A GUIDE FOR NEW BELIEVERS

# First Steps with Jesus

*A guide for new believers along with 30 daily devotionals*



Jeff Buckner

First Steps with Jesus

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Scripture references are provided for readers to consult in their own Bibles. The explanations and prayers in this manuscript are original prose.

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## Help for the journey

**Use the companion website.** Visit firststeps.jeffbuckner.com or scan the code below. Every reading in this booklet links straight to the ESV text. You will also find a private journal for each day, short answers to questions new believers often ask, a searchable list of the words you will hear, and a guide for the person who walks with you through these 30 days. Going through this with others? Group leaders will find a free guide for five meetings there too. Everything on the site is free.



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**You do not have to do this alone.** I would be glad to help you. Text, call, or email me any time with a question, a struggle, or a prayer request. If you would like someone to walk with you, I offer free 1-on-1 discipleship, in person in San Diego or by phone or video wherever you live. Women who would like a mentor can contact me too, and I will connect you with a woman from my church or help you find one near you.

If you live in the San Diego area, men can also join my free discipleship group training at Christ Community Church, starting January 9, 2027. Learn more at jeffbuckner.com/discipleship.

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## Welcome to your new life in Jesus Christ

If you recently accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you might be wondering, “What just happened to me?” That is perfectly normal. This booklet is designed especially for you.

You may be experiencing great joy and peace, a sense of relief, anxiety over the decision you just made, or not much of anything. Whatever you’re feeling, rest assured that this moment is unique for every believer. This booklet will help you understand your new life in Christ and provide practical steps to help you grow quickly in your knowledge, understanding, and love for him.

Throughout this booklet, you’ll be introduced to some words and phrases that may be new to you. A **disciple** is someone who learns from Jesus and follows and obeys him. You do not need years of Bible knowledge to be his disciple. You belong to a living Savior who invites you to know him, trust him, and grow alongside fellow believers. Being a disciple reaches into your whole life because it is grounded in a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus died for our sins and rose bodily from the dead. He is alive, seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and reigns eternally over all creation. During the 40 days between his resurrection and ascension, Jesus appeared to his followers, proved that he was truly alive, and taught them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). He told them, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit now dwells in you and empowers you to follow Jesus. Daily Bible reading and prayer help you understand him and respond to his love.

These daily habits are not how you earn God’s love or keep your place with him. Jesus has already done everything needed to bring you to God, and his acceptance of you rests on his work,

not yours (Ephesians 2:8-9). You read and pray because you already belong to him, not to become his.

Read the ten short introductory chapters, then begin the 30 daily devotionals. Or read a chapter alongside each of your first ten days. Keep your Bible open. Bring your questions to a trusted mature disciple or pastor. You were never meant to figure this out alone.

**Bible use.** The Bible was originally written in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek. Over the centuries, it has been translated into countless languages and versions. Differences stem from the translator's interpretation of the original writings. This booklet uses the English Standard Version (ESV) for the assigned readings. Your church may use a different translation. Many churches keep Bibles on hand to give to anyone who needs one, so ask at yours. If you would like to buy one, a popular choice is the ESV Study Bible.

Scripture references in this booklet point you to the biblical text; explanations and prayers here are original prose. A reference such as John 15:1-11 means the Gospel of John, chapter 15, verses 1 through 11.

## Your guide to the booklet

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### Keep these pages handy

Words you will hear · A to J

Words you will hear · L to W

Your next steps after day 30

**A word about the pace.** Thirty days is a starting rhythm, not a deadline for becoming mature. You can repeat a day, pause to ask a question, or take longer. Return to Jesus whenever you lose your place. The purpose is to grow in love and trust, not to produce a perfect record.

## A simple daily rhythm

Begin with about 15 minutes at a time. You need a Bible, this booklet, and something to write with. An audio Bible is useful if reading is difficult. The length of your session does not measure God's love for you.

**Ask for help.** Before you read, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the passage and respond honestly. Put distractions aside when you can. You are coming to a Person who already knows you better than you know yourself.

**Read the assigned Scripture.** Read the whole passage slowly, twice if possible. Notice who is speaking, who is listening, and what happens before and after. Then read the day's explanation. Let Scripture examine the booklet too.

**Reflect and pray.** Write a sentence or two in response to the question. Use the printed prayer as a starting point, then speak in your own words. Tell God what you believe, where you are confused, and what you need.

**Take one action.** Ask how the passage changes the way you live today. Choose the suggested step or another faithful response that fits your circumstances. Ask for the Spirit's strength, then act. Later, thank God for help and confess any failure.

### Reading with care

Ask first what the passage meant in its setting. A command to a particular person is not automatically a command to every Christian. A description of an event is not always an example to copy. Poetry uses images; letters address real churches; the Gospels tell the true story of Jesus. Read each passage as part of the Bible's larger story of creation, human sin, God's saving work in Christ, and his promised restoration.

An application should agree with what the passage teaches. A strong feeling or a verse opened at random does not settle a decision. When unsure, write down the question and seek help.

**If you miss a day.** Resume where you stopped. You do not need to double your reading to repay God. If this pattern regularly fails, choose a smaller, more realistic time. A few attentive minutes can become a steady habit.

PART ONE

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR NEW LIFE AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

## 1 What has happened to me

**Read in your Bible:** Ephesians 2:1-10; John 1:12-13.

Trusting Christ is the beginning of a new relationship and a new identity. You have entrusted yourself to Jesus, the Son of God who became truly human, died for our sins, and rose again. He reconciles us to the Father.

**You are a believer and a disciple.** These are not two levels of Christianity. Everyone who truly trusts Jesus is called to learn from him and follow him. Discipleship is not an advanced program. You follow because he has graciously called you, not to earn his acceptance.

Paul describes people separated from God by sin, then describes God's mercy in making them alive with Christ. **Grace** means God's undeserved favor. **Salvation** is his rescue from sin and its judgment, bringing us into life with him. **Faith** receives Christ and relies on him. Even your response gives you no reason to boast in yourself. The rescue comes from God.

You will hear Christians speak of being **born again**. This means the Holy Spirit gives new spiritual life (John 3:1-8). **Justification** means God declares those who trust Christ righteous because of Christ, rather than because they have earned a good enough record. **Adoption** means he welcomes them as his children. These gifts belong together, though the words describe different aspects of God's saving work.

Your history may still affect you. Memories, habits, strained relationships, and consequences do not all disappear overnight. New life means you now face them in relationship with Jesus and with help from his Spirit and people. Growth will take time. You can tell the truth about what needs to change without denying what God has already done.

Notice the order in Ephesians 2. God saves by grace through faith, and he creates his people for good works. Good works are a result of his rescue. They are never the price of admission. As a disciple, you learn to live from the acceptance Christ gives you.

**Begin here.** Tell God in your own words what you are trusting Jesus to do for you. If a word in this chapter is unfamiliar, find it in the glossary. Ask a mature disciple to explain it from Scripture.

**Reflect:** Which part of your new identity is hardest to receive?

**Pray:** Father, help me understand your grace and live as your child. Thank you for receiving me through Jesus. Teach me to trust your work more than my record. Amen.

## 2 Knowing Jesus and abiding in him

**Read in your Bible:** John 15:1-17; Philippians 3:7-11.

The center of being a disciple is knowing Jesus Christ. You are learning to love and trust a real Person. Jesus is Lord, not merely an inspiring teacher. He brings us to the Father, and through the Holy Spirit we enjoy real fellowship with God. Intimacy with him means growing honesty, dependence, love, and attention to his words.

In John 15, Jesus speaks to his disciples on the night before his crucifixion. He describes himself as a vine and his disciples as branches. A branch depends on the vine for life and fruit. **Abiding** means remaining in Jesus, continuing in trusting fellowship with him. His teaching, love, and commands shape that relationship. It is deeper than trying to maintain a spiritual mood.

