

# Growing in Christ

## Born Again

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). The Bible states that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Once you have believed that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and openly accepted Him as your Lord and Saviour, you have been born again into the Kingdom of God (John 3:3 and Romans 10:9-10).

Now that you have been born again of the Spirit of God you have become a child of God (John 1:11-12 and John 3:5-8) with God Himself as your heavenly Father (2 Corinthians 6:18). Since you are now a new person in Christ, God no longer holds your sins against you (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). The Bible tells us that God will not condemn or punish anyone who believes in Jesus (John 3:18 and Romans 8:1), instead He forgives us all our sins (Hebrews 10:17:18 and Colossians 1:13-14).

## What Now?

Now God wants you to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). God wants you to know certain things, to have certain things, and to do certain things, as part of your new life as a Christian. Let us take a look at each of these, which are just the first, though essential steps of a lifetime experience of learning about God through the knowledge of His Son (John 14:9-10).

## God Wants You To Know

**God Loves you.** God loves everyone in the whole world (John 3:16) and wants to save each and every one of us (2 Peter 3:9). Furthermore God loved us first, while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). God loved us just as we were, and was waiting to pour out His mercy on us (Titus 3:3-7), and Jesus tells us the heavens rejoice each time one person repents and is saved (Luke 15:7 and Luke 15:10). The Bible tells us that that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

**You are a new person** Jesus tells us that us that we must be born again in order to see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). Yet this is what God does for us when we accept that Jesus died for us (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). Our old lives and our past enslavement to sin are discarded, just as if they were crucified with Jesus (Romans 6:6). Now we are born again to live with and for Christ (Galatians 2:20).

**You can live victoriously** The Bible not only urges us to keep away from sin (Romans 6:11-14) but tells us that when we resist the devil he is compelled to flee from us, while if we draw near to God, God will draw near to us (James 4:7-8). The Bible tells us what sin is and that all who continue in sin will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Galatians 5:16-21). This does not mean that now that you are born again you will never sin, or that God will not continue to forgive you. The Bible says that if we confess our sins to God then, because Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins, God will forgive us (1 John 1:8-10 and 1 John 2:1-2), and our fellowship with God and Jesus will be restored (1 John 1:3 and 1 John 1:6-7).

**God is with you** God said that He would never leave or forsake us, but that He would be with us always (Matthew 28:20). You may wonder how this can be since Jesus, after his death and resurrection, is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Ephesians 1:20 and Colossians 3:1). But Jesus said that it was good that He was going to the Father, because then we would receive the Holy Spirit, who would be with us and in us always (John 14:16-17, John 14:26, John 15:26, John 16:7). Even when it does not feel like it or when your prayers do not seem to be answered immediately, you can depend on God (1 Corinthians 1:9 and 2 Thessalonians 3:3) and that He will do what is best for you (Romans 8:28).

## God Wants You To Have ...

**God wants you to have peace** To a world filled with strife and hatred God sent His son Jesus that we may have peace (Acts 10:36). God does not want us to be anxious about anything, but to rejoice, because He has given us His peace (Philippians 4:4-7). This peace has two forms: We have peace with God through our faith in Jesus (Romans 5:11) since all our sins have been forgiven, and for those who believe there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1). We can also have peace in our daily lives. Jesus said that we are not to let our hearts be troubled or afraid (John 14:27) but to take comfort in the fact that he has overcome the world, and all the evil in it (John 16:33).

**God want to bless you by meeting all your needs** God knows all our needs, but says that we must seek His Kingdom and His righteousness as our first priority, and then He will meet all our needs (Matthew 6:31-33). Once you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you have the right to call on God as your heavenly father, and He is waiting to answer your prayers (Matthew 7:7-11). Jesus said that He had been anointed to set the spiritually oppressed free and to heal the sick (Luke 4:18). Oppression and sickness come from the devil (Acts 10:38) and Jesus came to destroy his works (1 John 3:8). Jesus went about healing the sick (Matthew 4:23 and Matthew 8:16) and gave authority to his disciples to do the same (Matthew 10:1), and said that those who believed in His name would pray for the sick and they would be healed (Mark 16:17-18).

