

* NCCB COLLECTION *

FIRST STEPS

30 DAY DEVOTIONAL

JOHN 3:16

16' FOR THIS IS HOW MUCH GOD LOVED THE WORLD—HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY, UNIQUE SON AS A GIFT. SO NOW EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NEVER PERISH BUT EXPERIENCE EVERLASTING LIFE.

**NC
CB**

* LET THE GREAT JOURNEY BEGIN *



**WE WANT TO TAKE
THIS MOMENT TO**

*** ————— SAY A ————— ***

**MASSIVE
WELCOME!**

**WE HOPE THAT YOU HAVE HAD A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE,
AND WE ARE SO GLAD THAT YOU COULD JOIN US.**

We are looking forward to getting to know you, and see you grow in this church family. One thing we are certain of; God has a plan and a purpose for you, and it would be an enormous privilege for us to see the fullness of His promises realised in your life.

We as a church would love to journey with you, so we have put together this next 31 day guide to help you walk out this new and exciting road ahead with Jesus.

Come with us, we'll do you good!

Lots of Love Ash & Nadine

Jesus Loves You

A BIG CONGRATULATIONS ON MAKING A DECISION TO FOLLOW JESUS. WE BELIEVE THAT THE JOURNEY OF GETTING TO KNOW JESUS IS BEST DONE IN COMMUNITY. YOU PROBABLY HAVE MANY QUESTIONS, THAT'S WHY WE'VE DEVELOPED THIS 31-DAY GUIDE TO HELP YOU GROW IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, AND ALSO ——— TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR PLACE IN CHURCH. ———

THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING



TO BE MADE WHOLE, OR TO BE
SAVED IS TO SUBMIT TO GOD AND
HIS PLAN AND PURPOSE FOR OUR
LIVES. IT MEANS TURNING FROM
OUR OLD WAYS AND TURNING
TO JESUS, TO ASK HIM FOR
FORGIVENESS FROM OUR SINS
AND TO RECEIVE NEW LIFE IN HIM.

Salvation is God's free gift



ROMANS 10:9 SAYS THAT 'IF YOU DECLARE WITH YOUR MOUTH, "JESUS IS LORD" AND BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, YOU WILL BE SAVED.'

SALVATION IS GOD'S FREE GIFT TO US AND WE BECOME HIS CHILDREN. IT IS AN IRREVOCABLE ACCEPTANCE INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD AND AN EMPOWERMENT TO LIVE LIFE WHOLLY AND FULLY WITH THE PURPOSE OF REFLECTING GOD TO THE REST OF HIS CREATION.

IF YOU ARE NOT SURE WHETHER YOU ARE RIGHT WITH GOD OR YOU KNOW IN FACT THAT YOU NEED JESUS IN YOUR LIFE, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO FOLLOW HIM RIGHT NOW BY PRAYING A PRAYER OF SURRENDER TO JESUS.

DEAR JESUS, I'M PRAYING THIS PRAYER BECAUSE I KNOW THAT I HAVE DONE WRONG BY LIVING WITHOUT YOU. I AM SORRY AND I TRUST THAT YOU WILL FORGIVE ME. I ACCEPT YOUR LOVE AND GRACE FOR ME AND ASK THAT YOU WOULD BE MY LORD. HELP ME BELIEVE IN YOU AND LOVE YOU EVERY DAY, AND HELP ME TO SHOW THE WORLD WHAT YOU ARE LIKE AND HOW GREAT YOUR LOVE IS. IN JESUS NAME. AMEN.

CONGRATULATIONS

TO PRAY THESE WORDS WITH A SURRENDERED HEART TO JESUS

IS THE
BEGINNING
OF THE MOST
IMPORTANT
VOYAGE YOU
WILL EVER
EMBARK ON:

— THE —
JOURNEY OF
FOLLOWING
JESUS.



*Please
Take the
Time*

TO TELL SOMEONE

ABOUT YOUR DECISION TO FOLLOW
JESUS. WE ALL NEED PEOPLE ALONG
THIS FAITH JOURNEY. WHO CAN YOU
TALK TO, ASK QUESTIONS AND SHARE
WHAT GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIFE?



*** — HOW TO USE — *** **THIS BOOK**

- 1** THERE ARE 30 SECTIONS OR 'DAYS' IN TOTAL.
TRY TO DO ONE EVERY DAY.
- 2** DAYS 1 TO 10 WILL REVEAL WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE.
- 3** DAYS 11 TO 31 WILL - IN LIGHT OF DAYS 1 TO 10 - GUIDE
YOU IN LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.
- 4** YOU WILL NEED AN EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND BIBLE,
AND 5 TO 15 MINUTES EACH DAY.

ENJOY!



THIRTY



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DEVOTIONS



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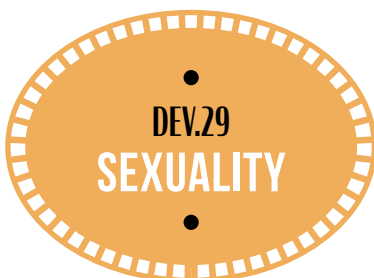
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DAY 1 WHO IS GOD?

DONE!

30 DAY DEVOTIONAL



The moon revolves around the earth, but the earth revolves around the sun. In our own lives, we're all tempted to shrink God to moon-size, where He revolves around us. But the Bible paints a different picture of God: a God so bright and glorious that He has a way of becoming the centre of our existence, not just a religious compartment on the side. Although the world of the Bible and our modern world are totally different, the good news is that the God the Bible describes has not changed at all. All the accumulative descriptions of God in the Bible serve as a compass of unchanging reality as we seek to find who God is. Let's read one person's encounter with Him.

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD IS REALLY LIKE THE GOD DESCRIBED HERE?

If your life was compared to the earth, is God more like a moon or a sun to you? Take the time to write down areas in your life that you need to give over to God. This is the first step towards a life that revolves around God as the sun, and not the other way round.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

[Isaiah 40:12-40](#),
[Psalm 103](#).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

1 It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. 2 Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 They were calling out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!" 4 Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. 5 Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven." 8 Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me." Isaiah 6:1-8

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

What is God like? We see He is: **1)** The eternal King (v1). Though earthly kings may come and go, God remains on His throne. **2)** High and exalted (v2). He is incredibly great. **3)** Holy (v3). This means that He is absolutely pure and totally unique. **4)** LORD (v3). The Hebrew word is 'Shaddai' which means the one who is powerful to act on behalf of those who desperately call out to Him. **5)** Creator (v3). He created the whole universe. **6)** Glorious (v3). God's glory is the magnificent radiance of His perfect character. His glory fills the universe. How should we respond in His presence? When we truly encounter Him, we worship Him like these angels do (v3), tremble in awe (v4), own up to our sinfulness (v5), receive His forgiveness and purifying touch (v7) and find ways to tell others about how amazing He is (v8).



WHAT IS MY
NEXT STEP?

WHAT DO YOU
THINK GOD IS
LIKE?

How does this story of Jesus change or challenge your view of God? It's time to understand your new identity in Christ. Accept His love today, allow Him to love you just the way you are.

WANT TO READ
FURTHER?

2 Corinthians 5:17,
Philippians 3:8-11.

The questions we like to ask about God are endless: Is God real? Is what we know about Him really true? What does He have to do with my life?

The Bible may not answer every question about God and will often lead us to ask more, but one of the areas in which the Bible is quite definite, is the answer to the question: who is Jesus?

Jesus commends the Apostle Peter's confession of Him as 'the Messiah, the Son of the Living God' (Matthew 16:16), because Jesus knew that who He is - and could be to us - has the power to change our lives. Jesus is so unique because two worlds collide in Him: Heaven and Earth, the Divine and the human.

Yes, His Name is the name above all names, and His star-breathing, storm-calming, miracle-working power is second to none. Yet, He is also the human Jesus, the personal friend who knows what we are going through and cares about us. That's why the Bible also calls Him 'Emmanuel', God with us.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels and demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. Romans 8:38

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

So does Jesus care about you? Yes He does! How do we know this? Often we disqualify ourselves from God's love because of our history, our failures and shortcomings. Sin has separated us from God and we can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. So how can we accept what we have not earned? The Bible says that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the Love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38). And to accept God's love is to trust His patient, forgiving and gracious stance towards us. Only He has the power to free us from guilt, shame and condemnation to give us a life of wholeness. All we have to do is turn to Him.

***TOMORROW
WE SEE
HOW CHRIST
RESCUES US***

**BUT TODAY
LET'S THINK ABOUT
WHAT HE RESCUES
US FROM.**



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

In what ways have you seen sin hurt people?

How do you feel about being guilty of sin before a holy God? Take some time to pray, and present to God the areas in your life that you know are in rebellion to His Holiness.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

To understand Judgement Day, see Romans 2:5 and Revelations 20:11-15. Read Psalm 2 for a prophecy about Jesus written hundreds of years before he was born that highlights his response to our rebellion.

Tomorrow we see how Christ rescues us, but today let's think about what he rescues us from. Have you ever seen how naughty little children can be? Have you ever asked, 'Who taught this kid to disobey its parents? To lie? To steal?' The Bible tells us that it is our sinful, rebellious hearts that lead us astray. The word sin means 'to miss the goal'. God created us to live our lives toward the goal of reflecting his love and holiness in the world. But left to our own devices, we always seem to miss the goal.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

10 As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous—not even one. 11 No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. 12 All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one." 13 "Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies." "Snake venom drips from their lips." 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "They rush to commit murder. 16 Destruction and misery always follow them. 17 They don't know where to find peace." 18 "They have no fear of God at all." 19 Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. 20 For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. Romans 3:10-20.

