrews 10:19-27
- ❖ Homework:
  - 1 John 5:1-21

# **YOUR STORY STUDY**

More resources can be found in the appendix  
beginning on page 17.

## **“YOUR STORY”:**

### **LESSON 1: YOUR STORY OF RESURRECTION**

- ❖ *Objectives:*
  - *To understand that you now live a new life.*
  - *To learn how one lives this new life and practices truth.*
- ❖ *Scripture:*
  - *Romans 6:1-23*
- ❖ *Homework:*
  - *1 John 1:1-10*

#### **ON YOUR OWN:**

##### **Read Romans 6:1-15**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. What do you think it means to say that you now “walk in newness of life?”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Why is it so important that we continue purging sin out of our lives after immersion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. According to verses 5-7, what happens if we continue to die to our old self?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. What does this teach in regards to the seriousness of our commitment to Christ?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - e. What sins do you still hold onto that you need to get rid of? How will you do it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does this passage teach you to do? What might keep you from implementing the lesson?

##### **Read Romans 6:16-23**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. In verse 17, what does Paul mean when he says that they “have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching they committed to?”

- b. Why is it important to obey from the willingness of your heart rather than because you're told to do it?
  - c. What is Paul's point in verses 20-23?
  - d. What questions do you have?
2. What does this passage teach you to do? What might keep you from implementing the lesson?

**Read 1 John 1:1-10**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
- a. What is the over-all point of 1 John chapter one?
  - b. What was the message of John and the other apostles?
  - c. What does it mean to walk in the light?
  - d. How does this relate to Romans 6?
  - e. According to verse 9, what must we do for continued forgiveness and cleansing?
2. What does this passage teach you to do? What might keep you from implementing the lesson?

In reviewing your action items, what must you do *this* week in order to make those a reality and obey Scripture?

Next Meeting Day, Time, and Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Please review this lesson between now and the next time we meet together. Bring this sheet back with you so that we can discuss any further questions or insight you might have!



2. What does this passage teach you to do?

**Read 1 John 2:1-27**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:

a. According to John, why is he writing the letter to the churches of Asia Minor?

b. What characteristic must we have in order to truly be a disciple of (or *to know*) Christ (v.3)?

c. What is the gist of the “new commandment” John talks about in verses 7-14?

d. According to verse 17, why should we not love the world and follow God instead?

e. What do you think an “Antichrist” is? Why are they so dangerous?

f. From this chapter, what can we assume the churches of Asia Minor were struggling with?

g. How does this section fit with the other two scriptures?

2. What does this passage teach you to do?

In reviewing your action items, what must you do *this* week in order to make those a reality and obey Scripture?

Next Meeting Day, Time, and Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Please review this lesson between now and the next time we meet together. Bring this sheet back with you so that we can discuss any further questions or insight you might have!

**“YOUR STORY”:  
LESSON 3: YOUR STORY OF GLORIFICATION**

- ❖ *Objectives:*
  - *To understand we must live a life that gives praise and glory to God.*
  - *To understand the life of a Disciple seeks to lift God up at all times.*
  - *To understand that our love for others glorifies God.*
- ❖ *Scripture:*
  - *1 Corinthians 10:23-33*
  - *1 Peter 2:1-12*
- ❖ *Homework:*
  - *1 John 2:28-3:24*

**ON YOUR OWN:**

**Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-33**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. What is the over all concept of this passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What is the meaning of verse 23 and how do we apply it to our own life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What does verse 31 mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. Why should we watch what we do and how we treat others? How does this benefit them and glorify God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does this passage teach you to do?

**Read 1 Peter 2:1-12**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. What is the over all concept of this passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. From this passage, what do you think Peter’s audience was struggling with?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What does Peter mean by “passions of the flesh” in verse 11? What might some examples be?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. What reason does Peter give that we should conduct ourselves honorably?