You abide as you receive his words, speak with him in prayer, depend on his Spirit, and obey what he teaches. These practices do not produce divine life by their own power. They are ways of responding to the One who gives life. You can read many pages and still avoid him; you can also read slowly and bring your whole heart to a few verses.

The Father tends the branches. Growth sometimes includes correction, loss of a harmful habit, or learning patience in difficulty. Do not assume every painful event is a punishment or claim to know God's hidden purpose in it. Jesus' picture teaches dependence and fruitfulness; it does not explain every circumstance of suffering.

Fruit includes a life increasingly marked by love and obedience. Jesus connects abiding with loving others, so closeness to him will affect the people around you. Time with him belongs within ordinary life: a brief prayer before a hard conversation, a remembered passage during temptation, gratitude while doing a chore.

**Begin here.** Choose a daily appointment for Bible reading and prayer. Treat it as time to be with Jesus. When distracted, gently return your attention to him. You can be honest about weariness, doubt, or an absence of warm feelings.

**Reflect:** What would dependence on Jesus look like in one part of today?

**Pray:** Jesus, I need the life only you can give. Help me remain in your love and receive your words. By your Spirit, grow your love in me and teach me to follow you. Amen.

## 3 The Holy Spirit is with you

**Read in your Bible:** John 14:15-27; Romans 8:9-17; Galatians 5:16-25.

God does not give you new life and then leave you to sustain it alone. The **Holy Spirit** is God, the personal presence of God in his people. Christians confess one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not an impersonal force, an emotional high, or a reward for reaching an advanced level of faith.

Jesus promised the Spirit to his disciples as he prepared them for his departure. The Spirit would teach and remind those first witnesses of Jesus' words. Through their apostolic testimony in Scripture, he still points the church to Jesus. He does not lead us to disregard the Bible or replace Christ with a fascination about spiritual experiences.

Romans 8 says that everyone who belongs to Christ has his Spirit. You do not have to wait for an unusual sensation to begin depending on him. The Spirit assures God's children of their adoption, helps them pray, and empowers them to resist sin. Christians differ about some spiritual gifts and experiences; speak with church leaders as you learn. No particular emotional experience is required to prove you belong to Jesus.

To walk by the Spirit is to rely on his help and follow his direction. Galatians describes the fruit he grows, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This growth is often gradual. The Spirit's power may be evident when you apologize, refuse a dishonest shortcut, or stay patient in an irritating conversation.

Dependence involves action. Ask for help, attend to Scripture, and take the step that obedience requires. If you have harmed

someone, asking the Spirit for peace does not replace telling the truth and making appropriate repair. God's grace supplies power for a changed life.

**Begin here.** Name a situation where your own resolve keeps failing. Ask the Spirit for help before you enter it. Identify one practical response that agrees with Scripture, and ask a trusted disciple to support you.

**Reflect:** Which aspect of the Spirit's fruit would serve someone near you today?

**Pray:** Holy Spirit, thank you for dwelling in God's people. Turn my attention to Jesus. Help me recognize sin, receive your comfort, and take a faithful step with the strength you give. Amen.

## 4 Learning to read the Bible

**Read in your Bible:** 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Luke 24:25-27, 44-49.

The Bible is God's written Word, given through human authors. It includes different kinds of writing, yet tells a unified story that reaches its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament prepares for him; the New Testament tells of his coming and explains life under his lordship. You read to know God truly and become equipped to live as his disciple.

Start with one of the Gospels, such as Mark or John. Read a short section in order rather than jumping from isolated verse to isolated verse. Before reading, ask the Holy Spirit for understanding. Afterward, summarize the main idea in a sentence. The goal is attention and response, not speed.

**Observe.** What does the text actually say? Notice repeated words, reasons given, contrasts, and who is speaking. Look at the

surrounding paragraphs. In a letter, follow the writer's argument. In a narrative, notice what the writer emphasizes about the people and events.

**Understand.** What did this communicate to its first readers or hearers? Ask how it fits the book and the Bible's larger story. Some laws governed ancient Israel under its covenant; we learn from them in light of Christ's fulfillment. A promise to a particular biblical person is not automatically a prediction about your job, health, or finances.

**Respond.** What does this reveal about God? Is there truth to trust, sin to confess, a command to obey, or a reason to worship? Choose an application that grows from the text. Ask how Jesus and his gospel shape your response. Bring difficult passages to a mature disciple instead of pretending to understand.

Use a reliable translation such as the ESV. Chapter and verse numbers help you find a passage; they are not part of the original authors' sentences. Study notes can help, but their explanations must be weighed against Scripture. Be cautious with online claims built on one verse or a supposed secret meaning.

**Begin here.** Read Mark 1:14-20. Write what Jesus announces and what he asks of the people he calls. Consider what following this same Lord means in your setting without assuming you must copy every detail of the fishermen's circumstances.

**Reflect:** What question about the Bible will you bring to someone this week?

**Pray:** Father, give me understanding and a teachable heart. Help me read carefully, see Jesus clearly, and live what I learn. Amen.

## 5 Learning to pray

**Read in your Bible:** Matthew 6:5-13; Hebrews 4:14-16; Philippians 4:4-9.

Prayer is speaking with God in response to who he is and what he has said. You come to the Father through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit. You can use ordinary words. God is not impressed by religious vocabulary or persuaded by the length of a prayer. Jesus welcomes honest dependence.

In Matthew 6, Jesus corrects prayer performed for an audience and prayer that treats repeated words as a technique. He gives his disciples a pattern: honor the Father's name, desire his kingdom and will, ask for daily needs, seek forgiveness, extend forgiveness, and ask for protection from evil. You can pray his pattern slowly and put each part into your own words.

Begin with who God is. Thank him for a specific gift. Confess a specific sin without explaining it away. Ask for what you and others need. Leave room to be honest about grief or confusion. The Psalms show God's people bringing both praise and pain to him. Reverence and honesty belong together.

When you pray, you do not need to manufacture a reply in your mind. God has spoken reliably in Scripture. A thought that comes during prayer should be tested by Scripture and wise counsel, not immediately announced as God's voice. You can ask for guidance while admitting uncertainty about a particular impression.

God hears his children, yet he does not promise every desired outcome or immediate relief. Jesus himself prayed in anguish and submitted to the Father (Mark 14:32-42). Persistent prayer is trust in God's goodness through circumstances you may not understand. An unanswered request is not proof that your faith is defective.

**Begin here.** Pray for five minutes using the pattern above. If your attention wanders, return without turning the interruption into a verdict on your faith. Keep a short prayer list. Over time, notice answers and changes in your desires. Bring concerns to other disciples so they can pray with you.

**Reflect:** What have you hesitated to tell God, even though he already knows?

**Pray:** Father, thank you that I may come to you through Jesus. Teach me to seek your will and ask for what I need. Help me trust you while I wait. Amen.

## 6 Grace and a changing life

**Read in your Bible:** Titus 2:11-14; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 John 1:5-2:2.

Grace brings forgiveness and trains us to live differently. Jesus saves us from sin's guilt and begins freeing us from its rule. **Sanctification** is the Spirit's continuing work of making believers more like Christ. You participate actively because God is at work in you. Dependence on him does not mean passivity.

**Repentance** means turning from sin toward God. It involves more than feeling bad or being embarrassed. You agree with God about what you have done, seek his mercy, and turn toward obedience. Confession names the sin honestly. If you lied, say that you lied. Jesus' finished sacrifice is the basis for forgiveness; your remorse does not pay for it.

Then take appropriate steps. Apologize without demanding immediate trust. Return what you took. Set a boundary around an occasion for temptation. Seek accountability from a mature disciple. If someone has been harmed, their safety matters.

Forgiveness does not erase consequences or require them to make themselves vulnerable to further harm.