23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Romans 3:23.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

God explores deeper than our achievements, looks and personalities. He sees minds that don't understand him (v10). He sees hearts that have turned away (v12). He hears words that are dishonest and hurtful (v13,14). He sees self-inflicted pain (v16). He observes that there is no peace or fear of God in us (v17,18).

How does God feel about our sin? He judges us according to his perfect law, which stands for his own holiness (v19). This law silences our excuses and leaves us standing guilty before him (v20). All of us have sinned, falling short of God's perfect standard (v23).

Is God cruel to judge our sin? Injustice happens when judges let the guilty off or treat people discriminately. God makes sure that justice happens. He lets no-one get away from their deserved punishment. He judges according to unchanging laws that are based on his unchanging holiness. To do anything else would be being unjust.

DEV 4

THE CROSS

In World War 2 a group of scientists were constructing the atomic bomb. One of the mechanics dropped a spanner into the radioactive device. Knowing that this would cause the bomb to explode in seconds, one of the scientists reached in and grabbed the spanner. He saved the lives of all, but lost his own life because of radiation exposure. It's a story that echoes the message of the cross, where Jesus died for our sins so we wouldn't have to.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26 A sign announced the charge against him. It read, "The King of the Jews." 27 Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 29 The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Ha! Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. 30 Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!"

31 The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! 32 Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!" Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him. 33 At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. 34 Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" 35 Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. 36 One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. "Wait!" he said. "Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down!" 37 Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, "This man truly was the Son of God!" Mark 15:25-39

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

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WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HAVE YOU PUT YOUR FAITH IN JESUS' DEATH AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS?

Have you experienced the fullness of His resurrection? Take this moment to recognize that because of the cross you now live a guiltless life, forgiven, confident that you are someone new who can walk closely with God.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Hebrews 10:19-22 and Isaiah 53 (a remarkable prophecy about the suffering of the coming Messiah).

A SCIENTIST AND A * — BELIEVER — *

TONY BUNN

I WAS BORN WITH AN ENQUIRING MIND, AND IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT FOR THE PAST 40 YEARS I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH. MY EARLY CHURCH EXPERIENCES IN A CHURCH SCHOOL LEFT ME UNABLE TO GET ANY SENSE OF THAT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP THAT MANY PEOPLE SPEAK OF. SINCE GOD IS IMMEASURABLE, SCIENCE CANNOT PROVE OR DISPROVE HIS EXISTENCE, AND SO FOR MUCH OF MY LIFE I SAT ON THE AGNOSTIC FENCE OF UNCERTAINTY.

My daughter invited my wife and I to church. I was amazed by the quality of the teachings. I was struck by the spiritual passion in the people. Shortly thereafter, a person of humble faith asked me a simple question: 'So what's your God story? Have you been saved?' 'Not sure I have a God story,' I said, 'and well, yes ... I think I'm saved but how does one really know?' She replied, 'If you're saved you know - your life starts to change in profound ways.'

This was my wakeup call. I started to read books like The Bible, Tim Keller's The Reason for God, and Francis Collins' The language of God - books that show the rational substructure of Christian faith. All the while there was this growing realisation that there is indeed another reality - the reality of Jesus Christ, who invites me to revel in both his masterful creation as a scientist and in friendship with himself as a follower.



A young girl wanted to get closer to God. One night God gave her a dream. In the dream she wanted to climb a high cliff to get to God at the top. She tried and tried but could not get to the top. Tired and sad, she was ready to give up and climb down. Then she noticed a trampoline at the bottom of the cliff. She let go and, bouncing off the trampoline, landed at the very top with God. How do we get close to God? Let go. And jump.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. 4 And you know the way to where I am going." 5 "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. 7 If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!" 8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." 9 Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? John 14:1-9

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

We can't get to God by climbing the cliff of our own moral and religious efforts. Jesus came to set us free from the lie that we can save ourselves. We can only get to God through faith in Jesus and His death for our sins (v6)

Why are there so many world religions? Answer: They are all attempts to reach God through effort. Buddhism has the Eightfold Path. Islam has the Five Laws. Hinduism has Karma. Judaism has the Torah. Although these religions offer elements of truth and beauty that should be cherished, they wrongly assume that we can earn our way to God. they all hold out a 'ladder' to God.

What makes Christianity unique? Answer: Although religion is humanity's attempt to reach God, Christianity is God's attempt to reach humanity. Since we can't get to Him through our efforts, He comes to us as we trust His undeserved grace! Christ is a kind of 'trampoline' of grace. As we trust in Christ we can overcome troubled hearts (v1), the fear of death (v3), and the ignorance of who God really is (v7). In Jesus alone we find the way, the truth, real life, and a personal relationship with God as our Father (v6). What amazing grace!

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HAVE YOU STOPPED TRUSTING IN YOUR OWN ABILITY TO EARN GOD'S ACCEPTANCE?

Do you now trust in the trampoline of Jesus alone, and His underserved grace, for your acceptance with God? Is anything stopping you from jumping? You are not alone on this new journey of faith, so make Sunday gatherings a priority in your life and see what God will do in you and through you as you impact other people around you.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Ephesians 2:8-10 and Romans 10:2-4 to see how religion and good works can't save us, but God's grace can.

A NEW FAMILY

SAINESAN NAIKER

**I GREW UP THE YOUNGEST OF 5 IN
A FAMILY OF PRACTICING HINDUS.
MY ALCOHOLIC, VIOLENT FATHER
FILLED OUR LIVES WITH ANXIETY, UNTIL
MY PARENTS DIVORCED WHEN I WAS 12.**

I practiced Hinduism because I was told to by my parents. Then my eldest sister came to faith in Christ. I admit I was curious. My second eldest sister, however, was very upset – until she visited Church with a friend. There she said she felt God’s presence tangibly, and sensed him saying, “I am your Father”.

So when I went to university to study, I decided to explore the God my 2 sisters had come to know. To be honest, I wasn’t immediately sold. After attending church for 6 months I still struggled to comprehend the simplicity of what I was hearing. How could I, who was so broken and fallen according to the Bible, receive something I did not deserve? Surely God’s acceptance must be earned by good deeds and religious devotion? Eventually I took God at his offer of grace. I let down my guard, and invited him to do what he wanted. Very quickly he stepped into my life, and settled my heart. I’ve never looked back.

Remarkably, while this was happening to me, a similar thing was taking place in my mother’s heart! She also came to know God as her Father. Inspired by the power of God to change lives, I started to pray for my 3rd eldest sister specifically. Within two weeks, she phoned and asked me what Bible she should buy, because she had a growing realization that the God of the Bible is the real one. Two months later I watched in astonishment as she was baptized!

So, God has changed my biological family. But one of the joys is that I have also found a spiritual family. The support and guidance that I have received, and have started to now give to others, has deeply enriched my life. Knowing that God is a God of love and power, who answers prayer, fills me with enthusiasm for the future.



A Spanish dad wanted to make peace with his runaway son in Madrid. He took out an ad in the El Liberal newspaper: ‘Paco, meet me at Hotel Montana as noon, Tuesday. All is forgiven. Papa.’ Paco is a common name in Spain, and when the father went to the hotel he found 800 young men named Paco waiting for their fathers. Deep down inside we all long for a home where we are loved without conditions. Let’s look at God’s offer of grace to us:

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. 12 The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. 13 “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. 14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. 15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. 16 The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. 17 “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”” 20 “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ 22 “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Luke 15:11-22

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Sin separates us from the God who loves us (v13). In the end it hurts us as much as it hurts God (v14,15). It’s never too late to come home though. If we come to our senses, turn from our sin and put our trust in God (v17-20), then we’ll be welcomed with compassion, open arms, forgiveness, joy and blessing (v20-25). This story is a stunning picture of salvation and the relationship God desires to have with us. Here’s another story. a father, returning from the shop, caught his little girl with sand in her mouth. He tried threatening and begging her to spit it out but she refused, since she liked the taste so much. He then held out the ice-cream he had bought her and she spat out the sand immediately. When God tells us to leave sin and follow Him it’s not because He wants to take away our fun. It’s because He has something much better for us. He offers us forgiveness, eternal life and a personal relationship with him.

WHAT CAN I DO?

FROM THE STORY IN LUKE, HOW IS GOD DIFFERENT TO YOUR EARTHLY FATHER?

Is there any sin or pain in your life that keeps you from coming home to God? Start being intentional in walking a life of freedom, rejecting the lie that your past cannot be forgiven.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Ephesians 2:1-10 for more insight into what we are saved from, and what we are saved into..

DEV.7
RESURRECTION

DONE!

30 DAY DEVOTIONAL



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

WHAT DOES THE RESURRECTION MEAN TO YOU?

Have you been water baptized? Baptism is an outward declaration of your inward decision to follow Jesus. It is a powerful opportunity to externally model the Spiritual resurrection from death into life in Christ Jesus. Find out more about baptism by hopping onto www.nccb.co.za and clicking on 'Next Steps'.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See [1 Corinthians 15:12-22](#). Read [Revelation 1:9-19](#) to see the risen One face-to-face.

Has somebody close to you died? If so, then you'd know how depressing and final death is.

In fact, there's one thing we can be sure of - we are all going to die. When Jesus' friends saw Him die a terrible death, they were devastated. That's because they forgot He had made a promise to come back. Have you ever wondered if Jesus is still alive, if Christianity is true, and if there is life after death? One spectacular event in history answers all your questions.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

1 Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. 2 Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. 3 His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. 4 The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. 5 Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. 7 And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you." 8 The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. 9 And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there." Matthew 29:1-10

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

What does the resurrection mean to us? It means Jesus really is God. That's why the women worshipped Him (v9). That's why they were bold enough to tell everyone (v10). It means Christianity is true. Josh McDowell, an atheist, once tried to prove that the resurrection of Jesus didn't happen, but after looking at the historical evidence, he was totally convinced that it actually did happen. He became a Christian and wrote a best-selling book 'The Resurrection Factor' that proves the resurrection as a fact of history. It means we can be sure about eternal life. In the same way Jesus lived beyond death, He promises we will be given eternal life if we trust in Him. It means Jesus is alive. This sets Jesus apart from all the founders of other religions. Only He has no grave! It means we can be blessed. Jesus said to a witness of His resurrection, 'Because you've seen me you've believed; but blessed are those who have not seen me - and yet have believed.' (John 20:29)

GETTING BAPTISED IN WATER IS THE FIRST STEP OF OBEDIENCE FOR A PERSON WHO HAS COMMITTED HIS/HER LIFE TO CHRIST.

