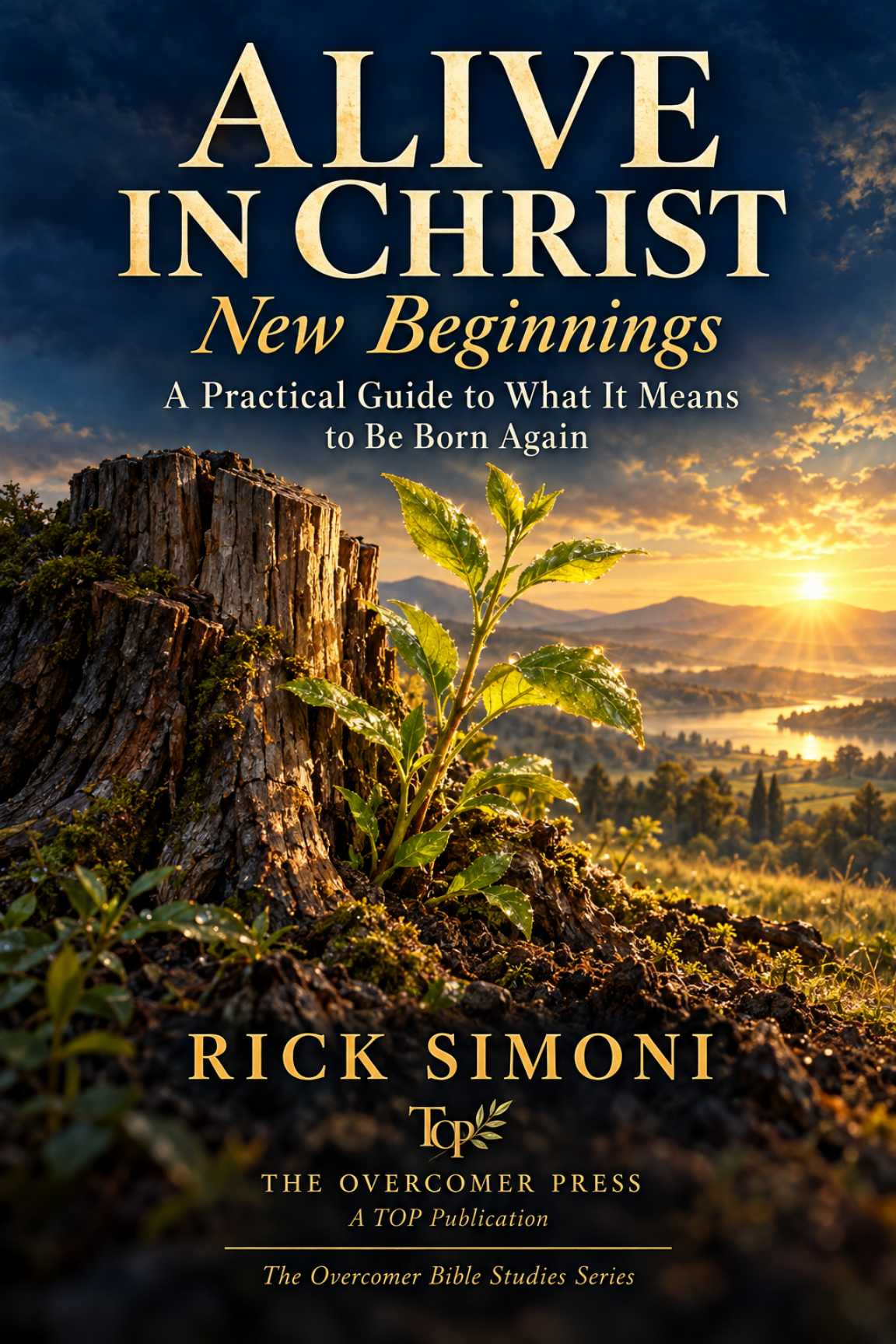
ALIVE IN CHRIST

New Beginnings

A Practical Guide to What It Means to Be Born Again



RICK SIMONI

THE OVERCOMER PRESS
A TOP Publication

The Overcomer Bible Studies Series

THE OVERCOMER BIBLE STUDIES SERIES

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A Hand on Your Shoulder

Perhaps you have only recently believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. You have heard words such as saved, forgiven, and born again, but you are still learning what they mean. Perhaps you have known the language for years and are only now discovering the life to which it points. This book is written to help you begin walking with Christ, with the Scriptures open and your feet on the ground.

You may have experienced great joy when you first believed. You may have come quietly, with tears, or with little feeling at all. The question beneath all those experiences is the same: Who is Jesus Christ, what has He done, and are you trusting Him? Our confidence rests in the crucified and risen Lord, not in our ability to describe a remarkable beginning.

The gospel brings us to a living Savior. He died for our sins, rose from the dead, and reigns as Lord. In Him there is forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and a life we could never produce for ourselves. Becoming a Christian is not merely agreeing to religious ideas. It is receiving Christ and learning to live by faith in Him.

There will be ordinary mornings after this beginning. The same kitchen will need cleaning. The same person may irritate you. An old temptation may return, and a prayer may seem to meet only silence. These are places in which you learn to walk with God. The truth of the gospel belongs in the home, the workplace, the difficult conversation, and the hour after a fall.

Read slowly. Keep a Bible beside you and read the passages in their setting. You need not finish a chapter every day. Where a passage exposes sin, respond honestly. Where it gives comfort, receive it. Where you do not understand, ask the Lord for light and speak with a mature believer who will help you search the Scriptures.

This is a hand on your shoulder for the first miles. It cannot take the place of Scripture, prayer, or fellowship with other believers. Its purpose is to direct you to Christ, so that you may know the ground beneath your feet and learn to walk in the life He gives.

PART ONE

THE MIRACLE OF THE NEW BIRTH

CHAPTER 1

Why the Bible Is Our Guide

> *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*
>
> **Psalm 119:105**

A new believer soon discovers that many voices claim to explain Christianity. Some are helpful; others are confident without being faithful. A moving story, a popular teacher, or a convincing video cannot settle what is true. We need the Word of God, something more dependable than another person's certainty or our own changing impressions.

Scripture is given by inspiration of God. It teaches, reproves, corrects, and instructs us in righteousness, equipping us for a life that pleases Him (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God spoke through human writers without making their words merely human opinion. We therefore come to the Bible ready to be taught and corrected, rather than looking only for sentences that agree with us.

Yet the Bible is more than a collection of instructions. It bears witness to Jesus Christ. After His resurrection, Jesus opened the Scriptures to His disciples and showed them the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27, 32). The sacrifices, promises, histories, and prophecies belong to a story that finds its fulfillment in Him. Reading with Christ at the center does not mean inventing a hidden meaning for every object. It means following the connections Scripture itself makes and allowing the apostles to show us how God's promises reach their fulfillment.

Begin where you can see Him clearly

Start with the Gospel of John. Notice what Jesus says about Himself, how He deals with people, and why John has written his account: that readers may believe on Christ and have life through His name (John 20:30-31). Continue with 1 John, which speaks plainly about faith, love, obedience, and assurance. Read the Psalms alongside these books as you learn to pray through joy, fear, grief, and waiting.

The Bible's references are simple once you become familiar with them. John 3:16 means the Gospel of John, chapter three, verse sixteen. First John is a different book, a letter near the end of the New Testament. The contents page in your Bible will help you find your way. Using it is no cause for embarrassment.

Read a paragraph before lifting out a sentence. Ask who is speaking, to whom, and about what. A command to ancient Israel about temple sacrifice does not tell you to offer an animal today; the New Testament shows you how Christ fulfilled those sacrifices. A promise must be understood in its setting before you apply it. Scripture is trustworthy, but we can misread it when we ignore what surrounds a verse.