Daily disciplines help form your attention and habits. Bible reading teaches you God's truth, and prayer expresses dependence. Gathering with the church, serving, and generosity also shape a disciple's life. These are responses to grace. They become distorted when used to earn God's love or compare yourself with others.

You will still struggle. Temptation is not itself the same as giving in to sin; Jesus was tempted without sinning (Hebrews 4:15). When you fail, return to God promptly. Repeated patterns deserve serious attention and practical help, rather than secrecy or a promise to try harder tomorrow. Some struggles also call for qualified counseling alongside pastoral care.

Look for growth over time: greater honesty, quicker repentance, increasing love, and willingness to receive correction. A single good week does not establish maturity, and a difficult week does not tell your whole story. Keep bringing your life into the light with Jesus and trustworthy people.

**Begin here.** Choose one recurring temptation. Identify the usual trigger, one way to limit access, and one person who can help. Ask the Spirit to strengthen your response before the next difficult moment.

**Reflect:** Where might a practical act of repentance begin today?

**Pray:** Jesus, thank you for your mercy. Help me turn from sin without hiding or making excuses. By your Spirit, teach me a new way to live. Amen.

## 7 Assurance when you struggle

**Read in your Bible:** John 10:27-30; Romans 8:1-17, 31-39; 1 John 5:11-13.

**Assurance** is confidence that you belong to God through Jesus Christ. Its foundation is who Jesus is, what he has done, and what God promises to those who trust him. Your emotions, a remembered spiritual experience, or a flawless devotional record cannot carry that weight. Your Savior can.

Some days you may feel deeply loved; other days you may feel little. Feelings are real experiences, but they are not infallible interpreters of your relationship with God. Bring them to him. Read his promises in context. Romans 8 speaks to people who belong to Christ and live by his Spirit, giving them hope even amid weakness and suffering.

Christ's promise is not permission to make peace with sin. John describes Jesus' sheep as people who hear him and follow him. First John joins confidence in Christ with truth about him, obedience, and love for fellow believers. These are evidences of new life, never a payment for salvation or a demand for sinless perfection.

A disciple's struggle with sin differs from a settled refusal to repent. When you fall and turn back to Christ, his mercy invites you into the light. If you insist that following Jesus has no claim on your choices, take the Bible's warnings seriously and seek pastoral help. Do not use a prayer you once said as protection against the Savior's present call to trust and follow him.

It is also possible to examine yourself so relentlessly that you lose sight of Jesus. Tender consciences need his promises as well as honest reflection. A desire to come to him, grief over sin, and growing love may be quiet signs of his work. Do not demand

constant emotional certainty or compare your growth with someone else's.

**Begin here.** When doubt comes, ask what is driving it: a question about the gospel, guilt over something to confess, suffering, or an anxious pattern of thought. Read one of today's passages and speak with a pastor or trusted disciple. Persistent distress deserves patient care; asking for help is compatible with faith.

**Reflect:** What are you relying on when you ask whether God receives you?

**Pray:** Jesus, help me rest in your saving work and hear your voice. Give me honesty about sin and confidence in your mercy. Keep teaching me to trust and follow you. Amen.

## 8 Belonging to the church

**Read in your Bible:** Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Hebrews 10:19-25.

Jesus brings you into a people. The **church** is the community of those who belong to him, expressed in local congregations where disciples worship, learn, pray, care for one another, and bear witness together. You are more than an audience member at a weekly event. Other disciples need you, and you need them.

Acts 2 describes the first believers devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, shared meals, and prayer. This account shows a life formed around Christ and one another. It does not require every congregation to reproduce every social detail. It does invite us to intentional worship, generosity, and mutual care.

Make gathering with a local church part of your regular life. Introduce yourself, explain that you are a new disciple, and ask

how to connect with a small group or mature believer. You can bring questions before you know the right words. Look for teaching rooted in Scripture and leaders who welcome honest questions and exercise accountable care.

**Baptism** is Jesus' command and a public identification with him and his people. The New Testament connects it with repentance, faith, cleansing, and participation in Christ's death and resurrection. Now that you have trusted Jesus, be baptized, even if you were baptized at an earlier time in your life. Your baptism should express the faith you have now, and being baptized again does no harm. Ask a pastor at your church to baptize you. A healthy church will gladly help you take this step; if yours will not, that may be a sign to look for a church that will. Water is not a substitute for personal trust in Christ. Baptism is obedience that flows from that trust.

**Communion**, also called the Lord's Supper, is the church's shared remembrance and proclamation of Jesus' death using bread and the cup (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Christians differ in how they explain Christ's presence and who should receive. Ask how your congregation practices it. Approach with faith, gratitude, honest self-examination, and concern for other believers.

Church people are still growing, including leaders. Address ordinary disagreements with humility and seek help when needed. Abuse, coercion, or demands for secrecy should not be excused as spiritual authority. Forgiveness and belonging do not require remaining in danger.

**Begin here.** At your next gathering, tell someone you want help growing as a disciple. Ask about baptism, a group, and a person who could meet with you regularly. You do not need to commit to every activity at once.

**Reflect:** What makes receiving help from other disciples easy or difficult?

**Pray:** Father, lead me into healthy relationships in your church. Give me humility to receive care and love to offer it. Amen.

## 9 Following Jesus in ordinary life

**Read in your Bible:** Colossians 3:12-17; James 1:19-27; 1 Peter 4:8-11.

Discipleship takes place in the life you already have. Jesus' lordship shapes how you speak at home, work when no one is watching, spend money, treat your body, and respond to people who frustrate you. Daily time with him prepares you for these ordinary places of love and obedience.

In Colossians 3, Paul grounds his instructions in the believers' new life with Christ. They are to put away old patterns and practice compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love. Christian character grows from belonging to Jesus. It should be visible in your relationships, not confined to your private thoughts about God.

Start with the next conversation. Listen before composing your reply. Refuse gossip. Tell the truth with kindness. When you have been wrong, apologize specifically. Forgiveness means releasing personal vengeance and seeking another's good; rebuilding trust and reconciliation can require repentance, time, wise boundaries, and safety. You may need help working this out.

Your resources are also part of discipleship. **Stewardship** means caring for what God entrusts to you: time, abilities, possessions, and opportunities. Practice generosity willingly and responsibly. Giving is never a fee for God's favor or a guarantee that he will

make you wealthy (2 Corinthians 9:6-8). A small, thoughtful act of service can be a meaningful expression of love.

Following Christ may create tension with old habits or expectations. Ask for wisdom about which influences strengthen faith and which draw you toward sin. Love people who do not share your faith without joining harmful conduct or treating them as enemies. Do your responsibilities faithfully. If a command seems hard, seek help understanding and obeying it rather than quietly dismissing it.

You will not change everything in a day. Ask the Holy Spirit to identify a faithful next step. A clear, limited response often helps more than a sweeping promise you have not thought through. Review it with someone who knows you and can encourage you.

**Begin here.** Choose one relationship, one responsibility, or one use of money. Ask how Jesus' words should shape it this week. Take a concrete step and notice what you learn.

**Reflect:** Where does your ordinary day most need the character of Christ?

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, help me follow you in the parts of life I call ordinary. Give me your love for people and wisdom to use what you have entrusted to me. Amen.

## 10 Sharing your hope and continuing to grow

**Read in your Bible:** Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Peter 3:13-16; 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

Jesus calls his disciples to help others become disciples. His commission includes going, baptizing, and teaching people to obey what he commanded. It reaches beyond a single

conversation or decision. The aim is people learning to know and follow the living Lord in the community of his church.

You can begin before you can answer every question. Tell the truth about what you are learning. The **gospel** is the good news about Jesus: the Son of God came among us, died for our sins, rose again, and reigns as Lord. God calls people to turn to him and trust Christ for forgiveness and new life. Your personal story points to that news; it does not replace it.