**“YOUR STORY”:  
LESSON 4: YOUR STORY OF PROCLAMATION**

- ❖ *Objectives:*
  - *To understand how Paul proclaimed his story and how we can too.*
  - *To learn to identify people of peace whom God has prepared us to meet.*
  - *To understand that in proclaiming God’s love, God abides in us.*
- ❖ *Scripture:*
  - *Acts 26:1-27*
  - *Luke 10:1-12*
- ❖ *Homework:*
  - *1 John 4:1-21*

**ON YOUR OWN:**

**Read Acts 26:1-27**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. Why do you think Paul was so excited to tell his story to the King?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Paul tells his story several times throughout the book of Acts, what good was it for the early Christians to tell the story of God and how they came to know God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What was Paul like before becoming a Christian?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. How did Paul meet Jesus and decide to become a Christian?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - e. What was Paul’s life like after becoming a Christian?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - f. What obstacles do you think they had to overcome in telling their stories?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does this passage teach you to do?

**Read Luke 10:1-12**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. What does this teach you about telling your story?

- b. Why do you think Jesus told them not to carry money and such?
  - c. Why do you think he sent them out in pairs instead of individually?
  - d. What does a person of peace look like?
2. What does this passage teach you to do?

**Read 1 John 4:1-21**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
- a. Why should we who are Christians not fear Satan or evildoers?
  - b. Why do you think it's so important to understand that God's Story is one of Love and to proclaim that love to people?
  - c. According to verse 17, what gives us confidence in the Day of Judgment?
  - d. Why do we proclaim a message of God's love according to John?
  - e. What are ways you can tell others of the love of God?
2. What does this passage teach you to do?

In reviewing your action items, what must you do *this* week in order to make those a reality and obey Scripture?

Next Meeting Day, Time, and Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Please review this lesson between now and the next time we meet together. Bring this sheet back with you so that we can discuss any further questions or insight you might have!

**“YOUR STORY”:  
LESSON 5: YOUR STORY OF RELATIONSHIP**

- ❖ *Objectives:*
  - *To understand the need of Christian community.*
  - *To understand your function as a member of the body of Christ.*
  - *To understand the importance of building and keeping relationships.*
- ❖ *Scripture:*
  - *Acts 2:42-47*
  - *Acts 4:32-37*
  - *Hebrews 10:19-27; Luke 4:16*
- ❖ *Homework:*
  - *1 John 5:1-21*

**ON YOUR OWN:**

**Read Acts 2:42-47**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. What does this teach us about the relationships of the early Christians?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Why do you think they spent so much time together and worshipping God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Where does the passage say they would meet with each other over a common meal?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. What does this teach us about our interaction with other Christians when it comes to our homes and possessions?
  
2. What does this passage teach you to do?

**Read Acts 4:32-37**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. What do you think it means that all were “of one heart and soul”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What does this passage tell us about the necessity of every believer meeting together with each other frequently?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. While we don’t have to sell everything we own, why do you think so many did?

2. What does this passage teach you to do?

**Read Hebrews 10:19-27**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. What does it mean to “stir up one another to love and good works?”
  - b. Why is ones presence important at worship and other gatherings (see also **Luke 4:16**)?
  - c. According to verse 26 and it’s context, what is the deliberate sins the writer is referring to? How does this relate with attendance at gatherings and worship?
  - d. What obstacles do you have to over come to make sure you meet regularly with other believers?
2. What does this passage teach you to do?

**Read 1 John 5:1-21**

1. On this sheet, think about and answer the following questions:
  - a. We are to love other followers of Christ, according to John, how do we know if we truly love other disciples of Jesus?
  - b. When we have loving relationships with each other, what do we do when we see another disciple sinning or practicing something against the Bible?
  - c. What does John mean when he says “keep yourselves from idols?”
  - d. With the previous passages in mind, how does the book of 1 John teach us to live in relationship with other disciples and even non-believers?
2. What does this passage teach you to do?

In reviewing your action items, what must you do *this* week in order to make those a reality and obey Scripture?

Next Meeting Day, Time, and Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Please review this lesson between now and the next time we meet together. Bring this sheet back with you so that we can discuss any further questions or insight you might have!

