

Beginning the Journey

Entering the Kingdom
of God

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Beginning the Journey

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Note: A sheet of Scripture memory verses is bound in at the back of this booklet. Cut them apart and carry them with you, memorizing the six Scripture verses.

Unit 1, Day 1

Welcome To Your New Journey!

GETTING STARTED

Congratulations on your decision to follow Jesus Christ! As you begin the exciting journey of life with Him, this book will encourage and guide you. Think of this book as a trail guide that will lead you to explore your new path in Christ.

Over the next year, you'll take an equipping journey that will help you experience God's love and prepare you for a lifetime of ministry to others. Right now you are taking the first steps of your trip. After completing this part of the journey, you will take the next steps which will help you examine your values in life and walk in daily victory with Christ. Beyond that, other studies will teach you how to share Christ's love with others.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This booklet is divided into five units. Each week as you complete a unit, you will meet with your mentor to go over what you have learned. Your mentor is someone from your cell group who is ahead of you on his or her journey. Your mentor will encourage you, pray for you, and help you to grow. A *Mentor's Guide*, located in the back of this book, will direct him or her in leading your times together. Often these times will be the high point of your week, giving you and your mentor an opportunity to encourage one another as you grow in Christ together.

Each unit in this booklet has daily growth guides. There are five in each week. You'll discover exciting truths about yourself and your relationship to Christ as you go through these daily guides. The guides use an interactive format with questions for you to answer or responses for you to check whenever you see this symbol:



So keep a pen or pencil at hand. These questions will help you dig into the Scripture and apply it to your own life.

THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE MEMORY

As you grow in Christ, you'll discover that the Bible is a powerful resource for strengthening your life and giving you direction. Memorizing key Scriptures gives you ready access to the riches of God's Word. It equips you to repel the attacks and temptations of Satan. The evil one isn't happy about your decision to follow Christ and he will try to divert and hinder your growth. You may have noticed that he is already trying!

When he tries to pull you off course through temptation or deception, God's Word can keep you on track. Jesus' own example in Matthew 4 shows us the power of Scripture to conquer the evil one. When Satan tempted Jesus, our Lord repeatedly quoted God's Word to win a decisive victory.

It's easy to memorize Scriptures when you keep them handy and use any free moments to review them. When you commit God's Word to memory, you have ready access to it — even when you aren't near a Bible!

You can review the verses each day whenever you have extra moments — like when you are waiting in a line or stopped at a red light. In the next year, you will memorize many powerful verses. They will nourish you and help you as you share your faith in Christ with family and friends.

Your first memory verse is 1 John 5:11-12. It reads:

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

Your new journey is the journey of life. You don’t have to wait until you get to heaven to enjoy the fruit of this life. God gave you life on the same day you gave your heart to Christ. From now on, you can experience this new life that is both joyful and exciting.



According to 1 John 5:11-12, what is the key to life?

Jesus is the Son of God. Without him, there is no life. With him is the fullness of life, eternal life, abundant life. With Jesus, your life will never be the same. You have embarked upon a journey, an adventure that will take you places you have never dreamed. Just place your hand in his and He will lead the way.

Right now, take out the first memory verse, 1 John 5:11-12. Begin to memorize this verse and its reference. Put the memory verses in your wallet or purse for ready access!



When can you memorize Bible verses? Check the following times when you have 5-10 extra minutes each day.

- Before or after breakfast**
- Commuting to work**
- Lunch break**
- Coffee break**
- Before or after dinner**
- Right before going to bed**

Ask God to help you commit to the process of memorizing Bible verses.

Unit 1, Day 2

God and Man, A Broken Relationship

The Hard Truth

God is *powerful*. We usually don't struggle believing that concept, do we? But did you know that God's power is available to you? From Scripture, we see that God can heal our diseases, control our circumstances, and release us from problems that have troubled us for years. That's good news!

God is *personal*. We often overlook that fact. He loves you, and He wants you to think of Him as your Heavenly Father. You don't have to do *one single thing* to make Him love you more. You are now His child, and He cares for you.



How have you usually pictured God in the past?

- Distant and unconcerned**
- Harsh and cruel**
- Loving and generous**
- I didn't believe there was a God**
- Other (Specify):** _____

For good or bad, our relationships with earthly fathers shape our view of God and His relationship with us. Even the best earthly fathers cannot fully demonstrate God's character. God's Word helps us to understand God's real nature and His concern for each of us. In John 3:16-17 we read:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."



Based on these verses, how would you describe God?

