

my new LIFE

A New Christian's Guide
to Following Jesus

my new LIFE

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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 the family of God! The Bible tells us there is incredible joy and celebration in heaven when someone places their trust in Jesus Christ.

“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don’t need repentance.” LUKE 15:7B

We celebrate this step of faith with you, too! This is an exciting time—but also a time when you might ask, “Now what?”

As you begin following 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 the pages of *My New Life: A New Christian’s Guide to Following Jesus*.

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, Christianity is all about God, His great love for you, and your continued response of trusting Him.

God’s love for you is great.

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 sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to make you right with Him.

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

Christ died for your sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead.

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

By responding to God's love, by trusting Jesus as your Lord and Savior, 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 truth? What happens 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

Throughout this book, you'll hear from the Bible, which is God's Word to us. God tells us about Himself and what He expects of us through His written Word. He actually speaks to us through His Word, and this resource will help you learn how to respond to Him. It will show you how to begin to live your daily life in Christ and continue in ongoing relationship with Him.

This is likely new for you, but we promise not to overwhelm you with too much information. 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 the foundation of your life. Let's start by reflecting on what you've experienced in your walk with God so far.

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

Two of the most important aspects of life in Christ are Bible study 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 true and 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 of guidance from God. In its pages, we learn about God and receive wisdom and instruction for following Him.

So the Bible teaches us about life with God, and prayer gives us 24/7 access to Him. We are His children, and He invites us to talk to 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 the truth of God's Word. The day's study will end with a prayer focus and a review of the weekly memory verse, which is also on the opening page of each week (see p. 11 for an example). We strongly encourage you to begin hiding God's Word in your heart by memorizing Scripture. Post your memory verse somewhere you'll see it often, read it daily, and repeat it aloud throughout the week until you have it memorized. (It often helps to break it into shorter sections and memorize pieces each day.)

Through this study, you'll gain a deeper understanding of 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 you will experience a true heart transformation as you grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. While *My New Life* will help you build a foundation for your faith, it is not a replacement for the Bible. Make sure you spend time in God's Word and in prayer outside of this study.

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 as you go. If you don't have someone in mind who could do this with you, ask your pastor to connect you with someone at your church.

This book is just the beginning of your journey of discovering life in Jesus. We pray these pages will give you a longing to grow in your relationship with God and dig deeper into His Word.

How to Use This Resource



First, you'll need a Bible. If you don't have one, check out [lifeway.com/Bibles](https://www.lifeway.com/Bibles) for options. The version used throughout this study is the Christian Standard Bible.



Each day includes a Bible verse, a main idea, questions to help you reflect and respond, and a guide to help you pray. Take your time as you ponder the truths of God's Word, and intentionally respond to God as you go.



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.



You can work through this book individually or with a mature Christian. If you work through it on your own, write down any questions you want to ask a mature believer.



Set aside the time you need. Don't feel rushed to get your study done quickly. Meditate on the truths of God's Word at your own pace.

my new LIFE

THE BIG IDEA

Because you have put your faith in Jesus, you are different, and your life will begin to look different.

Week 1

My New Life in Christ

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

*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



Day 1 • Receive New Life

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

There's a great scene in *The Princess Bride* where the story's hero, Westley, is thought to be dead. Two men, Fezzik and Inigo Montoya, want Westley alive so he can help them find the man they are looking for, to avenge Inigo's father's death. They carry Westley to the home of Miracle Max, who tells them Westley is "only mostly dead. There's a big difference between mostly dead and all dead. Mostly dead is slightly alive. With all dead, well, there's usually only one thing you can do . . . go through his clothes and look for loose change." Then, Max heals Westley, sending the three on their way with new life.

Let's think about this idea in the context of today's verse. Spiritually, there's a big difference between mostly dead and all dead—between thinking we're pretty bad off and realizing we're actually in the grave because of sin. When we think we're slightly alive, we have no urgency or desperation for salvation. We don't understand our need for new life. And there's no true gratitude for God's gift of grace and eternal life. But the truth is, when it comes to sin, there is no such thing as "mostly dead." We need a shift in our thinking.