# APPENDIX

## YOUR STORY RESOURCES

Following you will find some resources that will help you in your story and life as a new Christian. These will serve as a guide to help give some foundational information many new Christians ask. They are also provided for you to refer to when sharing with others about your journey.

## **COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS NEW CHRISTIANS FACE**

Written by Thom Hackett

Adapted by Joshua Freeman

New Christians often have misconceptions about God, the Christian life, and other believers. This looks at some common misconceptions of Christianity and is designed to dispel some of the myths that typically hinder new Christians from growing and maturing in the faith.

### **Ten Misconceptions of New Believers:**

#### **1. Once you become a Christian, God will solve all of your problems.**

Many new Christians are shocked when the first trial or serious crisis hits in their life. Here's the reality—the Christian life is not always easy! You will still face ups and downs, challenges, and joys. You will have problems and troubles to overcome, but you can do it. Here is a verse that offers encouragement for Christians facing difficult situations:

1 Peter 4:12-13 “Dear friends, do not be astonished that a painful trial is occurring among you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in the degree that you have shared in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice and be glad.” (NET)

#### **2. Becoming a Christian means giving up all fun and following a life of rules.**

A joyless existence of mere rule following is not a true depiction of Christianity and the abundant life God intends for you. This concept of Christianity (that the Christian life is only one of rules) describes a man-made experience of legalism. God has amazing adventures planned for you. Look at these verses for a description of what it means to experience God's life:

Romans 14:16-18 “Then you will not be condemned for doing something you know is all right. For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God. And other people will approve of you, too.” (NLT)

1 Corinthians 2:9 “However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.’” (NIV)

#### **3. All Christians are loving and perfect people.**

In all honesty, it doesn't take very long to discover that this is not always true. However, being prepared to meet the imperfections and failures of your new family in Christ can spare you future pain and disillusionment. Although Christians strive to be like Christ, we will never obtain complete salvation until we stand before the Lord. In fact, God uses our imperfections to “grow us” in the faith. If not, there would be no need to forgive one another. Even though we are not all love or perfect, we must love each other through the good and bad.

As we learn to live in harmony with our new family, we rub each other like sandpaper. It's painful at times, but the result brings about a smoothing and softening to our rough edges.

Colossians 3:12-13 "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others." (NET)

Philippians 3:12-14 "Not that I have already attained this- that is, I have not already been perfected-but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have attained this. Instead I am single-minded: Forgetting the things that are behind and reaching out for the things that are ahead, with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (NET)

Galatians 5:22-26 "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, being jealous of one another." (NET)

#### **4. Bad things don't happen to truly godly Christians.**

This point goes along with point number one; however, the focus is slightly different. Often Christians begin to wrongly believe that if they live a godly Christian life, God will protect them from pain and suffering. Paul, my hero of the faith, suffered much:

2 Corinthians 11:24-26 "Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with a rod. Once I received a stoning. Three times I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I spent adrift in the open sea. I have been on journeys many times, in dangers from rivers, in dangers from robbers, in dangers from my own countrymen, in dangers from Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers at sea, in dangers from false brothers" (NET)

Some believe the Bible promises health, wealth and prosperity for all who live a godly life. But this teaching is false. Jesus never taught this to his followers. You may experience these blessings in your life, but they are not a reward for godly living. At times we experience tragedy, pain and loss in life. This is not always a result of sin, as some would claim, but rather, for a greater purpose that we may not understand immediately. We may never understand, but we can trust God in these difficult times, and know he has a purpose.

Rick Warren says in his popular book, *The Purpose Driven Life* - "Jesus did not die on the cross just so we could live comfortable, well-adjusted lives. His purpose is far deeper: He wants to make us like himself before he takes us to heaven."