Bring the Word into the day

Suppose you read the instruction to be slow to wrath in James 1:19. Later someone interrupts your work, and your answer begins to sharpen. That is a place to receive what you read: pause, hear the person, and answer without cruelty. Understanding has begun to become obedience.

Keep a simple note of what you learn and what you need to ask. Do not measure a fruitful reading by the number of pages completed. Neither should you expect a private message hidden in every line. Let the passage say what it says. Ask the Spirit to make its truth living and effective in you.

On a dry morning, read a small portion honestly. You may receive no sudden feeling, yet the Word remains good food. Over time it corrects the stories you tell yourself, exposes falsehood, and steadies your trust in Christ. The aim is to know Him and follow Him, not merely to accumulate answers.

CHAPTER 2

What Does It Mean to Be Saved?

> *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
>
> **Romans 6:23**

To be saved is to be rescued. Scripture does not describe our deepest problem as lack of confidence, opportunity, or religious education. We have sinned against God. Sin includes what we do, what we refuse to do, and the inward rebellion from which those choices come. We need more than encouragement to improve. We need forgiveness and deliverance.

God has acted in His Son. Jesus Christ lived without sin, died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). His resurrection is not a hopeful ending added to a tragic story. The One who bore our sins is alive, and salvation is found in Him. We come to a living Lord who reconciles us to God.

You cannot buy this rescue with good works or make yourself worthy of it by a period of reform. Salvation is God's gift, received through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10). Faith takes God at His Word and entrusts itself to Christ. Its strength lies in the Savior upon whom it rests. A trembling person may truly trust a faithful Savior.

Repentance belongs to this turning. You stop defending your sin and turn to God. Repentance is not a promise that you will never need mercy again, nor is it payment for pardon. It is an honest response to the Lord: Your judgment is right, my sin is real, and my hope is in Your Son. We do not make Jesus useful while refusing Him as Lord.

Rescued into a new allegiance

Salvation includes forgiveness of sin's guilt and deliverance from its dominion. Sin no longer has the right to rule you (Romans 6:14). This does not mean temptation disappears or that every habit breaks without a struggle. It means you belong to Christ and can bring the whole struggle under His lordship.

The New Testament also speaks of salvation still to be revealed. We await the redemption of our bodies and the full deliverance that accompanies Christ's appearing (Romans 8:23). His sacrifice needs no supplement. What remains ahead is the full outworking of His victory, including bodily resurrection. You are rescued now, being changed now, and looking toward a completion you cannot yet see.

The same kitchen tomorrow

Tomorrow you may wake in the same house, face the same unpaid bill, and feel the same temper rise. That does not establish that nothing happened. Your circumstances may look familiar while your relationship to God has changed. Bring the temper to Him before giving it your tongue. Ask for help, and act on what you already know is right.

If friends invite you back into a practice you know is sinful, tell them plainly that you are following Christ. You need not insult them or pretend to be superior. You may need to leave early, change a routine, or ask another believer to stand with you. Grace gives you both a new standing and a new direction.

If you are still asking how to begin, come honestly to Christ. Call upon Him, confess your need, and trust His death and resurrection for your salvation (Romans 10:9-13; Acts 16:30-31). A particular arrangement of words does not save. He does. Do not wait until you can present a repaired life. Come to the Savior who receives sinners and teaches them to walk in newness of life.

CHAPTER 3

Born Again: A New Life, Not a New Label

> *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*
>
> **John 3:3**

Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus, a religious teacher. Nicodemus possessed knowledge, standing, and a serious interest in the things of God. Yet Jesus did not tell him that a little more instruction would complete him. He needed a birth from above. Religious experience and spiritual life are not the same thing.

We enter natural life by birth, not by promising to behave like living people. In the same way, spiritual life comes through God's work. The Spirit makes alive those who were dead in sins (Ephesians 2:1-5), and this life is received by believing on Christ's name (John 1:12-13). This beginning cannot be manufactured through ceremony, family connections, or imitation of Christian habits.

Paul describes the believer as a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The decisive phrase is in Christ. New birth is not simply a better opinion of yourself. You have been brought into relationship with the crucified and risen Lord. His life becomes the source of yours. The Christian life therefore begins with God's gift before it becomes our daily practice.

Birth is not maturity

A newborn child is fully alive and wholly dependent. He cannot yet do what a grown person can do. That does not make his life unreal. New believers likewise need nourishment, care, instruction, and time. Do not demand of yourself the understanding of someone who has walked with Christ for forty years.

Old ways of thinking may remain deeply familiar. You may know that lying is wrong and still feel the impulse to protect yourself with a

half-truth. You may forgive someone and find resentment knocking again the next morning. Growth means naming these things honestly and learning to respond from your new life in Christ.

At the same time, new birth must not become an excuse for refusing change. A living child grows. The Spirit directs us toward truth, love, and obedience. We should not use the language of grace to settle comfortably into a sin we have no intention of forsaking. Where there is resistance, bring even that resistance to the Lord and ask Him to make you willing.

Learning your new direction

Perhaps your old friendships were built around ridicule, drunkenness, or sexual immorality. You may not know how to belong without joining in. Begin with the next honest response. Refuse the cruel joke. Leave the situation that is drawing you back. Tell the truth when a convenient lie would protect your pride. These choices do not create your new birth; they express the life God has given.

Tell a trustworthy believer that you have come to Christ. Ask that person to read Scripture and pray with you. You do not need a polished testimony. You can say, simply, that you are trusting Jesus and want to learn to follow Him.

There is no need to pretend that you understand everything. A child begins by depending on the one who cares for him. Start there: Lord, I am Yours; teach me to walk. The One who gives life also supplies what is needed for growth.

CHAPTER 4

Eternal Life Starts Now

> *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*
>
> **John 17:3**

Many people imagine eternal life as a reward handed out after death to those who have behaved well enough. Jesus speaks of it as a present gift. The believer has everlasting life and has passed from death unto life (John 5:24). We are not waiting for death to introduce us to the Father. Through Christ we know Him now.

Eternal life is more than existence without an ending. It is life in fellowship with God through His Son. 1 John 5:11-12 places it where it belongs: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. We do not possess it independently of Him, like an object placed in a drawer. Our life is bound up with the living Christ.

This does not make us divine or erase the difference between Creator and creature. It means that God has graciously brought us into communion with Himself. We receive, depend, worship, and obey. Christ remains the source; we remain those who live by Him.

Life now, resurrection ahead

Present life in Christ does not mean that every promise has already reached its completion. Believers still suffer and die. The New Testament does not ask us to deny that grief. It gives us the promise of bodily resurrection. Because Jesus rose, death will not have the final word over those who are His (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

The Spirit who dwells in believers will also quicken their mortal bodies (Romans 8:11). Our hope is not permanent escape from a body God once called good. It is the redemption of the body and life with the Lord in the fullness of His renewed creation. We possess the beginning of that life now and await its unveiled fullness.

If a loved one dies in Christ, tears are not unbelief. Jesus wept with those mourning Lazarus before He came to the grave (John 11:33-38). Christian hope gives grief a future; it does not forbid grief to speak. We sorrow while trusting the One who said that He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25).

A life that reaches Tuesday

Because eternal life begins now, ordinary work is not an interruption to knowing God. You can speak to Him while washing dishes, waiting beside a hospital bed, or driving to a difficult appointment. You need not wait for a worship meeting to acknowledge His presence.

Suppose your day consists largely of caring for someone who cannot repay you. There may be little that feels impressive. Yet patience, faithfulness, and prayer belong to the life of Christ expressed in His people. A hidden day can be fruitful before God.