HERE IS WHY: JESUS AND THE EARLY CHURCH LEADERS COMMANDED THAT ALL BELIEVERS MUST BE BAPTISED IN WATER AS A FORM OF INITIATION INTO THE ADVENTURE OF FOLLOWING CHRIST. SEE MATTHEW 28:19, ACTS 2:37-38, ACTS 10:48. WE DO NOT GET BAPTISED BECAUSE WE FEEL LIKE IT, BUT BECAUSE WE TAKE CHRIST'S LEADERSHIP SERIOUSLY.

WHAT BAPTISM MEANS:

The baptism waters are like a press release. Although choosing to follow Christ is a deeply personal decision, it is not a private matter. Jesus instructed us to go public with our choice (Mark 8:38). Baptism is an outward sign to all, of what has already happened on the inside. *
The baptism waters are like a bath. In Acts 22:16, Paul was "baptised, washing away his sins". It depicts spiritual cleansing from the guilt of sin.*
The baptism waters are like a graveyard. Romans 6:4 says that "we were buried with Christ in baptism". Baptism reflects an inward decision to die to "the old you" who rejected and ignored Christ's leadership over your life. Baptism is a break from your sinful past. * The baptism

waters are like a maternity ward. Baptism also reflects how we are united with Christ in his resurrection. We have a new life. "If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

WHAT ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM/CHRISTENING?

Infant baptism, though often being special to the parents, is a religious tradition that is simply not mentioned in the Bible. Biblical baptism always happens to a person who understands what is going on, since they have just freshly repented of their sins and put their trust in Jesus.

GETTING BAPTISED

Once you received Jesus as Lord and Saviour, then speak to your Connect Group leader or one of our Pastors about getting baptised. It can happen anywhere, any time. And any Christian can baptise you. It is also a great opportunity to invite friends and family.

**WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?****HAVE YOU DECIDED TO FOLLOW JESUS? IF NOT, WHY NOT?**

Which of the six aspects of following Jesus challenges you most? We have many different courses to choose from that will better your understanding of following Jesus. These courses run throughout the year, so please hop onto www.nccb.co.za and click on 'Next Steps'

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See [Luke 5:1-11](#) for the longer version of some of this story.

'Just do it!' This is Nike's motto, but it also describes the pulse of our generation. Today, millions of people call themselves Christians but don't 'just do it'.

They don't really seek after and obey the God they claim to believe in. The earliest Christians didn't call themselves Christians, but rather they were called disciples, or followers of Jesus. Let's see some people who had a unique opportunity to follow Him and just did it.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

17 From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." 18 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. 19 Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" 20 And they left their nets at once and followed him. 21 A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. 22 They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind. 23 Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. Matthew 4:17-23

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

It means six things: **1)** Get stunned by His wisdom and strength. Why else would these people have followed Him so eagerly (v20)? Jesus has the wisdom and strength we need to live life at it best. **2)** Start a personal relationship with Him. This event was the beginning of an eternity of friendship with Jesus for these people. Jesus wants to be our friend too. **3)** Copy his example. Later on people commented on how much these men reflected Jesus in their lives (see Acts 4:13). Jesus wants to, and is able to, make us more like Him too. **4)** Believe and obey His teachings. These disciples took His teachings seriously. It affected how they lived (v17-23). Jesus' teaching can also lead us to think properly and live passionately. **5)** Join Him on His mission to reach people. He promised Peter and Andrew He would use them to change other people's lives (v19). That promise applies to us too. **6)** Give Him your highest loyalty. They left their jobs and families at once (v22). Whatever we give up is nothing compared to what we gain. The most important decision we can make is to 'just do it' and follow Him.



DEV.9

PAYING THE PRICE

In April 1999 a teenager pointed a gun at 17 year old Cassie. ‘Do you believe in God?’ he asked. ‘Yes, I believe in Jesus,’ were the last words she ever said. At her funeral 75 of her friends became Christians. They could see her faith was real enough to die for and they wanted something that meaningful for themselves. If you had a gun to your head and were asked the same question, what would you say?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

18 One day Jesus left the crowds to pray alone. Only his disciples were with him, and he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” 19 “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other ancient prophets risen from the dead.” 20 Then he asked them, “But who do you say I am?” Peter replied, “You are the Messiah sent from God!” 21 Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone who he was. 22 “The Son of Man must suffer many terrible things,” he said. “He will be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead.” 23 Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. 24 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 25 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? 26 If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels. Luke 9:18-26

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

When we see, like Peter and Cassie did, who Jesus really is (v20), we will be willing to pay a price to follow him. Like Jesus, our role model and leader, we may even be killed for our faith (v22). Following him means denying ourselves and carrying our cross (v23). This means things won’t always be cosy and easy. Pain, discomfort and unpopularity may result from being obedient to him. We can’t keep anything in this life forever (v24). It’s pointless trying to gain what this world offers, but losing our souls in the process (v25). At Judgement Day our devotion to Jesus will be greatly rewarded. Knowing him makes it impossible to be ashamed of him (v26). Jim Eliot knew these truths well. He was murdered while trying to share his faith with man-eating South American Indians. His grieving wife found his diary, in which he had written this line: ‘He is no fool to lose what he cannot keep to gain what he can never lose.’ She was so inspired by his example that she led a mission to the same men who had killed her husband - and led them to Christ!

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

DO YOU HAVE A REVELATION OF JESUS? WHAT IS THE COST OF FOLLOWING HIM FOR YOU?

Are you willing to pay that price? Take the time to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to highlight an area, or many areas in your life that you might need to let go for the sake of following Jesus.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

Matthew 13:44 shows how giving up everything for Jesus can be a joy.

SOMETHING UNEXPECTED * — HAPPENED — *

MARILYN KEEGAN

I WAS WANDERING IN THE DESERT, SPIRITUALLY THIRSTY. I FELT WRETCHED MUCH OF THE TIME. I TRIED ALL MEANS - BUDDHISM, MYSTICISM, HINDUISM, JUDAISM, NEW AGE STUFF - TO QUENCH THAT THIRST.

Then I read some advertising about an upcoming series a church was doing. I was concerned by the title of one of the talks - 'Jesus and the Loose Lady'. I sent a tetchy email to the pastors of the church, challenging their use of the word 'lady'. After a flurry of emails between them and myself, I went to hear this talk about 'The Loose Lady'. I was ready to criticise and be my normal difficult self. But something unexpected happened. The preacher told the story of how Mary, overcome by Jesus' grace, knelt at the feet of Jesus and spread perfume on them. Then and there something deep inside me - from a place I did not know - welled up, and I wept.

Broken, yet relieved by unexpected grace, I yielded my life to Christ. Finally, my spiritual thirst was satisfied. What a simple delight to entrust my life to him. Since then, I've had to confront many demons and make many changes in my life. I am learning to love others - I think more about others and what they need.

I AM DEEPLY HAPPY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS AND I FEEL SAFE, SECURE AND PROTECTED UNDER GOD'S WINGS.

***TO BE
A CHRISTIAN
MEANS WE
HAVE GREAT
BENEFITS
IN THIS LIFE
TOO.***



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

Do you believe these promises?

Has your faith been based on your changing feelings or on the unchanging facts of God's word? We can never walk this journey alone, we believe that life is better together and real life change happens in the context of relationships. Are you in a Connect Group? We would love for you to find a community, so please have a look on www.nccb.co.za under and click on 'Connect Groups'.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

To understand Judgement Day, see Romans 2:5 and Revelations 20:11-15. Read Psalm 2 for a prophecy about Jesus written hundreds of years before he was born that highlights his response to our rebellion.

A man once sailed in a ship across the sea. He could only afford the ticket so when everyone went to meal times, he sat alone, eating stale bread. When they arrived at their destination, the captain asked him, 'Why did you never come to meals? They were part of the price of the ticket.' This story reminds us of so many people who think trusting in Jesus only provides a ticket to heaven. To be a Christian means we have great benefits in this life too.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. Romans 8:14-17

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

If we trust and follow Jesus, what happens? We receive the Holy Spirit (v14). He is the presence of God when comes to live in us. We receive a brand new identity as a child and heir of God (v16,17). We don't need to be fearful of rejection from God ever again. We know who we are because we know whose we are. We receive an invitation to enjoy God as our loving Father (v15). We can now relate to Him as Abba (which means 'Dad'). We receive the promise that God will never stop loving us, no matter what (v35-39). These are incredible promises, sadly, many Christians either forget them or struggle to believe them. This sounds like the story of the ugly duckling that just didn't seem to fit in with the other ducks, until it found out it was really a beautiful swan. The discovery made it spread its wings and fly for the first time! Let's use our meal ticket and start eating from God's table. Let's use our wings and begin flying on God's promises.



Ever watched a sad movie that you knew would end well? Knowing that things will get better helps you get through the painful parts.

The Bible allows us to glimpse the end in order to help us get through our present trials. On 11 September 2001, the Twin Towers in America collapsed, killing thousands. On 9 December 2004, a giant Tsunami killed 200 000 people. On 12 January 2010, an earthquake in Haiti added yet more deaths to the number of those killed by natural disasters. What catastrophes. It made millions ask, 'When's the world going to end?' Let's see what Jesus taught about the end ...