The Bible tells us without Christ, we're completely dead. We're "dead in trespasses" (another word for *sin*). This isn't physical death—it's worse than that. We're dead spiritually, out of relationship with God. Before we received Christ's forgiveness, we were sinners headed for eternal punishment. But not anymore!

If we belong to Jesus, we have been spared from that punishment. In an act of pure grace, He has saved those who place their full trust in Him for salvation and turn away from a life of sin. If we believe in Jesus, we are made alive with Him! No longer dead, we are a "new creation" in Christ; the old, dead things have passed away, and new life has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).

That's good news because dead people can't help themselves. We were spiritually dead and incapable of doing anything to make ourselves right with God. This is one reason why the Bible emphasizes God's grace. Jesus makes us alive by grace alone—apart from any good we have done or could ever do.

We freely receive this saving grace, but it came at the greatest cost—the sacrifice of God's Son, Jesus. After He died for our sin, Jesus was raised to life and made a way for us to experience new life, too. Because of God's love for us, through Jesus, spiritually dead men and women are made alive.

Think back to when you first began to recognize sin in your life. How did you view it (e.g., completely terrible, pretty bad, not that bad)? How do you understand it now?

How do you feel knowing Jesus forgives your sins?

PRAY

Write a prayer to God as a way of responding to today's study. Use the prompts below to help direct your prayer.

- Acknowledge the depth of your need for salvation because of sin.
- Ask God to help you grasp the miraculous truth of Ephesians 2:4-5.
- Thank God for what He is doing in your life.

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GRACE

receiving God's favor even though we have done nothing to deserve it

When you become a Christian, you are saved by grace and made alive in Christ.

Read and write
2 Corinthians 5:17.

(p. 9)



Day 2 • Enjoy God's Presence

"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."

JOHN 15:4-5

Imagine you are just a few days away from taking the vacation of a lifetime. For three months, you will travel the world. There's obviously excitement. And there are also obvious preparations that need to be made. What will you do with your pets? Who will collect your mail and package deliveries? What different currencies will you need for different countries, and how will you acquire them? Do you need visas, or is a passport sufficient? The pressure of tending to the list of things you need to do can quickly overtake your enthusiasm for the trip.

Becoming a Christian can hit us like that sometimes. It is an absolutely momentous, exciting event, but when we start to consider the changes to our lives that come with walking with Jesus, our enthusiasm can be curbed by a well-intentioned to-do list. 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's words in John 15:4-5 bring great clarity, simplicity, and comfort to new believers who worry about how to be a Christian. Jesus says, "Remain in me." Some Bible translations use the word *abide*. What Jesus is saying is, "Stick with Me," or, "Stay connected to Me."

Remain is a word Jesus uses often in the Gospel of John. He is inviting His disciples to walk with Him, to continually pursue and obey Him. That might seem like a duty or chore at first, 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—it's a delight!

So how do you "remain" in Jesus? You will learn more about this as you continue through this book, but for now, it's enough to know that "remaining" is as simple as talking to God in prayer and receiving His truth as you read the Bible with His people. The "fruit" that comes from that is transformational. As you constantly rely on Jesus, He will make you more and more like Him, empowering and equipping you to love God and others as He loves you.

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

How does John 15:4-5 change your perspective about what you need to do to continue experiencing joy in the Christian life?

PRAY

Journal a prayer to God as a way of responding to today's study. Use the prompts below to help direct that prayer.

- Ask God to reveal Himself to you through His Word and deepen your relationship through prayer.
- Assess whether or not the Christian life makes you feel overwhelmed. Acknowledge the truth of John 15:4-5, and receive rest in Jesus.
- Thank God for what He is doing in your life.

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FRUIT

the godly behavior Jesus wants to produce in you

If you remain in Jesus, He will help you grow more and more into the person He has called you to be.

God's call to remain in Him is an invitation to experience His presence in your daily life.

Memorize the first half of 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation . . .



Day 3 • Obey God's Word

"If you love me, you will keep my commands."

JOHN 14:15

As a new follower of Christ, you're now in a relationship with Him. Like any relationship, you develop and cultivate that relationship daily. The growth of your relationship with Jesus, though, begins and continues by recognizing that He is Lord—and you are not (Romans 10:9-10). Your response to His lordship is to obey His commands and say yes to Him when He speaks to you through His Word and through prayer. If Jesus is your Lord, you know His teachings and follow them. When you experience tension between what you want to do and what Jesus says you should do, you yield to Him.