Do not make constant awareness of Him into another exhausting requirement. Your attention must often be on the task in front of you. The question is whether you entrust that task and yourself to Him. Begin the day with thanks, return to Him when distracted, and receive the responsibilities He has placed before you.

Life eternal has already opened to you in Christ. Learn to know the Father in the actual day He has given, while looking forward to the day when faith becomes sight.

CHAPTER 5

Faith When Feelings Change

> *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 5:7**

A joyful beginning may be followed by a very ordinary week. You pray and feel little, you read and become distracted, and a question rises: if I truly belonged to Christ, would I feel this way? Many new believers mistake emotional intensity for spiritual reality and then lose confidence when the intensity fades.

Feelings are part of being human. Scripture gives us songs of joy and prayers of anguish. We should neither worship our emotions nor pretend they do not exist. A weary body, a strained relationship, and a disappointing day can affect how we feel. None of these things can rewrite the gospel.

Faith looks beyond itself to Christ. The promise is not that everyone who can produce a steady feeling of forgiveness will be received. The promise directs us to the Son. First John was written so that believers might know they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). Assurance rests first in God’s testimony concerning Him.

Give doubt an honest hearing

Some doubts are questions that need patient answers. Others arise from shame, fear, or exhaustion. Do not assume every troubled thought is a direct attack of the devil. Nor should you treat every question as rebellion. Bring the actual concern into the light: What am I afraid of? What do I think God has promised? What does the passage really say?

If you are troubled because you continue to lie while calling it harmless, the answer is not merely to repeat a comforting verse. Confess the sin and turn from it. If you are troubled because you did not feel moved during prayer, do not accuse yourself of unbelief on that ground. The Spirit leads us into truth, not endless inspection of our emotional temperature.

The letters of John also connect assurance with love and obedience. These are fruits of knowing Christ, not an entrance fee. They help us distinguish living faith from empty claims. A tender conscience may need comfort; a hardened conscience needs awakening. Both need the same Christ and the same truthful Word.

When it is two in the morning

An anxious night is a poor courtroom. You may be replaying your conversion, wondering whether you used the right words or believed strongly enough. Return to the object of faith. Jesus Christ died and rose again. His invitation is trustworthy. You may come to Him now rather than trying to prove that you perfectly understood Him then.

Read a short passage such as John 6:35-40. Pray honestly about the fear, and let the matter rest rather than demanding a particular sensation before you sleep. When morning comes, speak with a mature believer who can listen carefully and help you distinguish a real question from a repeating accusation.

There will be days when joy returns quietly through a hymn, a kindness, or an opened passage of Scripture. Receive it with thanks. There may also be days when you must walk without that comfort. Faith does not pretend the road is easy. It entrusts the road to the faithful One who walks with His people.

PART TWO

WHO YOU ARE NOW

CHAPTER 6

A Child of God: Adopted and Accepted

> *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*
>
> **Romans 8:15**

God does more than pardon those who come to Him through Christ. He brings them into His family. The language of new birth tells us that He gives life; the language of adoption tells us that He receives us as His children, with access to Him and an inheritance in His Son (Romans 8:16-17). Both truths are meant to draw us near.

You do not approach God as an unwanted visitor hoping the door might open. Through Christ you have access to the Father by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). Prayer begins from that welcome. You can speak plainly, without a performance designed to persuade Him to notice you.

Some readers find the word father difficult. Your own father may have been absent, unpredictable, or cruel. Scripture does not ask you to enlarge that experience and call it God. It reveals the Father through His Son. Look at Christ's truthfulness, compassion, holiness, and costly love. Let Him correct what you have imagined about the One to whom He brings you.

Loved enough to be corrected

Acceptance is not the same as approval of every action. Hebrews 12:5-11 describes a Father who disciplines His children for their good. His correction can be painful, but its purpose is that we should share His holiness and bear the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

A rebuke from Scripture may expose a cherished excuse. A wise believer may challenge the way you speak to your family. Receive correction without immediately deciding that God has rejected you. The Father is teaching you to walk as His child. His love is more faithful than indulgence would be.

Do not try to decode every misfortune as a punishment for a particular sin. Scripture does not authorize that habit. When the Lord exposes something clearly, respond. When you do not understand your circumstances, trust Him and seek wisdom without inventing accusations against yourself.

You have brothers and sisters

Adoption brings us into a family larger than our preferences. The person with a different background, accent, education, or temperament may be your brother or sister in Christ. We learn family life by listening, forgiving, serving, and receiving help. Belonging does not depend on how quickly we become socially comfortable.

You may enter a gathering and feel too new or too rough around the edges. Others may know the hymns and recognize every reference. Tell someone you are learning. A healthy fellowship will make room for you to grow. Your worth in the family is not set by your fluency in its vocabulary.

At home, relatives may not understand the change in you. Do not make every meal a debate. Speak of Christ naturally, answer questions honestly, and let your conduct support your words. You can love your family without returning to sinful patterns to keep the peace.

When you pray tonight, begin simply with Father. Remember how that access was opened: through Jesus Christ. Your place with God is a gift to receive, and your life as His child is a calling to walk out with gratitude.

CHAPTER 7

Forgiven, Washed, and Made Righteous

> *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*
>
> **Ephesians 1:7 (sentence continues in the next verse)**

Forgiveness addresses a real debt. God does not call evil harmless or pretend that it never mattered. At the cross we see both the seriousness of sin and the greatness of His mercy. Christ gave Himself for us. Forgiveness is costly to Him and freely given to those who believe.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of sins that had marked their former lives, then tells them they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 6:11). Their past was real, but it no longer defined their standing before God. They belonged to Christ.

To be justified is to be declared righteous in God's sight through faith in Jesus Christ. Through Christ's obedience we are made righteous (Romans 5:19); our confidence rests in Him. To be sanctified is to be set apart for God. The One who receives you also calls you into a holy life. Pardon and transformation belong together, though they must not be confused: growth in holiness does not purchase your forgiveness.

When the past returns to mind

Memory may revisit something God has forgiven. A name, a place, or a careless remark can bring the old shame rushing back. The strength of that feeling is not evidence that Christ's blood has failed. Bring the memory under the truth of the gospel (Hebrews 10:17).

If the sin has never been confessed, acknowledge it honestly. If you have already confessed it, repeated self-punishment adds nothing to Christ's sacrifice. You do not need to keep proving that you are sorry enough. Thank Him for mercy and ask how to walk faithfully now.

This does not mean the past has no earthly consequences. A damaged relationship may need patient repair. A debt may need repayment. Someone you hurt may not be ready to trust you. Forgiveness from God does not give you the right to demand immediate reconciliation or freedom from consequences.

Make amends without trying to buy peace

Suppose you have taken money dishonestly. Confession to God should lead toward telling the truth and making restitution where possible (Luke 19:8). That action is the fruit of repentance, not the price of pardon. Seek wise help where the situation is complicated. Do not make a dramatic disclosure merely to relieve yourself while carelessly causing further injury.

When asking forgiveness, name what you did without placing the blame on the person you hurt. Allow that person time. Christian humility can bear the discomfort of repair because it no longer needs to protect a false appearance of innocence.

The same grace teaches us to forgive others. We do not excuse their sin, but relinquish vengeance to God. Forgiveness can coexist with truthful boundaries and a careful rebuilding of trust. The cross makes us honest about both mercy and evil.

You need not carry yesterday as a sentence against every tomorrow. Christ has opened a clean way forward. Walk in it with thanksgiving, truthfulness, and a readiness to put right what can be put right.

CHAPTER 8

The Spirit Lives in You

> *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*
>
> **1 Corinthians 6:19**

The Holy Spirit is not a reward reserved for unusually mature Christians. Everyone who belongs to Christ has His Spirit (Romans 8:9). You may have known little about Him when you believed, yet you did not receive a distant Savior who left you to manage alone. God has come to dwell in His people.

Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit refer to the same divine Person. He is not an impersonal influence or a power we learn to control. He teaches, comforts, leads, and strengthens. He glorifies Christ, making the truth of the Son living and effective among those who believe (John 16:13-14).

Paul calls the Spirit the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14): God's pledge of what is still to come. His presence is also a summons to holiness. The body in which you work, rest, speak, and act belongs to the Lord. Sexual conduct, speech, and the treatment of other people therefore matter deeply.

Learn to depend without pretending

You may have expected guidance to arrive as a clear voice at every decision. Often the Spirit works through Scripture already read, wisdom gained over time, or a needed word from another believer. He may bring a neglected responsibility to mind or expose an excuse you have been protecting.

An impression is not automatically His instruction. A peaceful feeling can accompany a selfish decision, and a right act can feel frightening. Test what you think you are receiving by Scripture and by the character of Christ. Seek counsel where the decision is significant. You may say, I think this is wise, without announcing that God has spoken.

The Spirit will not authorize deceit because it makes life easier, cruelty because you feel righteous anger, or sexual sin because a relationship feels meaningful. His leading agrees with the Word He inspired. Learning this protects you from both manipulation by others and overconfidence in yourself.

Help in the actual moment

Consider the instant before you answer a sharp remark. You can ask the Lord for help, remember His command concerning your speech, and choose a truthful answer without retaliation. Dependence does not remove your responsibility to act; it supplies the strength in which you act.

When you do not know how to pray, you are not shut out. Romans 8:26 speaks of the Spirit helping our infirmities. Tell God the truth you can tell. A halting prayer offered in need is welcome. You do not need to produce spiritual language to gain His attention.

If you resist a clear correction, confess that resistance. Ephesians 4:30 warns believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit, in a passage concerned with lying, anger, corrupt speech, and bitterness. Life in the Spirit is remarkably practical. The One who dwells in you is teaching you to love and live truthfully.

Return to this quiet confidence: you have not been left alone. Ask, listen through the Word, seek wise counsel, and obey the light you have.

CHAPTER 9

You Are in a Battle, but You Are Not Alone

> *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*
>
> **Ephesians 6:11**

The Christian life involves conflict with an accusing adversary, worldly pressures, and fleshly desires. Scripture teaches watchfulness without fascination with darkness. Our attention belongs chiefly to Christ, whose victory grounds our resistance.

Paul describes Christ's victory at the cross:

> *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*
>
> **Colossians 2:15**

His victory does not mean the enemy is harmless or that resistance is unnecessary. Peter still tells believers to be sober and vigilant (1 Peter 5:8-9). We stand because our Lord has conquered, and we take seriously His command to stand.

People are not the enemy. A mocking relative, a difficult coworker, or a spouse who does not understand your faith is a person to love. Ephesians 6:12 forbids us to reduce spiritual warfare to hostility against flesh and blood. We can resist lies firmly while refusing hatred toward those who repeat them.

What the armor looks like in use

Truth means refusing the lie that secrecy will protect you. Righteousness means resting in your standing in Christ while refusing the dishonest act. The gospel of peace steadies your feet because you have been reconciled to God. Faith receives His promises when fear argues otherwise. Salvation guards your hope, and the Word gives you a truthful answer when temptation distorts reality (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Prayer runs through the whole passage. The armor is no magical formula: you depend on the Lord, receive His provision, and pray for others. It belongs to the whole Church; faithfulness is not reserved for a spiritual elite.

In the first minute of temptation

Temptation itself is not the same as consent. Jesus was tempted, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). When an unwanted thought appears, do not spend the next hour proving that it shocked you enough. Refuse to entertain it and turn your attention toward what is right.

Take the offered way of escape seriously (1 Corinthians 10:13). Close the page, leave the conversation, or put the device where secrecy is difficult, and telephone someone who will help you remain honest. A practical boundary is not a failure of faith. It can be the very obedience through which you receive God’s help.

James 1:14-15 also teaches that temptation works through our own desires. Do not blame the devil for choices you must confess. Learn the circumstances in which you become careless: exhaustion, resentment, loneliness, or an unguarded routine. Address those circumstances without making them excuses.

Stand with others

If a pattern keeps returning, bring it to a mature believer. Ask for prayer and concrete help. Shame says you must defeat it alone before you deserve fellowship; grace brings you into the light where help can reach you.

Overcoming is the calling of every believer, grounded in Christ and expressed through faith (1 John 5:4-5). It may look, today, like refusing one lie and taking one obedient step. Do that in His strength. The battle is real, and you are not abandoned within it.

PART THREE

HOW TO WALK IT OUT

CHAPTER 10

Baptized with Power

> *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*
>
> **Acts 1:8**

Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Ghost rather than leaving them to supply their own power. At Pentecost the exalted Christ poured out the Spirit, and they bore witness with boldness they had not produced for themselves (Acts 2:1-36).

The purpose is plain: witnesses unto me. The Spirit directs attention to Christ, not a circle of celebrated spiritual people. Where an experience makes a personality impressive while Christ recedes, something has gone wrong.

This book encourages believers to seek the Lord for the baptism and empowering of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit who gives life also equips God’s people to bear witness. You may truly belong to Christ and yet need to ask Him for courage, liberty, and a fuller yielding to His power. Do not settle for self-reliance because you are afraid of excess; neither should you accept disorder merely because someone calls it spiritual.

Read the accounts carefully

Acts records different circumstances in which people received the Spirit. At Samaria, believers had already been baptized when the apostles prayed and laid hands on them (Acts 8:14-17). In Cornelius's house, the Spirit fell while Peter was speaking (Acts 10:44-48). At Ephesus, Paul asked about receiving the Holy Ghost (Acts 19:2); those who knew John's baptism heard of Jesus and received the Spirit (Acts 19:1-6). Acts records tongues at Pentecost, in Cornelius's house, and at Ephesus (Acts 2:4; Acts 10:46; Acts 19:6); Samaria's account does not mention them. Read each account in its own setting.

Acts 4:31 describes believers being filled afresh and speaking boldly, not another new birth or baptism. New birth, baptism with the Spirit, and repeated filling must not be treated as interchangeable labels. All direct us to the same Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:11 must be read with the burning of chaff in verse 12; fire carries judgment in this context. We need not build our appeal on the word fire when Acts 1:8 gives a clear promise of power for witness.

Ask without becoming anxious about your standing

Every believer belongs to Christ by His Spirit (Romans 8:9). You are not half a Christian while seeking His empowering. No one should make a particular outward manifestation the basis of your assurance of salvation. Spiritual gifts are given by the Spirit for the good of the body, and love governs their use (1 Corinthians 12-14).

Ask the Father freely (Luke 11:13). Tell Him where fear has kept you silent and where your own strength has failed. Other believers may pray with you. You need not manufacture a sensation, copy another person's experience, or pretend that something has happened. Trust the Lord and remain open to His working.

Be ready for ordinary opportunities in a neighbor's driveway or a lunchroom. Explain what Christ has done, listen respectfully, and admit when you need to seek an answer. Holy boldness can be quiet, truthful, and patient. The power is His; the witness points to Him.

CHAPTER 11

Filled and Overflowing

> *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*
>
> **Ephesians 5:18 (sentence continues in the next verse)**

The Christian life cannot be sustained by remembering a powerful meeting. God's command is to be filled with the Spirit. We need His present working as we serve, speak, endure, and love. Yesterday's encouragement is a reason for gratitude, but today we still depend on Him.

