

# a new start

getting off to a good start



*for those beginning  
their new life as a Christian*

Trevor Lloyd

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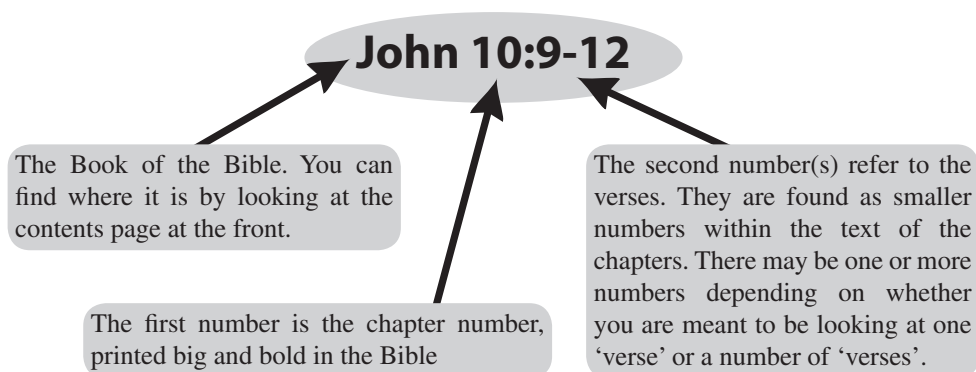
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# Using the Bible

You will see as you read this book that we often refer to passages from the Bible. If you are not used to using the Bible, then it can seem a little daunting. But it is not as difficult as it first seems so don't be put off.

The Bible is not one book but a collection of books, split into two main divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

When you need to look up a verse or passage from the Bible, there will be a 'reference' like the one below:



It may seem awkward to begin with but you will soon get used to it.

You will also find that there are many different translations or 'versions' of the Bible. The main ones referred to in this book are:

- New Living Translation (NLT)
- New International Version (NIV)

## **Different versions all teach the same truth; they are just put in different words.**

In order to help you to read the Bible and enjoy it, I recommend that you use one of the modern translations like those mentioned above, and don't just start at the beginning and try to read through. Start with a gospel like Mark, or a short letter like Colossians. Ask your helper for notes to help you to get started.

# Introduction

*A New Start* is a guide for those just starting off in the Christian life. When you are starting anything new, there are always some basic things that you need to know in order to move beyond the first steps. Your Christian life is like a journey and this book is to help you on the first part of that journey. Or, to put it another way, it provides you with some of the essential spiritual food you need to grow strong as a Christian. The Bible describes becoming a Christian as being born again! It means starting a brand new life - and there are some important things to understand if you are going to grow up spiritually.

## Getting Help

As well as reading this book, we suggest that you have someone who has been a Christian for some time and is spiritually stronger than you to help you start off. Talk with them about the questions that come to your mind as you read the book. Be honest with them about the challenges you face and tell them about the good things that are happening to you in this new life!

## Using the Bible

They will also help you to read the Bible if you have not been used to it. At the beginning of this book there is a short guide to looking up verses in the Bible. It's a little difficult to begin with and it can sometimes feel as though everybody else understands it and it's only you who doesn't! Don't give up. We have all felt that way at some time and it gets a lot easier as you read the Bible more and more.

## New Words

If you have had little or no experience of the Christian faith, you will find that there are some important words that are used regularly in this book and in the teaching you hear in church meetings. They may well be unfamiliar to you, so we have included a glossary at the end of each chapter that explain what is meant by the words highlighted in bold italics.

## A New Family

This is the first of two books that go together. This book is about you as an individual; the things that you need to understand and do in order to start growing. The second book is about belonging to a local church - this is essential for your spiritual growth. You have not only started a brand new life; you have become part of a brand new spiritual family. Read and talk about both books with your helper and put into practice all that you learn and you will take great steps forward in your Christian life.

Learning to live the Christian life is an amazing journey. Welcome to the most exciting adventure ever!

# 1

## It All Starts With God

In one sense, you became a Christian because you decided to. But the Bible teaches us that, in actual fact, God was working 'behind the scenes' before you came to that decision. Not only that but, in order for you to become a Christian, God has to change you supernaturally from the inside - by his Spirit. This is what we call being born again, and it is this that we will be looking at in this first chapter.

