

Next Steps in your Relationship with Jesus

Developing a relationship with someone requires a commitment of time and energy. So it is with your relationship with Jesus Christ; it takes time to learn some of the basic principles of the Christian life. Read through these lessons as the next step in your relationship with Jesus.

Knowing Jesus Personally 4 Lessons

Lesson 1: Understanding Your Relationship with Jesus Christ



Knowing Jesus Christ is the most exciting relationship you can have. It is the beginning of a life of adventure with an all-loving, all-powerful God. If you have sincerely asked Christ to come into your life, you can be sure that your relationship with God is secure. As a result of Christ's death on the cross, the only sufficient provision for a relationship with God, you have been completely forgiven and accepted by Him.

There are many exciting things that are true in your relationship with Christ.

Understanding these truths will help you build a firm foundation on which to grow.

1. Christ forgave your sins.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace..." (Ephesians 1:7).

When you trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, all your sins were forgiven...past, present and future.

What difference do you think it makes to know that all of your sins have been forgiven?

2. Christ made you a child of God.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name -- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:12,13).

a) What did you do to become a child of God?

3. Christ came into your life and He will never leave you.

(Christ speaking) "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.*" (Revelation 3:20).

a) Where is Christ right now in relation to you?

(Christ speaking) "*Whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.*" (John 6:37)

b) Under what circumstances might Christ leave you?

c) According to this, how many times is it necessary to receive Christ?

4. Christ gave you new life.

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

When you trusted Christ to be your Saviour and Lord, you began a new spiritual life. God will increasingly produce many new qualities in you as you grow in Him.

5. Christ gave you eternal life.

"*And this is the testimony; God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*" (1 John 5:11-13).

a) In whom is eternal life found?

b) Who has eternal life?

c) Do you have the Son (Jesus)?

d) Do you have eternal life?

e) When did eternal life begin for you?

Key Question: If you were to die tonight, how sure are you that you would spend eternity with God? Please choose one. 0% - 25% - 50% - 75% - 100%

These wonderful benefits are based totally on Jesus Christ. None of them can be earned. You received them the moment you placed your faith in Christ.

Which of these five truths are especially meaningful to you now? Why?

Dealing with Doubts

Even though feelings are important, your relationship with Christ is based on facts, not on feelings that can change daily. Doubts, questions and varying emotions are common parts of everyone's life, but they are very unreliable gauges of anyone's relationship with Christ. The Christian lives by faith in the trustworthiness of God and His Word.

But what if you don't feel like a Christian tomorrow? Place your faith in the faithfulness of God Himself and the trustworthiness of His Word. The more you learn, the more you will be able to answer any doubts with solid facts. Your feelings will begin to respond to the truth of God's Word and not to your circumstances.

Summary: Since you have trusted in Christ's payment for your sin, understood the basis of your relationship with God and have learned five truths about your relationship, you can be confident in your relationship with Christ.

Suggestions for Further Growth:

Take one truth each day and reflect on it. Read the accompanying verses and thank God that this is now true to you.

Tell someone this week that you have a relationship with Christ.

Key Question: What happens when you struggle and fall short in your efforts to live the Christian life? For the answer, study Lesson 2.

Answers: 2a) You received Christ, you believed in His Name. 3a) In your life. 3b) None 3c) Once 5a) Eternal life in the Son (Jesus). 5b) All who have Jesus in their lives. 5c) The moment you received Him.

Lesson 2: Experiencing God's Love

Your relationship with God is secure because, through Christ, you are forgiven and accepted by God. However, God also desires for you to walk closely with Him and communicate with Him throughout each day.

When we choose to sin, our relationship (our position as God's children) is not affected, but our fellowship with Him is interrupted. Sin keeps us all from experiencing God's love. Sin is more than cheating, lying, immoral behavior, etc. These actions are only the results of an attitude of sin. A simple definition of sin is: doing what we want instead of what God wants -- both in actions and attitudes.

All of us, therefore, need to experience God's forgiveness for our attitudes and actions

1. The basis for God's love and forgiveness.

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18)

Christ's death is the basis for forgiveness to bring us into a proper relationship with God. His death is also the basis for forgiveness in our daily fellowship with God. Read the following passage:

"You were dead in sin and your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then He gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for He forgave all your sin, and blotted out

the charges proved against you, the list of His commandments which you had not obeyed. He took this list of sin and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross." (Colossians 2:13,14, Living Bible).

In the day when this was written, "list of sins" meant an itemized bond nailed to the prison door. It listed every crime for which the prisoner had been convicted. When the sentence was served or restitution paid, authorities removed the list and wrote, "paid in full." The prisoner used this as proof that he could never be tried for those crimes again. The believer who trusts Christ's payment for sin can never be tried again. His sins have been "paid in full." He has full pardon from God.