Your obedience to Christ is a sign that you love Him, you know He loves you, and you treasure that love relationship. Think about it in terms of a parent and a child. Parenting involves teaching the difference between right and wrong. It also involves setting boundaries and rules for the child's safety. Those two realities exist in a healthy parent-child relationship because of *love*.

Relationship with God works in a similar way. He loves us so much that He has established boundaries and rules for our benefit. Our love for God makes us want to obey Him. Obedience is an outward expression of trust that He knows what is best for us.

So the importance of reading your Bible can't be overstated! In God's Word, you'll learn how to live. You'll discover that God is pleased when you follow His commands—and blesses you for it. As your relationship with Jesus grows, you express your love and devotion to Him by keeping His commands.

Jesus's words in John 14:15 read like an if/then statement: *If* you love Him, *then* you will keep His commands. While that is true, the word "*if*" in this verse can be understood as *since*. "[Since] you love me, you will keep my commands." That meaning becomes more clear when you read Jesus's words a few verses later: "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 14:21).

So, where should you begin? One of the first things Jesus asks you to do as a new Christian is to be baptized (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:37-41). The very first people who came to faith in Christ and established the church after His death and resurrection were baptized to demonstrate their commitment to follow Him. You are to do the same. Jesus commands you to be baptized as a first outward expression of the love you share with Him. It is a visible demonstration of your trust in Him and commitment to follow Him.

Why do you think your obedience matters to God?

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

PRAY

Journal a prayer to God as a way of responding to today's study. Use the prompts below to help direct that prayer.

- Recognize that God's commands are for your benefit.
- Acknowledge any commands you have been hesitant to obey, and ask God to change your perspective.
- Name an act of obedience you want to take to show Jesus your love.

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LORD

a title given to Jesus because He is unlike anyone else and above everyone else

Because Jesus is Lord, He is in charge, He is in control, and He calls the shots.

As a follower of Jesus, you express your love to Him by obeying His teachings.

Memorize the second half of 2 Corinthians 5:17.

... the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!



Day 4 • Get Connected

And let us consider one another in order 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.

HEBREWS 10:24-25

Have you ever been rock climbing? It's not for the faint of heart! Climbing up a vertical rock face in the elements of nature, using whatever holds you can find, is so dangerous that even your most skillful rock climber friend lives by this rule: Don't climb alone. A belay partner on the ground, appropriately attached to the rope that holds you, can support your weight if you slip. That safety gives you freedom to experience climbs you couldn't even attempt otherwise.

The same thing is true about your new life in Christ. You are never meant to live out your faith in isolation. And there's no good reason to do that anyway. You need people. That's especially true if you slip—and you absolutely will slip. Life in Christ requires courage and community. When the path gets tricky, God wants you to have the support you need to keep going.

As a new believer, you're learning your most significant relationship is the one you have with Jesus. He's the One who gives you the greatest support. He is the only One able to save you from your sin. At the same time, you were made for Christian community, living your day-to-day life alongside other Christians. The moment you receive salvation in Christ, you also enter into the family of God. The former never happens apart from the latter. As you grow in your personal relationship with Jesus, you're also meant to grow with other believers together as God's family. That's the message of Hebrews 10:24-25.

As you connect with other Christians in a local church, you'll become unified with the family of God and equipped to follow Him more closely each day. You'll be helped to grow in your understanding of the Bible. You'll pray for people and be prayed for by people. You'll encourage others and receive encouragement, serve alongside others to fulfill God-given tasks, and learn from others what it looks like to trust and follow God. Simply put, some aspects of following Jesus can only be learned in the context of relationships with other Christians. It's time to get involved in your local church community!

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

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

PRAY

Journal a prayer to God as a way of responding to today's study. Use the prompts below to help direct that prayer.

- Recognize that your new life in Christ involves new relationships in Christian community.
- Acknowledge the gift that God has given you in your local church.
- Ask God to bring people into your life with whom you can develop deep relationships that honor Him and help you grow in your faith.

