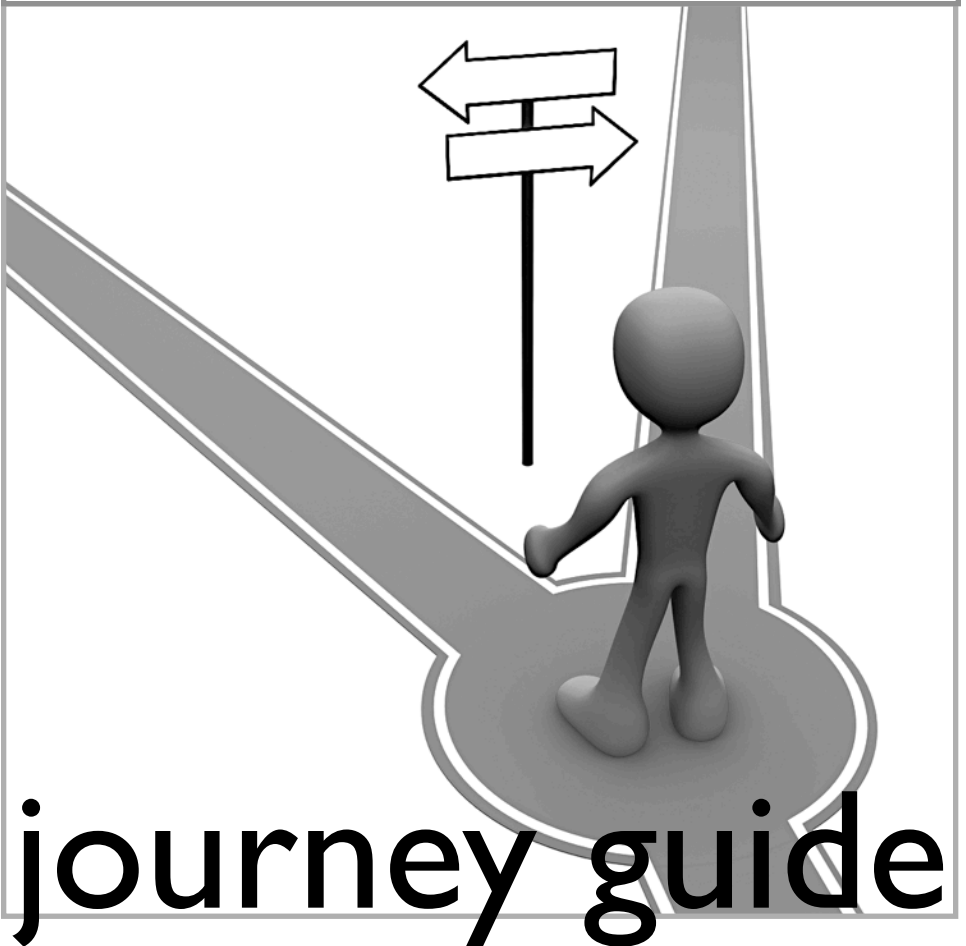


After the First Step



journey guide

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Introduction:

Welcome to the family of God! The decision you just made to follow Jesus is the most important decision of your life! A new spiritual journey has begun and many things have recently come true in your life:

- Your sins have been forgiven
- You have a new identity as a child of God
- You have the promise of a great inheritance which includes eternal life in Heaven
- You have entered into a new family - the family of God!

This is a life-transforming *first step*. This booklet will help answer what it means to be a Christian, and how to develop new habits that will help you mature and develop in your new relationship. In other words, what to do *after the first step*.

Remember that you have spent a lifetime developing habits that don't necessarily reflect God's desire and value system for building your life. As a result, you may feel pulled in different directions - a battle between the old way of doing things and the new value system that comes with being a follower of Jesus. Know that this is normal, and that it will take time. The truth is, even if you grow as a follower of Jesus for the rest of your life, you will never be finished.

Why 21 days? Research shows that it takes on average 21 days to start a new habit or break an old habit. The goal for you is that in 22 days you will be well on your way to establishing regular time with God through reading the Bible and prayer.

So let's get started! Grab a Bible and let's begin to unravel what it means to be a true follower of Jesus.

Warmly,

Pastor Lee Stephenson

P.S. You can share your thoughts online, pose a question, and interact with one of our pastors as you complete this guide. Go to www.harvestccaz.org/blog and look for the After the First Step link.