1 Peter 1:6-7 “This brings you great joy, although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials. Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold- gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away-and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (NET)

**5. Church of Christ ministers, missionaries, elders, and deacons are more spiritual than other believers.**

This is a subtle but persistent misconception that we carry in our minds as believers. Because of this false notion, we end up putting ministers, missionaries, deacons, and elders on "spiritual pedestals" accompanied by unrealistic expectations. I once thought like this and I had to shed this notion before I could become an elder in the Lord's Church. Since we tend to place these men on these spiritual pedestals; when one of these heroes falls from our self-constructed perch, it tends to make us fall too—away from God. Don't let this happen in your life. You may have to continually guard yourself against this subtle deception.

Paul, Timothy's spiritual father, taught him this truth—we are all sinners on an equal playing field with God and each other:

1 Timothy 1:15-16 “This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I was the worst of them all. But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.” (NLT)

**6. The Churches of Christ are always safe places, where you can trust everyone.**

Although this should be true, it is not. Unfortunately we live in a fallen world where evil resides. Not everyone who enters the church has honorable intentions, and even some who do come with good intentions can fall back into old patterns of sin. One of the most dangerous places in any church, if not properly guarded, is the children's ministry. Churches that don't implement background checks, team led classrooms, and other security measures, leave themselves open to many dangerous threats. We at Southwest are very careful about who we have teaching our children as well as the other classroom activities. We should always be mindful of the following admonitions...

1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour. Resist him, strong in your faith, because you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are enduring the same kinds of suffering. And, after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” (NET)

Matthew 10:16 “I am sending you out like sheep surrounded by wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” (NET)

**7. Christians should never say anything that might offend someone or hurt someone else's feelings.**

Many new believers have a wrong understanding of meekness and humility. The idea of godly meekness involves having strength and courage, but the kind of strength that is submitted to God's control. True humility recognizes complete dependence upon God and knows we have no goodness except that which is found in Christ. Sometimes our love for God and our fellow Christians, and obedience to God's Word compels us to speak words that may hurt someone's feelings or offend them. Some people call this "tough love."

Ephesians 4:14-15 "So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes. But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head." (NET)

Proverbs 27:6 "*Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*" (NIV)

**8. As a Christian you should not associate with unbelievers.**

I am always saddened when I hear so called "seasoned" believers teaching this false notion to new Christians. Yes, it is true that you may have to break off some of the unhealthy relationships you have had with people from your past life of sin. At least for awhile you may need to do this until you are strong enough to resist the temptations of your old lifestyle. However, Jesus, our example, made it his mission (and ours) to associate with sinners. How will we attract those who need a Savior, if we don't build relationships with them?

1 Corinthians 9:22-23 "*When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings.*" (NLT)

**9. Christians should not enjoy any earthly pleasures.**

I believe God created all of the good, wholesome, enjoyable, and fun things we have on this earth as a blessing for us to enjoy. The key is not holding on to these earthly things too tightly. We should grasp and enjoy our blessings with our palms held open and tilted up.

Job 1:21 "*And (Job) said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gives and the LORD takes away; may the name of the LORD be praised.'*" (NET)

**10. Christians always feel close to God.**

As a new Christian you may feel very close to God. Your eyes have just been opened to a brand new, exciting life with God. However, you should be prepared for dry seasons in your walk with God. They are bound to come. A life-long walk of faith requires trust and commitment even when you don't feel close to God. In these

verses, David expresses sacrifices of praise to God in the midst of spiritual times of drought:

Psalm 63:1 [A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.] “O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” (NIV)

Psalm 42:1-3 “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’” (NIV)

## DISAPPOINTMENTS NEW CHRISTIANS MIGHT FACE

Written by Thom Hackett

Adapted by Joshua Freeman

Wouldn't it be wonderful if life was just a bowl of cherries? Unfortunately, reality sets in and we are faced with people and things that are just disappointing. How we deal with these negative occurrences determines whether we smile or frown. Be positive smile a lot.

### 1. Disappointed with Yourself

Why do I have the same weaknesses as I had before? I had such great anticipation of a joyful life. I was truly excited about the forgiveness of my sins and the chance to start over with the help God was going to give me. My temptations are just as strong as before; no, they are even stronger! I feel overwhelmed by it all.

Don't despair for this is normal. Joy will come to the Christian and just after baptism it is a wonderful and wholesome joyous occasion.