Paul places this command in the midst of ordinary relationships. The following verses speak of psalms, hymns, thanksgiving, and submission to one another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:19-21). A Spirit-filled life has a voice that praises, a heart that gives thanks, and a humility that makes room for others. It is recognizable far beyond a public meeting.

The Spirit is a Person, not a supply we control by following a technique. Prayer, Scripture, and obedience do not operate a mechanism that compels Him to act. They are ways in which we turn toward God, receive His truth, and yield ourselves to His will. He remains Lord of His gifts and His working.

Fruit in the places where you live

Galatians 5:22-23 describes the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. These qualities reveal the character of Christ. Gifts equip us to serve; fruit concerns the life from which service comes. Both matter, and a visible gift never excuses an unloving character.

Longsuffering may grow while you care for someone who repeats the same question. Temperance may appear when you stop before the second cruel reply. Gentleness may be seen in the way you correct a child or answer a person who has embarrassed you. Such actions may pass unnoticed by a congregation while being precious before God.

You cannot manufacture spiritual fruit by becoming absorbed in an ideal version of yourself. Jesus directs the branches to abide in Him (John 15:4-5). Remain dependent on Christ, receive His Word, and respond to His commands. The life comes from Him and becomes visible through your willing obedience.

When the day has already gone wrong

Perhaps you began with prayer and had lost your temper before breakfast was finished. Do not write off the entire day. Confess the sin, apologize where needed, and ask for the Spirit's help in the next conversation. You do not need a new week, a special service, or a dramatic resolution before returning to dependence.

If tiredness has made you impatient, acknowledge both your responsibility and your limitations. Taking needed rest can be an act of wisdom. If resentment is feeding your words, bring the resentment into the light. Asking to be filled while protecting a known grievance is to come to God with a divided heart.

Seek fellowship with people who direct you toward Christ and encourage truthful living. Receive their prayers and encouragement, and offer yours. The Spirit's fullness is not a private possession to admire. It overflows in service to others.

At the end of a quiet day, you may have no extraordinary story to tell. Yet you may have listened well, refused a temptation, spoken of Christ, and thanked God in difficulty. Do not despise such fruit. Ask Him to continue His work tomorrow, and rest in His care tonight.

CHAPTER 12

Walking with God Day by Day

> *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*
>
> **John 15:4**

Walking suggests both relationship and movement. We do not learn the Christian life merely by collecting ideas about it. We walk with God through actual responsibilities, receiving His Word and responding in faith. The pace may be slow, but a small obedient step is still a real step.

Jesus' picture of the vine and branches protects us from self-sufficiency. A branch cannot become fruitful by detaching itself and trying harder. It must remain in the vine. In the same way, our strength is in Christ. Abiding means continuing in dependence upon Him, receiving His words, and remaining in His love through obedience (John 15:7-10).

This is not inactivity. A branch bearing fruit is wonderfully alive. Paul joins God's working and our response when he tells believers that God works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13). We act because He is at work, not because we can replace His life with determination.

A simple rhythm

Begin with a pattern that fits the life you actually have. In the morning, read a short passage and speak to the Father about the day ahead. Thank Him for mercy, name your responsibilities, and ask for help where you already feel weak. Ten attentive minutes can be a sound beginning. There is no holiness in setting a rule so severe that you abandon it in despair.

Through the day, pray briefly and honestly (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Ask for patience before answering, wisdom before deciding, and courage before speaking. Prayer is not confined to a room or a certain posture. We can turn to the Father in the middle of work without neglecting the work.

In the evening, remember a mercy and give thanks. Confess what needs confession. Where an apology or a practical change is needed, make a

clear intention to act. Then sleep. God has not asked you to sustain the world by lying awake reviewing yourself.

When prayer seems unanswered

Bring requests plainly, while entrusting the outcome and timing to God. Jesus teaches His disciples to pray for the Father's will, daily bread, forgiveness, and deliverance from evil (Matthew 6:9-13). Prayer includes desire, dependence, and surrender. It is not a way of forcing our preferred outcome.

You may pray faithfully and still wait. That waiting is not proof that you have failed to find the right formula. Continue to ask, seek wise action, and receive support from others. The Father can sustain you within a difficulty even while the difficulty remains.

If you miss your usual reading, resume at the next opportunity. Do not turn a broken routine into a broken month. The purpose of a habit is to help you draw near, not to become a score by which you judge whether God will receive you.

Over time you will discover that walking with God includes receiving interruptions, changing plans, doing hidden duties, and confessing quickly. Much of maturity is quiet faithfulness. Christ is present in those ordinary miles, teaching you to live from His strength.

CHAPTER 13

What Does Obedience Look Like?

> *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*
>
> **John 14:15**

Jesus' command is simple and searching. Love for Him takes shape in obedience (James 1:22). We should not soften that into a vague admiration that never changes our conduct. Yet neither should we turn obedience into payment for His love. The grace that receives us also teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

Ephesians 2:8-10 keeps the order clear. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works; and we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Works do not establish the root of our salvation. They are the fruit God intends to grow from it. Living faith answers the Lord rather than remaining content with correct statements about Him.

Obedience therefore concerns both trust and action. A person may feel generous while refusing a needed kindness, or speak warmly about truth while protecting a lie. The Lord brings love into the choices where it becomes costly and real. His commands are not decorative ideals.

Where you already know the next step

Start with what Scripture makes clear. If you have exaggerated a story to make yourself important, correct it. If you have been dishonest about money or time, tell the truth. If a private habit is feeding lust, remove the access that keeps serving it. If sarcasm repeatedly leaves another person small, stop calling it merely your sense of humor.

Forgiveness may be the hard step (Ephesians 4:32). You can relinquish revenge without declaring that the wrong was acceptable. Forgiving a person does not require placing yourself under their continuing harm or pretending that trust is restored. Love seeks truth and the good of the other; it does not make evil safe by concealing it.

Sometimes obedience begins before your feelings agree. You can answer gently while still upset, repay what you owe while embarrassed, or refrain from gossip while wishing to be included. This is not hypocrisy when you are honestly yielding to Christ. It is learning to let His truth govern you rather than waiting for desire to lead.

Grace and serious warnings belong together

The New Testament warns believers against hardening their hearts and turning away from the living God (Hebrews 3:12-14). We should receive those warnings as earnestly as we receive its promises. Assurance is not permission to settle into deliberate rebellion. Our safety is in Christ, and He calls us to continue in faith.

At the same time, a believer who hates his sin and comes for mercy should not be treated as though one failure has placed him beyond recovery. Scripture calls back those who wander and encourages the weak. The Lord knows how to correct without crushing a bruised reed (Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:20).

When you fail, confess and return. When you know what is right, do it in dependence on the Spirit. When you face an unclear decision, seek wisdom rather than inventing a rule to control everyone else.

Choose one place today where you have delayed a clear act of obedience. Bring your reluctance to the Lord, ask for His help, and act. The aim is not a flattering picture of your progress. It is a life increasingly responsive to the One who loved you and gave Himself for you.

CHAPTER 14

Church Without the Confusion

> *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 12:27**

The Church is the people who belong to Christ. A building may serve them, and an organized gathering may help their life together, but neither defines the body. Christ is its Head. By His Spirit believers are joined to Him and to one another (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Here baptism concerns incorporation into Christ's body; Acts 1:8 concerns power for witness.

This means you need more than private inspiration. You need people who will pray with you, teach you, correct you, bear burdens with you, and receive the help you can offer. Christianity was never intended to be a solitary attempt at spiritual improvement. Even a quiet new believer has a place in the body.

The first believers continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42). Those simple features remain a sound starting point. Look for the Scriptures faithfully taught, Christ honored, prayer taken seriously, and love expressed in actual conduct. The size of the meeting and the polish of its presentation tell you much less.

