

# First steps for new believers in Jesus Christ

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The Bible says that when we believe in Jesus to save us and receive him as lord of our life we become a child of God. (John 1.12) Here are some suggestions for your first steps as God's new son or daughter.

### **Make a permanent note of the date.**

It's your new birthday! You'll want to remember this day in the future.

*'When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!'* 2 Corinthians 5.17 TLB

Making a note of the date is like inscribing the date a building is started on the foundation stone. God is going to build something amazing out of you!

### **Tell someone what you have done.**

*'For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord and believe in your own heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'*

Romans 10.9 TLB

Telling someone is like cementing the foundation stone in place.

### **Be baptized.**

*'Those who believe and are baptized will be saved.'*

Mark 16.16 TLB

In the Bible baptism means being immersed in water by the leaders of a church. It is a way of making public your decision to belong to Jesus, just as a wedding is a way of making public a decision to share one's life with someone else permanently. Baptism doesn't 'save' you, but it's how you show Jesus that you are willing to obey him, and how he assures you that your sins have been washed away and your new life with him has truly begun. It is God's appointed way for making your union with his Son final, public and permanent.

To be baptized you will have to find a church if you don't already belong to one. Churches can be big or small, formal or informal, dead or alive. A good local church will welcome you into God's family and help you to grow as a child of God. Do an Internet search for 'Lively

church in Marshmere-under-Water / Little Grumbling / Dancing-by-the-Sea' or wherever you live, to find what's available. If several churches are listed, ask God to guide you and try visiting two or three of them on Sundays until you feel that you have found one that could become your spiritual home. Make sure they do proper baptisms!

### **Receive the Holy Spirit.**

Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit, or ask the church leaders at your baptism to pray that he will.

*"...if even sinful persons like yourselves give children what they need, don't you realize that your heavenly Father will do at least as much, and give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for him?"* (Luke 11.13 TLB) You have to ask!

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to live as God wants us to.

*'...those who follow after the Holy Spirit find themselves doing those things that please God.'* (Romans 8.5 TLB)

### **Find a mentor.**

If you already have a Christian friend ask if he or she would be willing to meet you on a regular basis for a while, to help you to learn how to follow Jesus. If you don't have such a friend, ask if there is someone in the church who would like to help you in this way.

### **Talk to your heavenly Father each day.**

Find a quiet place to pray and follow the TSP 'teaspoon rule':

1. *Thank* God for anything that comes to your mind.
2. Tell him you are *sorry* for any way you've failed him and ask him to forgive you.
3. Ask him *please* to help you and anyone else you know who is in need.

### **Read the Bible.**

The Bible is like food for your spirit. It will enable you to grow into a strong Christian. If you don't have a Bible of your own you can download one as an app, or else you can buy an electronic or physical copy. There are different kinds of English translation. Search for 'Bibles for new believers' for guidance on the translation that would best suit you.<sup>1</sup>

Ideally, set aside a time each day when you can read a passage of the Bible, think about it, and perhaps even make some notes on what you learn in a notebook or journal. My wife and I used to read it together each morning in bed before we got up, and then we prayed about what we had read as well as anything else that was on our minds.

Here are some suggested readings to get you started.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, one website providing guidance on the best Bibles for different kinds of people was eden.co.uk's Eden's Top 5 Bibles for New Believers.

# Fifty-day Bible-reading Plan

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Every Bible has an index to its various books at the front. A reference like 'John 1.1-18' means the book of John, chapter 1, verses 1 to 18. Don't confuse 'John', the book of John, with '1 John', the first letter of John.

## The Story of the Christian Faith (New Testament)

- Day 1. Luke chapters 1 & 2: The birth of Jesus
- Day 2. John 1.1-18: The identity of Jesus
- Day 3. Luke 4.14-44: Jesus begins his ministry
- Day 4. Matthew 5 & 6: The core of Jesus's teachings
- Day 5. John 3: God's love for the world
- Day 6. John 5: Jesus's miracles and authority
- Day 7. John 11: Jesus's power over death
- Day 8. John 15: The Christian life defined
- Day 9. Matthew 26 & 27: The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus
- Day 10. John 20 & Luke 24: The resurrection of Jesus and his ascension
- Day 11. Acts 2: The coming of the Holy Spirit
- Day 12. Acts 9.16-19: The conversion of Saul and his ministry
- Day 13. Acts 26: Paul's defence of the Christian faith
- Day 14. Romans 3: Justification by faith alone
- Day 15. Romans 7 & 8: The battle with sin, and life in the Spirit
- Day 16. 1 Corinthians 13, Ephesians 5: The way of love
- Day 17. 1 Corinthians 15: The power of the resurrection
- Day 18. Galatians 5, Ephesians 4: Freedom and unity in Christ
- Day 19. Ephesians 6: The whole armour of God
- Day 20. Philippians 1.18 to 2.18: Christ's example
- Day 21. Colossians 3.1-17: Putting on the new self
- Day 22. Hebrews 4.14 to 5.10: Jesus the great high priest
- Day 23. James 1 & 1 Peter 1: Pure religion
- Day 24. 1 John 4.7-21: God is love
- Day 25. Revelation 21 & 22: The new heaven and earth.

## Old Testament survey

- Day 26. Genesis 1.1 to 3.19: The creation and fall of humanity
- Day 27. Genesis 12; 28.10-15; 32.22-28: God calls a people his own
- Day 28. Genesis 37; 39 to 46: The story of Joseph
- Day 29. Exodus 1 to 6: The call of Moses
- Day 30. Exodus 7 to 14: Moses and Pharaoh
- Day 31. Exodus 19.1 to 20.2: The Ten Commandments
- Day 32. Deuteronomy 6.1 to 7.26; 11.13-21: Obedience flows from love
- Day 33. Judges 1.1 to 2.19: Cycles of disobedience in God's people
- Day 34. 1 Samuel 7 to 9; 15 to 17: The fall of Saul and rise of David

Day 35. 2 Samuel 5; 7 to 9; 11 & 12: Tales of David's life  
Day 36. 1 Kings 2 & 3; 6; 11: Solomon's reign  
Day 37. 1 Kings 11.9 to 14.31: The dividing of the kingdom  
Day 38. 1 Kings 17 to 19; 2 Kings 2 & 4: The prophets Elijah and Elisha  
Day 39. Job 1 & 2; 38 to 42: How the righteous respond to hard times  
Day 40. Psalms 1; 23; 139: Psalms that enrich your soul  
Day 41. Psalms 6; 22; 38; 51: Psalms for the suffering and sinful  
Day 42. Proverbs 3; 5; 7; 16; 31: Wisdom for everyday life  
Day 43. Jeremiah 11 & 12; 31.31-40: The covenant broken and the new covenant  
Day 44. Jeremiah 23.1-6; Isaiah 9.6,7; 53.1-12: Jesus the promised king  
Day 45. Jonah 1 to 4: The story of Jonah  
Day 46. Daniel 1 to 3: Exile in Babylon  
Day 47. Daniel 4 to 6: The life of Daniel  
Day 48. Nehemiah 1 & 2; 4 & 5; 8 & 9: The rebuilding of Jerusalem  
Day 49. Esther 1 to 8: The story of Esther  
Day 50. Malachi 1 to 4: Final words of the Old Testament.