Look at this verse in Acts 8:39—39 “When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.” [NIV]

Now that you are a Christian, Satan is working overtime with you to turn you from your new Christian life. This is a time for strength and a time to seek support from your new brothers and sisters. Don't be timid in seeking comfort and encouragement from your Christian family. Though it seems hard at times and especially so in the beginning of our Christian walk we must be willing to sacrifice to receive the goodness of God's Love.

Take heart in the wisdom offered by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1-2— “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” [NIV]

Colossians 3:5-11 — “So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.” [NLT]

God is always willing to forgive and provide strength for you. We have that promise. God is just and wanting no one to perish but have everlasting life. Don't be fearful or hesitant to talk to God. It is your right as a Christian to go to the Father and lay your burdens on Him. Take heart in the following verses...

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” [NIV]

1 John 2:1 “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” [NIV]

Philippians 2:12-13 “Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” [NLT]

## **2. Disappointed with Your Christian Brothers and Sisters**

Why are there so many imperfect Christians? What has happened to them? Many seem to be inconsistent in their lives. Today they act one way and tomorrow they act another way. They say how I am to act but they don't act that way. Aren't they supposed to have it all together?

What you are witnessing is the reality of life as a human. A point to remember is that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. It would be wonderful if all Christians were people who always practice what they preach but this is not the reality of life.

Look at what happened between the “Apostle Peter” and the “Apostle Paul” when Peter did not practice what he preached as recorded in Galatians 2:11-14--“But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. As a result, other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, “Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?” [NLT]

As we see from this exchange between two Apostles this is not something that is new to us today.

Therefore, what are we to do to minimize or eliminate inconsistencies and not doing as we say? First, as Christians we should be the ones setting the examples.

Consider 1st Timothy 4:12 “Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” [NIV]

We should be quick to confess wrongs when they occur and realize that even older Christians also are going through the process of “adjustment to Christian living” in their lives as well.

Philippians 3:12-14 “I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I

press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.” [NLT]

### **3. Disappointment with the World**

The pleasures and responsibilities of the world keep drawing me from the new Christian life. My job, my family, and my hobbies are choking me to the point that I am unfaithful and struggling. The world keeps pulling at me, pulling me back into the things I tried to get rid of in my life.

The lure of the world is strong even for the mature Christian. We are told in Matthew 6:33 to “seek first the kingdom of God and He will give us what we need” and this truth often escapes us when confronted with long time friends and family of the world. The lures of our former life are powerful, compelling and frightening. To combat Satan’s persuasive charm, we strive to develop close friendships that are centered on Christ and His work and not just social interests.

1 John 2:15-17 “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” [NIV]

### **4. Disappointed by Lack of Success**

I thought by becoming a Christian my problems would go away. Can’t I just give my problems to God? Why do I still have the same problems as before? I am trying to live as God would want me to. When is enough going to be enough? I need relief from these things.

There is an idea that is publicized by the “gospel of health and wealth” teachers today saying if you come to Christ all will be perfect from then on, but this is not what is real. We can see that even in the first century as the Church was beginning that this “health and wealth” idea was not always the case. Let’s take a look at 1st Peter and James.

1 Peter 1:6-9 “So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.” [NLT]

James 1:2-4 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” [NIV]

I wish I could tell you that since you are now a Christian you will have no more hardship in your life. However, that is not true.

Acts 14:21-22 "They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. 'We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,' they said." [NIV]

2 Timothy 3:12 "Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." [NLT]

While Christians will at some point suffer hardship, we have hope in Christ that someday we will suffer no more. We also have Christ helping us and strengthening us during those hardships!

## **5. Disappointed by the Preacher**

Always remember that God is Love. Whatever He may restrict us from doing is done in love to protect us from harm. There are some things that as a Christian we should not do and those come from the Christian's rule book, the book of life, the Word, the book of love poured out for us we know as the Bible. Sometimes you may be disappointed because a sermon sounds negative, understand that while the preacher tries to be positive, we sometimes struggle with problems that must be approached directly.