### God Chose You!

The Bible tells us that God knew us when we were in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13-16). He chose us before we were even born (Jeremiah 1:4-5). This means that we were not chosen because of the good or bad things we had done, but on the basis of God's *grace* (Titus 3:4-7; 2 Timothy 1:8-10). He actually chose you before the world was created (Ephesians 1:4) and he knew what he was doing. He didn't get a shock.

### God Has Guided You To Himself

Jesus says that no one can come into a relationship with him unless the Father (God) draws him (John 6:34). This means that before you began seeking God, he was seeking you. God is invisible but, by his Spirit, he can affect us in our mind, emotions and even our body. The thoughts you began to have, the desire for something more, the questioning, the prayers, the encounters with other people etc. have all been used by God to draw you to himself. A very important part of this process was what is often called *conviction* – that is, he made you aware of your *sin* and your need to *repent* (see Lesson 2).

### God Is In You!

From all this, we can see that becoming a Christian is not just about you deciding to believe in God or to follow the teachings of Jesus. God has to do something. He performs a miracle on the inside of you. When you turn to God and put your *faith* in him, he comes and lives in you by his Spirit. The effect of this is that your inner being – your *spirit* - that was dead to God, is now made alive. You can now relate to God from your spirit. He has made you clean and, though before you became a Christian your heart tended towards sin, you now have a heart that wants to obey God, even if you struggle to at times. Growing up spiritually means learning to live by this new nature and not by your old way of living. This is why the Bible calls it being born again and says that anyone who is a Christian is 'a new creation'.



**Take time to look up these following passages from the Bible, which are all about this wonderful truth of the new creation: John 3:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:21-24; 1 Peter 1:23; 2 Peter 1:4.**

## **Divine DNA!**

Just as we carry inside us the genetic code passed on to us by our natural parents, when we are born again it is like being given God's spiritual DNA inside us. The Bible likens it to having God's very own nature inside us. We have physical and other similarities to our parents that develop as we grow; so, as we grow up spiritually, we become more and more like our heavenly Father. The Christian life is about letting God's life - his DNA that is within us - change us from the inside out!

## **Think About It!**

***How does knowing that God chose you affect how you think about yourself now? How do you think knowing this should affect how you live the rest of your life?***

***Think back over some of the stages you went through in reaching your decision to become a Christian. Can you see where God was drawing you to himself?***

***What does following lots of rules do to a person compared to being totally changed from the heart?***



## **Taking Steps**

- 1. God chose you. Never allow yourself to wish that you were someone else. Thank God that he has chosen you to have a relationship with him and to follow him. You can also be confident about the future because you have been chosen by God.***
- 2. Your decision to follow God was the best decision of your life. You can continue to make good choices in your life by getting help from the Bible, the Holy Spirit and other mature Christians.***
- 3. Think about the areas in your life that you already know will have to change. Ask God to help you and thank him that he is in you to help you. Now have the courage to make the steps you need to and believe that, with God's help, you can change.***





# 2

## Your First Steps

In the previous chapter, we saw how God is responsible for leading you into this new life that you have begun. He chose you and saved you. But when you became aware of God drawing you to him, you responded and took some definite first steps yourself. These first two steps are called *repentance* and *faith*, and they must take place in our hearts and minds if we are truly to be called Christians.

### Repentance: A Complete Turn-Around

It is possible for God to draw us to himself, but for us to fail to respond and to ‘*show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance*’ (Romans 2:4). To become a Christian, we need first to repent. Repentance is a change of mind leading to a change of action.

The word repent means ‘to turn round,’ to make a complete change of direction. Even if we have lived quite a moral, religious life, we have been going our own way and we need to change course and go God’s way. Repentance also means that you have decided that Jesus Christ is going to be the *Lord*, or Master, of your life. You have handed the controls of your life over to him and are going to try to live in total obedience to him. What he says, goes!

### Faith: Total Trust

When people asked how they were to be saved, they were told to repent and believe (Acts 2:38). Faith is not believing *about* God but believing *in* God. It is not just mental agreement with the Bible, but total trust in a personal God and in what he says. True faith radically affects your life. You believe that Jesus died for you, that you are forgiven and that you can now have a relationship with God. So now you can start enjoying that relationship. You believe that he rose from the dead so that you can have this brand new life and that he can give you the power to live it. So now you start living that life to the full on the basis of this *faith*. What you believe affects what you do.

