

Introduction

When you believed in Jesus, confessed your sin and opened your heart to God, you made the most important decision of your life: you became a Christian. Through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, God saved you from the penalty of your sins and the judgment of your sinful nature. But salvation is really only the first step in Christianity; there is much more to come. Through Jesus, you have been given a new nature that is not sinful. God has declared you innocent and reclassified you as a saint, rather than as a sinner. You were once cut off from God in your sins, but now God has adopted you and calls you His child. You were once alone, but now you are united to God in Christ. While these things are true about you, they take time and attention to begin to really understand. This six-part study is designed to help you understand the basics of your new relationship with God.

Growing to know God is really like any other relationship. Even though there are a variety of ways to learn about another person, nothing matches the experience of living in oneness. Living in oneness with God is the central theme of Christianity and can be described as an extended walking journey taken by very close friends. One of my favorite verses about growing as a Christian uses this idea of walking and moving forward in maturity:

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him... .
Colossians 2:6, English Standard Version

Here you can see this idea of walking and growing and moving forward in maturity.

Your salvation was an expression of faith and belief in Jesus. Likewise, your maturity as a Christian will depend on faith and belief. The *First Steps* resource introduces six fundamental principles of Christianity. If you choose to believe these principles, you will begin to move forward in your journey with God. As you learn to embrace the truth by faith, you will *walk* with God and experience a deepening relationship with Him as your Creator and Father.

Take your time. Ask God to guide you and speak to your heart as you *walk* with Him through each lesson. Also, be sure to utilize the embedded video introductions.

It is my prayer that *First Steps* will propel you toward walking in oneness with our Great God.

Chris Campbell

First Steps for New Christians

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him
Colossians 2:6, ESV

Lesson One: Walk in Truth

There are so many opinions about God today. What is a Christian supposed to believe? How can we know for sure what God is like? Is there a way to check out an idea about God and determine whether or not it is true?

Thankfully, God always takes the initiative to help His children grow in their understanding. God has provided a book that tells us the truth. The Bible is filled with pertaining to all kinds of issues. Most importantly, the Bible shows us the truth about who God is and what He is like. Christians read the Bible because it tells us the truth.

What do you think?

1. Where do most people think the Bible came from? Check any boxes that describe popular opinions you've heard about the Bible.
 - ☐ Wise people wrote down their thoughts on wise living.
 - ☐ The Bible has been around since the beginning of human history.
 - ☐ Men wrote stories and created rules that would help control the behavior of people. They claimed these writings came from God.
 - ☐ God used a variety of people to record His views in their own words.
 - ☐ The Bible is a collection of some of the best stories from ancient times.
 - ☐ Other _____
2. The following is a list of important issues which people are concerned about in the 21st Century. See if you can guess how many items in this list are actually addressed in the Bible. Put a check beside each issue you believe the Bible tackles.

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Bitterness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with guilt | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Happiness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship | <input type="checkbox"/> Time management | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Finances | <input type="checkbox"/> Finding love |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Purity | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics |

The Bible actually deals with every one of these issues; this may surprise you, but it is a fact.

My Truth, Your Truth: What's the Difference?

Undeniably, it is rude to question another person's beliefs. Most people today are content to think that there are actually many truths from which to select. Some people assert that it is possible to create their own "truth" by choosing what they like from a variety of religions, philosophies and ideas. Real Christianity, however, makes some very bold claims regarding truth: 1) Truth can only be found in God. 2) The Bible is the ultimate written authority on truth. ***Translation: When it comes to what you believe about God, if the Bible doesn't back it up, then it can't be true.***

1. See for yourself. Look up the following verses in your Bible.
Draw a line between each Scripture reference and its matching claim.

Psalms 19:7-9

God's Word is truth.

John 17:17

The Word of God (the Bible) is everlasting.

2 Timothy 3:16

All of the Bible was written by God through men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:24-25

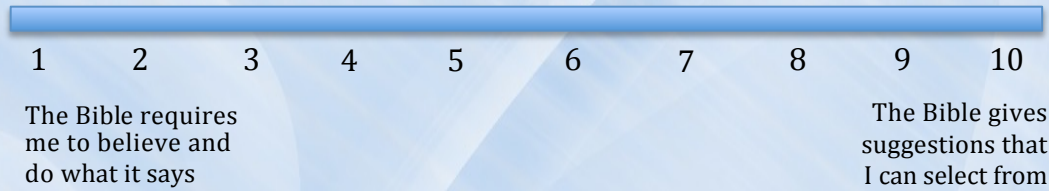
The written law of God (the Bible) is perfect, sure, pure, and true.

2 Peter 1: 20-21







The Bible is God-breathed.

2. Circle the number on each line that best measures your beliefs about the Bible up to this point in your life.

<div></div>										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
The Bible has no errors					The Bible is not totally true					
<div></div>										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
The Bible is relevant for today					The Bible is outdated					



God doesn't expect you to blindly accept the exclusive claims about the Bible without giving it some careful consideration. God has provided both internal and external evidence about the Bible to build our faith and increase our trust. Below is a brief list of facts about the Bible.¹

-  *The Bible is the **best-selling** and **most reproduced** book of all time.*
-  *The Bible was written by 40 authors over a period of 2,000 years on three different continents, addressing hundreds of subjects that consistently point to **the same message**.*
-  *Archaeology has repeatedly confirmed that the **Bible's historical details are accurate**.*
-  ***Scientific truth before scientific proof.** God revealed scientific facts thousands of years before scientists had the technology to confirm it to be true! For example, the Bible declares the earth to be round in shape. The Bible claims the earth is suspended in space. And there is more.*
-  *The Bible records hundreds and hundreds of specific **prophecies** (supernatural predictions about the future), **hundreds of which have already come true**.*
-  *Throughout history, no other resource has positively **transformed** more **lives and cultures** than the Bible.*

Which of these facts matters the most to you? Why?

¹ For more exciting evidence of the Bible being God's exclusive Word to mankind, check out the following resources: *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell (Thomas Nelson Publishers); *The Case for Faith*, Lee Strobel (Harpers Collins Publishing); *How Do We Know the Bible is True*, Brian H. Edwards (Answers in Genesis Publishing).

So, What's the Big Deal?

Here's the thing: If the Bible is the one absolute authority on truth and reality, then any idea or viewpoint that does not line up with Scripture qualifies as a **lie**. When people believe a lie is actually the truth, they automatically fall into deception.