"He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10-12)

- a) What has God done with your sins according to the verse above?
- b) For how many of your sins did Christ die?
- c) When Christ died on the cross for you, how many of your sins were in the future?
- d) What difference will it make in your daily life to know that you are totally forgiven?

2. You can experience God's love and forgiveness every day.

Even though you are totally forgiven, you still need to deal with your sins on a day-to-day basis in order to experience continuing fellowship with God. First John 1:9 says,

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

Confession -- agreeing with God about sin

When God brings to your attention that something you have done is sin, confess it. This confession involves at least three factors:

1. **Agree** with God that you have sinned.
2. **Thank** God that He has already forgiven you.
3. **Trust** God to change your wrong attitude and actions.

By turning back to God and away from your sin (repentance), you will experience His love and forgiveness provided by Christ's death on the cross. Instead of feeling guilty or condemned, you can know that your fellowship with God is restored.

Confession -- putting it into practice

Right now or tonight before you go to bed:

1. Ask God to reveal any sins in your life.

2. List these on a piece of paper. Be= completely honest; this is just between you and God.
3. After completing your list, write over it the promise of 1 John 1:9 (written above).
4. Thank God for the forgiveness He has provided for you through what Christ did on the cross.
5. Tear up the list and throw it away.
 - a) How often do you need to confess a sin to God?
 - b) When should you confess a sin?

Confession -- experiencing the result

"Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' -- and You forgave the guilt of my sin"
(Psalm 32:5)

"...as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12)

- c) What should you do if you still feel guilty after you have confessed your sin?
- d) What do these passages say about guilt and cleansing?
- e) In light of what we have looked at concerning guilt and forgiveness, how would you complete this statement? *When I have confessed all my sins, I...*

Summary: Understanding God's great love and forgiveness, allows Christians to enjoy a growing fellowship with Him.

Suggestions for Further Growth

Take some time now or before you go to bed tonight to apply the things you have learned about God's love and forgiveness. Make your confession list; then destroy it.

Try to spend 15 minutes or so each day alone with God in Bible reading and prayer. Here are some suggestions:

1. Read the story of the young man who ran away from his father and wasted his inheritance. The story was told by Jesus and is found in Luke 15:11-32. What does the story illustrate about our relationship with God, our forgiveness, and our fellowship with Him?
2. Read Galatians 5:16-23. Notice the differences that will take place as you allow God to work in your life. As you become aware of an area of your life that displeases God, deal with it according to 1 John 1:9 and then enjoy your fellowship with God.

Key Question: How can a Christian experience the power God has made available to live the Christian life? Lesson 3 explains how you can draw upon God's power source, the Holy Spirit, to live a meaningful Christian life.

Answers: 1a) God has forgiven them. 1b) All 1c) All 2a) Once 2b) As soon as you realize it is sin. 2c) Count on God's Word, the Bible, that you are forgiven and don't rely on your feelings. 2d) If anything is not confessed, there is reason for guilt to remain.

Lesson 3: Power for Living

You are now beginning to live the Christian life, which isn't a standard of performance or a code of ethics, but a vital personal relationship with a loving God.

Just as our relationship with God is totally dependant on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live a dynamic Christian life also comes totally from God.

Through your new identity in Christ, you have all the potential you need to live as a new creation in Christ. But, you must continually draw from the proper Source of power.

1. The Holy Spirit is the power source of the Christian life.

The Holy Spirit is God.

"For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:11-12).

The Holy Spirit came to dwell in you.

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9)

The Holy Spirit came to convict the world of sin and justice.

"When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regards to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

The Holy Spirit came to lead you into the truth.

"But, when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ.

(Christ speaking) "He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you" (John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit confirms your relationship with God.

"...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:14-16).

The Holy Spirit is the source of Christ-like qualities in your life.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23).

Which of these qualities would you most like God to be developing within you? (Christ speaking) *"Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me" (John 15:4-5).*

a) What does Jesus say we are to do in order to see this fruit produced in us?