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UNITY

the togetherness of believers in the shared gospel experience, sense of mission, concern for one another, and experience of suffering in Christ

- Jesus prayed we'd have it (John 17:11).
- The first church modeled it (Acts 4:32).
- Sin threatens it (Romans 16:17).
- Each believer must choose it (1 Corinthians 1:10-14).

You are not meant to live the Christian life alone.

Write the first half of 2 Corinthians 5:17.



Day 5 • God's Promise of Eternal Life

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.

1 JOHN 5:11-13

God has made a promise to you about your new life in Christ—you have eternal life. You may have heard these words from Jesus about that promise: “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” (John 3:16).

New life in Christ means that death is not the end of the story. There is more to life than an earthly existence. There is a greater, ongoing reality for all who trust in Jesus. God promises eternal life in heaven for those who follow Him, and He wants us to be confident in His promise.

The apostle John wrote today's Scripture with this goal in mind. From the beginning of the journey of following Jesus, and along the way, you will face doubts, questions, challenges, and feelings of insecurity regarding your eternal destiny. But God gives you assurance that eternity is guaranteed. It's not about what you do from this point forward. You didn't earn or deserve eternal life to begin with, and you don't keep holding on to it with good works, either. Eternal life is God's gift to those who believe in Jesus. You can't lose it because of mistakes you make, missteps you take, or sins you commit. Your sins are forgiven—past, present, and even future.

Nothing can change that fact. Jesus said it, and the New Testament writers knew it was true and want you to know it, too—with certainty. The apostle Paul wrote it like this: “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 8:38-39).

In moments of insecurity, doubt, or questioning, you might wonder, *Can it be true that I will live forever in heaven because I am a follower of Jesus?* We will talk about the reasons why in future sessions, but let Scripture give you this assurance: New life in Christ means that you belong to God, you have the promise of eternal life with Him forever, and nothing can ever take that away.

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

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

PRAY

Journal a prayer to God as a way of responding to today's study. Use the prompts below to help direct that prayer.

- Acknowledge any insecurities, doubts, or questions you might have about eternal life.
- Meditate on the promises of 1 John 5:11-13, John 3:16, and Romans 8:35,38-39.
- Ask God to give you peace as you trust His assurance that you will live with Him forever.

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ETERNAL LIFE

the gift and ongoing promise of God to all who believe in Jesus Christ

God is with you now, and you will be in heaven with Him forever.

God wants you to know with confidence that you have eternal life.

Write the second half of 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Week 1 Journal

Your study in week 1 centered around this big idea: Because you have put your faith in Jesus, you are now different, and your life will begin to look different. Take some time now to reflect on what you've learned about those two realities. Use the following questions to help.

What did you learn about God this week?

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

What are some specific ways you want to obey or apply what you have learned from God's Word this week?

How can you now answer the question, “How do I live my new life in Christ?”

Try to write this week’s memory verse without looking at it!

2 Corinthians 5:17

What is the “old” reality that has passed away in your life?
What “new” reality has come and will continue to come as you walk with Jesus all your days?



What prayer requests do you have?

Bible Reading Plan

One-Month Reading Plan through the Book of John

1:1-28

10:1-30

1:29-51

10:31-42

2:1-25

11:1-27

3:1-21

11:28-57

3:22-36

12:1-19

4:1-26

13:1-38

4:27-54

14:1-31

5:1-16

15:1-27

5:17-47

16:1-33

6:1-21

17:1-26

6:22-71

18:1-40

7:1-24

19:1-16

7:25-53

19:17-42

8:1-20

20:1-31

8:21-59

21:1-25

9:1-41

ENDNOTES

1. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0093779/characters/nm0000345>
2. *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary: The Authoritative Resource on the Christian World*, ed. George Thomas Kurian (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 719.

HOW TO BEGIN YOUR NEW LIFE AS A BELIEVER

As a new Christian, trying to figure out what it means to follow Jesus can feel a bit overwhelming. To grow in your faith, you need to understand the Bible, God's character, prayer, the gospel, and so much more. This 6-week personal Bible study explains these essentials in short chapters and simple terms. It will help you grow in your understanding of God's Word and provide a foundation of daily trust in Jesus that will help you continue to walk with Him for the rest of your life.

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