### Receiving the Gift

The Bible teaches us that *salvation* is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:23). We don’t deserve the gift but God, because of his own goodness, chooses to offer it to us. Faith is simply the means of receiving the gift. Although we can’t save ourselves by our own efforts, we do have to respond to God by reaching out our hands to take it. This is what it means to be saved by faith. If we don’t accept the gift, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

## Start As You Mean To Go On

The Bible says, *'just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him'* (Colossians 2:6). We have seen that the steps we take to receive Christ as the Lord of our lives are the steps of repentance and faith - and this is how we continue to live the Christian life. This does not mean that we keep on repenting about the same things. But if we do sin, then we confess and repent (1 John 1:9) and we change our mind to think how God thinks about things. It also means that we continually live in obedience to Jesus.

To live by faith means recognising that we can't live the new life in our own strength, and so we trust in God's life and power within us to live his way. It also means that we put God's Word above everything – our feelings, our moods, advice from well-meaning friends, what we have been used to doing etc. To live by faith is to always let God have the last word! There is no other way to live the Christian life than to trust and obey. Faith and repentance are not just the first steps of the Christian life; they are the way that we walk throughout the whole journey.

### Think About It!

- 1. What will it mean for you to have a complete turn-around in your life? What things will you need to stop doing and what things will you want to begin to do?**
- 2. Have you received God's free gift of forgiveness? Have you accepted that he has forgiven your sins and that you can now get to know him better?**
- 3. Think about a difficult situation that you are facing. Think and talk about how having faith in God is going to make a difference to how you face that difficulty.**



### Taking Steps

- 1. The Bible encourages us to make sure that we really have become Christians (2 Corinthians 13:5). Be clear in your own heart that you have truly repented and put your trust in Jesus Christ. Once sure, don't keep questioning it, but just thank God! (See Chapter 5).**
- 2. If you are not clear that you have made these steps, ask God to help you to make them before you go any further. Talk about it with the person who is helping you.**
- 3. Spend time thanking God that he has forgiven you for your past and doesn't hold any sins against you.**





# 3

## Baptism: Leaving Behind the Old Life

We have seen that the first steps you take when becoming a Christian are repentance and faith. It is interesting, though, that when some people asked the earliest Christian leaders what they had to do to be saved, they were told, '*repent and be baptised*' (Acts 2:38). This shows the importance of this next step - baptism - because it is the visible expression of your faith. The Bible also teaches that the **confession** of our faith is very important and baptism is the first very clear, public and visual declaration of your faith.

### The Importance of Confession

The Bible says that '*it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved*' (Romans 10:10). Notice what importance is placed on confession by linking it with faith. It is not enough to keep faith inside as a private belief. We must go public! One of the best things you can do when you first become a Christian is to tell someone what you have done - and get into the habit of doing this!

Obviously, the usual way of confessing our faith is by using our mouths. But being fully immersed in a pool of water is a very visual and public way of demonstrating our new faith!

### A Step of Obedience

As well as being a very unique and demonstrative way of going public, baptism can be for some the very first test of obedience. As a **disciple** of Jesus Christ, you are called to a life of obedience. Jesus is your Lord and Master. You are to '*do whatever he tells you*' (John 2:5). By requiring baptism right at the outset of our Christian life, our real willingness to do just this is tested. Of course, it is possible just to go through it as an empty ritual without a real attitude of faith and obedience, and this will achieve nothing other than getting you wet! But if you mean business, baptism is a very powerful act.

### The Old Has Gone!

So what does baptism actually mean?

We have already made clear that all of us were born sinners (Romans 3:23). From birth, we have within us a tendency towards sin – we do wrong things even when we are trying to do right. We can't help but do what we know is wrong (Romans 7:15-21). The true Christian way of dealing with this is not to try to beat it out of us, or to try to reform us or even just to try the best we can and say sorry when we go wrong. The Bible tells us that God deals

with it by killing us! (See Romans 6:6-7). When we are born again, our old life, with its sinful nature, is crucified – it is killed off and done away with. And then God raises us to life again with a new nature that is able to obey him.