Be interested in people, not merely in getting a chance to speak. Listen to their questions and experiences. Ask permission to share if that would be appropriate. Speak with gentleness and respect. You do not need to pressure someone, exaggerate what happened to you, or pretend all your difficulties vanished when you trusted Jesus.

You might say, in your own words, that you have begun trusting Jesus, are learning what his grace means, and would be glad to talk about it. If asked a question you cannot answer, say so. Offer to explore it together with help from Scripture and a mature disciple. Changing a person's heart is God's work; you are responsible to love and speak faithfully.

Your own learning continues. Stay rooted in a local church. Keep reading the Bible and praying each day. Receive correction. Learn to serve, and spend time with a disciple whose life shows Christ's character. Spiritual maturity includes increasing dependence on Jesus rather than the ability to manage without him.

The next 30 days offer a place to start. Expect meaningful discoveries and ordinary mornings. On both kinds of days, Jesus is worthy of your trust. Bring your actual life to him and ask his Spirit to help you take the next step.

**Begin here.** Choose one person to pray for regularly. Ask God for an opportunity to listen well and share honestly. Then arrange a conversation with a mature disciple about your own next steps.

**Reflect:** Who could help you keep growing after this first month?

**Pray:** Jesus, keep me close to you. Make me a faithful disciple who loves others and speaks about you with humility. Help me keep learning for the rest of my life. Amen.

PART TWO

## Your first 30 days with Jesus

Our theme passage is **John 15:5**. Jesus is the source of a disciple's life and fruitfulness. Read it in your Bible before beginning. Let **Matthew 28:18-20** remind you that this relationship includes learning to follow Jesus and helping others do the same.

Every day begins with Scripture and includes prayer. The action is a response to God's grace. It is not an extra requirement for earning his love. Carry the conversation with God into the rest of your day: ask for help, remember what you read, and thank him when you notice his care.

### Four movements in the journey

**Days 1-7 · Receive your new identity.** Meet Jesus in John's Gospel, explore grace and adoption, and learn where assurance rests.

**Days 8-14 · Learn to abide.** Practice careful Bible reading, honest prayer, dependence on the Spirit, and repentance.

**Days 15-21 · Follow Jesus with his people.** Connect with the church and practice love, forgiveness, baptism conversations, service, and worship.

**Days 22-30 · Live as a disciple.** Bring ordinary responsibilities, suffering, generosity, and witness under Jesus' care. Make a sustainable plan for continued growth.

### Before you begin

Choose a regular time and place. Put your Bible where you will see it. Ask a mature disciple to check in with you around days 7, 14, 21, and 30. At each conversation, share one discovery, one question, and one area where you need prayer.

**My starting date:** _____

**My usual time and place:** _____

**A disciple I can learn with:** _____

Use the writing space on each day for a response, question, or prayer. If a day feels especially important, stay with it. You are learning a way of life with Jesus, not racing to finish a booklet.

## Day 1 Jesus welcomes you to know him

**Read:** John 1:1-18 in your Bible.

**Understand.** John begins before Jesus' earthly birth. He identifies Jesus as the eternal Word who is with God and is God. The Son truly became human and made the Father known. Your relationship with Jesus rests on who he is, not on the intensity of your first experience of faith.

John describes those who receive Christ and believe in him as God's children. Their new life comes from God. Today you begin by receiving that gift with gratitude. You are learning to know the One who came near to bring you to the Father. You can ask him questions, admit confusion, and expect to learn over time.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for making yourself known through Jesus. Help me understand who he is and receive the new identity you give. Holy Spirit, teach me as I read and pray today. Amen.

**Reflect.** What does this passage reveal about Jesus that helps you trust him?

**Act today.** Read verses 12-13 again. Write a sentence beginning, Because of Jesus, I can come to God as… Then tell God what that means to you. Return to that thought once during your day.

My response and prayer

## Day 2 A disciple comes and learns

**Read:** John 1:35-51 in your Bible.

**Understand.** The first disciples meet Jesus through testimony, invitation, and personal encounter. They begin following before they understand everything about him. Their questions are part of the story. Jesus already knows more about them than they know about him.

Disciple is not a title for a Christian who has graduated to a higher level. A disciple learns from Jesus and follows him. These first followers would need patient teaching and correction. So will you. Their story invites you to bring real questions while giving Jesus your attention. You do not need to invent an impressive spiritual history or borrow someone else's language to begin.

**Pray.** Jesus, thank you for inviting people to know you. Make me teachable. Help me bring my questions honestly and follow what I already understand. Give me people who will help me learn. Amen.

**Reflect.** What question would you most like to bring to Jesus right now?

**Act today.** Write your question in the space below. Share it with a mature disciple or pastor this week. Keep your daily Bible appointment even if the question remains unresolved; learning often grows through continued attention.

My response and prayer

## Day 3 God gives new life

**Read:** John 3:1-17 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Nicodemus is a respected religious teacher, yet Jesus tells him he needs new birth. Religious knowledge and outward position cannot produce spiritual life. The Holy Spirit gives it. Jesus also points ahead to his saving death, describing the Son being lifted up so that those who believe may have life.

Being born again means receiving life from God. It does not require that every believer can identify the same emotions or describe the same kind of dramatic conversion. Your hope is in the Son whom the Father lovingly gave. As his disciple, you grow by depending on the Spirit who gives life, not by trying to manufacture a spiritual identity.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for your love in giving your Son. Holy Spirit, help me understand the life you give. Teach me to rely on Jesus and receive your work with gratitude. Amen.

**Reflect.** How does Jesus' conversation challenge the idea that religious activity can give you new life?

**Act today.** Write two brief sentences: what you cannot produce by your own effort, and what you are asking the Spirit to grow in you. Pause before one ordinary task and ask for his help there.

My response and prayer

## Day 4 Grace comes before good works

**Read:** Ephesians 2:1-10 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul describes the depth of human need before describing God's mercy. God makes his people alive with Christ. Salvation is his gift, received through faith. No one can boast of earning it.

Then Paul explains that God creates his people for good works. The order matters. You do not perform enough good works to become accepted by God. Because he has rescued you in Christ, you begin a life shaped by his goodness. A disciple can take obedience seriously while resting in grace. Your Bible reading today is an opportunity to know your Father, and your action is a response to his love.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for rescuing me through Jesus. Free me from trying to purchase your acceptance. Show me a good work you have placed within reach today, and help me do it with gratitude. Amen.

**Reflect.** Where are you tempted to measure God's love by your performance?

**Act today.** Offer one helpful act to someone without looking for credit. Before you do it, remind yourself that Christ's saving work

is the basis of your acceptance. Afterward, thank God for the opportunity to love.

My response and prayer

## Day 5 You can come as a child

**Read:** Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-7 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul uses adoption to describe the place God gives those who belong to Christ. They are welcomed as children, and the Spirit enables them to address God as Father. This access rests on the Son's redeeming work.

Human families can make the word father comforting, painful, or complicated. God's character is not defined by the failures of an earthly parent. He is holy, faithful, and loving. You can bring both gratitude and pain into your relationship with him. Romans also connects being God's children with sharing Christ's suffering and future glory. Adoption does not guarantee an easy life; it gives you belonging and hope within it.

**Pray.** Father, help me receive the belonging you give through Jesus. Heal the ways I misunderstand your character. Holy Spirit, help me come honestly and trust the Father's care. Amen.

**Reflect.** What helps or hinders you when you address God as Father?

**Act today.** Begin a short prayer with Father and name one concern you have kept to yourself. If that word is difficult, tell him why. Consider sharing that difficulty with a trusted pastor rather than forcing a feeling you do not have.