Deception is dangerous. It blinds us to truth and encourages choices which ultimately prove to be harmful to our relationship with God. Jesus spoke very clearly about deception and about the source of all lies:

You are of your father the devil He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
John 8:44, ESV

When you became a Christian, God saved you from the devil's clutches. The devil, however, does not give up easily. Even though you are forever delivered from his grasp, the devil works very hard to keep you from growing in a loving relationship with God. The most effective way to stunt your spiritual growth is to feed you lies. From the time we are very young, our minds are full of lies about God, about life, about ourselves, etc. The best way to rid your mind of lies is to consistently look for truth and embrace it when it is revealed to you. The only place you can find absolute truth is--you guessed it--the Bible.

Shortly before Jesus warned about the devil, He had this to say about truth:

*So Jesus said to those who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my followers, and **you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**"*
(paraphrased from John 8:31-32, ESV)

Walking in Truth

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him
Colossians 2:6, ESV

Jesus said, "*I am ... the truth ...*" (John 14:6). Therefore, moving forward in spiritual growth and maturity requires that we learn to *walk in the truth*; we do this by making God's Word (the Bible) a priority in our lives. The Bible brings us into a deeper encounter with God, who is the source of all truth. God uses the Bible to communicate with us.

There are many ways to read and study the Bible. Try a variety of methods and determine which method works best for you.

Ask any Christian who has a vibrant relationship with God to share with you how they study the Bible. A trusted adult like a parent, pastor or youth leader may be an excellent Bible study resource. The point is: begin reading and studying the Bible!

Review the following tips for Bible study, then try using the format suggested below during the coming week.

Tips for Truth

- ✚ Get a copy of God's Word (the Holy Bible) that is written in a way you can easily understand.
- ✚ Before you begin, always pray for God to give you understanding.
- ✚ Don't be afraid to make notes or marks in your Bible.
- ✚ Rather than skip from one passage to another, select a book of the Bible to study. For example, you could begin with the Gospel of John (which tells the story of Jesus) or the book of James (which is filled with godly wisdom).
- ✚ Take your Bible with you wherever you go; have it handy at church, Bible studies or any occasion when you might have a spare moment.

A Simple Way to *Walk in Truth* Daily.

Get your Bible, a notebook/notepad, something to write with and find a quiet place to focus.

1. Ask God to speak to you through today's Scripture. Try James 1:1-8
(Note: You can find this particular passage by using the Table of Contents in the front of your Bible or your search tool if you are using an electronic Bible. The first number in the scripture reference indicates the chapter and the numbers following the colon indicate the verses to be read.)
2. After reading the text, summarize the verses in your own words. Reword it in a way that would enable you to easily explain it to a friend.
3. Reread the verses and compare them to your summary. Is there something you added or left out? If needed, adjust your summary to reflect the big idea(s) in the verses.
4. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - **What do these verses teach me about God?**
 - **What do these verses teach me about myself and humanity?**
 - **If these words are from God (truth), what is He asking me to believe?**
What do I need to do to obey Him?
 - **With whom can I share these truths?**
5. **Close with prayer. Thank God for the truths you have seen in His Word. Ask Him to give you faith to believe these truths and strength to obey them.**

Use your notebook daily and refer to your notes as a reminder of these truths and how to walk in them.

First Steps for New Christians

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him ...
Colossians 2:6, ESV

Lesson 2: Walk in Trust

It's common for new Christians to have *trust issues* with God. The Christian's journey with God requires trust-- but can God really be trusted? Does He have your best interest in mind? Will He take care of you? Does He even know what is best for you?

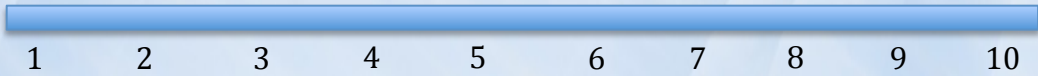
Jesus captured the attention of His followers when He addressed the issue of trusting God by inviting them to think of God as their Father (Matthew 6:9). Can you imagine God Almighty, the Creator of All and the Master of the Universe as a father? As *your* Father?

The idea of God as Father can provoke strong emotions. Our initial feelings are typically based on the experience we've had with our biological dad or father figures throughout childhood. Regardless of your experience, try to imagine a father who is perfect in every way. Imagine a father who is a protector and provider for his children, accepting and full of unconditional love. Many dads have wanted to be faultless in these areas, but only one Father is perfect. According to the Bible (Lesson 1), God is the perfect Father.

Measuring Trust

Circle the appropriate number which currently describes your feelings toward God.

<div></div>										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I feel close to God					I feel very far from God					
<div></div>										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I trust God to look after me					I've learned that I need to take care of myself					
<div></div>										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
God knows what is best for me and He wants to bless me					It's hard for me to think I'll ever really like God's plan for my life					



I am confident that God
accepts me and is
pleased to call me His
child

God is waiting to see if
I will disappoint Him



I am confident
that God will
never let me go

I worry that God
will ultimately
reject me

Profiling the Perfect Father

Read the following passage that describes God as Father. Circle every word that describes God's character.

The Lord is compassionate and merciful,

slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever.

He does not punish us for all our sins;

he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.

*For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height
of the heavens above the earth.*

He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

The Lord is like a father to his children,

tender and compassionate to those who fear him. Psalm 103:8-14, NLT

Which of these fatherly qualities are most important to you? Why?

What do you think it means to "fear" God?

How could fearing God be a good thing?

Below are more truths about God, the Father of every Christian. Connect the verses with the matching facts:

Hebrews 13:5

Protective of me

Exodus 34:6

Gracious and gives me the freedom to fail

Psalms 18:2

Always with me

Lamentations 3:22-23

Trustworthy and full of endless love and mercy

Hebrews 4:15-16

Patient and slow to get angry

The Bible is full of good things to say about God as a father. However, the most important thing is for you to believe He is *your* good Father. Read the following verses and write your name in the blanks provided.

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)

Even before he made the world, God loved _____ and chose _____ in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt _____ into his own family by bringing _____ to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

What do you think?

Read Ephesians 1:4-5 again, carefully. Put a check in any box below that represents the truth about your father-child relationship with God.

- ☐ God loved me before I knew Him.
- ☐ God chose me to be his child before I could even consider choosing Him to be my Father.
- ☐ God makes me holy.
- ☐ God knew who I would be before He created the world.
- ☐ No sin is too big for God to forgive.
- ☐ It gave God great pleasure to make me His own.

The love of God the Father is strong. He chose you first but, in your natural state of sin, you rebelled against God and did things your way. Even though you didn't know how to cooperate with God, He provided a way to adopt you as His child and love you in Christ.

It's hard for us to even understand the greatness of God's love. Check out another passage that describes God's great love as our Father.

*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Romans 8:38-39 NLT***

What about when we sin?