Living the Christian life is not about trying to do the best we can; it is about trusting in what God has already done *for* us and *in* us. We have to do what the Bible calls ‘counting ourselves dead to sin’ (see Romans 6:11). In other words, believing what God says about you and starting to live as if it were so - because it is! This is basically the teaching of Chapter 6 in the book of Romans in the Bible and it is really important to understand if you are going to live a successful Christian life. It is what baptism represents. Baptism is a funeral service! It is the burial of your old life and the sign of your being raised to a new life.

## Start Living!

Imagine having a million pounds in your bank account and yet still living as if you had to struggle to make ends meet. Either you didn’t know you had it there or you weren’t counting on it – that is, you couldn’t really believe it. Once you know it is there - and you really believe it - you can decide to go and spend it. Once you realise and believe God has given you a new life, you can start to live it.

### Think About It!

- 1. Why is it important to tell others about your faith?***
- 2. Why can baptism be thought of as a test of your obedience?***
- 3. How do you think knowing that God has done away with your old self and given you a new heart can help you to live a new life?***



### Taking Steps

- 1. It is best if you are baptised as soon as you make a decision to follow Christ. If you haven’t already been baptised, approach the church leaders as soon as possible about being so. You don’t have to understand everything about it to do it.***
- 2. Make sure that you have read Romans 6. Pray to God to help you to understand it and talk with your helper about it if you are finding any part of it difficult to understand.***
- 3. Next time you are tempted to do what you know is wrong, remind yourself of your baptism and that it means you don’t have to follow that sin anymore. Resist the temptation by telling it that you are now a new person, under new management and that you don’t live that way any longer. Get into the habit of doing this. It may seem odd at first but you can do it because you are a new person!***





# 4

## Baptism: Power To Live the New Life

Baptism in water is one aspect of teaching about baptism. There is also the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Just as you were immersed in natural, physical water, so God wants to immerse you completely in the spiritual living water of his Spirit. The first shows you are a new person starting a new life; the second gives you the power that you will need to live this new life, and to tell others about it.

### Why is the Baptism in the Spirit So Important?

If you are a Christian, you already have the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit of God who first convicted you of your sin (John 16:7-11) and gave you new life (John 3:5-8). Without the Holy Spirit, you cannot be a Christian (Romans 8:9).

But the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a distinct experience from your conversion. It is when the Holy Spirit, who has conceived new life in you, comes and fills you through and through and immerses you or ‘clothes’ you in his power! Even Jesus as a man on earth needed this power for the work he had come to do (Luke 3:21-23; 4:14-21). The first disciples also needed this baptism to do what Jesus was calling them to do (Acts 1:4,5,8) and this gift and promise of the Spirit is offered to all Christians (Acts 2:38-9).

### What Does the Baptism in the Holy Spirit Do?

The effects of being clothed with the power of God are many. The following are some of them, which the Bible promises and many Christians have experienced. The baptism in the Holy Spirit:

- makes Jesus more real to you (John 15:26)
- opens up the Bible so it becomes a living Word to you (John 16:13)
- introduces you to a way of life led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14)
- sets you free, especially to praise and worship God (2 Corinthians 3:17)
- fills you with God's love (Romans 5:5) and joy (Acts 13:52)
- empowers you to live the Christian life (Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:16)
- empowers you to serve God and to be a witness for him (Acts 1:8)
- helps you to pray (Romans 8:26)
- helps you to stay spiritually refreshed and be a source of refreshing for others (John 7:38)
- confirms that you are part of the body of Christ, the Church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)
- enables you to use gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

These won't all happen overnight, but the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gateway into a life lived by the power of the Spirit, where all these things are possible and can be experienced more and more.

## How Can I Be Baptised in the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is like the wind, that blows where it wants (John 3:8). We can't control him but we can put ourselves in the position where we come under his influence and power. It is a little like trying to get the sails of a yacht in the best position to catch the wind. So there is no prescribed formula or rigid method for receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit but there are some principles that can help get us ready to receive it.