My response and prayer

## Day 6 The Shepherd holds his people

**Read:** John 10:22-30 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Jesus speaks amid questions and opposition about his identity. He describes his sheep as those who hear his voice and follow him, and he promises them life and security in his care. Their safety rests in his power and the Father's power.

This passage gives a disciple reason for confidence. It does not invite us to ignore Jesus while claiming his protection. Hearing and following describe relationship with the Shepherd; they are not a demand to achieve perfect performance before he will receive you. When fear comes, turn your attention to the trustworthy Savior and keep bringing your actual life under his care.

**Pray.** Jesus, thank you for caring for your people. Help me hear you through Scripture and follow you with trust. When I am afraid, remind me that my hope rests in you. Amen.

**Reflect.** What is the difference between trusting your Shepherd and trying to feel perfectly certain about yourself?

**Act today.** Write one truth about Jesus from this passage. When anxiety about your standing returns, read it and pray in response. If the same fear keeps overwhelming you, arrange a conversation with a pastor or mature disciple.

My response and prayer

## Day 7 Bring your thirst to Jesus

**Read:** John 4:1-26 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Jesus speaks with a Samaritan woman across barriers of ethnicity, history, and social expectation. He knows

the truth about her life and offers the life only he can give. As the conversation deepens, he directs her toward the Father and identifies himself as the Messiah.

You do not need to hide your history to know Jesus. He does not confuse loving someone with avoiding the truth. His grace makes honest relationship possible. The water imagery points to a gift deeper than temporary relief. Let the conversation draw you toward Jesus himself rather than treating him as a way to get everything else you want.

**Pray.** Jesus, you know my history and my needs. Help me bring my thirst to you honestly. Teach me to worship the Father in truth and receive the life you give. Amen.

**Reflect.** Where do you look for lasting satisfaction in something that cannot provide it?

**Act today.** Review days 1-7. Write one discovery about Jesus and one question. Share them with your companion or a trusted disciple. Ask that person to pray with you about one need, and pray for them too.

My response and prayer

## Day 8 Remain close to Jesus

**Read:** John 15:1-11 in your Bible.

**Understand.** On the night before his death, Jesus prepares his disciples for life dependent on him. A branch draws its life from the vine. Abiding describes continuing in that relationship, receiving his words and remaining in his love. Obedience belongs within this fellowship.

Jesus' image challenges self-sufficiency and encourages steady attention. Reading Scripture and praying are ways to remain

attentive to him. They do not mechanically produce fruit or keep him loving you. The Father's care is purposeful, and Jesus desires his disciples' joy. Today, ask less about whether you can manage everything and more about how to depend on him in the next faithful step.

**Pray.** Jesus, I need you for the life you call me to live. Help me remain in your love and receive your words. Holy Spirit, grow fruit in me as I follow him. Amen.

**Reflect.** What part of your day do you tend to handle without seeking Jesus?

**Act today.** Set two quiet reminders, perhaps at lunch and before bed. When each comes, pause to remember today's passage. Tell Jesus what is happening and ask for help to respond with trust and love.

My response and prayer

## Day 9 Give Jesus your attention

**Read:** Luke 10:38-42 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Martha welcomes Jesus and becomes distracted and troubled by her serving. Mary sits listening to him. Jesus gently addresses Martha's worry and affirms Mary's attention to his teaching. The problem is not that practical service is worthless. The surrounding Gospel repeatedly calls disciples to love through action.

Service can become an anxious attempt to prove your worth, and a crowded life can make listening seem unproductive. Jesus deserves your attention. His words form the person who serves. A disciple learns to bring responsibilities into relationship with him,

making room to hear him without despising the work that love requires.

**Pray.** Jesus, help me recognize when activity is crowding out attention to you. Quiet my need to prove myself. Teach me to listen and then serve from the love I receive. Amen.

**Reflect.** What usually distracts you during Bible reading and prayer?

**Act today.** Put your phone beyond reach for your next reading time, if practical. Read the passage aloud or listen attentively to it. Choose one ordinary responsibility afterward and do it as service to Jesus, asking for his peace rather than recognition.

My response and prayer

## Day 10 Let Scripture teach you

**Read:** 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Psalm 119:9-16 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul urges Timothy to continue in the Scriptures he has learned. They point to salvation through faith in Christ and equip God's servant for faithful living. Psalm 119 expresses a heart that treasures God's instruction and asks for help to obey it.

The Bible does more than supply a comforting sentence. It teaches, corrects, and trains a disciple. Read with enough patience to hear something you did not expect. Learning a verse by heart can help you remember truth during the day, but memorization should preserve its meaning. Look at what comes before and after before deciding how to apply it.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for Scripture. Give me patience to understand it and humility to be corrected. Help me see how your Word points me toward Jesus and faithful living. Amen.

**Reflect.** Which purpose of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3 do you most need today?

**Act today.** Choose a short verse from today's readings. Read its surrounding paragraph, then write the verse reference and summarize its meaning in your own words. Carry that summary with you and return to it once. Memorize the verse if you wish.

My response and prayer

## Day 11 Learn the prayer Jesus taught

**Read:** Matthew 6:5-13 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Jesus addresses the motives and assumptions behind prayer before giving his disciples a pattern. Prayer is not a performance for observers or a technique for wearing God down. The Father knows our needs, and he welcomes us to ask.

The prayer begins with God's name, kingdom, and will. It also brings daily provision, forgiveness, relationships, and protection into his care. Let these priorities shape your own words. Asking for daily bread teaches a disciple to depend on God in ordinary needs. Praying for his will teaches us to seek more than immediate comfort or control.

**Pray.** Father, help me honor your name and desire your will. Provide what I need today. Forgive my sins and help me forgive. Protect me from temptation and evil. Teach me to trust you. Amen.

**Reflect.** Which part of Jesus' pattern receives the least attention in your prayers?

**Act today.** Pray through the passage slowly. After each part, add a specific concern in your own words. Name one person to pray

for as well as your own needs. At the end, leave one unresolved matter in the Father's care.

My response and prayer

## Day 12 The Spirit helps you follow

**Read:** John 14:15-27 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Jesus comforts his disciples before his death and promises the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will be with them and will teach and remind these first witnesses of Jesus' words. Their testimony is foundational for the church. We receive it through Scripture rather than assuming every private impression has the same authority.

The Spirit directs us toward Jesus and helps us live in loving obedience. You can ask for help with understanding, patience, courage, and resisting temptation. His presence is not measured by whether you feel unusually spiritual today. A disciple relies on God's promise and responds to the truth he has given.

**Pray.** Holy Spirit, thank you for your presence with God's people. Help me understand Jesus' words and remember them when I need them. Strengthen me to obey with love rather than fear. Amen.

**Reflect.** In what situation do you need help applying what Jesus teaches?

**Act today.** Identify one instruction from Scripture that you already understand. Ask the Spirit for help and take a small, specific step of obedience. If you are unsure what a passage means, write the question and seek guidance before making a major decision from it.

My response and prayer

## Day 13 Let grace bring you into the light

**Read:** 1 John 1:5-2:2 in your Bible.

**Understand.** John rejects the claim that fellowship with God can coexist with denying or concealing sin. He also rejects the claim that believers have become sinless. He points us to confession, God's faithfulness to forgive, and Jesus Christ as the advocate for his people.

Confession is honest agreement with God about sin. It is not a payment that persuades him to become merciful. Jesus is the basis of forgiveness. As a disciple, you can stop defending what is wrong and bring it to him. His mercy also frees you to seek help and make appropriate repair rather than managing appearances.

**Pray.** Father, I confess the sin I am tempted to hide. Thank you for forgiveness through Jesus. Help me turn from it, receive your cleansing, and take responsibility for what I have done. Amen.

**Reflect.** What changes when you believe that honesty can lead toward mercy rather than only exposure?

**Act today.** Name one specific sin privately to God. Identify one fitting step of repentance, such as an honest apology or a change in access to temptation. If the issue is recurring or serious, arrange confidential support from a trustworthy mature disciple or pastor.