SIN SEPARATES

Even though God loves us, our sin separates us from Him. Every one of us, without exception, has broken the tie that God made to us when He created Adam and Eve. The results of that separation are devastating. In Romans 3:23 we see that *all* people have sinned and come short of God's glory. In Romans 6:23 we see that the wages of sin is *death*. Without God, the human situation is hopeless. Before you became a Christian, *your* situation was hopeless. Why? Your sin separated you from God!

It would be nice to believe that we possessed a little "spark of goodness" which we could fan into a flame. Unfortunately, that's not true.

Read Isaiah 64:6 to discover how our best efforts look to God.

“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”



What stands out to you about this passage?

You may be wondering how to define sin. Sin is rebellion against God or missing the mark of God’s glorious will. You may also be confused about the difference between the word *sin* and the word *sins*. Think of *sin* as a root word, and *sins* as a fruit word.



How have you thought of sin in the past?

- All the bad deeds that you have done**
- Putting yourself on the throne of your life**
- I am not sure**
- Other:** _____

Simply stated, sin means putting yourself on the throne of your life. This root sin (putting yourself on the throne of your life) results in the fruit of other sins — evil thoughts, deeds, attitudes, and words. Sin is a condition in which you and I have declared that we are the master — the king — the owner — the boss — of our own lives. That’s what makes us unacceptable to God. He never intended for us to own ourselves.

In fact, this total rebellion against God’s ownership brings *wrath*. Read the following words from Romans 2:5.

“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed.”

Some people want to avoid this point, saying that God’s love cancels out wrath. But if we look at what this verse is saying, we realize that *we* are the ones *storing up wrath for ourselves*. God isn’t doing it to *us* we are doing it to *ourselves*!

If a man commits murder, do we accuse the judge of being unreasonable when he declares the criminal guilty? Of course not! The murderer was responsible for his destiny.

You and I are responsible for our destiny. When we realize this, we often try to find a way to patch things up with God. Have you ever thought that doing good works, being religious, or being a good person would make up for your sin? Most people falsely think that these actions will create a way to God. Jesus made the way for us to overcome sin, and He has given this way to you. Jesus made the way to God by sacrificing Himself.

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life.’”

Unit 1, Day 3

Jesus Made A Way

The Good News

On the previous pages, you learned some distressing news: your sin separates you from God. In fact, there is no way you can approach God yourself. Why? Your best efforts are like filthy rags to Him. But Jesus made a way for you to have a relationship with God. Jesus became like us so that we can enter into the fullness of life with God. That's good news!

JESUS — GOD WITH US

Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father (God).” Even though we do not see Jesus physically today, we can see him through what is recorded in the Bible. Jesus is both fully God and fully human. Jesus took on earthly flesh and became a man so that he could fully identify with each and every one of us. He understands our joys and pains, our health and sickness, our living and dying.

Visualize this by imagining that God “made his dwelling” among humans. In other words, he “pitched His tent” in our camp. Through this camping out, Jesus provided a way for us to understand God because he adopted our language to show us who He is. As a new believer, you are on an amazing journey. But God made the most amazing journey of all when Jesus came to earth as a man!

Read the following words from John 1:1&14 to gain insight into Jesus’ extraordinary journey.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”



What stands out to you from these verses?

JESUS — SAVIOR AND LORD

Because we cannot approach God on our own, because we cannot overcome our sinful state, we need a savior. *Jesus is our Savior!* His amazing love for humanity and His unswerving devotion to the Father’s will led Jesus to the cross.

Read Romans 5:8 to see the depth of God’s love.

“But God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”



What feelings do you have as you read this passage?



Thank Jesus for dying for you, for being your Savior!

Yesterday, we read the beginning of John 14:6. Now we will look at the entire verse:

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”



What does it mean to you that Jesus is the way to God?

Jesus tells us that He is the way to God. Because Jesus gave His life for you, you don't have to wander around in the forest looking for the right path. He is walking beside you, leading you in the way of truth and life.

In order for you to enter into the fullness of this journey, you must realize an important truth. Jesus saved you from a self-owned, self-directed, and self-destructive life. He saved you to show you a better way. The way to know your Savior fully is to give Him the right to be your Lord. When He is Lord of your life, He will lead you down paths that most people only dream about. Your life will be transformed through the experience of His love and His power. It cost Him His life on the cross to provide you with this opportunity. It will cost you the right to control your life as you realize that your Lord can do a better job with your life than you can.

Take time right now to give Jesus the right to be the Savior and Lord of your life. Pray, “Jesus, all I know about myself I give to all I know about You!”

**IF YOU LIKE WHAT YOU'VE READ SO FAR, YOU'LL ENJOY THIS BOOK!
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