Jesus' words to his disciples about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, where he compares it to living water, give us some clues. Read John 7:37-39:

- **Thirst** - we need to be thirsty for God, realising our need for him and eagerly desiring him (John 7:37).
- **Come** - start by thanking God and worshipping him (James 4:8a).
- **Ask** - God says if we ask he will give; expect to receive it (Luke 11:9-13).
- **Believe** - all promises of God are received by faith; believe you have received it and it will be yours (Mark 11:24).
- **Drink** - actively respond to the Holy Spirit as you begin to sense him, not letting barriers of fear, preconceptions or lots of questions in the mind hinder you (John 7:37).

## The Laying On Of Hands

Sometimes, we read in the Bible, the Holy Spirit was given directly without any human involvement (Acts 2:1-4). At other times, he was given as another Christian laid their hands on them and prayed (Acts 9:17; 8:17; 19:6). Be open to either way. The laying on of hands helps to open you up to receive from your fellow Christians, reminding us that we are together as one body in our experience of God and not just a number of isolated individuals.

## The Signs of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

When you have been baptised in the Holy Spirit, you know about it! It's a definite experience. Here are some things that generally happen:

### **Some Visible Demonstration of the Power of God** (Acts 10:45)

This may include falling over, shaking, or some other physical signs; or an overflow of emotion (weeping, laughing etc.). It may just involve feeling an inner 'surge' of the Spirit. We can't be definite and rigid about what may happen.

## **A Release in Praise** (Acts 10:46)

You find a desire to praise and worship God rising up within you and trying to break out and overflow. Don't hold it back. Even normally quiet and inhibited people can become very enthusiastic in praise when released in this way.

## **Speaking in Tongues** (Acts 10:46)

Speaking in tongues is when you speak in a language that you have not learned and that is unknown to you. It is speaking to God directly from your spirit and not your mind. Some people are afraid of it but there is no need to be. It is not a question of 'do I have to do it?' but 'can I do it?' When you are baptised in the Spirit, you can and should expect to. Don't let fear or anxiety rob you of any of God's gifts. Speaking in tongues helps you to build yourself up spiritually (Jude 20) and helps you to pray (Romans 8:26-27) and to praise God (Acts 2:11) when your own words are not enough.

## **Go On Being Filled**

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a one-off initiation. It is the entrance into the realm of the Spirit. But we need to go on being filled every day; not just getting a top-up at meetings, but drawing from the streams of living water within us every day. It is like driving a self-filling car that re-fills itself continually with petrol as it is driving along. What a great gift!



***Ephesians 5:18-21 shows you how you can go on being filled with the Holy Spirit.***

***Read it and note:***

- **Speaking** – it is important to speak out your faith in God's Word, to yourself and to others.
- **Singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord** - continually singing your praise and worship to God is key to being constantly filled.
- **Giving thanks** – filling your mouth with thanksgiving rather than grumbling is one of the best ways to stay full of the Spirit.
- **Submitting to others** – always be willing to receive help and instruction from others and be fully involved in the church. (See more about this in the second book, *A New Family*).

## **Think About It!**

- 1. What do you think might stop you from receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit? What are you going to do about these things?***
- 2. Why do you think you need such a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of your Christian life?***





# 5

## Living the New Life

We have said that the Christian life is a journey and that there is a pathway to follow. There are certain regular steps you need to take to walk this path. Or, to put it another way, you have been born again and, just as in our natural, physical lives there are certain things that we must do in order to grow, so there are essential things for us to do for our spiritual growth.

### Healthy Diet: Enjoying the Bible

The Word of God is our spiritual food by which we grow (Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2). Without it, we starve our spirit and will be spiritually weak. Reading it daily, with the help of the Holy Spirit, keeps us on the right path in our Christian journey (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:105). Here are just a few suggestions to get you started:

- Read long parts of it for enjoyment and ask someone about things you don't understand (See Acts 8:26-35).
- But also regularly read shorter passages that you can then chew over in your mind (we call this *meditating*), asking the Holy Spirit to help you understand (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:18).
- As well as meditating on these passages, pray through them, share with others what you learn and, most importantly, do what it says (Psalm 1:1-3; Matthew 7:24).

