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WHAT NOW?

A GUIDE TO
FIRST STEPS AS A
FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED ME, SO HAVE I LOVED YOU. NOW REMAIN IN MY LOVE. IF YOU KEEP MY COMMANDS, YOU WILL REMAIN IN MY LOVE, JUST AS I HAVE KEPT MY FATHER'S COMMANDS AND REMAIN IN HIS LOVE. I HAVE TOLD YOU THIS SO THAT MY JOY MAY BE IN YOU AND THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE COMPLETE.

JOHN 15:9-11

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CELEBRATION

Your journey has begun. By placing your trust in Christ, you have made life's most important decision. We're so excited and celebrate with you.

As you begin, it's important to remember that although it's your journey, you don't travel alone. As Christ-followers, we are in this together, celebrating what God has done and is doing in our lives.

You might have family members, friends or coworkers who also follow Christ. They'll want to know about your faith decision. Be sure to tell them so they can join in the celebration.

Welcome to Door Creek Church. We look forward to journeying with you.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

Now that you've placed your trust in Christ, you might be wondering: What just happened? There are many ways to describe the step you've taken, such as, "I trusted in Christ alone for my salvation" or "I committed my life to Christ" or "I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior."

In the last statement, the verb received is helpful in understanding what just happened. In receiving Christ, you've received:

THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE

Eternal life can't be earned by doing good deeds—it's a free gift from God that can't be taken away. It means more than living forever. It means you've entered into a relationship with God and you can know Him personally (John 17:3).

THE HOLY SPIRIT

When you believed the gospel, you received the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit is a person—the third person of the Trinity along with God the Father and Jesus, His Son. The Holy Spirit now lives in you, and has begun His work of changing you to become more like Christ.

A NEW IDENTITY

When you placed your faith in Christ, you were adopted into God's family (John 1:12). This means you can now relate to God as children relate to loving parents (Romans 8:15).

A NEW FAMILY

None of us were intended to walk this journey alone. You are now part of a new family. You have 'brothers' and 'sisters' who are also Christ-followers, and they can help you along your way (Hebrews 10:24-25).

You have received these gifts from a gracious God because of your decision to become a Christ-follower. God gives you these gifts because He loves you and He wants to equip you for your journey.

READING YOUR BIBLE

Reading the Bible helps us to know God better. It's through Scripture that we learn about the overarching story of God's rescue plan for humanity. Through the various books of the Bible, we learn more about who God is, who we are and what He desires for our lives.

Also, following Christ can be challenging at times, and we can sometimes find ourselves stuck or off course. One of the ways God directs us and helps us get back on track is through the Bible.

As you read your Bible, you'll see it was written to people from a different time and culture. In fact, the Bible is not written to us, but it is written for us. Although it was written centuries ago, God still uses it to guide, challenge and inspire us.

It can be intimidating that the Bible is such a big book. With most books, you start at the beginning and read to the end. That may not be the best way to read the Bible—at least not at first. Here are a few good places to start:

- 1. Discover who Jesus is:** Read the Gospel of John
- 2. Discover how to pray and talk to God:** Read Psalms
- 3. Discover God's wisdom:** Read Proverbs
- 4. Discover how being a Christ-follower affects how you live your life:** Read Colossians

Try setting aside some time each day—you might want to start with 10 or 15 minutes.

READ A CHAPTER.

Read it slowly. Note different phrases or paragraphs that stand out to you.

THINK IT THROUGH.

What is the passage about? Pay special attention to verbs, metaphors, repeated words, comparisons and contrasts.

APPLY IT.

How might this passage apply to you personally?

PRAY.

Ask God to help you understand and apply what you're reading.

Ultimately, reading the Bible is about listening to what God is saying to you. It might not be easy at first, but you'll get the hang of it over time. Following Jesus isn't about trying harder, it is about training better.

Reading your Bible on a regular basis will help you grow as a Christ-follower.

PRAYER

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is simply talking with God. It's a conversation. You share your concerns, what you're thankful for and what you need. Over time, prayer becomes a natural part of your relationship with God. Since each one of us is unique, we all need to find what fits.

At first, your prayer time might feel one-sided. You might wonder if anyone is really listening. This is where faith comes in. Prayer requires faith to believe that God is truly listening.

WHY PRAY?

We pray so we can know God better—to understand who He is and what matters to Him. You can't develop a relationship without conversation, and prayer is conversation with God. Prayer might not change your immediate situation, but—over time—prayer will change you and help you grow as a Christ-follower.

HOW DO I PRAY?

Be genuine and authentic. Don't be overly concerned about the words you use, the posture you take or the places you pray. God is more concerned about your heart and your authenticity. Jesus gave instructions on prayer in Matthew 6:5-14. The prayer used in verses 9-13 is known as the "Our Father" or "The Lord's Prayer." Read these verses and notice the themes of praise, confession, thanksgiving and petition. It might be helpful to incorporate these into your prayers.