Sometimes it may be necessary for a preacher to speak of negative things for our learning. However, this is not to say that the pulpit should be a place for all error to be put forward each time we meet. It should be out of love and for the purpose of trying to understand and teach those in error.

You will find that we are responsive to the positive teaching coming from the pulpit. It is neither our desire nor our aim to convict people with fire and brimstone through the mouth of the preacher. We will in fact teach the Christians who worship with us about error. But we will do that with prayer, knowledge, and love. The pulpit should also be a place of celebration for Christ lives. Consider these verses...

Romans 10:1 "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." [NIV]

Romans 10:2-3 "I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. [NLT]

2 Timothy 2:24-26 "A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." [NLT]

Allow me to offer the following comments as a conclusion in an attempt to give you a better understanding of what to expect when disappointments come your way.

## CONCLUSION

1. There may be other disappointments you will face as new Christians, but I have found these to be quite common.
2. I think it will be helpful to you to know that Christians generally go through four stages of spiritual growth...
  - a. The **"ball of fire" stage**, following their conversion to Christ
  - b. The **"reality" stage**, when the disappointments start to come in
  - c. The **"up and down" stage...**
    - 1) Here, people either grow through it to the next stage...
    - 2) Or they fall away, or become apathetic (i.e., "pew-warmers")
  - d. Finally, those who persevere reach the stage of **"steady as she goes"**, where growth is progressive and steady:

*"But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day." - Pro 4:18*

3. To reach that stage where we will grow steadily...
  - a. We need to have REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS of problems to come
  - b. We need to be sure we are CONVERTED TO CHRIST, not the church, teacher, or friend

## **STEPS FOR NEW CHRISTIANS**

Written by Dr. Dale Robbins and edited by Thom Hackett

Adapted by Joshua Freeman

To accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior is the most important decision you will ever make in your life. In reality, it is the beginning of a brand new life in Christ, and as a new-born child of God, there are many important things you need to understand. As you read this, please note the scripture references and look them up in your Bible.

### **Important Understandings**

#### **1. You are saved by Faith**

Your salvation is based purely upon the grace of God and your faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, salvation is not something that can be “earned” by how good you try to be or some religious act that you perform. Salvation is a free gift from God, and came as you put your faith in Jesus, His death and resurrection, and trusted him to forgive your sins and rule your life. The scripture says “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV).

#### **2. You’re not saved by feelings**

Good feelings are nice to have, but feelings do not prove whether you’re saved or not. There may be times when you “feel” that God is close to you, and other times when you “feel” he is not. Remember that He has promised to always be with you and never leave you, regardless of feelings (Hebrews 13:5). Always remember that a Christian live by faith, not by sight or the feelings of our senses. The Bible says “We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7, NIV).

#### **3. You may experience doubts**

One of the most common things that happens to a new Christian is that the devil tries to whisper doubts in your thoughts: “You’re not really saved,” or “nothing really happened to you” for example. But don’t listen to those lies! If you placed your faith in Christ and follow Him, you are saved, regardless of whether you feel it or not. Remember, feelings come and go, but Christ remains with us. God’s Word promises, “if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9, NIV).

#### **4. You are forgiven of all your sins**

The Bible teaches that all mankind has a sinful nature which keeps him separated from God's presence and will result in eternal death. But Jesus came to suffer the consequences of that sin as our substitute, so that we could be forgiven of sin and have access to God's presence. When you repented (turned away) from your sins, and asked Jesus to forgive you and become your savior, and passed through the watery grave of baptism that's exactly what he did. He forgave every sin you've ever committed, regardless of how awful or evil they may have been. God can forgive more sin than man can commit. "If 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, NIV).

#### **5. You're not perfect, just forgiven**

Being a Christian doesn't mean that you won't make mistakes, but it means that you are forgiven of sin and that your goal is to live like Christ and not live in the old sinful way

anymore. Don't ever let the Devil condemn you if you stumble or make a mistake! God loves you and wants you to ask Him to forgive you (1 John 1:9), then He wants you to get back on your feet and keep walking for Him! Don't ever let other people or the Devil bring condemnation upon you! God loves you and will correct you, but He will not condemn you. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Romans 8:1, NIV).