### Aerobic Exercise: Prayer

Someone has called prayer 'the Christian's vital breath'. It is as vital to our spirit as plenty of oxygen is to keeping us physically alive and well. Like breathing, it is something we do all the time, talking in our hearts to God throughout the day (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). But we also need times that we set aside especially to talk deeply with God (Mark 1:35; Matthew 6:6). Here are some basic things you should consider about prayer:

- Don't try to be religious or say the right thing; just talk to God like a father or a friend (Matthew 6:6; Romans 8:15-16).
- If you are ever worried about something, talk to God about it (Philippians 4:6).
- If you are ever aware that you have sinned and have a guilty conscience, go quickly to God to ask for his forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and then move on.
- Talk to God about the good things that are happening in your life as well – give thanks for them continually.

## Taking Steps: Getting Started

1. ***Set aside some time each day (about 15-30 minutes to begin with) in a place where you will be uninterrupted, to read your Bible and pray.***
2. ***Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you read.***
3. ***Read through a passage of the Bible each day until you've read through a whole book. (Ask your helper for a guide to Mark's Gospel or Colossians.)***
4. ***Whenever you come to a verse that strikes you, stop and read it again a few times, chew it over in your mind, and then pray about it. It may be:***
  - ***something to thank God for***
  - ***something to ask God about***
  - ***a promise to claim***
  - ***a command that you want to ask for help to obey.***
5. ***Spend the last five minutes praising God about all that you've read and thought about.***



## Family Life: Relating to Other Christians

When you were born again, you were born into a family. The Christian family is called the **church**. God never meant for us to live on our own (Genesis 2:18). A good Christian family will help us to grow up spiritually (Ephesians 4:15-16; 1 Peter 2:4-5). Being part of a Christian church that has mature godly leaders is essential for our protection, our provision of spiritual food and our growth (Hebrews 13:7,17).

Read more about this important aspect in the second book – *A New Family* - that accompanies this book.

## Out Into the World: Sharing Your Faith

Jesus says, if we are his disciples, then we must be willing to confess our faith in him before others (Luke 12:8-9), as we saw in our chapter about baptism. Often, this just means telling people what God has done for you (John 9:25; Luke 8:39). Telling other people about your faith can be a challenge, as not everyone will respond positively, but we are promised that the Holy Spirit will help us (Acts 1:8). The more we grow in our love for God, the more we will want to tell others about him (2 Corinthians 5:14).

## Think About It

1. *Imagine what would happen to your friendship with Jesus if you never read the Bible or prayed.*
2. *How do you think meditating on the Bible can help you to grow as a Christian?*
3. *What has been your experience of natural family life? How do you think life in a spiritual family might be similar and how might it be different?*



## Taking Steps

1. *If you are already going to a church regularly, ask about becoming a member and be prepared to get really involved in the family life of the church.*
2. *Read the follow-on book – A New Family – when you have finished this one.*
3. *Share your faith as soon as possible with at least one person (a family member or friend) and tell one of the Christians in the church how you got on.*
4. *Look for opportunities to tell others about your faith on a regular basis, and don't give up even if people don't seem to want to know.*



## Glossary

**Meditating** - this is not what most people think of as meditation, which is based on eastern ideas of emptying or focusing the mind. Instead, it is chewing over the words of the Bible in our mind, extracting every morsel of spiritual truth and insight from them.

**Church** – church is not about a building or an institution; church is the family or community of people who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord and who are born again. There is the Church which includes all believers everywhere, and there is the specific local church that you need to belong to.

## Notes

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# 6

## Seeing The Big Picture

So far, in these studies, we have focused mainly on you as an individual and your new life. But it is important to understand that God has a great plan and purpose for the whole world – a plan that you are a part of. It is important to see that your life fits into God’s grand design, or big picture. In order to do this, you will have to understand what God’s purpose is for us and for his world.

### Let’s Start at the Beginning

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, shows us that God created a world that was good (Genesis 1:21). He created man and woman in his image and told them to fill the earth with a people like himself, ruling the world on his behalf (Genesis 1:26-28). However, man and woman chose to disobey God and there were terrible consequences to bringing sin into the world (Romans 5:12). For example:

- Man and woman died spiritually on the inside (Genesis 2:17; Ephesians 2:1).
- They were separated from their God (Genesis 3:23-4).
- They came into conflict with each other - the beginning of the battle of the sexes! (Genesis 3:16)
- Families were in conflict and split by hatred (Genesis 4:8-10).
- Work that God had intended to be a joy became a toil and burden (Genesis 3:19).
- All kinds of moral evil, social disorder and political oppression resulted (Genesis 6:5-6).
- Even the natural environment was affected (Genesis 3:17-19).