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

3 Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, "Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?" 4 Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you, 5 for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. 7 Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. 8 But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come. 9 "Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. 10 And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. 11 And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. 12 Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come. Matthew 24:3-14.

24 For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. 25 See, I have warned you about this ahead of time. 26 "So if someone tells you, 'Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,' don't bother to go and look. Or, 'Look, he is hiding here,' don't believe it! 27 For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. 28 Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near. 29 "Immediately after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

PRACTICALLY, HOW CAN YOU FIX YOUR EYES NOT ON WHAT IS SEEN AND IS TEMPORARY, BUT ON WHAT IS UNSEEN AND ETERNAL?

WE KNOW HOW THE STORY ENDS (READ REVELATIONS 21:1-7), SO FIX YOUR HOPE AND TRUST IN JESUS, WHO IS THE AUTHOR AND PERFECT OF OUR FAITH.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See 2 Peter 3:3-15 for more about the end and how to prepare for it. Revelations 21:1-7 tells us what heaven is like. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 to learn about living with eternity in mind.



light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 30 And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven. Matthew 24:24-31

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Jesus teaches us about the end of the world. He gives 10 signs (v5-14) including false Christs and false prophets, worsening wars, natural disasters, many Christians being hated and some Christians even losing their love for God because of the increasing evil in society. It's all happening! The end is coming closer. One unexpected day, Jesus will return in full glory and power to end the world as we know it. Those who have rejected him will mourn (v30), but his own people will be gathered to him (v31). We don't know when it will happen, but one thing we're sure of is this: we are closer to the end today than we were yesterday. Wow! We need to learn how to live with the end in mind.

WE SHOULD HEED THE BIBLE WHEN IT SAYS,

***'FIX YOUR EYES NOT
ON WHAT IS SEEN,
BUT ON WHAT IS UNSEEN
IS ETERNAL.'***

(2 CORINTHIANS 4:18)

FILLING THE VOID

OLIVER BERARD

FOR YEARS, I INDULGED MYSELF WITH ALL THINGS EXCITING: GIRLS, SMOKING, DRINKING, PARTIES, WEED AND DRUGS. IT SEEMED HARM-LESS. I HAD SOME REALLY GOOD TIMES WITH FRIENDS, DOING AS I PLEASED. OVER THE YEARS, I DRANK MORE, SMOKED MORE, AND DID MORE POTENT DRUGS. I ATTENDED A CATHOLIC CHURCH NOW AND THEN, AND USED TO ENJOY THE PEACE THERE. THOUGH I FELT BAD ABOUT MY LIFESTYLE, I DIDN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH OR CONFIDENCE TO CHANGE IT. AND I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHAT CHANGING IT WOULD ENTAIL. SO I JUST KEPT GOING.

Over time, an emptiness surfaced. Though I tried to fill my inner hole with travel, trances, friends and drugs, I became more depressed. More and more I withdrew from friends who were leading a lifestyle that I could no longer endure. I began to take anti-depressants and attend therapy. In therapy I came to the conclusion that there was a major void in my life. I was empty, insecure, and felt heavy.

Realising I could sit there forever and never solve the real problem of filling my void, I ended therapy months later. Although I'd been exposed to other religions, I just knew that the only person who could fill the void in my life was Jesus Christ. Feeling the Catholic church was not for me, I found a church, which was a bit more accessible to me. I found the people easy to relate to. I joined a small group. On Sundays I initially bailed out the back of meetings before anyone could speak to me. But over time I've built solid relationships. Jesus has brought me back from the brink. I experience Jesus changing me, sometimes slowly, sometimes fast. And I experience the security of his faithfulness, not to mention deep, stabilizing peace and a sense of purpose.



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

What part has the Bible played in your life so far?

How can you get more of the Bible into you? Make sure you have an easy to read Bible, a helpful daily devotional, and then put aside a time that works for you in the day, to create a new rhythm to your life.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Joshua 1:6-9 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17 for more.

God didn't write the Bible. But He did inspire its 40 writers, including a poet, a king, a shepherd, a doctor, a tax collector, and a fisherman, who wrote different books over 1600 years. The Old Testament (39 books) was written before Jesus. The New Testament (27 books) was written after he came. God made sure they wrote what He wanted them to and that it contains the truth of who God is, what He's done and is still doing, and how to have a relationship with Him. the historical world of the Bible has changed, but its message remains as true a relevant today as it ever did.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

9 How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. 10 I have tried hard to find you don't let me wander from your commands. 11 I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. 12 I praise you, O Lord; teach me your decrees. 13 I have recited aloud all the regulations you have given us. 14 I have rejoiced in your laws as much as in riches. 15 I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways. 16 I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word. 17 Be good to your servant, that I may live and obey your word. 18 Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions. 19 I am only a foreigner in the land. Don't hide your commands from me! 20 I am always overwhelmed with a desire for your regulations. 21 You rebuke the arrogant; those who wander from your commands are cursed. Psalm 119:9-21

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Why get into the Bible? It keeps us pure (v9) and sin-free (v11). It brings us joy (v14) and wonder (v18). It nourishes our souls, like honey feeds our bodies (v103). It guides us in decision-making, like a path leads us when we're lost (v105). It gives us understanding (v104). How do we get into the Bible? Obey it (v9). Treasure it (v14). Think about it often until it becomes part of you (v15). Don't neglect it (v16). Ask God to open your eyes as you read and hear it (v18). Long for it (v20). Be humble, not arrogant, as you receive it (v21). Find pleasure in it (v103). It's not enough to get into God's Word and be informed. God's Word needs to get into us until we're transformed! Every time you read or hear it, ask God to speak to you through it.





If you take a burning log from the fire, it soon dies out. It needs other pieces of wood to keep burning brightly. In the same way, our passion for God dies out if we try to follow Jesus alone and don't connect with a church that loves God.

In heaven the headlines are not about politics or movie stars. They're about what's happening to God's Church all over the world. The Church is God's family. It exists to reflect Him and His message in the community in which it's placed. It's not a building or a meeting. It's people. We belong not only to God, but also to each other. the Christian life is about togetherness. No lone rangers allowed! Let's take a look at church at its best:

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. 42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. 43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. Acts 2:41-47

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

This story tells us how to be the church. Devote yourselves to being taught and living out God's Word. Do everything you can to understand and obey the Bible better together. Build strong relationships. Don't only go to meetings; get into each other's homes and lives. Break bread together. Eat bread and wine/juice together, remembering Christ's death (see 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Pray to and praise God together. Draw close to God together, expecting Him to reveal more of Himself and His ways to you. Care for each other. Try help each other, especially the hurting. Draw in outsiders. Keeping God to ourselves is selfish, so share your faith with others, inviting them to come along to certain gatherings. Don't give up. Every church is an imperfect bunch of people connected to a perfect head, Jesus. He gives us the grace to not be critical of leaders and each other. He wants us to be part of the solution not the problem.

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

WHAT EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD OF CHURCH?

Do you know of a church that is like this in some way? What's stopping you from joining in? We are the church, and every single one of us play a significant role. Our 'Starting Point' course takes you on a journey to help get you connected and involved in areas that you are passionate about. Find out when the next course is happening on www.nccb.co.za, and click on 'Next Steps'.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Hebrews 10:24-25 for more. See 2 Timothy 4:2-5 for warnings about the danger of churches teaching errors. To understand why Christians break bread together read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

**WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?**

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU BEEN AWARE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IN YOUR LIFE?

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for more of His activity in your life.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

Ezekiel 37:1-10 gives a powerful picture of the enlivening effect that the Spirit has on believers. Also see John 14:16-17.

H₂O can exist in three different ways (water, gas, ice) and yet be the same substance. In the same way, God reveals Himself to us in three:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:19). There's only one God, not three. Mysteriously, He is all three at the same time. Let's look at the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes to live in us when we become Christians. A sailing boat needs wind or else it will not move the Holy Spirit is the wind in the sails of each Christian's life.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

7 But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. 9 The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. 10 Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. 11 Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged. 12 "There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. 14 He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.' John 16:7-15

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Who is the Holy Spirit? He is called 'Counsellor' (v7), which means comforter, strengthener, advisor and helper. He's also called 'the Spirit of Truth' (v13). Why is He given to us? The Holy Spirit is your helper (v7). Jesus could only be in one place at a time, but through the Holy Spirit, He can be with millions of people at the same time. That's why it's good that Jesus went back to heaven (v7). What does He do? He can convince non-Christians to turn from their sin to God (v8-10). He helps us understand the truths of the Bible (v13). He communicates the will of God to us (v14). He leads us to worship and glorify Jesus (v14). He allows us to experience God's wonderful grace (v15), that's why knowing and obeying God is impossible without the Holy Spirit! Thank God for this wonderful friend and gift!



It's said that early Sudanese converts to Christianity committed to praying everyday. Each one had a separate spot in the thicket where he would pour out his heart to God. Over time the paths to these places became well worn. as a result, if one of these believers began to neglect prayer, it was soon apparent to the others. They would kindly remind the negligent one, 'Brother, the grass grows on your path.'

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HOW DO YOU PRAY?

How can you make your prayer life more interesting and real? Why not try reading Psalm 42 aloud to God, making it your prayer to God.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See [James 4:2](#) and [Matthew 26:42](#) to see why some prayers are not answered.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

6 But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. 7 "When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. 8 Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! 9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today the food we need, 12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. 13 And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. Matthew 6:6-13

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

How should we pray? Cut out distractions and focus on God who is with you. He is eager to respond to your prayer (v6). Be real, don't try to impress Him with fancy religious talk (v7). Express gratitude, sorrow, curiosity, love, anything. Why should we pray? There's so much stuff to pray about: focus on who God is and tell Him how much you love Him (v9). Think about what He wants for you and the world around you: then invite Him to have His way (v10). Ask Him for what you need, even small things (v11). Say sorry for any sins you've committed (v12). Give Him your pain and forgive those who've ringed you (v12,14). Ask him for protection from temptation and the devil (v13). When should we pray? 'Pray continually' (1 Thessalonians 5:17). You can keep talking to God non-stop. Push through the times when it seems like He's not listening. He is. Also, realise that not everything you ask for, you really need or are ready to receive. Be patient. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray. Stay connected.