Sin is a big deal to God, even after becoming a Christian. Sin will impact your sense of closeness to God. Thankfully, God has made a way for us to address our sin when we fail. *"If we confess our sin, He [God] is faithful and just to forgive us of our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Quickly admitting our sin to God allows not only for our forgiveness, but for our cleansing. This keeps our fellowship with our Heavenly Father fresh and intimate.

According to these verses, what can separate us from God's love? _____

If this is true, and it is (Lesson 1), what does being the recipient of God's perfect love mean to you?

Learning to recognize and trust God as your Father is vital to your success as a Christian. To help you begin to *walk in trust*, commit to reading aloud the following truths twice a day for the next week.

Sometimes our idea of “Father” clouds our understanding of God. Consider the following lies we may believe about God. If you have believed any of these lies about God, you can break free by simply rejecting the lie and affirming the truth in Jesus' name.

I refuse to believe the lie that my Heavenly Father is:

1. distant and disinterested.
2. insensitive and uncaring.
3. stern and demanding.
4. passive and cold.
5. absent or too busy for me.
6. never satisfied with what I do
impatient or angry.
7. mean, cruel, or abusive.
8. trying to take all the fun out of life
for me.
9. controlling and manipulative.
10. condemning or unforgiving.
11. nit-picking, nagging or
perfectionistic

I choose to accept the truth that my Heavenly Father is:

1. intimate and involved (Ps. 139:1-18).
2. kind and compassionate (Ps. 103:8-14).
3. accepting and filled with joy and love
(Rom. 15:7; Zeph. 3:17).
4. warm and affectionate (Is. 40:11; Hos. 11:3-4).
5. always pleased with me and eager to spend time
with me (Heb. 13:5; Jer. 31:20; Ezek. 34:11-16)
6. patient, slow to anger, and pleased with me
in Christ (Exod. 34:6; 2 Pet. 3:9).
7. loving, gentle, and protective of me
(Jer. 31:3; Is. 42:3; Ps. 18:2).
8. trustworthy. He wants to give me a full life.
His will is good, perfect and acceptable
(Lam. 3:22-23; Jn. 10:10; Rom. 12:1-2).
9. full of grace and mercy. He gives me freedom to fail
(Heb. 4:15-16; Lk. 15:11-16).
10. tenderhearted and forgiving. His heart and arms are
always open to me (Ps. 130:1-4; Lk. 15:17-24).
11. smiling as He thinks of me and proud of me as His
growing child (Rom. 8:28-29; Heb. 12:5-11; 2 Cor. 7:4).

First Steps for New Christians

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him
Colossians 2:6, ESV

Lesson 3: Walk in Freedom

Visualize countless people being enslaved in captivity: they have no understanding of freedom, because they have never been free. Then a rescuer comes: he breaks the chains of bondage and throws open the doors of imprisonment. All who care to leave the prison and start a new life, of possibilities are free to do so. Initially there is great joy and excitement as scores of people embrace their freedom. However, once beyond the walls, what will they do? How will they live? The only life they've mastered is a life of slavery. Released people do not naturally know how to live as free people--and so it is with many Christians.

The Bible teaches that we were all once enslaved to sin (John 8:34). Jesus came to rescue us from the cruel slave-master of sin, the devil. Jesus' blood, shed on the cross, bought freedom for every person who believes in Him (Matthew 26:28). And you did just that; you believed in Him- but now what? Do you know how to live as a free person?

Learning to *walk in freedom* is another essential goal for every Christian. You don't automatically know how to live as a free person, but your Savior does. In this lesson, we will look at how Jesus not only sets us free, but also shows us how to live in freedom.

Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you. Galatians 5:1, The Message

Freedom is defined in a variety of ways. Check the boxes which reflect what some people believe freedom is.

- ☐ Freedom is being able to do whatever I want.
 - ☐ Freedom is not having to answer to anyone.
 - ☐ Freedom is getting my way.
 - ☐ Freedom is not having rules [or the absence of rules].
 - ☐ Other
-

A common understanding of freedom shared by many people today is that it is the right to do whatever I want, whenever I want, however I want.

Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? _____

Believe it or not, freedom is not a life without rules or accountability. The absence of rules and accountability to authority is actually *anarchy*. There is no safety or justice with *anarchy*.

Anarchy: a state of disorder due to the absence or non-recognition of authority.

However, there is safety and security in authority that is trustworthy, honorable, and sovereign. If you live in a *free* country, you know firsthand the liberties that are guaranteed by a strong government for its citizens. What are some freedoms your country provides that may not be provided in other countries? See how many you can list below.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Freedom can, be defined as the privilege and responsibility to choose what is right.

Strong, moral leadership with the authority and power to hold citizens accountable provides maximum freedom.

Look up the following Bible verses and connect each Scripture with the matching claim on the right.

Matthew 28:18

**Jesus is perfect in righteousness.
There is no corruption in His
leadership**

1 John 2:1

**If Jesus sets a person free, they are
fully free.**

Hebrews 13:8

**Jesus has all power and authority.
There is none who can rival him.**

John 8:36

**Jesus never changes. His
leadership will never weaken.**

In your opinion, what do these verses teach about Jesus' leadership and the freedom He brings us?

Think About It

The biblical word for Jesus' supreme leadership is *Lord*. [There is none higher than Jesus. There is none wiser than Jesus. There is none greater than Jesus].

The key to *walking in freedom* is embracing Jesus as Lord. This is more than just lip service or making a quick confession with your mouth. Embracing Jesus as Lord means you choose to come under His leadership in every aspect of your life. When you do, you are guaranteed a freedom no one can take away. When Jesus is Lord of your life, you have a leader who will teach you how to recognize what is right. He will always give you the opportunity and strength to do what is right and to benefit from your obedience.

Let's look at a few more verses that teach us about freedom in the *Lord* Jesus Christ. Fill in the blanks:

- In Christ, I am a _____ of Heaven. (Philippians 3:20)
- In Christ, I am free from the power of _____ and _____. (Romans 8:2)
- In Christ, I am free to discover God's _____ for my life. (Romans 12:2)
- In Christ, I am no longer a sinner. Instead, I am a _____. (Ephesians 1:1)

There is so much more to be said about freedom in Christ. When you make Christ Lord of your daily life, I am confident you will be delighted by freedom. You will also find yourself consistently *walking in freedom!*

There is a special tool available through Generation Freedom and Freedom in Christ Ministries called *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*. The "*steps*" have been used by millions of Christians around the world to maximize their experience of freedom in Christ. Again, it's all about surrendering to the right leader: the Lord Jesus Christ. Ask your mentor, pastor or this ministry about *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*. It will quicken your pace and steady your step as you continue to *walk in freedom*.

In the meantime, let's conclude this lesson with another list of important truths about your new identity in Christ, your Lord. Recite these truths out loud, twice daily, over the next week.