Learn to recognize healthy fellowship

Faithful teachers can be questioned from Scripture (Acts 17:11). Mature leaders acknowledge that they are accountable to Christ and do not require unquestioning loyalty to themselves. A healthy fellowship makes room for the weak, corrects sin honestly, and does not confuse a person's usefulness with that person's worth.

No gathering will be without faults. Ordinary disagreements, awkward personalities, and imperfect arrangements are not by themselves signs that you must leave. We learn patience and forgiveness among imperfect people. Yet serious wrongdoing should not be dismissed with the remark

that no church is perfect. Truth and accountability belong to the life of Christ's body.

You can begin by speaking with one mature believer. Ask how the fellowship teaches Scripture, cares for people, and handles correction. Join in the gathering, listen, and become known gradually. You do not have to volunteer for everything to prove your sincerity. Faithful belonging grows through shared life.

If religious people have hurt you

A wounded reader may find all of this difficult. Someone may have used the name of God to control you, shame you, or silence honest questions. Such conduct must not be excused. You are not required to remain under coercion in order to prove forgiveness or loyalty to Christ.

Seek trustworthy people who can hear what happened without immediately defending the institution or leader. You may need time and distance before you can participate freely again. A careful beginning is not the same as rejecting fellowship. Christ's care for His people is patient and truthful.

Do not conclude that the sins of some believers tell the whole truth about the Lord or His body. There are brothers and sisters who will walk with you without demanding a performance. Ask Him to lead you toward such fellowship. A kitchen table, a small group, or a local congregation can become a place of genuine encouragement.

Bring something as well as receiving

You can pray for a struggling person, prepare a meal, listen without gossip, or share a passage that helped you. In 1 Corinthians 14:26, the concern is that what believers bring should edify the whole gathering. Your contribution need not be public to be valuable.

Come as a learner, but remember that you are also a member. Receive care and offer it. The life of Christ is made visible as His people love one another.

CHAPTER 15

Water Baptism and the Lord's Supper

> *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 11:26**

Christ has given His people visible acts that direct us to the gospel. Water baptism and the Lord's Supper are not empty religious customs. They confess and proclaim the death and resurrection of the Savior to whom we belong. We receive them with faith, reverence, and thanksgiving.

They do not replace Christ or add merit to His sacrifice. This book understands them as appointed signs that bear witness to His saving work and strengthen believers as they respond in faith. The outward act must never become a substitute for the inward reality to which it points.

Water baptism: belonging to Christ

Jesus commands baptism and teaching His disciples to obey Him (Matthew 28:19-20). Baptism publicly identifies the believer with Jesus Christ. Romans 6:3-4 connects baptism with death, burial, and resurrection: the old life under sin's dominion is no longer our rightful dwelling, and we are called to walk in newness of life.

Do not reduce that passage to a picture that requires nothing of you. Paul's point is that union with Christ has consequences for the way we live. Baptism confesses a new allegiance. We belong to the Lord who died and rose, and we are to present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead (Romans 6:13).

If you have believed and have not been baptized, speak with believers you trust about taking that step. You need not wait until you know every doctrine or have resolved every struggle (Acts 8:36-38). Baptism belongs near the beginning of discipleship. It is a confession of dependence on Christ, not a certificate that you have reached maturity.

The table: remembering Him together

At the Lord's Supper we remember the body given and the blood shed for us (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). The bread and cup direct our attention to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice and proclaim His death until He comes. The table holds together His accomplished work and our expectant hope.

Paul's correction in 1 Corinthians 11 arose in a gathering where selfishness and division were humiliating others. His warning about eating and drinking unworthily concerns a sinful manner of participation. It does not mean that only believers who feel worthy of Christ's sacrifice may come. None of us earns the table.

Examine yourself honestly. Bring sin into the light. Refuse contempt for your brothers and sisters. Seek reconciliation where you have wronged someone, and partake with gratitude for the grace on which you depend. Examination should lead toward repentance and faithful participation, not endless paralysis over whether you have become good enough.

Carry the confession into the week

The one bread also speaks of our shared life as one body (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). We cannot honor Christ's table while treating the people around it as disposable. Receiving the signs with faith includes learning to love those who share them.

After baptism, there is a life to walk. After the Supper, there are people to serve. Take what you confess into the home, the workplace, and the hidden choices of the week. The signs point to the living Christ, and He is the One by whom we live.

PART FOUR

PRESSING ON

CHAPTER 16

When You Have Sinned

> *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*
>
> **1 John 2:1 (sentence continues in the next verse)**

John gives both the purpose and the provision. The purpose is that we should not sin. The provision is an Advocate with the Father if we do. We must keep both truths. Expecting mercy is not permission to be careless; a desire for holiness is not a reason to hide when we have failed.

Sin damages fellowship. It grieves the Spirit, wounds people, and darkens our enjoyment of the Lord. Scripture does not tell us to dismiss it as unimportant because we are believers. It tells us to confess our sins, with the assurance that God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse (1 John 1:9).

Jesus Christ the righteous is our Advocate. His intercession does not portray a loving Son trying to persuade an unwilling Father to show mercy. The Father sent the Son in love, and our access rests on the saving work the Father purposed and the Son accomplished. We come to the Father through the Son, relying on His righteousness rather than presenting our excuses.

The hour after a fall

First, stop defending what happened. Name the sin plainly. If you lied, do not call it a communication problem. If you acted cruelly, do not explain it entirely by the other person’s conduct. Confession agrees with God about what is wrong and turns from it (Proverbs 28:13).

Then receive His promise. Prolonged self-punishment cannot cleanse you. Neither can a dramatic vow that you will never need help again.

Turn to Christ in faith, thank Him for mercy, and ask for strength to take the next right step.

If someone was hurt, address that injury. An apology should not become a speech in which the injured person must comfort you. Say what you did, acknowledge the wrong, and ask forgiveness without demanding an immediate response. Where restitution is possible, begin it.

Learn from the pattern

If the same sin keeps recurring, do more than repeat the same private resolution. Examine the pathway into it. Did you nourish resentment? Keep access to a known snare? Avoid the person who might ask an honest question? Bring the pattern to a trustworthy believer (James 5:16) and agree on practical steps that interrupt it.

Help may include a changed routine, a removed source of temptation, regular conversation, and prayer. None of these replaces dependence on Christ. They can be concrete ways of refusing to make provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). It is not weakness to accept help from the body to which you belong.

Do not mistake a quick confession for complete repair. Forgiveness is freely given, but trust may take time to rebuild. Accept appropriate consequences without concluding that God's mercy has failed. Grace can sustain you through the painful work of making things right.

Peter denied the Lord and was restored to love and service (John 21:15-19). His sin was grievous; it was not the last word Christ spoke over him. Let that turn you toward the Savior rather than toward despair.

Return promptly, return honestly, and return ready to obey. The Lord's aim is not to leave you circling your failure. He restores His people to a truthful walk with Himself.

CHAPTER 17

Growing in Grace

> *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*
>
> **2 Peter 3:18**

Growth in grace is growth in knowing Christ and living from His life. It includes understanding, character, obedience, endurance, and love. A larger store of religious information may help, but information alone is not maturity. The question is what the truth is producing as you receive it by faith.

God works patiently. Some changes become visible quickly; others expose roots that have taken years to deepen. We should neither excuse those roots nor despair because their removal is difficult. Bring the actual condition of your heart to the Lord and continue in the means of grace He provides: His Word, prayer, fellowship, and obedient response.

Paul’s assurance is full and carefully stated:

> *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*
>
> **Romans 8:1**

The remainder of Romans 8 explains the life and direction associated with belonging to Christ. We must not turn the verse into a slogan that makes walking after the flesh harmless. Neither should we turn Spirit-led walking into a wage with which we buy acquittal. The chapter grounds freedom in Christ and describes the life His Spirit produces.