NEXT STEPS

CONNECTING TO COMMUNITY

Following Jesus can be challenging at times. You'll be better prepared to meet those challenges if you're engaged in a relationship with other Christ-followers. God designed us to be in community and to care for one another.

There are many ways to connect with others at Door Creek Church. A couple good places to begin:

Life groups. Life groups consist of 8 to 16 people who meet regularly to discuss the previous Sunday's sermon and to reflect on how it applies to their lives. Find a life group at doorcreekchurch.org/groups.

Exploring Christianity (Alpha I). Have you ever wondered is there more to life than this? No matter what your background is, or your views on Christianity, this is the place to come and investigate the existence of God and the basics of Christianity.

CONNECTING TO SERVE

Volunteering is another way to engage with other Christ-followers, develop relationships and serve at Door Creek Church or in our surrounding communities. To learn more, click on the 'Serve' tab at doorcreekchurch.org.

APPENDIX A

GRACE, FAITH, WORKS

Grace is at the very heart of the Good News. It's a free gift from God, something that is not earned or deserved, but is ours through faith in Christ. Grace can be a difficult concept to grasp because we live in a performance-based world. Grace is not performance-based, it's a free gift.

Your new relationship with Christ is because of your **trust** in Him, not because you've done some good deeds (or **works**). You are certainly encouraged to do good deeds, but those good deeds don't form the foundation of your new relationship with Christ. That relationship is founded on faith—and faith alone.

Faith and works are not exclusive, they go hand-in-hand. The motivation to do good works grows out of our love for Christ—the one whose good work on the cross rescued us.

This process is often misunderstood in this way: *I obey Him and do good works so that He'll love and accept me. Rather, we do good works because He accepts us.*

In contrast, God's unconditional love for you can be summed up this way: God can't love you any more than He does right now and He chooses not to love you any less. There's nothing you could do that would cause God to love you less. And there's nothing you could do more for God to love you more. His love is perfect and never calibrated to our performance.

APPENDIX B

MISCONCEPTIONS

Christ-followers sometimes have misconceptions about what to expect on their journey. Here are a few common ones and why they aren't true:

MYTH 1: All my problems will go away.

In John 16:33, we read that "In this world you will have trouble," meaning Christ-followers are not exempt from trouble or hardship. Your struggles serve a purpose—without them you run the risk of becoming self-sufficient, relying on your own abilities and forgetting to rely on Christ. Our struggles remind us that we're not ultimately in control of our lives, and they should reorient us toward Christ.

MYTH 2: God will answer all my prayers.

Sometimes, God will answer your prayers just as you've asked. But more often, God will answer your prayers in a different way and time. And sometimes it will seem that God is not answering your prayers at all. At times like this, you can rest assured that God knows what you need, when you need it and what's best for you.

MYTH 3: God will change me into the person He wants me to be right away.

Philippians 1:6 reminds us that God's good work is a process that isn't completed in this world. Expect God, through His Word and Holy Spirit, and your relationship with others, to continue this good work so that one day we will be like Jesus.

MYTH 4: I'll be free from the temptation to do things that I know are wrong.

Being a Christ-follower doesn't mean that you are free from temptation. The Bible is full of stories of people who loved God but disobeyed Him. Only one man lived without sin: Jesus. We all stumble and fall, but God is compassionate and forgiving. He knows your heart and your intentions. He forgives those who are truly sorry for their mistakes. And because you're not on this journey alone, your fellow travelers will help pick you up and get you back on your feet.

MYTH 5: I will know God's will for my life.

God's will is not always obvious. You will face many crossroads where one path seems just as good and honorable as the other one. Sometimes God might want you to wait, and waiting can be difficult. God might want you to pray, read your Bible and seek the counsel of other Christ-followers. As you seek God's will for your life, remember what's important— to love God, love others and walk humbly.

MYTH 6: I have to fit neatly into a Christian box.

The Bible has no plan for "cookie cutter" Christians. You are free to have your own personality, profession and political views. God made you unique and He delights in it. Christ-followers have varying beliefs on many issues, but we all share a common desire to honor God with our lives. Door Creek Church desires to focus on the gospel that unites us, rather than issues that divide us. Here, you won't be told what to think, but encouraged in how to think biblically.

APPENDIX C

Additional Resources

READ:

LIFE

- *Now That I'm a Christian* (Patton)
- *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Yancey)
- *Praying the Bible* (Whitney)

READING THE BIBLE

- *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Fee & Stewart)
- *Eat this Book* (Peterson)

PRAYER

- *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* (Yancey)
- *A Praying Life: Connecting With God In A Distracting World* (Miller)

GOD & CHRISTIANITY

- *The Reason for God* (Keller)
- *The Case for Christ* (Strobel)
- reasonablefaith.org

WATCH:

All Door Creek Church messages can be found at doorcreekchurch.org/messages.



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1 CHURCH | 3 LOCATIONS

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