In Christ

I Am Accepted

I am a child of God. (John 1:12)
I am Jesus' chosen friend. (John 15:15)
I am holy and acceptable to God (justified). (Rom. 5:1)
I am united to the Lord and am one spirit with Him. (1 Cor. 3:16)
I have been bought with a price. I belong to God. (1 Cor. 6:19, 20)
I am a part of Christ's Body, part of His family. (1 Cor. 12:27)
I am a saint, a holy one. (Eph. 1:1)
I have been adopted as God's child. (Eph. 1:5)
I have been bought back (redeemed) and forgiven of all my sins. (Col. 1:14)
I am complete in Christ. (Col. 2:10)

I Am Secure

I am forever free from punishment. (Rom. 8:1- 2)
I am certain all things work together for good. (Rom. 8:28)
I am free from any condemning charges against me. (Rom. 8:31f)
I cannot be separated from the love of God. (Rom. 8:35f)
I am hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:3)
I am certain that God will finish the good work he has begun in me. (Phil 1:6)
I am a citizen of heaven, along with the rest of God's family. (Eph. 2:19)
I can find grace and mercy in times of need. (Heb. 4:16)
I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me. (1 John 5:18)

I Am Significant

I am salt and light to those around me. (Matt. 5:13,14)
I am part of the true vine, joined to Christ and able to produce much fruit. (John 15:1, 5)
I am hand-picked by Jesus to bear fruit. (John 15:16)
I am a Spirit-empowered witness of Christ. (Acts 1:8)
I am a temple of God and the Holy Spirit lives in me. (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19)
I am at peace with God and He has called me to tell others that they can also have peace with God. (2 Cor. 5:17)
I am God's co-worker. (2 Cor. 6:1)
I am seated with Christ in heaven. (Eph. 2:6)
I am God's building project, His handiwork; created to do His work. (Eph. 2:10)
I am able to do all things through Christ who gives me strength! (Phil. 4:13)

First Steps for New Christians

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him ...

Colossians 2:6, ESV

Lesson 4: Walk in Power

The Trinity--there it is. I have just introduced one of the most challenging concepts of Christianity into a beginners' Bible study. Not fair, I know.

When Christians refer to the *Trinity*, we are talking about the mystery of God's three-in-one nature. The Bible reveals God to be one, or consistent in His nature and character, yet three in composition (Deuteronomy 6:4). *He is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit*. Perhaps the best picture we have of the Trinity is found in the Gospel accounts at Jesus' baptism. As *Jesus* (The Son) is baptized, God the Father speaks from Heaven and the Holy Spirit descends from heaven as a dove (Luke 3:22). This can be a difficult concept to wrap our minds around.

While it's important for you to be aware of the truth that the God of the Bible is three-in-one, the focus of this lesson will be the often overlooked and misunderstood person of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit.

Most Christians know a lot more about *God the Father* and *Jesus the Son* than they do about *God the Holy Spirit*. God gave Jesus to the world so all who believe could have eternal life and overcome the *consequences* of sin. God gave His Spirit to believers in Christ so we might overcome the *power* of sin and be transformed into people who resemble our God.

Walking in power means you are learning to welcome the Holy Spirit's presence into your life, in order to have the power to live in a way that pleases God. Walking in power is part of a life-long journey toward becoming like Jesus. The Holy Spirit produces this transformation for you.

What do you know or think you know about the Holy Spirit?

- The Holy Spirit lives inside every Christian. ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure
- The Holy Spirit makes people do crazy things. ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure
- The Holy Spirit is mysterious and is impossible to know. ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure

- The Holy Spirit lives inside Christ-followers. _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Not Sure
- The Holy Spirit should be referred to as “He,” not “it.” _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Not Sure

A Proper Introduction

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus spoke to His disciples about the person who would continue his earthly ministry in a very powerful way. Look carefully at the following passages that record Jesus’ words and follow the instructions.

- Read **John 14: 15P 18**. Jesus is talking about sending someone to help His followers keep His commandments. Check the boxes that match Jesus’ description of this *Helper*.

<input type="checkbox"/> He is a Spirit <input type="checkbox"/> He is someone like me <input type="checkbox"/> He is like Jesus <input type="checkbox"/> He is truth <input type="checkbox"/> The world can easily recognize Him	<input type="checkbox"/> Only Christians can fully recognize Him <input type="checkbox"/> He will live on the inside of Christ-followers. <input type="checkbox"/> He is like God, the perfect Father
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- Read **John 14: 25-27**. The Holy Spirit assists Christ-followers by _____ them all things and helping them to _____ the things that Jesus has said (vs. 26) .
 According to Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit is recognized by a strong sense of _____ (vs. 27) .
- Read **John 15:26**. According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of _____. When we need to speak up and share the truth about Jesus, the Holy Spirit will:

<input type="checkbox"/> Help us to run away. <input type="checkbox"/> Help us change the subject in a funny way.	<input type="checkbox"/> Help us to keep quiet. <input type="checkbox"/> Give us the words and the confidence to testify.
--	--

Read **John 16: 7-11**. Have you ever tried to convince someone of something who stubbornly refused to see things from your perspective? It can be very frustrating and disappointing. When it comes to sharing Jesus and God's plan of salvation, the Holy Spirit plays a powerful role.

He convinces people of their _____ and God's standard for _____ and their unavoidable _____ (vs. 8).

What does it mean to you to have Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit will do all of the convincing? All we have to do is share the truth and encourage others to consider God's plan of salvation.

Read **John 16:12-15**. Jesus understands that He has more to share with us than our minds can absorb at one time. Therefore, the Holy Spirit acts as a tutor who guides believers into all truth (vs. 13). According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will help us for several reasons. Check the boxes which apply:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Holy Spirit likes to draw attention to himself. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Holy Spirit likes to charge for information. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Holy Spirit works to make Jesus famous. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Holy Spirit delights to give Jesus' insight to Christ-followers. |

Experiencing the Holy Spirit

After Jesus departed planet Earth, the Holy Spirit arrived. Just as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit had made a huge impact and functioned like Jesus said He would. You can check it out for yourself in **Acts 2**.

So what about you? Have you begun to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life? Is He teaching and guiding you daily? Are you finding the power to live the life Jesus died to give you? There are more things about the Holy Spirit's presence you'll need to know so you might *walk in power*.

Consider the following verse from **Ephesians 5:18**:

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit (New Living Translation)

This verse is comparing what two things? _____

Have you ever encountered a person who was drunk? Check the boxes that describe a person under the influence of alcohol.