God promises you eternity with Jesus Himself in heaven (Romans 8:17 and Matthew 25:46). Jesus said we should rejoice more in this than anything else (Luke 10:20) and that we should rather seek to lay up treasures in heaven than on earth (Matthew 6:19-20).

### **God Wants You to do ...**

Before we look at the things that God wants us to do, let us remember that ***it is not the things we do that result in our salvation, but our faith in Jesus*** (Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 11:6). We should therefore, like Jesus, always strive to do the will of our Father out of love, and not out of fear or condemnation (John 6:38 and Romans 8:1). Since Christianity is a relationship with God, ***it is essential that we spend time with God, which we can do in prayer***. There are various types of prayer. Prayer can be thanks-giving to God, or request to God to meet our needs (Philippians 4:6). Prayer does not have to be formal – it can be in church, or at a special time you set aside each day, or at any moment of the day. The Bible urges us to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Whenever you pray, pray in faith believing that your prayers will be answered (James 1:6-8). The Bible tells us that the prayers of a righteousness man are powerful and effective (James 5:16).

**Read God's Word.** Jesus said that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4), and though heaven and earth may pass away, His words will never (Matthew 24:35). We must read the whole Bible and apply it to our lives, because all scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

**Grow in faith.** The Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6). Faith in God protects us from temptations and other forms of attack by the devil (Ephesians 6:16) and helps us to receive healing and to overcome problems in our lives (Mark 9:23). To increase your faith, study the Word of God, which is the Bible (Romans 10:17).

**Join a church** The Bible tells us that a church is not made of stones, but that we are the stones that make up the spiritual house of God (1 Peter 2:5). We are also told the church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23) over which Christ is the head (Colossians 1:18), and for whom He gave His life (Ephesians 5:25). The church you join should be somewhere where you can worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) and where you, as part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) be taught more about the Kingdom of God (Acts 11:26) and use and develop the gifts that God gives you (Romans 12:4-8).

**Have fellowship with other Christians.** Jesus said that even where two or three gather together in His name then (by the Holy Spirit) He is with them (Matthew 18:20). In the Bible we read that the early Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, and to breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 4:42). They were urged not to give up meeting together but to encourage each other towards love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25).

**Resist Temptation.** The Bible says that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us (James 4:7) but that if we sin we should confess them to God, as God is faithful and just and will forgive us and purify us from all un-righteousness (1 John 1:9). God does not tempt us (James 1:13) but instead, when we ask, delivers us from all temptation (Luke 11:4). Temptation comes from the devil (1 Thessalonians 3:5) and from our own evil desires (James 1:13).

**Be baptised.** Jesus said that we should make disciples from people of every nation, and that we should be baptised (Matthew 28:19). It is clear from the Bible that there is more than one type of baptism (Hebrews 6:1-2).

By repenting of our sins, believing in and confessing Jesus as our Lord and Saviour we are saved (Romans 10:9-10) and are baptised into the body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:13). We must also, once we have repented and believed in Jesus, be baptised in water (Acts 2:38-39) just as all new believers were the book of Acts, as a public confession of their faith (Acts 8:36, Acts 17:38 and Acts 18:18). The third baptism is in the Holy Spirit, which the Bible shows may be received before baptism in water (Acts 10:47) or afterwards, and is usually through the laying on of hands by someone who has already been baptised in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18 and Acts 19:6).

**Tell others the good news.** God wants us to testify about Him (John 15:27) to everyone on earth (Acts 1:8) just as the apostles did (Acts 4:33). Not only must we tell others about Jesus, but also help them to become disciples of Jesus through baptism and teaching (Matthew 28:19-20).

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