Letting God

*—**OUT THE BOX**—*

NICOLA GOLDBLATT

I GREW UP CATHOLIC - NOT A GOOD CATHOLIC, BUT ENOUGH TO FEEL THAT GOD AND I WERE FINE, AS LONG AS HE STAYED IN HIS BOX, OF COURSE. NEVER FOR A SECOND DID I ALLOW MY LITTLE BIT OF RELIGION TO RESTRAIN MY LIFESTYLE. I WAS A PARTY-ANIMAL, SURROUNDED BY MATES AND BOYS, INEBRIATED, HAVING THE TIME OF MY LIFE. I WAS THAT GIRL DANCING ON THE BAR COUNTER. IN LONDON, A HOUSE-MATE INVITED ME TO A NON-CATHOLIC CHURCH.

I went and wept the whole time, I felt so moved. Although I tried to explain this away, something drew me in and over the next while I attended three consecutive courses that introduced people to Christianity. But somehow this delusion kept me from progressing spiritually: I thought I was a Christian because I'd been brought up one. When people spoke of having a relationship with God, I just thought they were being excessive. It was during my fourth course that I first understood you can't be born a Christian, you can only become one when you trust and surrender yourself to Christ.

I met Jesus, and my heart exploded with joy. Letting God out of the box I let him start having his way in my life. I experienced His presence powerfully. This is what I'd been missing all those years. And the Christian community amazed me, especially a group of girls who surrounded me, supporting my newfound faith. Being a Christian didn't make life easier: I was staying in London illegally, and was living with my boyfriend. God gave me the courage to let the boy go (he couldn't accept the change that was happening in me) and I came back to SA. But the joy of discovering Christ swallowed those lesser pains.

MY DISCOVERY OF CHRIST WAS A GRADUAL PROCESS, I WAS A SLOW LEARNER, BUT WHEN I FINALLY 'GOT IT', IT BLEW ME AWAY LIKE FIREWORKS! I'M SO GLAD GOD IS PATIENT WITH THE SLOW KIDS. I AM GLAD HE NEVER STOPPED PURSUING ME.



When they asked Michelangelo how he made his statue of David he is reported to have said, 'I looked inside the marble and just took away the bits that weren't David.'

God is our master Sculptor. He wants us to become more like Jesus. He wants to chip away everything that's not like Christ in us. When we were saved we received Jesus' innocence and righteousness, but not His character. That takes time, obedience and the help of the Holy Spirit to develop.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

16 So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. 17 The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. 18 But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. 19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. 22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. 25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Galatians 5:16-25

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Jesus was, and still is, loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled (v22-23). Imagine you're a fruit-bearing tree. As you stay close to the Holy Spirit and obey Him (v25), you'll bear the fruit of Jesus' character. You don't have to try to be good - just do your best to stay close to the Holy Spirit. He'll work in you to stir up new desires for purity and love, and a new hate for sins that, though bringing you pleasure briefly, bring long term hurt to you and others.

What does it mean to keep in step with the Spirit (v25)? It means we obediently listen to His voice that communicates through the Bible and our conscience. When we're tempted, we'll feel His gentle warning in our heart. We must obey Him! If we do, we'll feel His peace and joy. If we disobey, He'll be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). If we sin, He will then lovingly urge us to repent. We must not harden our hearts against Him. The more we keep in step with Him, the more of Him we'll experience, and the more like Jesus we'll become.

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HOW AWARE ARE YOU OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IN YOU?

Which of the nine fruits are you needing most? It's only in moments of testing do we discover how well we are doing. Pray for more opportunity to allow the fruits of the spirit to be evident in your life.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Romans 8:28-29, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and 1 Timothy 4:12.

DEV.17 OBEDIENCE

DONE!

30 DAY DEVOTIONAL



WHAT IS MY
NEXT STEP?

WHAT ARE THE
SINS YOU STRUG-
GLE WITH?

Do you hide or confess them? In what ways have you noticed even small changes in your life that show that you are becoming more like Jesus?

WANT TO READ
FURTHER?

[Read Psalm 51 and Romans 8:1.](#)

If a child steals something from their parent, they don't stop being their parent's child, but they do damage the relationship temporarily. The way to make peace is for that child to own up to, and turn from, their wrongdoing. In the same way, when we become a child of God and then sin, we don't stop being his child, but we break fellowship with him until we admit the sin and sincerely ask for his help to change.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

5 This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. 6 So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. 7 But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. 1 John 1:5-10

1 My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. 2 He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. 3 And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. 4 If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. 5 But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. 6 Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. 1 John 2:1-6

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

God is light (1:5). Since he hates sin, he wants us to live openly and obediently before him. This makes fellowship with him and other Christians possible (1:6-7). If we sin, we must confess it and not hide it (1:9). God promises to forgive us and purify us with the blood of Jesus (1:9-2:2). As we grow in our relationship with him, we'll become more obedient (2:3) and more like Jesus (2:6). No matter how many times we fall, if we confess, he'll lovingly forgive us. Like a child learning to walk, we must move beyond falling all the time, to learning how to walk in obedience. God is gracious, but He's also committed to making us more like His Son. One more thing - it's important to know the difference between the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin and the devil's condemnation. When you sin, the Holy Spirit will lovingly highlight your sin and gently draw you back to God. But the devil will try to make you feel unworthy of God, causing you to run from him in shame. Reject these lies and feelings of shame. Rather run to God's grace.



God enjoys being enjoyed. “The Father seeks after worshippers” (John 4:24). We worship God because we can confidently access God through Jesus and the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18).

Worship is our total devotion to God because of who He is, all He’s done and all He still will do. Worship is not just singing once a week with other Christians. It’s loving and being in awe of God throughout the week. Worship is the heartbeat of a Christian. It’s also the pathway to real peace, joy and power.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

1 Sing a new song to the LORD, for He has done wonderful deeds. His right hand has won a mighty victory; His holy arm has shown His saving power! 2 The LORD has announced His victory and has revealed His righteousness to every nation! 3 He has remembered His promise to love and be faithful to Israel. The ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. 4 Shout to the LORD, all the earth; break out in praise and sing for joy! 5 Sing your praise to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and melodious song, 6 with trumpets and the sound of the ram’s horn. Make a joyful symphony before the LORD, the King! 7 Let the sea and everything in it shout His praise! Let the earth and all living things join in. 8 Let the rivers clap their hands in glee! Let the hills sing out their songs of joy 9 before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with fairness. Psalm 98.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Why worship God? Because He is a holy (v1), righteous (v2), loving and faithful (v3) king and judge (v9). He has done marvellous things (v1) – like saving people, revealing himself, creating the sea, rivers, mountains and everything! How should we worship? Worship God with your mind by filling it with thoughts of God from the Bible. Worship Him with your heart by shouting for joy and bursting into song (v4). Worship God with your body by clapping, dancing and, if possible, making music (v6-8). Lastly, worship God with your will by giving everything to Him as your king, starting with yourself. “Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name!” (Psalm 103:1). Worship is the one thing we will do for- ever. God wants us to learn to worship him even when we don’t feel like it, because He never changes. If we put this into action, we will soon discover that worshipping God brings greater satisfaction than anything this world offers.

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

ARE YOU A WORSHIPPER? HOW CAN YOU WORSHIP GOD MORE ON YOUR OWN?

And with others? Download some great worship music and spend time worshipping God.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Psalm 63 and Revelations 4:2-11 for more.



NO MORE SEEKING



NATASHA SWIFT

I GREW UP IN A NON-RELIGIOUS FAMILY. BUT IN MY EARLY TEENS, A DEEP YEARNING TO KNOW WHO I AM AND WHY I AM HERE CAME OVER ME. I STARTED TO ANXIOUSLY SEEK FOR A HIGHER POWER AND AN AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY, BUT BECAUSE OF MY PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY, I NEVER CONSIDERED IT AN OPTION.

I travelled the world and turned over every stone in my search; Buddhism, the yogic practices of Hinduism, New Age Metaphysics, Shamanism, African Cosmology, and Sacred Geometry.

In my thirties I married Chris, but a year into our marriage, I felt that marriage was hindering me on my spiritual search. We separated until I realized marriage is precisely where spiritual growth is forged. Chris graciously welcomed me back, but then the arrival of our first child gave way to further anger and resentment in our marriage. At this time, we just happened to meet our new neighbours who were church pastors. We decided to visit their newly started church.

What a surprise. Everything felt familiar, comfortable, like home. It was as though God was speaking to me through the message. What really impacted me was the idea of Grace: because of Jesus' perfect life and sacrificial death, there's nothing I can do to make God love me more or less. His love was a given – a gift of Grace. God was inviting me to come as I am.

After many months of exploration I surrendered to Jesus on the Alpha course. Later I was baptized. And wow, things have changed... I started to feel the presence and love of God palpably. Also feelings of shame were washed away. My marriage began to heal too. There's so much joy now. For decades I had anxiously searched for God. Yet all along He had been searching for me, drawing me to himself. To find Him I didn't need to do Yoga in Thailand or visit a Shaman in an African village. I just needed to go to the Cross, where God's grace was demonstrated. The futile searching has given way to the thrill and peace of being found!



