

My New Life

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A New Christian's Guide to Building Your Life on God's Word

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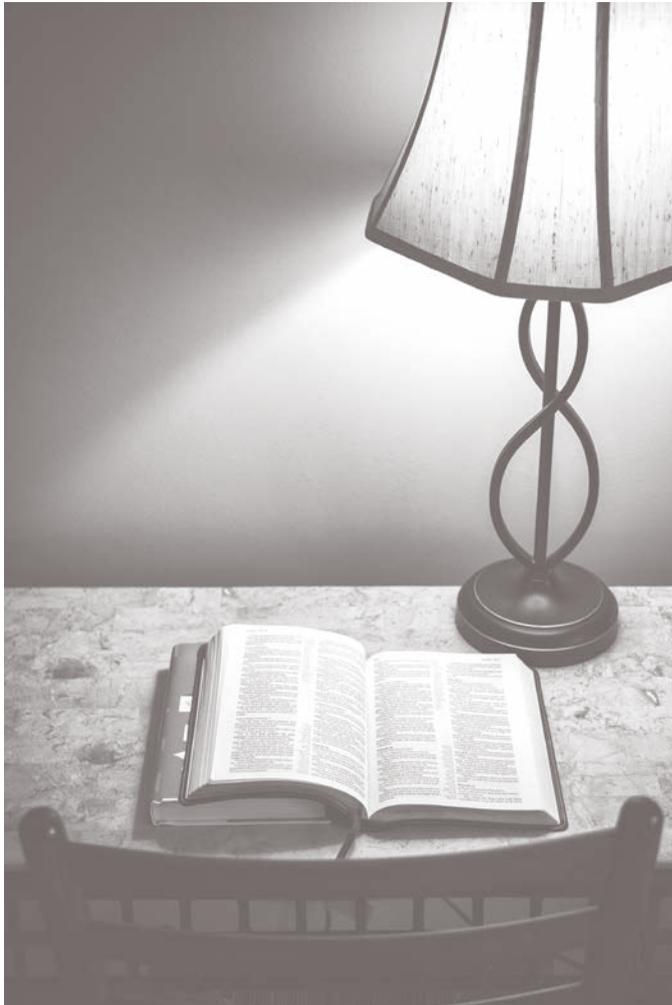
A New Christian's Guide to
Building Your Life on God's Word

N A M E :

Getting Started in the Christian Life

SO IF YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH CHRIST, SEEK THE THINGS ABOVE,
WHERE CHRIST IS, SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. SET YOUR MINDS
ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON EARTHLY THINGS. COLOSSIANS 3:1-2

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

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Introduction

Welcome to *My New Life: A New Christian's Guide to Building Your Life on God's Word*! The Bible tells us there is incredible joy and celebration in heaven when someone chooses to place their trust in Jesus Christ (Luke 15:7,10). We, too, celebrate this step of faith with you. This is an exciting time for you, but also a time that you might question, "Now what?"

As you begin this journey of trusting Jesus, our desire is to give you foundational truths from God's Word that you will stand on for the rest of your life. May your faith in God and understanding of His Word deepen as you seek Him through these pages. Welcome to the family of God!

IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD

So, now you are a Christian, but what does that *really* mean? As you'll read in the coming pages, it is all about God, His great love for you, and your continued response of trust in Him.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!"
(Ephesians 2:4-5).

God is so gracious that He sent His One and only Son, Jesus, to make us right with Him. We were once without hope and God graciously offered hope through His Son. This generous gift wasn't given because of anything we have done, but by what He has done for us!

"God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

The good news is that Christ died for your sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead. This is the gospel, the foundation of our faith. The word *gospel* means "good news."

"For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

You have responded to God's love by accepting Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. By doing so, you have been saved and are promised eternal life with Him!

"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).

Today, Jesus is alive and at work in your life! So what are the implications of this? What does it mean now that you've chosen to trust Him with your life? What does this mean for you moving forward?

These are just a few of the questions we want to help you answer in the pages ahead.

GOD INITIATES, WE RESPOND

“We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). It all starts with God loving us. God initiates a relationship with us and we respond by believing in Him. God desires for this to be a continuing, ongoing relationship. In this study, you will discover some basics of how a relationship with God works. It begins with coming to know God through His Word, the Bible. God tells us about Himself and what He expects of us through the written Word of God. He actually speaks to us through His Word. We respond by reading the Bible, understanding it, and obeying His teachings. We learn to do what His Word says. James 1:22 instructs us to “be doers of the word and not hearers only.” James goes on to say, “the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works — this person will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25).