- ☐ Slurred speech
- ☐ Confused thinking
- ☐ Less reserved

- ☐ Impulsiveness
- ☐ Physical imbalance
- ☐ Other

Likewise, a person under the influence of the Holy Spirit should be easy to recognize. **Galatians 5: 22-23** describes a person under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Fill in the blanks:

*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: _____, _____,
_____, _____, kindness, _____, faithfulness, gentleness, and
_____. Galatians 5: 22-23a*

The power of the Holy Spirit does not end here. In addition, He helps us to pray (Romans 8:26); gives us a supernatural skill set to serve God (spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11); and empowers us to make right choices. The Holy Spirit has been given to you as a helper and a guarantee that you can be the "you" God created you to be!

Cooperation is the Key

God wants you to enjoy the presence and power of His Spirit every day. But it is important for you to understand that God will not force Himself on you. Instead, God will meet you at the level of trust and surrender you are willing to give Him. He will match His power with your level of cooperation. When the Bible says, "*be filled with the Holy Spirit*" it is telling us to cooperate fully. Daily we are called to drink in God's Spirit and surrender total control to Him.

I am often asked, "How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?" The answer lies in the simple strategy that we have been emphasizing in these lessons:

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him
Colossians 2:6

When you received Jesus you confessed your need for God and handed over your life to Him by faith. To be filled with the Spirit means that you daily confess your need for God to empower you and willingly hand over control of your life to Him every day. I pray aloud each day, "Lord, please fill me with your Spirit" or "Holy Spirit, I welcome Your leadership today. Please fill me and control every part of my life."

If you've never prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit before, it is sometimes helpful to have a trusted Christian parent, pastor or mentor pray with you the first time. They can support you by laying a hand on you and praying in agreement with you.

Remember: Cooperation is the key.

- **Ephesians 4:30** describes what happens when we choose to yield to the temptation of sin rather than cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Put a check in the box which correctly describes the Holy Spirit's response to our decision to sin.
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit is humiliated
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit is saddened
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit is furious
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit thinks it's funny
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit ignores it
- **1 Thessalonians 5:19** explains what happens when the Holy Spirit directs us to do something and we choose not to cooperate. Put a check in the box that matches the outcome of that decision.
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit is humiliated
 - ☐ You limit the Holy Spirit's power in your life
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit is furious
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit thinks it's funny
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit ignores it

Final thought

Imagine taking a trip and upon arrival there are two lodging options. The first option is the home of a nice family who gives you a bedroom with your own bathroom. They give you a key to a side entrance to the house, where you can come and go to your room. They tell you to be sure to let them know if you need anything and they'll do their best to help you, but they have a busy schedule and other priorities which take up their time.

The second housing option is a home of comparable size. The family at this home gives you a bedroom with your own bath, but also gives you a tour of the entire house (including the kitchen and pantry) and tells you to make yourself at home. This family wants you to consider their house your home and if you need something to let them know. There is nothing in their home off-limits to you. Their greatest desire is for you to feel at home.

Question: Which of these two housing options would you choose? _____

Most people would choose the second option. Yet, I wonder how many Christians treat the Holy Spirit the way the first family treats their house guests, by only giving Him limited access to their entire life?

So what about you? Will you give the Holy Spirit full access to His new dwelling place in your life? Or will you try to restrict His access?

This week, hopefully, as you make the choice to be filled with the Holy Spirit everyday, consider the invitation you are giving Him. Will you surrender completely to the Holy Spirit, giving Him total control and influence; or will you limit His power in your life. Don't miss the power of this fundamental principle.

Walk in power!

First Steps for New Christians

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him ...
Colossians 2:6, ESV

Lesson 5: Walk in Community

Here is a simple truth: a collection of lit candles dispels much more darkness than a single candle burning alone. Likewise, Christians were meant to shine for Jesus together. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that a Christian's faith should be practiced privately. Instead, followers of Jesus are repeatedly encouraged to band together for the sake of making God famous. We can do much more together than we can apart.

Christian community or a faith community of Jesus is commonly referred to as "church." You might think the *church* is a building or you may have heard people refer to Sunday worship services as "*going to church*;" but the church is neither of those things. Church is an interconnected group of Christ-followers who seek to practice their faith in Jesus together on a variety of levels. These Christ-followers meet in various locations and settings. Regardless of the "where" and the "how," the Bible instructs Christians to get together regularly.


Walking in community is a step you will need to take in your journey with God. While some view participating in church as optional, your involvement in Christian community is a must for spiritual growth.

What Do You Think?

Think of some of the "church buildings" you have seen near your home. In your opinion, what are some of the reasons people attend church services?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> To worship God | <input type="checkbox"/> To get a spiritual boost |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To learn more about God | <input type="checkbox"/> Because they've always gone--it's a habit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To get caught up on neighborhood news and gossip | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To show off their families | |

How familiar are you with church gatherings?

									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not a clue--I've never been around church on any level						Very familiar--I've been around church my whole life			

What is your current attitude regarding church gatherings and the services held in church buildings? Circle the number which describes you best.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I'm bored					I'm excited				

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I don't feel welcomed					I feel very welcomed				

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The music is lousy					I love the music				

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I can't follow the teaching					The teaching really keeps my attention				

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I feel like I'm just going through the motions					I always feel better about my faith when I participate				

God's Bod: The Body of Christ

Nowadays, it's a popular thing to take a stand against "organized religion." Religion has indeed been the source of many problems throughout history. But, when a person says, "I don't believe in organized religion", it's likely they mean, "I don't see the need to participate in church." However, it's important to recognize the fact that *Christianity* is not *religion*. Christianity is really a relationship with God. Jesus has made a way for people to be one with God. If you really think about it, the church is really a collection of people who represent the physical presence of God on planet Earth. Or, as the Bible puts it, we (the Church) are the body of Christ. See for yourself:

Read 1 Corinthians 12: 12-20.

These verses describe the church as a _____.

Continue by reading 1 Corinthians 12: 21-31. Check the blanks which best agree with the teachings in these verses.

The Church, like a human body, functions best when everyone works together.

___Agree ___Disagree ___Not sure

The Church is a place where people should do their own thing.

___Agree ___Disagree ___Not sure

It's easier to be a Christian if you avoid Church.

___Agree ___Disagree ___Not sure

Some members of the Church are more important than others

___Agree ___Disagree ___Not sure

When Christians love each other through the Church, God is honored and His work is accomplished.

___Agree ___Disagree ___Not sure

Read Ephesians 4: 11-14. According to these verses, the Church provides Christians the opportunity to be:

☐ trained

☐ unified

☐ cared for

☐ mature

☐ taught

☐ focused on Jesus

☐ motivated

☐ Other

Is It Really That Important?

Doesn't God have bigger things to worry about than your regular involvement in Church? Well, God's plan to address those bigger issues involves His Church. The Church is called to spread God's hope and love by sharing the truth about Jesus and serving those in need. This is a pretty big job. Which is why God tells us to hang out together and work together.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25.