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

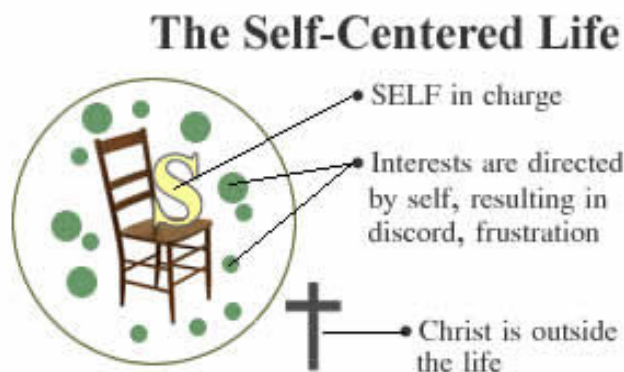
b) What does the Holy Spirit desire to equip you to do?

c) What does it mean to you to be a witness for Christ?

d) Why do you think the Holy Spirit's power is needed to be a witness?

2. Not all Christians experience the Holy Spirit's power.

Although the Holy Spirit lives within all Christians, not all Christians are filled or directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us there are three kinds of people; the natural, spiritual and carnal.

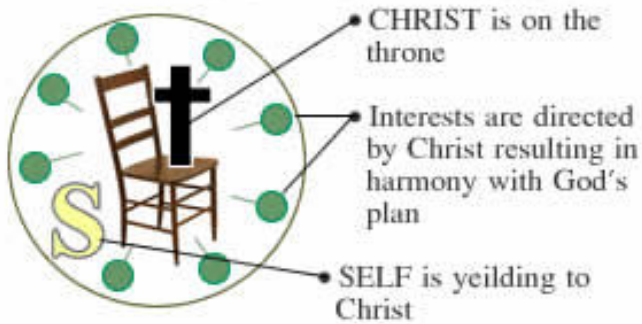


The Natural Person

Those who have not trusted Christ's death to pay for their sins and thus Christ does not live in them. (See 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14)

The circle represents a person's life. *The natural person* directs his or her own life and thus sits in control. (S). Christ (+) does not live in the natural person's life and is therefore outside the circle.

The Christ-Directed Life

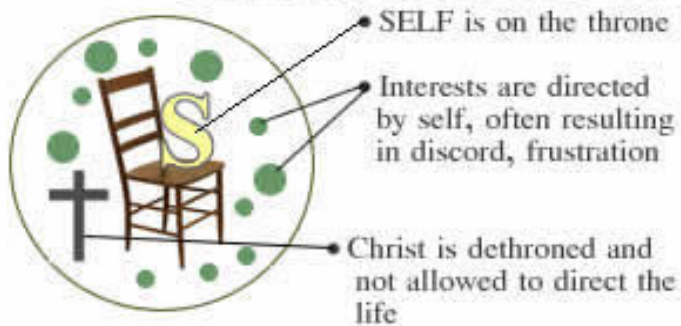


The Spiritual Person

Those who have trusted Christ as their Savior and are trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. (See 1 CORINTHIANS 2:15)

The spiritual person has invited Christ (+) into his or her life and has allowed Him to take control through the Holy Spirit. The person therefore yields to Christ's direction.

The Self-Directed Life



The Carnal Person

Those who have trusted Christ to pay for their sins but who are trusting their own efforts to live the Christian life. (Carnal refers to "flesh" as opposed to "spirit")

A carnal Christian lives in the energy of the flesh, not in the power of the spirit. (See 1 Corinthians 3:1,2). Although Christ lives in the carnal person's life, the Holy Spirit is not allowed to direct it. Instead, the person remains in control.

Which of these three circles best represents your life?

3. You can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The abundant Christian life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through you in the power of the Holy Spirit. You can be filled with the Holy Spirit only by faith, by trusting God to produce in you the fruitful life He promised. The following three steps explain how you can be filled with the Spirit.

1. Confess all known sin.

"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."
(Psalm 66:18).

a) Why do you think it is important to confess all known sin in order to be filled with the Spirit?

2. Yield every area of your life to Christ.

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer to parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness." (Romans 6:12,13).

b) What do you think yielding every area of your life to Christ would involve?

3. Trust the Holy Spirit to fill you

God has commanded you to be filled with His Spirit:

"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled (directed and empowered) with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

God has promised to answer your requests which are in accord with His will:

"And this is the confidence which we have before Him that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14,15).

c) Is it God's will for you to be filled with His Spirit?

You can be filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone. This prayer is a good way to express that faith:

"Dear Father, I know that I have been directing my own life and, as a result, I have sinned against You. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross. I now invite Christ to take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled, and as You promised that You would do if I asked in faith. As an expression of faith, I now thank You for taking control of my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit."

d) Does this prayer express the desire of your heart?

If this is the desire of your heart, you can pray this prayer right now and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

4. You can be continually empowered by the Holy Spirit.

If you find that you have retaken control of your life through sin -- any definite act of disobedience -- simply breathe spiritually (exhale the impure and inhale the pure). This important exercise will enable you to continue to experience Christ's loving control in your life throughout each day.

a) Exhale -- Confess your sin

"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).