Throughout this book, we’ll hear from God’s Word and this resource will help you respond to Him. It will show you how to personally begin to live your daily life in Christ. This is likely new for you, but we promise not to overwhelm you with too much information, and you have the freedom to go at your own pace. You’ll take tiny bites of truth each day, which will train and guide you as you make God’s word your foundation.

How did you become aware of your need to become a Christian?

When did you acknowledge your need for Jesus? Describe what that was like.

Who was influential in sharing the good news of God’s love with you?

What to Expect from This Resource

BIBLE READING AND PRAYER

The Bible is God's message to us. Since He is the God of all truth, we can trust that His teachings are completely reliable.

- The Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit and written by men.
- The Bible is completely without error; it is holy.
- The Bible, also known as God's Word, is our trustworthy source for guidance from God. In its pages, we will learn about God and get wise instructions for following Him.

One of the benefits of being a follower of Christ is prayer. Prayer gives us 24/7 access to God. Because we are His children, He invites us to talk to Him, approaching Him as a loving Father. As you read God's Word and go about your everyday life, respond to Him in prayer.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

Each day, you will read Scripture passages related to that day's topic. You'll also find questions that will help you respond to God. The day's study will end with a prayer focus. We encourage you to begin hiding God's Word in your heart by memorizing Scripture. You'll find a memory verse or verses on the opening page of each week (see page 10 for an example). Post this somewhere you'll see often, read it daily (break it down into smaller sections, if necessary), or repeat it aloud throughout the week until you have it memorized.

You'll gain a deeper understanding at a heart level about what the gospel is, who God is, what your life in Christ looks like, the value of belonging to a church, and God's mission for you. Although you will gain a lot of knowledge, which is a good thing, our hope is that there would be true heart transformation as you grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This resource will help you build a foundation for your faith, but this resource does not take the place of the Bible. We'll give you the foundation to help you grow, but you need to also spend time in God's Word and in prayer, seeking Him.

We hope you have someone to do this alongside you. It's most helpful if this person has been following Jesus for some time so they can answer your questions. If you go through this alone, that is OK, too. But if you desire someone who trusts and loves Jesus to walk with you through this book, please ask this individual. If you don't know of anyone, ask your pastor to connect you with someone.

This book is just the beginning of your journey to discovering life in Jesus. We trust that the ensuing pages will give you a longing to dig deeper into God's Word.

How to Use This Resource



First, you'll need a Bible. Don't have one? Find one here: **LifeWay.com/Bibles**. In this resource, we will use the Christian Standard Bible.

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Each day has a Bible verse, a short explanation of the verse and main idea, questions for you to ponder and respond to, and a guide to help you pray. Take your time as you ponder these truths of God's Word and be intentional to respond to God as you go.

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At the end of each week, you will find additional journaling pages. Use this space to reflect on the truths you are learning, how God is changing your heart, and what you will do with what you have learned.

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You can work through this book individually or with another mature Christian. If you work through it on your own, be sure to write down questions in the notes section that you feel you may need to ask other, mature believers.

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Take the time you need. Don't feel rushed to get it done. Soak in the truths of God's Word at your own pace.

My New Life in Christ

WEEKLY TRUTH TO MEMORIZE:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

MAIN IDEA:

When you become a follower of Jesus, He makes everything new. Since you believe in Jesus, you are now different and your life will begin to look different. Fortunately, the Bible helps us know how to become a Christian and it also gives us guidance about how to embrace this new life. This first session offers basic instruction for living the Christian life.

WEEK *1*

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MY NEW LIFE

Your New Life

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TODAY'S TRUTH: When you become a Christian you are saved by grace and made alive in Christ.

MAIN SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:4-5

"Dead men do not bleed."

That's what the doctor told his patient.

This patient was special; his family admitted him because he kept insisting he was dead. Not merely in an emotional or figurative sense, but dead in a clinical, biological sense. The doctor attempted to reason with this incredulous patient, pointing out to him that dead people do not breathe, walk, or talk as he was doing. These observations did not seem relevant to the man.

Since the man persisted in the belief that he was dead, the doctor pulled out some medical textbooks in order to show him the typical characteristics of an expired human corpse, one of them being that dead bodies do not bleed when they are punctured. The patient at last looked as if he might change his mind, nodding his head and stating, "That's right. Dead men don't bleed." To demonstrate to the man indisputably that he was not dead, the doctor poked his finger with a needle. The man's finger bled. The patient then looked at the doctor and exclaimed, "Wow! Dead men do bleed after all!"