#### **6. You are a New Creation**

When you accepted Jesus by confessing your sins, acknowledging Him as the Son of God and was baptized then He came into your heart by His Spirit, and now His presence and nature lives and dwells in your heart (1 Corinthians 6:19). You did not merely become a better person, you were "born again" spiritually as a brand new person! Now He wants you to learn to live your life according to the new nature of His Spirit inside you. The Bible says "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV).

#### **7. You have the promise of Eternal Life**

God's Word says that when you place your faith in Christ, you are given eternal life. That is, someday when your physical body wears out and dies, your soul will go to be in the Lord's presence to spend eternity with Him! "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, NIV).

#### **8. You must keep living for Christ**

You must understand that your salvation is based upon your "continued" relationship with the Lord. He has promised to keep you saved, as long as you keep believing and living for Him. As a new Christian, you need to grow in your relationship with God and deepen your faith, so that discouragements, temptations, or trials will never cause you to drift away from God. Remember, if you depart from the Lord, you also depart from what gives you the promise of salvation. The Bible says that Christ will one day present you before God, holy and unblemished "...If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the Gospel" (Colossians 1:23, NIV).

#### **9. You need to go to Church (Your support network)**

You should attend church regularly so that your faith can be strengthened by the preaching of God's Word, and so you can grow spiritually and be encouraged by the fellowship of other Christians. Church is where you can go to express your love, faithfulness, and worship to God. Church is where we can learn how to be a Christian, and where the spiritual leaders can help you and encourage your faith. The Bible warns us not to absent ourselves from church attendance, because we need the strength and encouragement it brings. "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..." (Hebrews 10:25, NIV). We are told Jesus regularly attended the church in His day (Luke 4:16). As Christians, we should strive to follow the example of Christ, especially in the fellowshiping and worshipping with other believers.

#### **10. You need to Pray every day**

Prayer is vital to your spiritual growth. God likes to hear from you and have daily fellowship with you. Not only does He promise to answer your prayers, but as you pray He will also provide guidance and spiritual strength. The Bible tells us to "Pray continually," that is—pray faithfully every day (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

### **11. You need to read the Bible daily**

The Bible is God's Word, and as you read from it every day, it will cause you to grow spiritually (2 Timothy 2:15). As you study His written word (start with the Gospel of John), He will strengthen your faith, speak to your heart, and give you guidance and direction for every need and decision in your life. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalms 119:105, NIV).

### **12. You need to remind yourself what happened in baptism**

Baptism in water is a confession of your repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19). Water baptism (not to be confused with baptism in Holy Spirit) does save you by washing away your sins, and is where you receive the Holy Spirit. It is an act of your obedience in God's Word. It symbolically shows that you have died to the old sinful life, and have risen in the newness of the Life of Christ. The scriptures say "...Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38).

### **13. You need to live a Holy life**

As we have mentioned, Christians are not perfect. However, God wants you to "aim" toward perfection. That is, your goal must be to grow in submitting yourself to the new nature of His Spirit in your heart, follow the example of Jesus, and live a godly and wholesome life (Hebrews 12:14). You repented and asked Him to forgive your sins, and now you need to grow closer to Him each day, which will take you farther away from sinful thoughts and behavior which are displeasing to God. Your faith in God will cause a desire to obey Him and do those things pleasing in His sight (Colossians 1:10). Should you continue to live in an unrestrained, sinful lifestyle, this would lead you away from God and back into the old ways that lead to death. But as we grow in our relationship with God, His strength in our life will increase to overcome sinful behavior and habits. "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1, NIV).

### **14. You need to tell others about Christ**

It is important for you to openly declare Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord to others, as it establishes the testimony of your faith. Once you have accepted Jesus Christ, tell someone. Don't keep it a secret. The Bible says that "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33, NIV).