A man once was stranded in a game park at night. He heard a lion roar, and spent the night in a tree terrified, only to find out the next day that the lion had been caged all along. He had nothing to fear. This is a picture of spiritual warfare. In some ways, life gets tougher when you follow Jesus. The reason is that we have a new enemy, Satan. When we become Christians, we become soldiers in a war. But, we don't fight him in our own strength. And if we trust Jesus, we have nothing to fear.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time will lift you up in honor. 7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you. 8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are. 10 In His kindness God called you to share in His eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, He will restore, support, and strengthen you, and He will place you on a firm foundation. 11 All power to Him forever! Amen. 1 Peter 5:6-11

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

The devil is like a roaring lion looking to devour you (v8). But if you're in Christ, then he's in a cage. Jesus has all authority over him and has given you His authority too (Luke 10:17-19). Satan may not harm you, unless you enter his cage. How do we resist the devil and stay out of his cage? Be humble, trusting, self-controlled and spiritually alert (v6-8). When we give in to pride, unbelief, temptation and spiritual laziness, we lose our spiritual protection. Stand firm in your faith (v9). The main battlefield is our minds. Satan will try to get us to believe his lies, so we must stand in faith on the truth of the Bible. Stay in community (v9). Satan preys on the isolated ones. Together, we can watch one another's backs. Also, we must repent of all occultic practices like witchcraft, sorcery, talking to the dead, visiting psychics, tarot card reading, "glassy-glassy" and more (see Acts 19:19). Lastly, be sure that God will overcome Satan's efforts to harm you (v10). So be aware of the devil, but be in awe of God (v11).

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED SPIRITUAL ATTACK?

How can you better fight this war in the future? To take things further for a greater understanding on this topic, why don't you sign up for 'Possess the Land' on www.nccb.co.za, which is a course that is run throughout the year. You will find more information under 'Next Steps' on our website.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Psalm 91, Matthew 4:1-11 and Ephesians 6:10-18.



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

WHAT PROMISES IN THE BIBLE MEAN THE MOST TO YOU?

What storms have you experienced? How did you handle them? How can you grow your trust in God's faithfulness? Discipleship is so important in the Christian faith, so find someone who you can walk this journey together with, and try meet for coffee on a regular basis.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

Read Romans 4:18-21 and Hebrews 11:1-12 for more about faith.

Pilots flying through thick clouds sometimes experience something called 'vertigo'.

This means they lose their sense of whether they're flying upwards or downwards. Many, following their trustworthy senses, have crashed in to the ground. But good pilots rely on the equipment that tells them exactly what angle they're flying at. In the same way, many Christians give up on faith because feelings like doubt, guilt, fear and worry overwhelm them. In those times, we should distrust our feelings, and rather trust in God's unchanging promises and faithfulness and learn to fly the right way up.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

35 As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." 36 So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). 37 But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. 38 Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with His head on a cushion. The disciples woke Him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" 39 When Jesus woke up, He rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. 40 Then He asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey Him!" Mark 4:25-41.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Jesus sets us off in a direction (v35). Then, as we obey Him, a storm often comes and things go wrong (v37). When this happens we often feel like Jesus is doing nothing to help us, and doesn't seem to care (v38). But He does! Since He's in control, He doesn't panic. That's why He could sleep. Our lack of trust in Him make us fearful (v40) and we doubt that He really cares for us (v38). But He can end the storm any time. Why does He allow storms to come our way? He does this to develop our faith in Him. Faith that is untested is not real faith. In the midst of every storm, remember that God's grace can and will sustain you. How do we grow in trust? We remind ourselves that Jesus is with us. He does care. And He's made promises He will keep. He has the power to change any situation. But until He does, we must trust Him. If we don't, our emotions may overwhelm and shipwreck us. It's better to hold onto promises God makes to us in His word. Promises like, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5).

BIG THINGS HAPPEN

IN SMALL GROUPS

IN NEW COVENANT CHURCH, WE'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT CONNECT GROUPS, FOR THREE REASONS:

- 1** Jesus calls us to build relationships with other Christians so that we can encourage, strengthen, care for, support, challenge and sharpen one another. Together we stand, isolated we fall.
- 2** Our Sunday meetings are not enough to develop enduring relationships. But committing to meet with a few people on a regular basis is a great way to do this.
- 3** Small groups are helpful for deepening our insight into the gospel, applying it to our life, growing in spiritual gifts and partnering with others as we seek to better serve the city and the church.

A BIT ABOUT CONNECT GROUPS:

Each group meets weekly in a home or online. They range in size from five to twenty. Usually they include a meal or refreshments, a conversation about the Sunday message, some bible discussion and a time of prayer. There is no pressure to pray aloud if you're not ready. Every group aims to grow in number until it is ready to multiply into two groups, with a new leader leading the new group.

HOW TO JOIN ONE:

Either join a group with someone you already know, or hop onto www.nccb.co.za under 'Connect Groups' and click on a group and we will make contact with you. You might want to visit two or three groups before you commit to one where you feel you can relate to some people in the group.



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

What tough times have you experienced?

What did you learn in them? How can you deal with tough times better in the future? The power of the church community is that you never walk these roads alone. Surround yourself with people who will build you up and strengthen you. Our Connect Groups which meet in peoples homes or online are communities that everyone needs. For more info hop onto www.nccb.co.za under 'Connect Groups'.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

Read Psalm 23, Romans 5:3-5 and Hebrews 12:1-11.

God didn't write the Bible. But He did inspire its A butterfly struggles for hours to break free from its cocoon. But if you were to try help it, it would die. The fight to get out is the very thing that develops in it the strength to fly. This is the reason God often doesn't answer our prayer to take away the struggles we're facing. He loves us too much to spare us from suffering.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. 4 He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. 5 For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with His comfort through Christ. 6 Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. 7 We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us. 8 We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. 9 In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead. 10 And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in Him, and He will continue to rescue us. 11 And you are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers for our safety. 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Why does God allow us to suffer at times? These verses provide some answers: 1) So that he can comfort us (v3). It is when we hurt most that he holds us the tight- est, even when we can't feel his presence. 2) So that we can comfort others (v4). Our wounds enable us to later help other people with the comfort God gave us. 3) So that we can experience Christ, the wounded healer (v5). God knows what pain feels like. Jesus lived the human life and suffered a painful death. That's why he is so gentle with us in our suffering. 4) So that other suffering people are inspired by our example of perseverance (v6). 5) So that we rely on God more, and on ourselves less (v9). 6) So that God receives glory by delivering us from the suffering (v10). 7) So that spiritual community is strengthened as we pray for one another (v11). God finds no joy in our pain. We must persevere in trusting God as the father of comfort (v3) and our deliverer (v10). He doesn't always take the suffering away, but He promises to always bring us through it.



You can't see the stars well when you're next to bright lights. In the same way, you easily drift from your devotion to God and your faith in Him when you're captivated by money – hoping it will bring good things in life, and the respect of people.

If this is a major goal in your life then you're in real danger. You need to step back from the bright lights of money and things, and see God's glory afresh.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

5 These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy. 6 Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. 7 After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. 8 So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. 9 But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. 11 But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:5-11

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Why is loving money (and what it can get you) dangerous? You can't take it with you to heaven (v7). It is the root of all evils (v10). Loving money will cause us to break God's commands in many ways, because we will do anything to get it - even lie, cheat, steal or use others for personal gain. It can make us turn from God (v10). It promises happiness but it brings pain, ruin and destruction in the long-term (v9). It's uncertain and temporary and easy to lose (v17). How can we use money in a God-pleasing way? Realise that we can be content with very little (v8). Put your hope in God, not money (v17). Enjoy all God gives you, seeing it as a generous gift (v17). Ask God for what you need. Give generously (v18) to needy people and to the church you're part of, underwriting the God-given vision of the church. Focus on the eternal riches that come from obedience to Christ in this life (v19). You can't take money to heaven with you, but when invested in the advance of God's kingdom, you can send it on ahead of you. Don't run after wealth, rather, run after God and use any money He trusts you with in a way that pleases Him.

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

DO YOU PUT YOUR TRUST IN WEALTH OR GOD?

How can you better use money and things in a way that brings praise to God? Have you ever tithed? The Bible teaches us to bring all our tithes (ten percent of our income) into the storehouse (church). Why don't you start tithing as soon as this Sunday and see the blessing of God activated in your life (Malachi 3:6-12).

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See [Malachi 3:6-12](#), [Matthew 6:19-34](#) and [2 Corinthians 9:6-12](#) for more.



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

WOULD YOU SAY YOU'RE A HARD-WORKER?

How can you be motivated to work harder? Alternatively, how can you make sure you don't overwork? What are some of the dreams you believe God has given you to pursue? Write these dreams down and start to take the time to pray into them.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See *Proverbs 5:6-11*.

Ted was a talented soccer player who played really poorly. His father never watched him. Then his father died. Curiously, he started to play really well. He never missed practices. When his coach asked him what had changed he said, "Now that my father is dead, he may be watching me play - I don't want to let him down," Let's read about how God, our Heavenly Father, watches over us, and how this should inspire hard work in us.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. Colossians 3:17

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord. 23 Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. 24 Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. 25 But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favorites. 4 Masters, be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven. Colossians 3:22-4:1.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

In those days, up to half of the known world were slaves. So most of their Christians were really poor. They lived on hand-outs from the wealthy masters. They felt unmotivated to work. Without a vision for their work, they felt used by their 'masters'. Even today, our work and duties can sometimes feel like slavery. But as Christians we can learn to please God in our work. How should we do work in a God-pleasing way? Do everything with God's help and for God's glory (v23). God wants to help you develop your knowledge and skills. Do it for God, not people (v23). Don't focus mainly on pleasing people (like bosses, lecturers or teachers). Please God first. This will push you to work hard when no one, except God, is looking(v22). Put your whole heart into whatever you do (v23). The way to success is hard work. However, overworking doesn't please God either (see Psalm 127:1-2). Work towards a vision (v24). Ask God to help you have a vision for your life and work wisely towards it. A great vision will inspire great sacrifices, which will result in great rewards. Don't abuse power over others (4:1). God wants equal opportunity for all. That's why Christians led the way in ending slavery a long time ago.