This humorous story about a man's belief that he was dead might seem preposterous, but the statement "we were dead in trespasses" (Ephesians 2:5) might also sound ridiculous to us. Nonetheless, this is what the Bible teaches is true about us before we were saved. Because of "sin"—which is anything we think, say, or do that opposes God—the Bible describes our condition as "dead in trespasses" (Ephesians 2:5). We weren't dead in a physical sense, but we were spiritually dead. With respect to our relationship with God, we were dead men and women walking.

When did you first begin to recognize sin in your own life?

How did you respond to this?

Before Christ's forgiveness, we were sinners who followed our own selfish desires. We *were* subject to death and condemnation. But not anymore! The key word in the previous sentences is the past tense verb "were." No longer are those things true of us if we belong to Jesus, having placed our full trust in Him for salvation and committing to turn away from a life of sin.

We were dead until God saved us by His grace. The Bible states, “God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4-5). If we believe in Jesus, then we are made alive with Him. In a real sense, before we trusted in Jesus for salvation, we were only breathing corpses. Now, since we belong to Him who died and was raised, we are truly alive, capable of following the good ways of God instead of the evil ways of this world. No longer dead, we are, as the Bible states elsewhere, “a new creation” in Christ; old, dead things have passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17).

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus is able to forgive your sins?

We were dead, and dead people cannot help themselves. This is part of the reason the Bible emphasizes we “are saved by grace” (Ephesians 2:5). The word *grace* refers to our receiving God’s favor even though we have done nothing to deserve it; in fact, we have done everything opposite of deserving it. Grace is God’s unmerited blessing. We were spiritually dead and incapable of doing anything to commend ourselves to God. By grace alone, apart from any good we have done, is how we are made alive with Christ.

Though we freely receive this saving grace, it came at the greatest of costs—the death and resurrection of God’s Son, Jesus. Because of God’s love toward us in Jesus, spiritually dead men and women can be made alive.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for making me alive in Your Son, Jesus. Without Your grace, I would still be dead in my trespasses and blindly traveling down the path of sin. Because of what You have revealed in the Bible, I now have a better understanding of who I was before I met Jesus and of who I am eternally in Him. I praise You for the richness of Your love and mercy. Help me to continue learning what it means to be alive in Christ. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.

NOTES

Enjoy God's Presence

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TODAY'S TRUTH: God's call to remain in Him is an invitation to experience His presence in our daily lives.

MAIN SCRIPTURE: John 15:1-5

Imagine that you are just a few days away from taking the vacation of a lifetime. For weeks, if not months, you will be traveling the world and taking in all of its wonders. While you would obviously be very excited about your trip, there would be many things to do before you leave. What will you do with your pets? And what about the mail? Your bills? How will you acquire the different currencies you need for different countries? Do you need visas, or is a passport sufficient? The list of things you might need to do to enjoy your vacation can quickly overwhelm you and dampen your enthusiasm for the trip.

Similarly, while becoming a Christian is very exciting, it can quickly become overwhelming and even dampen your enthusiasm for your faith. One moment you are joyously celebrating what God has done in your life, and the next you are overwhelmed with all the things you are supposed to "do" to grow as a Christian.

Jesus' simple words from John 15:4-5 bring us great comfort. Read them carefully:

"Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."

What do you find encouraging in these verses?

What do you find challenging about Jesus' command to "remain" in Him?

These words bring an enormous amount of clarity and simplicity to new believers fretting about how to be a Christian. Jesus simply says: "Remain in me" (John 15:4). Some Bible translations use the word "abide." What Jesus is saying is "stick with Me" or "stay connected to Me."

In the Gospel of John, Jesus frequently uses the word “remain.” When Jesus invited His disciples to remain in Him, He meant for them to walk with Him, and continually pursue and obey Him. To our ears this might seem like a duty or chore, but Jesus assures us that if we remain in Him, we will find our greatest joy in being connected to God through Him. Pursuing and obeying Jesus is not a duty, but a delight.

This raises two very important questions: First, how does one “remain” in Jesus? You will learn more about this as you continue through this book, but for now it’s enough to understand that “remaining” is as simple as talking to God in prayer and listening to His word as you read the Bible with His people, the church. The “fruit” that comes of that is godly behavior—loving God and loving others as He has loved you.