Rewrite these two verses in your own words: _____

Walking in community, or actively involving yourself in Church, is one of the more challenging steps toward maturity. As we have seen in previous lessons, God's favor and power in our lives are always ignited by our faith. Take some time to allow more of God's Word to build your faith regarding the Church. Match the correct verse on the left with the church principle on the right.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Serve each other in community

Galatians 5:13

Confess your sins and pray for each other in community

James 5:16

Show love and respect for each other in community

Romans 12:10

Allow community to teach you patience, humility, gentleness, and consideration

Ephesians 4:2

Allow community to teach you the blessing of forgiveness and make you tenderhearted

Ephesians 4: 31-32

Encourage one another in community

Convinced Yet?

Let me share a trustworthy truth from the Hebrews 10 passage:
People grow better together!

There is an old Chinese proverb which tells of the phenomenon that occurs among trees in their natural habitat. Trees which grow together in a forest tend to be much taller than trees planted individually in someone's yard. This is because the trees in a forest must naturally stretch further toward the sun in order to expose as many of their leaves as possible to its life-giving light. Trees planted by themselves are not required to stretch as far to reach sunlight. I'm sure you can see where I'm going with this: involvement in Christian community (the Church) will boost your spiritual growth. Why? Because the Church utilizes God's Word (the Bible) to help Christians *walk in truth* and draws our attention to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Which, in turn, helps us to *walk in trust, walk in freedom* and *walk in power*. Finally, the Church is the place where Christians from all backgrounds, with a variety of rich experience and godly wisdom can help us *walk out our faith!*

So what will you do from this point forward? Will you make the Church a priority in your walk with God? Maybe you are wondering about the best way to choose a church. As a wrap up for today's lesson, I've included some important questions for you to consider when you are choosing a church to attend:

- ✚ ***Are the teaching and opinions of its leaders in line with the Bible?***
- ✚ ***Does the worship focus on God and help me to worship Him?***
- ✚ ***Do the people of this church care about making a difference in their culture by living out their faith?***
- ✚ ***Are there people in this church who will take a personal interest in my spiritual growth?***
- ✚ ***Is the atmosphere of the church warm, welcoming and loving to regular attendees and visitors alike?***

Walk in community!

First Steps for New Christians

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him ...

Colossians 2:6, ESV

Lesson 6: Walk in Victory

I've got some good news and some bad news. If you're like me, you want the bad news first. So here it comes, the bad news first.

You have an enemy--and not just any enemy. Your enemy is not human; he is supernatural and spiritual. This enemy is stronger than you, smarter than you, fiercer than you and does not fight fair. The Bible describes this enemy (Satan) as having a powerful leader, with a vast army of demons. Their intent is to wage war against humanity for the purpose of minimizing God's fame. Human beings were made in God's image and have the capacity to reflect God's glory in remarkable ways (Genesis 1-2). Therefore, this enemy works hard to distract human beings from God's love in order to stunt their spiritual growth and keep them disconnected from God. Should a human being trust in Jesus; this enemy works hard to keep the Christian in a defeated lifestyle, so we will never fully reach our God-designed potential in life. Now are you ready for some good news?

The good news is that you have a God who loves you and has adopted you as His own child. Even though the enemy is strong, God is the Almighty. Even though the enemy is clever, God is the All-Knowing. Even though the enemy is very organized, God alone is All-Present (everywhere at once). There is really no comparison between this enemy and our Great God. He cares for you and has promised never to leave you nor abandon you. God has you covered! Now that's good news!

Although your relationship with God in Christ is secure, you must do your part to be victorious in the spiritual battles you face. Just because you have become a Christian, doesn't mean the enemy will leave you alone; quite the contrary. You are now the focus of his attacks. The more you grow to be like Jesus, the more God's glory will shine through you, showing others His love and salvation. Therefore, the enemy does not want to see you succeed. There is much at stake in the battle between good and evil. In order for you to walk in victory, you must recognize you face a daily battle. Know your enemy, but remember the victory has already been won through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Perhaps more importantly, you'll need to believe and trust that, "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4)." This lesson will give you the basics for *walking in victory*!

What do you know or think you know about your enemy?

- The devil is a fallen angel. ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure
- The devil has powers just like God. ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure
- Demons typically operate just like they are portrayed in movies. ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure
- The enemy tends to be organized like an army with different levels of leadership and ranks. ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure
- The devil is a real person. ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure

It's never productive to take our focus off the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). However, it is wise for Christians to have a basic understanding of the enemy so we can be victorious in battle. In order to simplify this lesson, most of the commentary will be in reference to the devil/Satan. Just realize that the same ugly traits which characterize Satan are true of lesser demons.

Take a look at this list of names the Bible uses to refer to Satan:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| ➤ The Devil | ➤ Serpent |
| ➤ Lucifer | ➤ The Accuser of Christians |
| ➤ The Destroyer | ➤ Angel of Light |
| ➤ Belial (Worthless) | ➤ Prince of Darkness |
| ➤ The Dragon | ➤ Beelzebub (Lord of Flies) |
| ➤ Father of Liars | ➤ The Opposer/Adversary |
| ➤ Tempter | ➤ Prince of Demons |
| ➤ Evil One | ➤ Murderer |
| ➤ A Roaring Lion | ➤ Prince of the Power of the Air |

Which of these names stand out most to you? Why? _____

Satan is commonly portrayed in literature and other media as an obnoxious creature with horns, a pointy tail and a pitchfork. This picture of the enemy could not be further from the truth. Satan's origin and why he was created by God are both revealed in the Scriptures.

The prophet Ezekiel gives us a stunning picture of Satan before he became an enemy of God. Ezekiel recorded the testimony of God regarding his creation of Satan. **Circle** all of the positive things God had to say about Satan's original condition.

*You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty....
Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone— all beautifully crafted
for you and set in the finest gold. They were given to you on the day you were
created.*

*I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. You had access to
the holy mountain of God and walked among the stones of fire. You were
blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil
was found in you. **Ezekiel 28:12b-15 NLT***

If you remember anything about these verses, remember that Satan is a created being. Though originally quite beautiful, his greatness cannot compare to the splendor and power of the eternal God. God created Satan in perfection; he was beautiful until evil was found in him.

The prophet Isaiah recorded the details of Satan's descent into wickedness. Circle the phrase "**I will**" every time it appears in the text below:

*How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have
been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world.
For you said to yourself, "I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above
God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north.
I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High."
Instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest
depths. **Isaiah 14: 12-15 NLT***

Satan's rebellion can be summed up in a five-letter word: P__ _ D__
Satan's original sin was pride, leading to a terrible rebellion against God.