God had my Number

CAROL BRADLEY

I GREW UP IN ISRAEL. ABLE TO READ HEBREW, I THOUGHT THAT WAS AS CLOSE AS YOU COULD GET TO GOD, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD WAS POSSIBLE. MY LIFE HAS BEEN TOUGH: A DISINTEGRATED FAMILY, A DIVORCE, BEING A SINGLE MOM TO THREE CHILDREN, AND A HIGHLY PRESSURISED JOB. ALL I KNEW HOW TO DO WAS SURVIVE. MY JOB WAS EVERYTHING TO ME. IT PROVIDED FOR ME AND MY FAMILY, AND GAVE ME THE AFFIRMATION I CRAVED.

One day I heard a voice say to me, "I am your rock, not your work". I believed it was God speaking to me. I found myself asking God if he really was a personal God, who knew me and loved me as an individual. Was it possible to have a personal relationship with him?
I thought I'd ask God directly.

Opening a bible late one night, the answer came as I read these words: "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love. For I have put my faith in you. Show me the way I should go for to you I lift up my soul". I was deeply moved. Minutes later I received an sms: "Give your trust to God and don't give up because he always comes through. Trust in him." Shocked, I messaged back asking who it was and how they got my number. Their answer came: "The Lord gave me a number and told me what to write". Amazingly, this person was from another part of South Africa, didn't know me, or anyone I knew. Tears sprung to my eyes. I discovered God had my number, and loved me. So I started to trust Jesus.

Life's never been the same since. I stopped trusting in the rock on which I'd depended for so many years - work. I spent more time with my children, and God has provided for me in every way since then. I've been through the stress of changing jobs, the children's father leaving the country, and having to sell my house due to financial difficulties. But God has provided for me all the way. I've been blessed with amazing love from believing friends, grown closer to my children, lost the impatience of a pressurised job maniac, and recently found true love in a man God hand-picked for me.



DONE!

30 DAY DEVOTIONAL



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

How do you feel about being salt and light?

How can you begin to see the people in your world as your mission field? Did anyone invite you to church? The Good News of Jesus is too good to keep to yourselves. Who in your world can you invite along to church this Sunday? Your invitation may just be the opportunity they've been waiting for.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?
See Mark 5:19-20

Why are you on this planet? Answer: To reflect Christ's character and to do the will of God.

If Christ is the hope of the world, then God's people are the messengers and models of that hope. Following Jesus means we're on a mission with God to bring change to our world, starting with the people round us.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

11 "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way. 13 "You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. 14 "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. Matthew 5:11-16

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

How can we be salt (v13)? Salt only works if it leaves the salt-shaker and makes contact with the food. God has a mission field for you - it's the people in your family, community, place of study or work. If you try to represent Christ but have lost your love for him and His ways, then you'll make no impact. Your ungodly life and attitudes will speak so loudly that no one will hear your words. But a life that is 'salty' with a passion for God and His ways will make others thirst for God. How can we be light? Light should be made obvious to all, not hidden. Following Jesus is a very personal thing, but it's not a private thing. Let your light shine before people (v16). How will people respond? Some will hate you (v11-12). But they really hate the light of God within you which exposes their darkness. So don't take it personally. Look forward to the rewards from God for persevering in suffering (v12). Some, however, will see your good deeds and be drawn to the God that motivates you (v16).

DEV.25
SHARE YOUR
STORY

DONE!

30 DAY DEVOTIONAL



Look around. Non-Christian people surround you. How can you reach them? One way is by being real.

Reality TV is the trend that looks at the real lives of other people. Our generation doesn't want second-hand or made-up stories. They want reality. That's why one of the most powerful ways to influence other people towards God is simply to tell them how you came to know God and what he has done in your life since then. The most unbelieving friends may listen if you do this.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

"Brothers and esteemed fathers," Paul said, "listen to me as I offer my defense." 2 When they heard him speaking in their own language, the silence was even greater. 3 Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. 4 And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. 5 The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the followers of the Way from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished. 6 "As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 8 "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, the one you are persecuting.' 9 The people with me saw the light but didn't understand the voice speaking to me. 10 "I asked, 'What should I do, Lord?' "And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything you are to do.' 11 "I was blinded by the intense light and had to be led by the hand to Damascus by my companions. 12 A man named Ananias lived there. He was a godly man, deeply devoted to the law, and well regarded by all the Jews of Damascus. 13 He came and stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight.' And that very moment I could see him! 14 "Then he told me, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and hear Him speak. 15 For you are to be His witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. 16 What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.'" Acts 22:1-16

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Paul tells some unbelievers his God-story. Learning from him, what should we say? Firstly, tell people a little of how your life was before you became a Christian (v1-5). Then, explain the events that led you to become a follower of Jesus (v6-11). Lastly, tell them how your life has changed since then (v12-16). Never feel like your experience of God is not radical enough. Some people, like Paul, meet God powerfully, but most meet him less

dramatically. Just tell your story and trust that some people will connect with it. Keep it simple. Let the focus shift from your life to God's grace. However, if you speak about God's work in you, but your life hasn't begun to change, don't be surprised when people ignore what you say.

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

PRACTISE
TELLING YOUR
GOD-STORY BY
WRITING IT DOWN
OR BY TELLING
A CHRISTIAN
FRIEND.

What was life like before? Then what happened? What's life like now? Now step out and ask God for an opportunity to tell someone.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

Read Romans 4:18-21 and Hebrews 11:1-12 for more about faith.



COUNTING THE SECONDS



MICHAEL DAY

“I WANT TO TAKE A BREAK FROM YOU AND TRY LIFE WITHOUT YOU.” THESE WERE MY WORDS TO GOD IN GRADE 8. I’D BEEN PRIVILEGED TO GROW UP IN A COMMITTED CHRISTIAN FAMILY AND HAD GONE TO CHURCH FOR 13 YEARS. BUT TWO THINGS MADE ME MOVE AWAY FROM GOD. FIRST I DESPERATELY CRAVED THE ACCEPTANCE OF MY FRIENDS AND WAS WILLING TO DO ANYTHING TO GET IT. SECOND, ALTHOUGH MY FAITH HAD INSTILLED SOME GOOD MORALS IN ME (THAT I WAS SOON TO THROW AWAY), GOD HAD NOT YET BECOME VERY REAL TO ME.

What followed was a two-year crazed adventure away from God – the worst two years of my life. Instead of trusting God’s path or me, I tried to create my own. As each week passed, I fell further and further away from God. Involved in the wrong crowd, I did things that I knew would upset my parents, things I truthfully didn’t want to do. I knew what I was doing was wrong but couldn’t bring myself to stop.

Then one day I came to my senses and realised that life without God sucks – it doesn’t make sense and it doesn’t satisfy. So I turned to God.

And he came to me, forgave me and took control. What a relief it was to give my life to him, to start trusting and following Jesus, not holding anything back. My experience of Christ, and the hope he gives, soon became so great that it was not that difficult to let my friends know that God was now in charge of me.

When I came back to Christ it dawned on me that, though I had walked away from Him, He had not walked away from me. I imagine He was constantly calling out my name, patiently watching me do all these stupid things, and yet having so much more for me. I guess that God was counting the seconds until I would be home. And how good it is to be home! Home is the place where I am gripped by a sense of gratitude, and purpose, and comfort, and life lived to the full. I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.



DEV.26
SERVING

Imagine you are at the front of a long queue waiting your turn, when suddenly the queue turns around and the people at the back go first.

Imagine you are at the front of a long queue waiting your turn, when suddenly the queue turns around and the people at the back go first.

(v1). We must remember who we are in God, and who God is in us (v3). This knowledge enables us and makes us feel secure, which in turn empowers us to humble ourselves before others. We should find practical ways of serving others (v5). Serving is not the way to greatness. It is greatness.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that His hour had come to leave this world and return to His Father. He had loved His disciples during His ministry on earth, and now He loved them to the very end. 2 It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had given Him authority over everything and that He had come from God and would return to God. 4 So He got up from the table, took off His robe, wrapped a towel around His waist, 5 and poured water into a basin. Then He began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel He had around Him. 6 When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to Him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will." 8 "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." 9 Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" 10 Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." 11 For Jesus knew who would betray Him. That is what He meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12 After washing their feet, He put on His robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. 14 And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. 15 I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. 16 I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. 17 Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them. John 13:1-17

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Why should we serve others? It is love in action (v1). In God's kingdom we exist for the benefit of others (v10). Jesus modeled it and told us to do it (v15). If we serve others, we will be blessed by God (v17). Jesus said that it is more of a blessing to give than it is to receive (Acts 20:35). Why should we serve people? We should serve people because we love them

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT SERVING OTHERS?

What holds you back? In what ways can you serve the people in your Connect Group, and the needs of the larger church? We believe we can all play a part in building the church. We have an amazing volunteer culture, and it would be wonderful to have you on one of our teams. For more info have a look on www.nccb.co.za under the 'Next Steps' section and find the 'Get Involved' page where you can sign up to be part of the team.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Mark 10:42-45 and Philippians 2:1-4 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.



God. It's about loving people. The kind of faith "that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27). Don't forget Mother Teresa's warning: "The poor don't need us as much as we need the poor." That's because serving broken people draws us closer to the God who loves them.

One of the tragic errors in the church in the last century is the teaching that the New Testament mainly concerns itself with getting people into heaven. That's not true. Just think of Jesus' declaration: 'The Kingdom of God is here.' And think of the prayer we are meant to pray: 'Let your Kingdom come.' It's as clear as day that Jesus didn't come just to get people into heaven, but heaven into people. First we ourselves start to enjoy the wholeness of God at work in our broken lives. Then we become conduits of that wholeness into other people, especially the people who are most broken in society.