Second, what is “fruit”? Fruit is what Jesus wants to produce in you. If you will remain in Jesus, then He will make you more and more into the person He called you to be. Jesus can transform you to become just like Him. Jesus’ instruction to His followers is that they must be constantly reliant upon Him in order to become more and more like Him.

Read the following prayer and try to pray to God using your own words as you feel comfortable.

PRAYER: Father, I humbly ask that You keep me close to Jesus through regular prayer and reading my Bible, and that these things will result in me becoming more and more like Jesus. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.

NOTES

Obey God's Word

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TODAY'S TRUTH: As a follower of Jesus, you express your love to Him by obeying His teachings.

MAIN SCRIPTURE: John 14:15,21

"If you love me, you will keep my commands. ... The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him" (John 14:15,21).

As a new follower of Christ, you're now in a relationship with Him. Like any relationship, you develop and cultivate your relationship with Christ as you walk daily with Him. Your relationship with Him begins when you recognize that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-10). Jesus is unlike anyone else; because of this, the Bible gives Him the title *Lord*. The word *Lord* means "master" or "boss." The idea that Jesus is Lord means He is in charge, He is in control, and He calls the shots. Your response to His lordship is to obey and keep His commands, and to say yes to Him when He speaks to you through His Word and through prayer. It means that you know His teachings and follow them. When you experience tension between what you desire to do and what Jesus says you should do, you yield to Him.

How would you describe Jesus to someone who doesn't know Him?

One way we express our love for God is to obey His commands that we find in Scripture. We typically think of a mom or dad trying to teach a small child when we see the words "obey" or "obedience." Parents are entrusted with the responsibility of raising their children and caring for them. One aspect of parenting involves teaching children the difference between right and wrong. Another aspect of developing a healthy parent-child relationship and demonstrating love requires setting boundaries and rules for the child's safety.

Our relationship with God works in a similar way. He loves us deeply, so much so that He places boundaries and rules for our benefit. Our love for God makes us want to obey Him, and Scripture says we will be blessed when we do. Our obedience to God is an outward expression of our trust in Him that He knows what is best for us.

The good news is we don't have to wonder what God wants us to do. God's commands are found in the Bible. It's important that as a new believer you begin to read the Bible. In the Word of God, you'll learn what He tells us to do and how we are to live. You will discover that God is pleased when you follow His commands. As your relationship with Jesus grows, you express your love and devotion to Him by keeping His commands.

Jesus talked about our obedience in John 14:15: “If you love me, then you will keep my commands.” This sentence has the feel of an if/then statement: *If we love Him, then we will keep His commands.* While that is true, the word “if” in this passage can be understood as *since*. “[Since] you love me, you will keep my commands” (John 14:15). This meaning is clear when you read the words of Jesus in John 14:21: “The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him.”

Why do you think our obedience matters to God?

What part of obeying God’s Word seems difficult to you right now?

So, where should you begin? One of the first things Jesus asks you to do as a new Christian is to be baptized. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples and to baptize them. The Book of Acts tells the story of the very first Christians who established the church after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Those who came to faith in Christ were baptized to demonstrate their commitment to follow Him. It’s the same for you. Jesus commands His followers to be baptized as an outward expression of their commitment to follow Him. Being baptized is one of your first steps of obedience to His commands.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for inviting me to be in a relationship with You. Help me to understand Your Word so that I can obey what it says. May my actions and words demonstrate my love for You. When I struggle to follow Your way, remind me of Your constant love that desires the best for me. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.

NOTES

Get Connected

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TODAY'S TRUTH: You are not meant to live the Christian life alone.

MAIN SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 10:24-25

Rock climbing is a demanding sport in which the participant climbs up a rock ledge using whatever handholds and footholds he can find. The journey is dangerous and laden with potential hazards, leading seasoned rock climbers to suggest one thing: Don't climb alone. A partner, positioned on the ground holding the belay rope wrapped around him, can support the climber's weight if he slips. Having a partner allows the climber to experience climbs he couldn't attempt on his own. In the same way, God's Word teaches us that we were never meant to live out our faith in isolation. The Christian life is meant to be lived alongside other Christians.

When God created us, He made us for relationships. In fact, our lives are filled with them: smartphones connect us to friends and family; social media platforms allow us to communicate with friends from all seasons of our lives; and refrigerators hold pictures of those people whom add meaning to our lives. These relationships are a significant part of life. However, now your most significant relationship is the one you have with Jesus, because only Jesus is able to save you from your sin.