Day 1:

Now that you have established a new relationship with God through Jesus, this relationship needs to be developed. The great news about God is that He loves you enough not to leave you where He found you. God will continue to work in your life, transforming you and renewing you to be more like His Son Jesus. This lifetime process is called *discipleship*.

What intrigues you about the Bible?

How important is God's Word for your own spiritual development? (Read Matthew 4:4 and Deuteronomy 8:1-3)

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and come up with 4 ways that the Bible is useful.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

When it comes to reading the Bible what is the bottom line? (Read James 1:22-25)

Close in prayer by thanking God for this new spiritual journey you are embarking on.

Day 2:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthian 5:17)

Read Colossians 1:21-22 and write it in your own words.

Before making a decision to follow Jesus, what was your former attitude towards God?

In what ways can we be “hostile” towards God?

According to the verse on the top of the page...what changes have been made in your life?

What does it mean to be “in Christ?”

Are there some habits or attitudes in your life that you have realized are not honoring to God? (List them below)

How does 2 Corinthians 5:17 make you feel about your new life in Jesus?

Ask God to remove those habits or attitudes that aren't honoring to Him. (Know that this is a lifetime battle)

Close in prayer thanking God for this new life, a life where the old has passed away.

Day 3:

How should the focus of your lives be different now that you have become a follower of Jesus?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and answer the above question again.

How does Ephesians 5:1-2 describe the life of one who follows Jesus?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31 - Write a life principle for the Christian life based on this verse.

Close in prayer asking God to help you in re-focusing the purposes and priorities in life.

Day 4:

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

There is a great contrast presented in this passage. What do you think is the main them of verses 1-3?

What is the main them in verses 4-10?

Take a closer look at verses 8 and 9. Are good works a source for our salvation? Why or why not?

Grace is simply defined as God's unmerited favor. In other words, it is a gift. If salvation came through works, it would no longer be a gift but a wage. What is the difference between a gift and a wage?

Consider memorizing Ephesians 2:8-9 this week.

Close in prayer thanking God for the gift of salvation, that you did not have to earn.

Day 5:

What comes to mind when you think of prayer?

Prayer is simply communicating with God - our communicating with Him and He communicating with us.

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

This is a prayer from the Apostle Paul for Christians in Ephesus. What stands out to you about his prayer?

What is characteristic about God's answers to prayer?

Read Matthew 7:7-11

What is Jesus trying to teach us about prayer?

How do you think God would respond to your request if He thought it was bad for you? What if it would be better for you to grant it at a different time?

Close in prayer taking time to:

- 1) *Reflect on God Himself and praising Him for who He is.*
- 2) *Admit your mistakes or specific sins. This requires humility but at the same time reflect on His forgiveness.*
- 3) *Thank Him for all the great opportunities, people, and things He has brought into your life.*
- 4) *Lift up your personal requests and others to the will of the Lord.*

Day 6:

Read Philippians 4:4-7

Life can be difficult, even for the Christian. However, even in times of difficulty, reading your Bible and praying can become places to find peace. Based on the passage you just read, answer the following questions about prayer and its place in our lives.

When difficult times arise, what is the wrong response?

How does God feel when we worry?

What is the right response?

When we face difficult situations but lift them up to the God, what does He promise to do?

What can you do this week to move away from worry and towards trusting God more?

Close in prayer thanking God for His continual faithfulness and provision in your life.

Day 7:

Temptation is something that is common to all humans. Read the following passages and find great assurance in the midst of temptation.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

What is true about every temptation that you face?

What 2 things does God promise to do for you in the midst of temptation?

Read James 1:13-15

Who does not tempt us with evil?

What are sources of temptation in our life? (Also read 1 Peter 5:8)

Describe the process of temptation and sin as demonstrated in verses 14-15.

How does God provide for us in times of temptation? (read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5)

List some temptations that you are currently facing:

Close in prayer by asking God to give you strength in to resist and to obey His will.

Day 8:

Read Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:14-16

Can Jesus identify with the temptations you struggle with? Explain.

Read I John 5:3-5, James 4:7 and I Peter 5:8-9

How are we able to overcome the temptations of this world?

Read Psalm 119:11

How can the Word of God help you resist temptation?

Close in prayer thanking God for providing a way to escape the snares of temptation.

Remember, you can share your thoughts online, pose a question, and interact with one of our pastors as you complete this guide. Go to www.harvestccaz.org/blog and look for the After the First Step link.

Day 9:

Life happens and sometimes we choose poorly. In other words, we chose to do things our way and as a result, we rebel against God and His values system. This is called sin. The great thing is God's grace is always available to us if we are willing to confess our sins to Him.