My response and prayer

## Day 14 Notice the fruit God grows

**Read:** Galatians 5:16-26 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul contrasts life directed by sinful desires with life led by the Spirit. The Spirit produces a recognizable kind of character. His fruit includes love, patience, faithfulness, and self-control. These qualities serve real people; they are more than private spiritual achievements.

Growth involves resisting sin and keeping in step with the Spirit. It will often be gradual, and comparison can distort your view. Ask where God's work is becoming visible and where you still need help. You may see progress in a quicker apology or a more patient response. Give God thanks without pretending the struggle is over.

**Pray.** Holy Spirit, grow the character of Jesus in me. Help me resist what harms my relationship with God and others. Make me attentive to your work and humble about the growth I still need. Amen.

**Reflect.** Which aspect of the Spirit's fruit would most change one relationship this week?

**Act today.** Choose that relationship and practice one fitting response. Then check in with your companion about days 8-14. Share one discovery, one question, and one place you need prayer. Invite them to describe growth they have noticed without demanding reassurance.

My response and prayer

## Day 15 You belong with other disciples

**Read:** Acts 2:41-47 in your Bible.

**Understand.** After Peter's proclamation of Jesus, the first believers are baptized and enter a shared life of teaching, fellowship, prayer, meals, and generous care. Acts describes what

happened in that setting. It also shows lasting priorities for a church centered on Christ.

Fellowship means participating in a shared life of faith. It includes friendship, yet goes deeper than enjoying the same activities. Disciples help one another learn, endure, and obey Jesus. You can begin by being present and letting someone know you. You do not need to join every program to start belonging or to prove your commitment.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for bringing me into your people. Help me receive teaching and care. Lead me toward trustworthy relationships where I can learn, contribute, and grow as Jesus' disciple. Amen.

**Reflect.** Which part of the shared life in Acts 2 is most missing from your week?

**Act today.** Plan to attend the next church gathering you can. Contact a pastor, group leader, or welcome team member and ask how a new disciple can connect. Use the church's current published contact information rather than waiting to know someone personally.

My response and prayer

## Day 16 Take baptism seriously

**Read:** Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 6:1-4 in your Bible.

**Understand.** The risen Jesus commissions his disciples to make disciples, baptize, and teach obedience to his words. Baptism belongs to following him in community. Paul connects baptism with Christ's death and resurrection while explaining why grace leads believers away from a life ruled by sin.

Now that you have trusted Jesus, be baptized, even if you were baptized at an earlier time in your life. Your baptism should express the faith you have now, and being baptized again does no harm. Baptism deserves prompt, wholehearted obedience, not delay caused by embarrassment. It is not a substitute for faith, nor a claim that you have reached spiritual maturity. A disciple is still learning when they take this public step.

**Pray.** Jesus, help me understand baptism and respond faithfully to your command. Give me humility to ask questions and courage to identify with you and your people. Amen.

**Reflect.** What do you understand about baptism, and what do you still need to ask?

**Act today.** Ask a pastor at your church to baptize you, and take the next preparation step they give you. This applies even if you were baptized before you trusted Jesus. If your church will not baptize you, talk with a mature disciple about finding a church that will.

My response and prayer

## Day 17 Receive and offer forgiveness

**Read:** Colossians 3:12-15; Ephesians 4:25-32 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul calls people loved by God to practice compassion and forgiveness. He also tells them to put away lying, bitterness, and destructive speech. Forgiveness grows from the mercy Christ has given us and becomes visible in how we treat others.

Forgiving does not mean calling evil good, pretending pain has vanished, or restoring trust without evidence of change. Reconciliation involves another person's response, and safety

may require firm boundaries. You can seek freedom from personal vengeance while pursuing truth and appropriate accountability. Ask for help when the hurt is deep. A disciple may need time and repeated prayer to work through it faithfully.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for your mercy toward me. Help me release revenge and seek what is right. Give me wisdom about truth, boundaries, and any steps toward peace that are possible. Amen.

**Reflect.** Is there someone you need to apologize to, or a hurt you need help bringing to God?

**Act today.** If appropriate and safe, offer one specific apology without excuses. If you are the person harmed, write a prayer naming the hurt and the help you need. Seek pastoral support before approaching someone when a direct conversation would be unsafe or unwise.

My response and prayer

## Day 18 Love becomes visible in service

**Read:** John 13:1-17 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Knowing who he is and where he is going, Jesus washes his disciples' feet. He takes a servant's place while remaining their Lord and Teacher. He also tells Peter that Peter must receive cleansing from him. We receive Jesus' saving care before we can follow his pattern of love.

The passage calls disciples to humble service. Christians differ about practicing foot washing as a specific church observance, but its demand for concrete love is clear. Notice what someone actually needs rather than choosing a task that makes you look

generous. Service rooted in Jesus can be quiet, ordinary, and costly without becoming a way to earn acceptance.

**Pray.** Jesus, thank you for loving and cleansing your people. Free me from needing the highest place. Help me notice a real need and serve with the humility you have shown. Amen.

**Reflect.** Which ordinary task do you resist because it seems beneath you?

**Act today.** Do a practical act of service at home, at work, or in your church. Choose something useful to the other person. Do it without drawing attention to yourself, and thank Jesus for letting his love shape your actions.

My response and prayer

## Day 19 Your presence and gifts matter

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; 1 Peter 4:10-11 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul compares the church to a body made up of different members. He challenges both the feeling that you do not belong and the attitude that you do not need others. Peter calls disciples to use what God gives them to serve, relying on his strength.

You do not need a public role to matter to Christ's people. Listening, hospitality, practical help, and prayer can build up a congregation. Gifts are entrusted for others' good. Their use should express love and fit the church's wise oversight. You are free to begin with a manageable contribution while continuing to receive care and learn.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for making each member of your people matter. Help me receive others' gifts without comparison. Show

me how to serve faithfully with the abilities and strength you give. Amen.

**Reflect.** Are you more tempted to feel unnecessary or to act as though you need no one?

**Act today.** Ask a church leader about one suitable way to help. Explain that you are a new disciple and want room to keep learning. If you already serve heavily, consider whether you are also receiving teaching, rest, and support from others.

My response and prayer

## Day 20 Remember Jesus at his table

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 11:17-29 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul addresses a church whose divisions and treatment of poorer members contradict the meal they share. He recalls Jesus' institution of the bread and cup and calls for serious self-examination. The Lord's Supper proclaims Jesus' death and points toward his return.

Communion directs a disciple toward Christ and also toward the people joined to him. It is not a display of personal superiority. Come with faith, gratitude, repentance, and care for others. Churches differ about participation and how they explain Christ's presence in the meal. Learn your congregation's practice rather than treating those differences casually or making assumptions about the next gathering.

**Pray.** Jesus, thank you for giving yourself for us. Help me remember your death with gratitude. Expose pride and indifference in me, and teach me to honor the people you have brought into your family. Amen.

**Reflect.** How does the context of this passage connect remembering Jesus with caring for others?

**Act today.** Ask a pastor or mature disciple how your church observes communion and prepares to receive it. Before the next observance, pray about one relationship or attitude that needs attention. Take a fitting step toward repentance rather than merely rehearsing the concern.

My response and prayer

## Day 21 Encourage a fellow disciple

**Read:** Hebrews 10:19-25 in your Bible.

**Understand.** The writer grounds confidence to approach God in Jesus' sacrifice and priestly care. From that foundation, believers are called to hold their hope, consider one another, and keep gathering. Encouragement helps people persevere in faith and love.