But God did not give up on his original purpose to fill the earth with a people who were in relationship with him, ruled by him and reflecting his *glory*.

### A Quick History Lesson

God was not knocked off course by our rebellion. He called a man named Abraham and made a promise to him that he would fulfil his original purpose (to fill the earth with a people like himself) through *his* descendants (Genesis 17:1-8). Abraham’s descendants were the Jews, and God repeated his promise to the nation of Israel a number of times through what are called *covenants*.

God also allowed the Jewish people to become a kingdom and God uses this to teach us spiritual truths about how he wanted us to live in his spiritual *Kingdom* - both how to, and how not to! In many ways this is what the Old Testament is for. Their stories become warnings and examples for us (1 Corinthians 10:11). But it also points us to the one who

would totally reverse the consequences of Adam's disobedience. The Jews called him the *Messiah*, and we call him *Christ* - King Jesus.

## Christ and His Church

Many Jewish people did not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and the New Testament goes on to explain that the true descendants of Abraham are not those who are Jews by birth but spiritual descendants who have the same faith as Abraham (Romans 4:16-17). That's you and me. The church is now the true Israel.

It is through Christ and us, then, that he is going to fulfil his purpose of filling the earth with people like himself, and restoring the world to what he intended it to be. One day, Jesus is going to return to finish the job completely but he is working through us now so we can get on with it while we wait for his return. Our job is to work with Jesus, by the power of his Spirit, to advance his Kingdom through every part of our lives and this world.

## Understanding the Kingdom of God

We need to understand certain things about this Kingdom of God:

- It is not a geographical area or political realm but is made up of all those who, in their hearts, submit to Jesus as their Lord and King.
- It is spiritual (in the Holy Spirit) and life-changing (Romans 14:17).
- It is growing and one day will fill the whole earth (Matthew 13:31-32).
- It grows secretly through the influence of our lives - not by political power, media persuasion etc. (Matthew 13:33).
- It grows alongside the evil in this world and will often be opposed but can never be overcome (Matthew 13:24-30).

The great news is that you are now a citizen of this Kingdom and have a part to play in advancing that Kingdom in the world. God didn't just save you so that you could go to heaven; he saved you so that you could help bring heaven to earth! You are going to continue your relationship with God for all eternity but you can now be used by God to carry out his purpose while you are alive on this earth. This is the best kind of life to live – live it to the full!

### Think About It!

- 1. In what practical ways does the Kingdom need to come in your life?**
- 2. In what ways can we bring a Kingdom influence to our family, friends, neighbours, communities and to society?**
- 3. How should knowing the Kingdom is going to fill the whole earth in the future affect how we live now?**



## Taking Steps: Playing Our Part

1. **Keep submitting your life to Jesus - the Kingdom must come practically in your life first.**
2. **Stay full of the Holy Spirit.**
3. **Influence the world for good and don't let the world influence you.**
4. **Stay full of hope - you are part of a Kingdom that is growing.**
5. **Find out what God has called you to do to help make the earth more like heaven and give yourself to it faithfully.**
6. **Be part of a church that is seeking God's Kingdom above all things.**
7. **Tell people about Jesus and his Kingdom.**



## Glossary

**Glory** – what God is like in all his brilliance and beauty.

**Covenant** – a binding agreement where God lays down the conditions. God has covenanted to be our God and when we become disciples of Christ we are in a covenant with him, to trust and obey him in everything.

**Kingdom of God** – not a geographical place or political power but God's rule over people's hearts and lives and, through such a people, to the whole world.

**Messiah/Christ** – God's specially chosen and anointed King who rescues us and rules over his kingdom.



### Key Verse:

***"For the Kingdom of God is...righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."***  
***(Rom. 14:17).***

## Notes

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# Notes

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We strongly recommend that you read the companion booklet  
**a new family**

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