Our relationship with Jesus shapes all of our other relationships, especially our relationships with other Christians. As we learn about what it means to follow Jesus, we cannot overlook this vital truth: God never intended for us to live the Christian life alone. We were made for Christian community, living our day-to-day lives alongside other Christians. Hebrews 10:24-25 reminds us of the importance of the church: "And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

Who was instrumental in teaching you about Jesus? How did he or she do this?

Following Jesus is a personal decision that leads us to do things like pray, read God's Word, and worship. These things are invaluable because they help us to grow spiritually. However, it is equally important to grow spiritually alongside other Christians. When we get involved in a local church we immediately benefit. With other Christians, we:

- Grow in our understanding of the Bible;
- Pray for each other;
- Encourage others and receive encouragement;
- Serve alongside others to fulfill God-given tasks;
- Learn from others what it looks like to trust and follow God.

**What is one prayer request you would like someone to pray for with you?
Who can you ask to join you in praying for this need?**

How have you connected with other Christians? In what specific ways have they encouraged or challenged you in your faith?

In 1 Corinthians 12:12,27, the apostle Paul describes the church as a body that has many parts. In the same way, the church is made up of many Christians who have different skills and abilities. We are called to build and prioritize healthy relationships with other Christians because we need each other. Simply put, there are some things about following Jesus that we can only learn in the context of our relationships with other Christians. As we read God’s Word, pray, worship, and serve with other Christians, God unifies and equips us to follow Him more closely each day.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for designing me for relationships that bring joy and fullness to my life. I’m grateful to be part of Your family. Help me to prioritize getting involved with my church and forging strong relationships with other followers of Jesus who love You too. Show me, through other Christians, what it means to trust You in the ups and downs of life, when challenges come, and when great things happen. Allow me to see when and how I can encourage someone else. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.

NOTES

God's Promise of Eternal Life

TODAY'S TRUTH: God wants you to know with confidence that you have eternal life.

MAIN SCRIPTURE: 1 John 5:11-13

We want to end this week with this promise: those who become followers of Jesus are given the promise of eternal life. One of the most well-known verses in the Bible is John 3:16: "For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

When people hear the words "eternal life" they almost always think of heaven. In this instance that's exactly what Jesus is referring to. By placing your faith in Jesus, you have the promise of heaven. Death is not the end of the story for Christians. There is more to life than our earthly existence. Eternal life means that God is with us now and we will be in heaven with Him forever.

What do you find most hopeful or encouraging about the truth that God offers us eternal life?

God promises eternal life for those who follow Him. He wants us to be confident in His promise. In 1 John 5:11-13, we're reassured of this: "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

John wrote these words so that you would know for certain that you have eternal life when you believe in Jesus. We want you to know from the outset of the journey of following Jesus that along the way you will encounter doubts, questions, challenges, and feelings of insecurity regarding your eternal destiny. God gives assurance that eternity is guaranteed because you believe in Jesus. It's not about what you do from this point forward. You cannot earn eternal life. You don't deserve it. It's His gift to those who believe in Jesus. You cannot lose it because of mistakes you make, missteps you take, or sins you commit. Your sins are forgiven—past, present, and future.

Nothing can take away God’s promise of eternal life to those who believe in Jesus. Nothing can change that fact. Jesus said to His followers: “My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:27-29).

What do these verses teach us about God’s character and power?

The apostle Paul encouraged us to have unwavering faith: “Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35,38-39).

There may be times when you feel insecure about the decision to follow Christ. In moments of doubt or questioning, you might wonder to yourself, *Can it be true that I will live forever in heaven because I am a follower of Jesus?* These types of questions, doubts, and fears are not unusual for new believers. We will talk about the reasons for this in future sessions, but these words of Scripture were given so you will know with certainty that eternal life is yours and nothing can take that away. As a Christian, you belong to God and you have the promise of eternal life with Him forever.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for the gift of Your presence both today and forever in heaven. I want to have an unwavering faith in the promises You give me in Your Word. When questions or doubts arise, help me to always seek Your Word for truth. Help me to turn to Your Word each day so it will become the foundation of my life. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.

NOTES

Week 1 Journal

Use these pages to journal as you go through the week. If you need guidance, use the following questions to help you.

What truths or promises from God's Word stood out to you this week?

What did you learn about God this week?

How can you obey or apply what you have learned from God's Word this week?

What prayer requests do you have?