The Bible also tells us that a large number of angels joined Satan's rebellion and were cast out of God's Heaven (Luke 10:18; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6).

After Satan and the rebellious angels *fell* from Heaven, they surfaced on planet Earth. Satan was present in the Garden of Eden, where he tempted Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). His activity is also detailed in several other Bible passages.

One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. "Where have you come from?" the Lord asked Satan.

Satan answered the Lord, "I have been patrolling the earth, watching everything that's going on." Job 1:6-7 NLT

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Luke 4:1-2 NLT

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8 NLT

What do these verses tell you about demonic activity on earth? Write out your thoughts.

Look carefully at the verse that follows 1 Peter 5:8 (above).

*Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. **Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith ...** 1 Peter 5: 8b-9a, NLT (emphasis mine)*

Here it is again: the key to *walking in victory* is the same truth we have been studying in each of the previous lessons. The key to victory over the enemy is *faith*. Remember our key verse for these lessons:

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him ...
Colossians 2:6, ESV

Your faith in God's plan of salvation introduced God's saving grace into your life. God's grace cleaned you up, gave you eternal life and brought you into His family as His precious child. The devil couldn't prevent God from saving you. Likewise, if you continue to trust in God's truth and power, the devil will not be able to prevent God's will and purpose in your life.

Without God, you have no chance of overcoming the devil's power to deceive and mislead you. With God, however, this enemy has no chance at achieving victory over you. This is good news!

So how does a Christian continue to walk by faith when it comes to daily victory over the devil? I'm glad you asked. The winning strategy for spiritual warfare and victory over the satanic forces is best summed up in one simple verse:

Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee. James 4:7

This short verse contains two commands and one promise. Write them in the blanks below:

Command #1 _____

Command #2 _____

The Promise _____

If you want to walk in victory, learn to submit (surrender) to God each day. In addition to surrendering to God, learn to recognize the enemy's methods (e.g., temptation and lies). When you notice the enemy's activity, resist him by rejecting his lies aloud and embracing God's truth; this tactic works especially well in the face of temptation.

Think About It

Pick a situation below in which you commonly face temptation:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stealing/shoplifting | <input type="checkbox"/> Anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lying | <input type="checkbox"/> Complaining/criticism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/hopelessness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quarreling/arguing | <input type="checkbox"/> Impure thoughts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hatred | <input type="checkbox"/> Eagerness for lustful pleasure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy/envy | <input type="checkbox"/> Cheating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gossip/slander | <input type="checkbox"/> Greed/materialism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Procrastination | <input type="checkbox"/> Apathy/laziness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swearing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear /anxiety | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bitterness/unforgiveness | |

Imagine using the strategy of James 4:7 the next time you are tempted to sin. Plug your sin into the prayer below and practice saying the declaration out loud. Remember the devil can't read your mind; he's not God. When we resist the enemy we need to do so out loud. There's no need to shout or raise your voice. Living by faith is not just a matter of believing something is true in your heart; it's also about confessing with your mouth (Romans 10:9-10).

[Prayer] *God, I confess to You that I am being tempted to _____. I agree with You that this is sinful and my participation in this behavior would demonstrate a lack of faith in You. I give You my life and I welcome the Holy Spirit to control me fully. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.*

[Statement of faith] *In the name of Jesus I reject the lie that (name the temptation) will satisfy my soul or give me lasting peace and joy. I am a child of the Most High God. He alone can meet my every need. In the name of Jesus, I command any evil spirit to leave my presence this very moment.*

Note: There are no magic words to pray to ward off the devil. What matters is that you are submitting or surrendering to God in your heart and resisting the devil out loud with your mouth. Thus, obeying James 4:7

What was it like to pray a prayer that followed the directions of James 4:7?

What might this approach to James 4:7 look like if you were struggling with fear? Or stress? Or gloominess? Choose one of these struggles and write out your own prayer and declaration of faith below.

[Prayer] _____

[Statement of faith] _____

Remember to practice James 4:7 consistently and repeatedly whenever necessary. When we choose to submit to God and resist the devil, the enemy ultimately flees!!! This is great news!

For more helpful information on *walking in victory*, be sure to read *Stomping Out the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker (Youth Edition)*, both by Anderson and Park. Another very helpful resource is *The Steps to Freedom in Christ for Teens and Young Adults*. All three of these resources are available through Freedom in Christ Ministries USA's online bookstore (www.freedominchrist.com).

Final thoughts...

Consider two final verses which present the truth about your position as a believer in Christ; as a Christian.

But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory... because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. 1 John 4:4a,c NLT

We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them. 1 John 5:18 NLT

As you finish this lesson think about the following:

Don't overestimate Satan.

Don't underestimate him.

You will *walk in victory* when you are walking by faith, immersed in the Word of God and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Walk in victory!

First Steps for New Christians

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him
Colossians 2:6, ESV

Lesson 7: Walking and Talking with God.

Some people believe God is too big and too preoccupied with universal issues to care about the details of their every day lives. This is simply not true. Throughout the Bible, God initiates interaction and conversation with individuals, as well as groups of people. Jesus intentionally pursued relationships and interacted with people wherever He traveled or taught. In fact, immediately after His resurrection from the grave, Jesus walked with two men as they headed to their rural home outside of Jerusalem (Luke 24:13-35). During their journey, Jesus listened intently as His companions spoke from their hearts about the events surrounding the crucifixion. Then, the Scriptures tell us, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself (v.27)." Their understanding of Scripture was supernaturally expanded.

In the same way, God wants to communicate with you as you walk with Him. Prayer is the way Christians converse with God. Prayer builds a relationship with God like nothing else. Therefore, praying is one of the most important things you can learn to do as a Christian. The key to prayer is the same as every other concept of Christianity; it begins with faith. The focus of our faith is Almighty God, sovereign Creator of the universe; He is the One to whom we pray. Your commitment to learn more about Him and willingness to obey whatever He may ask of you will shape the quality of your prayer experience.

In this lesson we will look at some basic truths about prayer. We'll discover how to talk to God in prayer and consider why God's answers to prayer are not always what we expect.

That's Why We Pray!

What importance has prayer played in your life so far? Check the items below which apply to your understanding of prayer. Prayer is:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> something I'm required to do | <input type="checkbox"/> talking to myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> difficult | <input type="checkbox"/> talking to God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dull | <input type="checkbox"/> listening to God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> easy to do | <input type="checkbox"/> hard for me to comprehend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> asking for things | <input type="checkbox"/> Other_____ |

The Truth Is Indicate the number of times you have prayed in the last 24 hours.