You have something to offer even while you are new. A thoughtful question, a prayer, or a specific word of gratitude can help another disciple. Gathering is more than receiving something useful for yourself. It is also an opportunity to consider how your presence can strengthen someone else. This shared life supports, rather than replaces, your daily relationship with Jesus.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for access to you through Jesus. Help me hold to your promises and encourage others. Make me attentive to someone who needs care, and willing to receive encouragement myself. Amen.

**Reflect.** Who has helped you follow Jesus, and what specifically have they done?

**Act today.** Thank that person directly. Then review days 15-21 with your companion. Discuss one next step in church connection, baptism, or service. Ask each other what has helped daily Bible reading and prayer, and pray about the obstacles you are facing.

My response and prayer

## Day 22 Obey with the strength God gives

**Read:** Philippians 2:1-16 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul calls the church to humility shaped by Jesus, who gave himself in obedience and was exalted by the Father. The instructions about working out salvation belong in that context. Believers are to live out God's saving work with reverence because God himself is at work in them.

This is active dependence. A disciple takes responsibility while relying on the Spirit's enabling grace. You can obey before you feel confident, asking God to shape both your desires and your actions. Even a complaint or rivalry can become a place to practice a different response. Do not reduce the passage to a private improvement project; notice its concern for the community's shared life.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for working in your people. Give me humility like Jesus and willingness to obey. Help me take responsibility without trusting my own strength as the source of change. Amen.

**Reflect.** Where are you waiting for obedience to feel easy before you begin?

**Act today.** Choose one clear responsibility you have delayed. Ask for God's help and take the first practical step. If you are

unsure whether the step is actually required by Scripture, discuss it with a mature disciple rather than treating guilt alone as God's command.

My response and prayer

## Day 23 Look for the way to resist

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 10:1-14; Hebrews 4:14-16 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul warns the Corinthians through examples from Israel's history. Spiritual privileges do not justify careless confidence. He urges them to flee idolatry and trust God's faithfulness in temptation. The promised way to endure temptation is not a promise that life will never feel overwhelming or that you can manage every hardship alone.

Hebrews directs you to Jesus, who understands temptation without having sinned. You may come for mercy and help. A disciple can admit vulnerability and use practical means of escape. Leaving a setting, asking someone for support, or removing access can be acts of reliance on God rather than signs of spiritual weakness.

**Pray.** Jesus, you understand temptation and offer help. Keep me from pride about my strength. Show me a faithful way to resist, and give me willingness to take it promptly. Amen.

**Reflect.** What early warning usually appears before a familiar pattern of sin?

**Act today.** Write a brief plan: When this warning appears, I will take this step and contact this person. Choose a realistic boundary, not just a promise to try harder. Pray over the plan and ask your trusted person whether they can help.

My response and prayer

## Day 24 Follow Jesus in your work

**Read:** Colossians 3:17, 22-4:1 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul speaks into an ancient household setting, including the unjust institution of slavery. He addresses both enslaved people and masters and places them under the authority of Christ. The passage does not make slavery good or give employers permission to exploit workers. Its setting matters as we consider faithful work today.

A disciple's responsibilities are lived before the Lord. Honesty, diligence, fairness, and respect matter even when no one offers praise. Those with authority must consider how they treat others. If you are a student, caregiver, employee, or employer, ask how Christ's lordship changes the next responsibility before you. Faithfulness may also involve challenging wrongdoing through appropriate channels.

**Pray.** Lord Jesus, help me honor you in my responsibilities. Give me integrity when no one is watching and fairness toward those affected by my choices. Help me work and rest with trust in you. Amen.

**Reflect.** Where would remembering Jesus change your attitude or conduct in today's responsibilities?

**Act today.** Complete one task with deliberate honesty and care. If someone works under your direction, consider one practical way to treat them more fairly. Before beginning, ask the Spirit for strength; afterward, thank him without measuring your worth by how much you accomplished.

My response and prayer

## Day 25 Practice generous stewardship

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul is encouraging a collection for believers in need. He connects willing generosity with God's provision and the thanksgiving it produces. God's gifts equip his people to share. The passage is not a technique for making yourself wealthy through a financial offering.

Stewardship means caring for what God entrusts to you. A disciple can practice generosity with money, time, or practical resources while taking responsibilities seriously. Giving should be willing and thoughtful, never manipulated by claims that God's favor is for sale. If your resources are limited, your dignity and belonging in Christ's people are not diminished.

**Pray.** Father, thank you for what you have entrusted to me. Free me from greed and fear. Give me wisdom to meet my responsibilities and generosity that serves others with a willing heart. Amen.

**Reflect.** What fear or desire most shapes the way you use your resources?

**Act today.** Review one part of your spending or schedule. Choose a responsible act of generosity that meets an actual need. You may give time or help rather than money. Pray for the person receiving it, and give without expecting control, repayment, or spiritual credit.

My response and prayer

## Day 26 Bring suffering into prayer

**Read:** Romans 8:18-39 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul speaks of creation's groaning, the believers' longing, and the Spirit's help in weakness. God's children still suffer while awaiting final restoration. Their hope rests in God's purpose and his love in Christ. The good God promises includes conformity to his Son and final glory; it does not mean every painful event is itself good.

You may pray honestly when you cannot explain what is happening. The Spirit's help is especially precious when words fail. Jesus' love is not disproved by hardship. A disciple can receive practical care and ask for relief while also trusting God's faithfulness in circumstances that remain unresolved.

**Pray.** Father, you know what hurts and what I cannot understand. Holy Spirit, help me in my weakness. Keep me rooted in the love of Jesus and give me strength and help for today. Amen.

**Reflect.** Which part of the passage gives you room for honesty, and which gives you hope?

**Act today.** Tell a trusted person one real need and ask for prayer or practical support. If you know someone suffering, offer a specific form of care without trying to explain why God allowed it. Make room to listen.

My response and prayer

## Day 27 Speak with gentleness and respect

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:13-17 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Peter writes to believers facing opposition. He calls them to honor Christ as Lord, remain ready to explain their hope, and speak with gentleness and respect. Their conduct should agree with their words. Faithfulness may still bring

misunderstanding, so a positive response is not the only measure of faithful witness.

Sharing your hope begins with reverence for Jesus and love for the listener. You can say what you know without pretending to answer everything. Your story should point to Christ's death, resurrection, and grace rather than only describing a better mood or improved circumstances. The Spirit helps you speak; you do not control the other person's response.

**Pray.** Jesus, help me honor you as Lord and love the people around me. Give me courage, gentleness, and honesty. Open an appropriate opportunity to explain why I am learning to trust you. Amen.

**Reflect.** What would you say if a friend asked why Jesus matters to you?

**Act today.** Write a three-sentence answer in your own words: what you were trusting before, what you have learned about Jesus, and how you are learning to follow him now. Keep it honest. Practice with a mature disciple and welcome their feedback.

My response and prayer

## Day 28 Love a neighbor in front of you

**Read:** Luke 10:25-37 in your Bible.

**Understand.** A legal expert asks Jesus about eternal life and then seeks to define the limits of his obligation to love. Jesus tells of a Samaritan who shows costly mercy to an injured stranger. He turns attention from classifying which people qualify as neighbors to becoming a neighbor through mercy.

A disciple's love must reach beyond convenience and familiar groups. You cannot meet every need, but you can notice a person and respond wisely to the need within reach. Loving action should respect that person's dignity and wishes. It is not a tactic that makes them owe you a religious conversation.

**Pray.** Father, help me see people with mercy rather than pass them by. Give me wisdom about the help I can offer. Form the love of Jesus in me toward someone outside my usual circle. Amen.

**Reflect.** Which people or needs do you find easy to overlook?

**Act today.** Offer one practical form of care to a neighbor, coworker, or person your church is helping. Ask what would be useful rather than assuming. Later, tell your companion what you learned and review one discovery and one question from this week's readings. Pray together if possible.