Correction that brings you into the light

Conviction exposes real sin and calls for a truthful response. Accusation seeks to trap you in hopelessness, as though Christ could not receive you. This distinction is useful, but it is not an infallible test based on how a thought feels. Accusations may be specific, and conviction can be deeply painful. Test the message by Scripture: does it tell the truth about your sin and about God’s provision in Christ?

A godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Despair says there is no point in returning. Grace neither flatters nor abandons you. It brings you to the light and gives you reason to act.

Be careful, also, about making the feeling of failure into another failure. A distressed believer does not need to be told that continued sadness proves an absence of grace. Sometimes healing and renewed confidence come slowly. Patient companionship, truthful teaching, and ordinary kindness can help a person receive what he struggles to believe.

Recognize quiet growth

You may notice that you confess more quickly, listen longer, or refuse a conversation you once enjoyed. Perhaps you are beginning to pray for someone you used to resent. These are reasons to thank God. They are not medals that place you above another believer.

Ask someone who knows you well where growth is visible and where you still resist correction. Listen without preparing a defense. We often see our intentions more clearly than the effects of our conduct; others may help us see what we have missed.

Do not compare your path continually with another person’s. Different burdens, histories, and responsibilities affect the shape of growth. The Lord’s call is to follow Him. There is enough work in today’s obedience without measuring everyone else’s progress.

Grace is no excuse for standing still. It is the ground on which we can get up, receive correction, and continue without pretending. Keep knowing Christ, keep responding to His Word, and give Him the glory for what His life produces.

CHAPTER 18

Looking for That Blessed Hope

> *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*
>
> **Titus 2:13 (sentence continues in the next verse)**

The One who died and rose again will appear in glory (Acts 1:11). Christian hope is anchored in that promised coming. We do not know Him only as a figure in the past or an inward comfort in the present. He is the living Lord who will bring His work to its promised completion.

Christ reigns now. After His resurrection He was exalted to the Father's right hand (Acts 2:33-36; Ephesians 1:20-22), and He must reign until every enemy is subdued, with death itself the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). The continued presence of suffering does not mean that His throne is empty. It means that the full manifestation of His victory is still ahead.

For those who belong to Him, His appearing brings bodily resurrection and transformation. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 comforts grieving believers with the promise that the dead in Christ will rise and His people will be with Him. We need not master every disputed sequence of prophetic events before receiving the clear hope of being with our Lord.

Hope makes the present matter

Titus places the blessed hope beside the grace that teaches holy living. Expectation of Christ does not release us from responsibility; it deepens it. We will give account before Him (2 Corinthians 5:10). Freedom from condemnation in Christ is not freedom from accountability. His love teaches us to take both mercy and obedience seriously.

If you expect to see Him, forgive today, tell the truth today, and care for the person He has placed before you. Do not postpone faithfulness until you have a more interesting task or a clearer understanding of the future. Readiness is expressed through a living relationship with Him in the present.

Nor does hope authorize predictions the Lord has not given (Acts 1:7). Sensational claims can consume attention while ordinary duties are neglected. Keep the central promise clear: Jesus Christ will come, the dead will be raised, and His people will be with Him. Let that promise steady rather than agitate you.

When the years are difficult

There may be long seasons of illness, unanswered questions, or hidden service. Paul calls present affliction light and momentary in comparison with the eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). He is not belittling pain. He is placing it beside a future so great that pain cannot finally outweigh it.

You may weep and still hope. You may need another believer to remind you of the promise when you cannot speak it strongly yourself. Receive that help. The body of Christ bears one another's burdens while awaiting the day when those burdens are removed.

The ordinary years matter. A faithful marriage, honest work, prayer in weakness, a quiet witness, and a forgiven offense belong to a life lived before the reigning Christ. Their worth is not determined by how many people notice.

Until He appears, remain in Him. Receive the Word, gather with His people, and do the next faithful thing. Your life is not moving toward an empty horizon. The Savior who gave Himself for you is the One you will see.

CLOSING

Keep Coming to Christ

There is more to learn than this little book can contain. Some answers come quickly; others take years of reading, prayer, correction, and faithful companionship. You need not possess every answer to trust the Lord who has received you.

Return often to the heart of the gospel. Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again. He lives and reigns. Through Him we come to the Father, and by His Spirit we learn to walk in newness of life. These are not truths to leave behind when you become more experienced. They are the ground beneath every stage of the journey.

When you are tempted, turn toward Him before you give consent. When you have sinned, confess rather than hide. When you are weary, receive help rather than pretending. When you are encouraged, give thanks and strengthen someone else. In every season, let the Scriptures bring you back to the Son.

A fruitful Christian life need not be widely known. The Lord sees the patient answer, the resisted temptation, the truthful apology, and the kindness offered without reward. He is forming His life in His people, including those whose service happens almost entirely out of sight.

Abide in Christ, trust His Word, and respond to His working; you cannot manufacture Christlikeness apart from Him. Keep walking with Him in the place where you are. The first miles are real miles, and the One who began His work is faithful (Philippians 1:6).

> *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*
>
> **Colossians 2:6 (sentence continues in the next verse)**

Lord Jesus, thank You for receiving sinners and giving life. Teach us to trust Your Word, turn promptly from sin, and depend on Your Spirit. Make us truthful, patient, and faithful in the ordinary places of our lives. Keep our hearts near You, and make us a help to others who are learning to walk. Amen.

APPENDIX A

Words You Will Meet

These brief explanations are starting points. Read the passages beside them so that the meaning grows from Scripture rather than from a definition alone.

Abide. Remain in Christ, depending on Him and continuing in His Word and love. Abiding bears fruit through a living response to Him. John 15:1-10.

Adoption. God's gracious reception of believers as His children, with access to Him as Father and an inheritance in Christ. Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:5.

Advocate. One who represents another. Jesus Christ the righteous is our Advocate with the Father; when we sin, we come through Him for mercy and cleansing. 1 John 2:1-2.

Atonement. Christ's saving work in dealing with sin and bringing us into peace with God. Romans 5:11 uses the word in connection with the reconciliation we receive through Him. Romans 5:6-11.

Baptism. Water baptism is Christ's appointed public confession of belonging to Him, pointing to death with Him and newness of life. Baptism with the Holy Ghost concerns the Spirit's coming and empowering; read each passage in its context. Romans 6:3-4; Acts 1:5-8.

Born again. Made spiritually alive by God's Spirit. This is a new birth, not merely a new religious identity. John 3:3-8.

Church. The people who belong to Christ, His body. The word also refers to local gatherings of those believers. No individual possesses the whole life or gifts of the body. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

Confession. Acknowledging the truth openly. We confess Jesus as Lord and confess our sins rather than concealing or defending them. Romans 10:9; 1 John 1:9.

Covenant. God's binding commitment, establishing a relationship with His people. The New Covenant rests on Christ's blood, remembered in the Lord's Supper. Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6-13.

Disciple. A learner and follower of Jesus Christ, continuing in His Word. Matthew 28:19-20; John 8:31.

Faith. Trust in God and in His testimony concerning Jesus Christ, expressed in reliance upon Him. Faith receives grace and bears fruit in obedience. Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:17.

Fellowship. Shared life in Christ, expressed in His Word, prayer, the Lord's table, and mutual care. Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3.

Flesh. Sometimes the physical body or ordinary human life; in passages about flesh opposed to the Spirit, it concerns human life acting apart from God's rule. The context determines the meaning. Galatians 2:20; Galatians 5:16-24.

Gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ: He died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and brings forgiveness and life to those who believe. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Grace. God's undeserved favor freely given in Christ, which receives, sustains, and teaches His people. Grace is never permission to remain content with sin. Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14.

Holy Ghost. Another name for the Holy Spirit, the divine Person who gives life, dwells in believers, glorifies Christ, and equips the Church. Romans 8:9-11; John 16:13-14.

Intercession. Prayer on behalf of another. Christ intercedes for His people, and believers pray for one another. Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:1.

Justification. God's declaration that the believer is righteous in His sight through faith in Jesus Christ. Its ground is Christ's saving work, not our record of achievement. Romans 3:24-26; Romans 5:1.

Kingdom of God. God's rule through Christ. We enter by new birth and belong to His kingdom now; its fullness awaits His appearing and the final defeat of death. John 3:3; Colossians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26.

Lord's Supper. The bread and cup Christ appointed for His people to remember and proclaim His death until He comes. Also called communion. 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Mercy. God's compassion toward people in misery and sin. His mercy brings pardon and help to those who cannot rescue themselves. Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 4:16.

New creature. A person made new in Christ, belonging to Him and called into a new way of living. The new beginning is real even while maturity is still developing. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Overcome. Prevail through faith in Christ over the world's opposition and temptation. This is the calling of every believer, not a title for a superior spiritual class. 1 John 5:4-5.

Pentecost. The Jewish feast day on which the exalted Christ poured out the promised Holy Ghost on His disciples in Jerusalem. Acts 2:1-4, 33.

Quickened. Made alive. God makes those who were dead in sins alive together with Christ, and will also give life to believers' mortal bodies. Ephesians 2:5; Romans 8:11.

Reconciliation. Peace with God in place of alienation, through the death of His Son. The gospel calls us to receive that reconciliation. Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

Redemption. Deliverance at a cost. Christ gave His blood to redeem us; we belong to the One who bought us. Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

Repentance. A turning of heart and mind toward God that includes an honest turning from sin. Its fruit appears in changed conduct; it does not earn forgiveness. Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20.

Resurrection. Being raised from the dead. Christ rose bodily, and those who are His will be raised and transformed at His coming. Present spiritual life does not replace this future bodily hope. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 42-54.

Righteousness. Rightness before God and conduct consistent with His character. Our standing is received in Christ, and His life produces righteous conduct in us. 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:7.

Salvation. God's rescue through Jesus Christ from sin and judgment, bringing forgiveness, new life, and the hope of final bodily redemption. Ephesians 2:8; Romans 8:23.

Sanctification. Being set apart for God and growing in holiness. Believers belong to Him already and are called to live increasingly in keeping with that belonging. 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7.

Sin. Disobedience to God in thought, desire, word, or deed, including refusal of the good we know we ought to do. All need His mercy. Romans 3:23; James 4:17.

APPENDIX B

Scriptures to Keep Close

These verses are printed in full from the King James Version. Read their surrounding passages as well. Learn a few slowly, returning to them in prayer and obedience; memorization is a help to faith, not a contest.

The King James Version uses older forms. Thou and thee refer to one person; thy and thine mean your or yours. Ye refers to more than one person. Hath means has, shew means show, and suffer can mean allow (1 Corinthians 11:26; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Salvation and assurance

> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*
>
> **John 3:16**

> *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*
>
> **John 5:24**

> *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*
>
> **Romans 10:9**

> *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*
>
> **1 John 5:13**

Life in Christ

> *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 5:17**

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8:1

Walking and resisting temptation

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Ephesians 5:18 (sentence continues in the next verse)

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Romans 6:14

Confession and growth

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1 John 2:1 (sentence continues in the next verse)

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 1:6 (sentence continues in the next verse)

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

Endurance and hope

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

2 Corinthians 4:17 (sentence continues in the next verse)

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Titus 2:13 (sentence continues in the next verse)

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (sentence continues in the next verse)

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:3

APPENDIX C

Your First Weeks in the Word

This plan gives you a manageable beginning and does not require another document. Take one reading a day, or spread a reading over several days. A missed day does not require starting over. Keep your Bible open and continue where you stopped.

In each reading, notice what the passage reveals about Christ, what it says about our need or response, and how its truth touches the day before you. These are habits of attention, not questions you must answer in writing. End with a brief prayer shaped by what you have read.

Week one: Meet the Savior

Day 1. John 1:1-18. The eternal Word comes among us, and those who receive Him become children of God.

Day 2. John 1:19-51. The Lamb of God is announced, and the first disciples begin following Jesus.

Day 3. John 2. His glory is revealed, and He speaks of the temple of His body.

Day 4. John 3:1-21. New birth, God's love, and the call to believe on the Son.

Day 5. John 3:22-36. John directs attention away from himself and toward Christ.

Day 6. John 4:1-30. Jesus meets a thirsty woman and offers living water.

Day 7. John 4:31-54. Witness, faith, and taking Jesus at His word.

Week two: Hear His promise

Day 8. John 5:1-29. The Son gives life and exercises judgment.

Day 9. John 5:30-47. The Scriptures bear witness to Christ; come to Him for life.

Day 10. John 6:1-21. Jesus provides for the multitude and meets His disciples on the sea.

Day 11. John 6:22-71. The Bread of Life and the words of eternal life. If the reading feels long, pause after verse 40 and finish later in the day.

Day 12. John 7. Jesus teaches openly and promises living water, which John connects with the Spirit. If the reading feels long, pause after verse 24 and finish later in the day.

Day 13. John 8:1-30. Mercy, light, and the identity of the Son.

Day 14. John 8:31-59. Continuing in His word and the freedom the Son gives.

Week three: Learn His care

Day 15. John 9. A man receives sight, and religious certainty is exposed as blindness.

Day 16. John 10. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep and gives His life for them.

Day 17. John 11:1-44. Jesus meets grief and reveals Himself as the resurrection and the life.

Day 18. John 11:45-57; John 12:1-19. Opposition deepens as Jesus approaches His appointed hour.

Day 19. John 12:20-50. The grain of wheat, the cross, and the call to walk in light.

Day 20. John 13. The Lord washes His disciples' feet and commands them to love one another.

Day 21. John 14. Access to the Father, the promised Comforter, and Christ's peace.

Week four: Remain in Him

Day 22. John 15. The vine and branches: abiding, fruit, love, and witness.

Day 23. John 16. The Spirit glorifies Christ, and sorrow will give way to joy.

Day 24. John 17. Jesus prays for His people to be kept, sanctified, and one.

Day 25. John 18. The Lord is arrested and questioned; Peter discovers his weakness.

Day 26. John 19. Christ is crucified and buried. Attend to what He accomplishes.

Day 27. John 20. The risen Lord meets His disciples, and John states why he wrote.

Day 28. John 21. The risen Christ restores Peter and calls him to follow.

Continue from here

Read 1 John over the next five days, one chapter at a time. Watch how the letter holds together assurance, truth, love, and obedience. Then begin Romans, moving slowly through its explanation of sin, justification, union with Christ, life in the Spirit, and practical service.

Alongside these readings, turn to Psalm 23 for the Shepherd's care, Psalm 51 for confession, Psalm 63 for longing after God, and Psalm 121 for His keeping. Read the whole psalm rather than only a familiar line.

Read with another believer when possible. Bring the passages you do not understand and listen to the answers with your Bible open. In time, continue through the whole of Scripture. Christ is the center of its witness, and there is a lifetime of riches to discover in Him.

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About the Author

Rick Simoni writes for The Overcomer Magazine, encouraging believers to see the unity of the Scriptures in Jesus Christ and to live in the reality of His finished work, present reign, and indwelling life. His writing emphasizes the movement from shadow to substance, the fellowship of Christ's body, and the obedience that grows from faith.

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