Also read Hebrews 10:1-25. Remember the three factors involved in confession:

- i) Agree with God that you have sinned.
- ii) Thank God that He has already forgiven you.
- iii) Trust God to change your wrong attitudes and actions.

b) Inhale -- Claim by faith the fullness of the Spirit in your life

- i) Surrender the control of your life to Christ.
- ii) Trust that He now directs and empowers you.

Summary: The Holy Spirit is the power source of the Christian life. As you trust Jesus Christ, God's Spirit will produce His character within you and empower you to be His witness.

Suggestion for further growth: Continue to spend 15 minutes alone each day with the Lord in Bible reading and prayer.

Key Questions: You can only trust someone as much as you know him. How does God want you to get to know Him better? Study Lesson 4.

Answers: 1a) Remain in Jesus: rely on and stay close to Him. 1b) To be His witnesses. 1c) A witness tells what he or she has seen or heard. A Christian witness should tell others what he know to be true about Christ. 1d) He promises to give you the right words to say and the boldness to say them. 3a) until we consciously have clean hearts before God, He cannot have fellowship with us. 3c) Yes, His command indicates His will.

Lesson 4: Growing in your relationship with Christ

God desires to empower you through the Holy Spirit to live a Christ-directed life. As you continue to breathe spiritually (confess your sin and claim the fullness of the Spirit), you will experience a deepening fellowship with God enabling you to grow in Christian maturity.

1. What does it mean to grow in Christ?

It means to increase in your knowledge of Christ, your love for Him, and in obedience to Him.

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

- a) What does Jesus say is the essence of eternal life?

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment."

- b) There are more than 600 commands in the Old Testament. Why do you think Jesus singled out this one in Matthew 22:37,38?

- c) How would loving God with all your heart, soul and mind affect your life?

(Christ speaking) *"Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him"* (John 14:21).

d) What will be a result of your growing love for Him?

Just as it is a natural process for a child to grow in a loving relationship with a parent, so it is also natural for you to grow in your love relationship with God.

How can you grow in Christ?

Communication is vital to any relationship, including your relationship with Christ. There are four aspects of communication that will help you grow in your relationship with Christ as you live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. God communicates with us through the Bible, revealing His character and His will.

"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

- a) How would you define each benefit described in this passage?
- b) Which of these benefits would be most helpful to you right now?
- c) How would you evaluate the helpfulness of the Bible reading you have done so far?

3. We communicate with God through prayer -- sharing our thoughts, our needs and our desires to do His will.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7)

"This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us -- whatever we ask -- we know that we have what we asked of Him" (1 John 5:14,15).

- a) What do these verses tell us about prayer?
- b) What are some things you can be praying about?

"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

"Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

- c) Why is it important to be thanking God?

4. We communicate with Christians through fellowship -- encouraging and building up one another.

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10: 24,25).

- a) Why is it important to spend time with other Christians?
- b) Why would this be important for you now?

The Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia*, means "sharing in common." We desperately need to share our Christian experience with others who love God and walk with Him, and likewise allow them to share with us. The church where we can meet other Christians and hear God's word, is God's appointed place for Christians to meet. Bible studies and meetings are also extremely helpful.

5. We communicate with non-Christians by witnessing -- sharing about our relationship with Christ.

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to me by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)

- a) What would motivate you to tell another person about Christ?
- b) Who would you like to tell about what Christ has done in your life?

Summary: Read 1 Corinthians 3:6,7. God is the source of your growth. You cannot develop spiritual maturity just by trying real hard. As you walk in power of the Holy Spirit, read the Bible, pray, tell people about Christ and spend time with other believers, God will be at work in you producing fruitfulness and maturity.

Suggestions for Further Growth

Set aside time and a place for daily personal Bible study and prayer. A good book to begin with is the New Testament book of John. As you read, underline particularly meaningful verses. Pray and ask God to show you who He is and how you can respond to Him. Some additional suggested passages for study are the ones in this lesson. Other passages are: Colossians 1:9-12; Matthew 7:7-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Psalm 1; 34; 103; 145; John 15:1-7; and Luke 9:23-26.

Answers: 1a) Knowing God. 1b) If we truly love God we will fulfill the other commandments. 2a) Teaching --presents truth about God and ourselves; rebuking -- points out what is wrong; correction -- shows us how to do what is right; training in righteousness --describes how to live a life which pleases God. 3a) Pray about everything. When we pray according to God's will, He hears and answers us. 3c) God wants us to; by thanking God, we express our trust in Him. 4a) To be in an environment of mutual encouragement to love and do good deeds.