My response and prayer

## Day 29 Failure need not end the conversation

**Read:** John 21:1-19 in your Bible.

**Understand.** After Peter's denial and Jesus' resurrection, Jesus meets his disciples and speaks personally with Peter. He calls Peter to love him, care for his people, and follow him. The scene includes restoration and a sober description of costly discipleship. Grace does not pretend the failure never happened; Jesus brings Peter forward into renewed responsibility.

Peter's particular commission is not identical to every disciple's calling. Yet the passage shows the risen Lord's mercy and authority. When you fail, turn toward Jesus rather than deciding you are beyond his care. Receive correction and appropriate help.

Some responsibilities require time, accountability, and renewed trust before they can be resumed.

**Pray.** Jesus, thank you for your patient mercy. Help me bring failure to you honestly and receive your correction. Teach me to love you and follow you in the responsibilities you place before me. Amen.

**Reflect.** Has shame been keeping you from prayer, Scripture, or other disciples?

**Act today.** Resume one healthy practice you have avoided because of shame. Tell a trusted disciple where you need help. If you have missed readings, continue from where you stopped instead of treating unfinished days as a debt you owe God.

My response and prayer

## Day 30 Keep learning to know Jesus

**Read:** Philippians 3:7-14; Matthew 28:18-20 in your Bible.

**Understand.** Paul values knowing Christ above the achievements he once relied on. His righteousness rests on faith in Christ. He has not finished growing, so he presses on toward the goal Christ sets before him. Jesus commissions disciples under his authority and promises his continuing presence.

You have reached the end of a plan, not the end of discipleship. Knowing Jesus remains central. Keep receiving Scripture, talking with the Father, depending on the Spirit, and following Jesus with his people. Let these habits serve relationship. As you grow, you can help someone else begin. You will still be a learner while you do so.

**Pray.** Jesus, thank you for what you have taught me this month. Keep drawing me into a closer relationship with you. Holy Spirit,

help me continue in faith, love, and obedience, and make me useful to others. Amen.

**Reflect.** What have you learned about Jesus, and what next step would help you know and follow him more deeply?

**Act today.** Complete your next steps plan. Meet with your companion or a pastor to discuss it. Choose your next Bible reading, protect a realistic daily prayer time, and arrange another check-in. Thank God for one specific evidence of grace.

My response and prayer

## Words you will hear

### A to J

**Abiding.** Remaining in trusting, dependent fellowship with Jesus, receiving his words and living in his love. John 15:1-11.

**Adoption.** God's gracious welcome of believers as his children through Jesus Christ. Romans 8:14-17.

**Assurance.** Confidence that you belong to God through Christ, grounded in his work and promises. 1 John 5:11-13.

**Baptism.** The water rite Jesus commanded, identifying a person with him and his people. Every believer should be baptized after trusting Christ, even if baptized at an earlier time. Matthew 28:18-20.

**Born again.** Given new spiritual life by the Holy Spirit. This describes God's work, not a required emotional experience. John 3:1-8.

**Church.** The people who belong to Jesus, gathering in local communities to worship, learn, serve, and care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

**Communion or the Lord's Supper.** The shared bread and cup through which the church remembers and proclaims Jesus' death. Churches differ in their explanation and practice. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

**Confession.** Honest acknowledgment of sin to God; it may also involve telling a trusted person and taking responsibility with someone harmed. 1 John 1:9; James 5:16.

**Disciple.** Someone who trusts Jesus, learns from him, and follows him. Discipleship is the life of every Christian, not an advanced rank. Matthew 28:18-20.

**Faith.** Trust in Jesus Christ and reliance on him, rather than confidence in your own merit. Ephesians 2:8-9.

**Fellowship.** Sharing life in Christ with other believers through worship, care, prayer, and practical support. Acts 2:42-47.

**Gospel.** The good news of God's saving work through Jesus Christ, especially his death for our sins and bodily resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:1-5.

**Grace.** God's undeserved favor and kindness, rescuing us and training us to live for him. Titus 2:11-14.

**Holy Spirit.** God, the third Person of the Trinity, who gives new life, dwells in believers, and empowers their life with Christ. Romans 8:9-17.

**Justification.** God's declaration that those who trust Christ are righteous because of Christ, not their own achievement. Romans 3:21-26.

## Words you will hear

### L to W

**Lord.** A title of authority. Calling Jesus Lord acknowledges that he rules and deserves our trust and obedience. Philippians 2:9-11.

**Mercy.** God's compassion toward people in misery and sin, including his forgiveness of those who turn to him. Ephesians 2:4-5.

**Obedience.** Responding to God's authority by doing what he teaches. For a disciple, it grows from faith and love through the Spirit's power. John 14:15-17.

**Prayer.** Speaking with God in response to who he is and what he has said, coming to the Father through Jesus with the Spirit's help. Matthew 6:5-13; Ephesians 2:18.

**Repentance.** Turning from sin toward God with a changed heart and mind that leads toward changed conduct. Acts 20:21; Luke 3:8.

**Resurrection.** Jesus' rising bodily from death, and God's promised raising of his people to life with him. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 42-49.

**Salvation.** God's rescue from sin and its judgment into life with him, accomplished by Jesus and received through faith. It includes our future completion in glory. Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 8:23-25.

**Sanctification.** God's work of making his people holy, setting them apart for himself and progressively shaping them to be like Jesus. Disciples participate through Spirit-enabled obedience. 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

**Scripture.** The Bible, God's written Word given through human authors, teaching us God's truth and equipping us for faithful living. 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

**Sin.** Our rebellion against God in desires, thoughts, actions, and failures to do good. It damages our relationship with him and others. Romans 3:23; James 4:17.

**Spiritual disciplines.** Regular practices such as Bible reading, prayer, and gathering with the church that help us attend to God and respond to his grace. They do not earn salvation. Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 4:7-8.

**Stewardship.** Responsible care for what God entrusts to us, including abilities, possessions, time, and opportunities. 1 Peter 4:10-11.

**Trinity.** The one God eternally exists as three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are not three gods or three temporary roles. Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-3; Acts 5:3-4.

**Worship.** Honoring and responding to God with reverence, gratitude, love, and obedience, in gathered praise and the whole of life. John 4:23-24; Romans 12:1-2.

## Your next steps after day 30

You are still at the beginning of a lifelong relationship. Return to John 15:5 and Philippians 3:7-14. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you keep knowing and following Jesus. Review this plan with a mature disciple and choose a pace you can sustain.

**Continue in Scripture.** Read the Gospel of John in order, one short section each day. If you have recently read it, begin Mark. Read the surrounding paragraphs, summarize the main idea, and

choose an appropriate response. Write questions for your next conversation.

My next Bible book and starting date: _____________\
_____

**Continue in prayer.** Protect a realistic daily appointment. Give thanks, confess honestly, and bring needs to the Father. Return to him in brief prayers throughout the day. Use Matthew 6:9-13 when you need a pattern.

My usual time and place: ____________________\
_________

**Continue with the church.** Keep gathering and learning. If you have not been baptized since trusting Jesus, ask your pastor to baptize you. Ask about a group and a fitting opportunity to serve. Receive care as well as offering it.

My next church connection: __________________\
_________

**Continue with another disciple.** Meet regularly to discuss Scripture and pray. Ask each other what you are learning about Jesus, where obedience is difficult, and what help you need. Let trust grow through honesty and follow-through.

My companion and next check-in: _______________\
_______

**Continue in love.** Choose one relationship in which to practice what you are learning. Pray for someone who does not yet know Jesus. Look for an opportunity to listen, serve, and share your hope with respect.

One step I will take this week: _________________\
________

**When you lose your rhythm, come back.** You do not need to earn your way into another conversation with Jesus. Open your Bible, ask for the Spirit's help, and take the next faithful step. His grace is the foundation of a disciple's life.

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