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING MORE COMPASSIONATE TOWARDS HURTING PEOPLE?

What holds you back? How can you wisely start helping others? Love our City is an incredible initiative that you can get involved in. For more information as to how you can help, hop onto www.nccb.co.za and start making a difference.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Matthew 25:31-40 and 1 John 3:11-18

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

25 One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking Him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" 27 The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" 29 The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. 31 "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. 33 "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' 36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same." Luke 10:25-37.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Following Jesus means that we learn to love the people around us (v27), especially people who are hurting (v37). In this story, the religious people (the priest and Levite) were too busy or uncaring to help, while a person of low class in society (the Samaritan) lovingly did what he could. God wants us to rise to the occasion and care for the needy, doing what we can and encouraging others to join in (v35). Being a Christian is not just about loving



DEV.28

THE POWER
OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT

If someone plays an unplugged electric guitar in a big hall you can hardly hear it. But if you plug it into a big amp and turn up the volume, it can entertain thousands. God wants to take our little lives and to plug them into the power of His Spirit. That way, our impact in this world will be so much bigger than if we tried to do it in our own strength.

WHAT IS MY
NEXT STEP?HAVE YOU BEEN
FILLED WITH THE
SPIRIT?

Have you sensed Him using you in supernatural ways? Do you feel God's call to be part of his global mission? Take the time to have a look on www.nccb.co.za, and see if there are any mission trips happening into other countries that you can go on.

WANT TO READ
FURTHER?

See [John 7:37-39](#), [Acts 2:17-18](#) and [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#) for more.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

4 Once when He was eating with them, He commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before. 5 John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" 7 He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." 9 After saying this, He was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see Him. Acts 1:4-9

1 On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. 2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. 3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. 4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. Acts 2:1-4.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

God promises us a gift (1:5), the Holy Spirit. When we are saved we are born of the Spirit (John 3:5). But he also wants to baptise (1:5) and fill us (2:4) with the Spirit, where we experience His presence and power in a very real way (2:2-4). Why? So we'll have power to be His witnesses (1:8). He wants us to influence people with His power, not with our own cleverness and determination. Who will we influence? God wants us to share His passion for people. God wants to use us to begin impacting people where we are, and then send us to people in other places. We must be willing to go (1:8). How does he fill us? Jesus, in John 7:37-39, tells us we need to come to Him, thirsting for Him, and asking Him with simple trust, to be filled with His spirit. Once we've been filled, we must keep on yielding control to the spirit, staying plugged in day after day (Ephesians 5:18).



WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HAVE YOU GIVEN IN TO SEXUAL SIN?

How can you go about controlling your sexual urges and dealing with pressure from media, your emotions and your body in a way that pleases God? The greatest danger is to keep these areas of your life secret, but rather find someone who you can trust to help you walk a journey where you find victory.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See *1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Proverbs 5 and 2 Timothy 2:22.*

When you stick two pieces of tape together the bond is very strong. If you tear them apart and try to use the same tape again, it will be far less sticky.

Sex is the bonding agent that God designed to bind a man and a woman together for life. That's why separating from a sexual partner is so painful. The more you have sex before marriage, the less power that sex will have to "bind" you to your life-partner one day. So resist the pressures to have sex that come from the sex-crazed media and your own hormones.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

1 Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You live this way already, and we encourage you to do so even more. 2 For you remember what we taught you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. 4 Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor— 5 not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and His ways. 6 Never harm or cheat a fellow believer in this matter by violating his wife, for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before. 7 God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives. 8 Therefore, anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching but is rejecting God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you. 9 But we don't need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-9

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

How can we have a God-pleasing sexuality? We must actively avoid all sexual immorality (v3). This includes sex and foreplay before marriage, adultery, homosexual sex, and looking at pornography. We must learn how to control our bodies (v4). Our sex-drive is very strong. We must learn how to control it rather than be controlled by it. We should not take advantage of anyone sexually (v6). That includes sexually harassing people, rape and sexual abuse. We should link sex with real love (v9). Sex that's selfish or hurtful isn't based on real love. Why please God with our sexuality? Jesus commanded it (v2). God wants us to be holy and honourable (v4). We need to be different to people who don't know God (v5). We'll be punished by God if we disobey him in this area (v6). Let's please God and benefit ourselves and others by avoiding all sexual sin! Sex is like a river. When it stays in the banks of God's instructions, it brings great blessing. When it overflows and floods the banks of God's instructions, it brings destruction to our lives and to society.



A man once built a fence between himself and his neighbour, whom he didn't like. Then God told him to make peace. With tears in his eyes, he broke the fence down and, using the same wood, made a path from his door to the neighbour's door. Our world is hurting because of the fences of hostility, prejudice and superiority. All around us, God calls us to change fences into paths.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. 9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. 10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. 11 In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. 12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Colossians 3:8-15

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Why overcome division and hostility between people? When we follow Jesus we are no longer mainly identified by our class, culture, race or gender, but by our new identity in God (v10) as God's loved and chosen people. That means that a Christian in Nigeria has more in common with a Christian in the USA or China than they do with their non-Christian Nigerian friend! We are united by our common relationship with God. That's why our race, culture, class, gender, level of education and level of wealth are not enough to divide us. Christ is all and is in all (v11). How do we seek peace? Be set free from anger and hate (v8). Become compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, forgiving and loving (v12-13). Most importantly, allow God's love to bind us together in unity and peace (v14-15). Change must start with the church (v12). If God's people don't know how to make peace, then there's no hope. Become a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9). The Holy Spirit will guide and strengthen you.

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

HAVE YOU BEEN FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT?

How have you experienced prejudice or hostility in your family, community or place of work? What changes must happen in your heart? Do you need to forgive anyone or ask forgiveness? What practical steps can you take to become a peacemaker? The best time to act is NOW, so why don't you do something.

WANT TO READ FURTHER?

See Ephesians 2:14-22 for more.



GIVING CHURCH ANOTHER TRY



LIESEL MULLER

MY EARLIEST MEMORIES OF CHURCH INVOLVED LONG SERMONS AND OLD PEOPLE, NEITHER OF WHICH I COULD RELATE TO. SO I LOOKED ELSEWHERE FOR THE TRUTH. I TOOK CLASSES IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND READ BOOKS ON MIND-POWER. I VISITED RELIGIOUS TEMPLES AND FREQUENTED ESOTERIC FAIRS. BUT THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING MISSING. ONE NIGHT, I HAD A VERY REAL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE THAT LEFT ME ON MY KNEES PRAYING. GOD SHOWED ME THAT BY EXPERIMENTING WITH ALL THESE BELIEFS I WAS FLIRTING WITH DANGER.

Aged 25, after fulfilling some of my biggest dreams, I still felt unfulfilled. Some close friends spoke enthusiastically of their faith and I decided to give church another try. As I walked in, tears started rolling and I cried throughout the service. I felt like a baby being cradled by this

great heavenly father. Since I was a teenager I had been desperately seeking the truth but all I had to do was stop running. I listened carefully to the words of the service and I heard a message of truth, the kind of message you can actually take something out of.

Whilst I am made uniquely for a purpose, there is immense relief in knowing that I am no longer the ultimate creator of my life. It allows you to be available for things you could never have otherwise imagined. I have encountered a genuine caring and a love that Christians have for each other, and for making a real difference in the communities around them. I have come home, and I never want to leave.

WHAT'S MY NEXT STEP

STARTING POINT COURSE

When we first visit a church, we're at best a guest. But if this is the church for us, then it's God's plan that we would progress to becoming part of the family. The Starting Point Course will help you make that transition from observing guest to participating family member.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Starting Point outlines what membership and participation in the local church looks like. At Starting Point, we share the New Covenant Church story; our vision and mission as a gospel community filling Johannesburg with the message, life and fame of Jesus.

WHO IS IT FOR?

It is for those who want to:

- find out more about our church
- learn how to become involved in the church
- decide whether this is the church for them
- meet more people in the church
- meet the leadership team of the church

WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?

We run Starting Point many times a year. Sign up by hopping onto www.nccb.co.za, click on 'Next Steps', and register for the next Starting Point Course.



WHAT WE BELIEVE

GOD

We believe there is one eternal God, Creator of all things, who exists in three distinct but equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God never changes towards His holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He sustains and governs all things according to His sovereign will for His own glory.

THE BIBLE

We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God written by human hands. Consisting of Old and New Testaments, it is accurate, authoritative, consistent, and applicable to our everyday lives.

THE HUMAN RACE

We believe that all men and women, are created in the image of God, and have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. Sin which has brought condemnation, and separation from God has corrupted the human nature. Reconciliation back to God to please Him is fulfilled by being born again, and forgiven.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man and the only one who can reconcile us back to God. He

lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father, died on the cross in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead to prove His victory, empowering man, He ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all.

SALVATION

We believe that salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. In order to receive forgiveness and the 'new birth', we must repent of our sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and submit to His will for our lives. All who believe are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the infilling, indwelling supernatural power of the Holy Spirit for all believers. He has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ by convicting sinners, imparting spiritual life and giving a true understanding of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit enables us to use spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues.

THE CHURCH

We believe the Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. This is made visible in local churches, communities of believers committed to each other, who through worship, prayer, breaking of bread are faithful to the gospel.

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that Baptism is a symbol of new life and union with Christ and all who believe should be baptized according to scripture. We believe the Lord's Supper (Communion) is a reminder of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all on the cross, and should be done regularly as the church gathers.

THE FUTURE

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. Our eternal destination of either Heaven or hell is determined by our response to the Lord Jesus Christ. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

* NCCB COLLECTION *

FIRST STEPS

Thanks to Terran Williams for the written
content of this guide.

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**NC
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