- ☐ At least twice
- ☐ More than 3 times

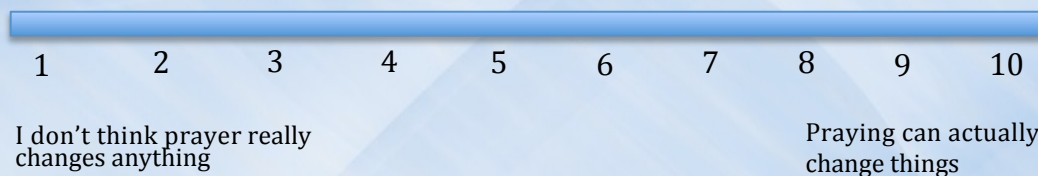
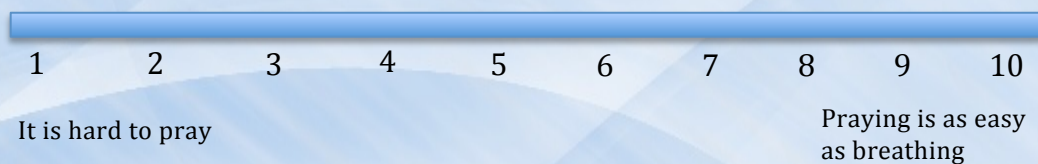
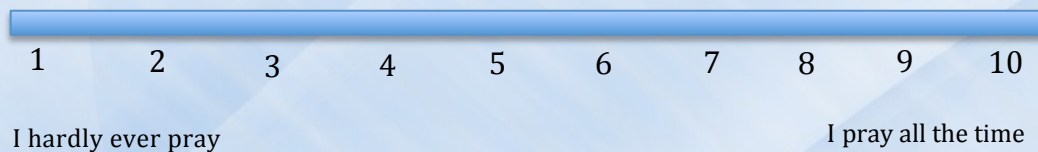
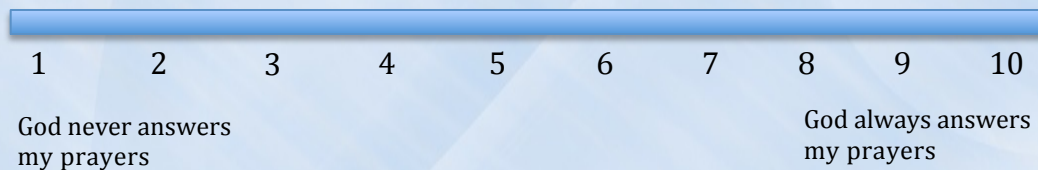
- ☐ None
- ☐ Too many times to remember

There are many reasons people don't pray. Some people don't know how to pray, while some simply don't feel the need to pray. Some people are unsure if their prayers will be heard, let alone be answered.

Complete this sentence.

If I had a guarantee or if I knew for sure that God would respond to my next prayer, I would talk to Him about

Mark the place on each line that best describes your beliefs about prayer up to this point in your life.



Prayer 101: The Basics

The best dads love to talk with their children, even if the children can't speak in full sentences, grasp great concepts or ask challenging questions. God also loves to talk with *His* children! Thankfully, effective prayer does not depend upon your age nor your ease with words. Prayer is a matter of drawing near to God in conversation, while recognizing that He is also drawing near to you (James 4:8).

Key thought: Though God is your Heavenly Father, he's not your earthly dad in the sense that you should approach him casually--after all, this is Almighty God we're talking about! Jesus helped his disciples with this concept when they asked him to teach them how to pray in Matthew 6. Read the passage below and connect the verse on the left with the matching principle on the right.

*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 6:9:13

Remember to confess your sins to God and to forgive others.

Depend on God for your daily needs.

Ask God to guard your heart from sin and evil.

Respect God's holiness as you look to him as your Father.

Pray that God's will would be achieved in you and through you.

The Bible has so much more to say about prayer--a few more of those points are listed in the verses below. Look up the verse and fill in the blanks:

Luke 18:1-8 Prayer involves my willingness to _____ even when God doesn't respond quickly.

John 17:9-19 Jesus set the example for us; we should pray for _____ as well as for ourselves.

Philippians 4:6 About which things should you *not* pray? (Trick question)

1 John 5:14-15 It's important for me to learn about God, so I can pray according to His _____.

Helpful Hints

Acronyms are great tools for remembering important principles. The acronym **PRAY** can be used as a guideline for personal prayer:

Praise: Let God know you are grateful; thank Him for your blessings.
E.g., Dear Father, You are so wonderful and holy. I thank you for _____.

Repent: admit your mistakes and sin.
I confess that I've failed in the following ways

Ask God to meet your needs, as well as the needs of others.

Yield: don't do all the talking; listen for God to speak to your heart.
Let God know you will trust that He knows what is best.

Contrary to what you may have heard, God *always* answers prayer. God responds to our prayers with a "yes" or a "no;" and sometimes he says, "you need to wait." Answers to prayer can be delayed for a variety of reasons. In some cases, prayer is delayed because we are out of line with God's will. Look up the following Scriptures and link them to their matching truths:

Answer to prayer can be delayed if:

Matthew 6:15	I am walking in disobedience
Matthew 7:7-8; James 4:2	I am harboring bitterness toward others
John 15:7; 1 John 3:22	I am asking with selfish motives
James 4:3	I am simply not asking

Prayer is not a way for you to control God, like a cosmic vending machine that gives you what you want. He is totally wise and completely loving and He always knows and wants what is best for you. God cares about you personally and is ready to listen to and communicate with you. When you pray, speak to God with honesty and respect. Prayer is your opportunity to tell God about every detail in life that is important to you. You can pray aloud or in your heart, and you can pray anywhere.

Take a moment to think through your daily routine. When would you have an opportunity to pray? Check the box(es) which apply.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Before you leave for school | <input type="checkbox"/> When you are nervous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> As you shower or bathe | <input type="checkbox"/> When you are fearful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Before you eat a meal | <input type="checkbox"/> When you are sad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After you sin (confession) | <input type="checkbox"/> Before you fall asleep at night |
| <input type="checkbox"/> When you need strength to resist temptation | <input type="checkbox"/> I can pray throughout the day |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> When you are happy and thankful |

Think back through the previous six lessons. Remind yourself that God loves you and desires to give you what is best. It's up to you to cooperate with and trust Him; prayer will help with this. God's timing in answering your prayers may frustrate you, but hang in there: God promises that our prayers will be answered as we learn to pray in harmony with His perfect perspective. Prayer will bring you closer to God as you embrace your relationship with Him and fill your heart and mind with His words (John 15:7).

Take time to pray right now!

One Final Suggestion

Consider keeping a journal, notebook or log to record your prayer requests and the dates on which answers are received.

Be sure to check out other resources for growing in Christ online at www.freedominchrist.com