Read Psalm 139:23-24

What should be our attitude towards our own sin?

Read I John 1:8-9

What is true about us if we say that we have no sin?

What does God promise to do if we confess our sins? (2 things)

Read Proverbs 28:13

What should go along with our confession of sin?

Read Hebrews 9:22

What has become the means of our forgiveness?

Close in prayer asking God to search your heart and thanking Him for forgiveness of sin.

Day 10:

The future is elusive and uncertain. As a result, we go through life having questions about what the future will hold, and we look for help in making decisions. As a Christian, you have the assurance that God will guide and provide direction for your life as you trust and rely on Him.

Read Proverbs 3:5-6

What three things are we commanded to do?

What does God promise in return?

Read Romans 12:1-2

What steps should we take in order to know God and His will?

Read Isaiah 55:8-9

Why is it important to trust God and not in yourself?

Write down areas in your life that you are having a hard time trusting God with. Now ask Him to help you in these specific areas of your life.

Day 11:

Read Romans 12:3-6

What comparison does Paul make between a human body and the church?

Take a moment and re-write the verse you just read in your own words.

Read I Corinthians 12:12-13 and Colossians 1:18

Who is the head of the body? Why is this important?

What is the basis for the church being one body?

Close by taking time to pray for your church, church unity, and the leadership of the church.

Day 12:

Did you know God has uniquely gifted you to play a specific role in the Church - the Body of Christ? When you placed your trust in Jesus as your Savior, God gave you spiritual gifts to be used to service Him and other Christians.

Read I Corinthians 12:1-11

Who gives us spiritual gifts?

According to verse 7, what is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Read verses 4-6 again. What do you think is Paul's main point?

Read I Peter 4:10-11

According to verse 10, what is the overarching purpose of using our spiritual gifts?

Close in prayer asking God to help you develop your gifts by helping you find a great place to plug in.

Day 13:

Read I Corinthians 13

The passage you just read is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible. This passage describes love in the midst of Paul's teachings on spiritual gifts. His pause to talk about love is as though Paul is saying the goal of Christians is to practice love.

According to verses 1-3, what comparison exists between love and the other gifts?

Re-read verses 4-8. Which of these qualities of love do you most need right now?

Pray asking God to help you develop each of those areas of love.

Remember, spiritual gifts are the channels to carry the love of Jesus to others.

Day 14:

Read Ephesians 2 and Romans 5:1-5 and answer the questions below.

What did God do for you when you first trusted Jesus for salvation? (List as many things as you can)

What condition were you in when Jesus set you free? (Be very specific)

What did Jesus set you free from?

How does it make you feel today knowing all that Jesus has done for you?

Close in prayer by thanking God for His love and redemption.

Day 15:

Read Ephesians 1:13-14

How is the Holy Spirit described in these verses?

What does His presence guarantee in our lives?

Read I Peter 1:3-9

Do these verses refer to the past or the future? Explain.

What implications does future salvation have on your present life and service for God?

Take time to ponder this truth today, thanking God through prayer for His work in your life.

Day 16:

Today...plan to read Psalm 119. This Psalm is the longest chapter in the Bible, with a total of 176 verses. This particular psalm describes the virtues and benefits of God's Word and its role in the life of the Christian. Read through the Psalm, jotting down things you learn about God's Word and its role in your life, benefits and blessings.

Close in prayer by thanking God for the gift of His Word.

Day 17:

Who was the most influential person in your decision to follow Jesus? How did that person influence you?

Read Luke 15:1-10 and Luke 19:1-10.

What was Jesus' attitude regarding people who are lost?

How does that impact you?

Ask God to begin to give you that same burden to share His love with those who need to hear.

Day 18:

All throughout the New Testament, you will find people who influenced others for Jesus. Read some of those stories in the passages below:

Acts 16:15, 31-33 Matthew 9:9-10 John 1:40-45 John 4:49-53

What do these passages teach you about how you can use your own relationships to influence people for Jesus?

Identify people in your life that you do not think know Jesus. Write down their names below:

Relatives...

Friends...

Co-workers...

Neighbors...

Pray that God will provide you an opportunity to share about the love of Jesus with them in the near future.

Day 19:

Jesus often times used parables (narrative illustrations) in his teaching. In Mark 4:2-8 we find a parable that suggests how we can go about influencing others. Read the parable and write down your observations to how we can influence others for Jesus.

Read I Corinthians 3:5-9

What is our role in the process of evangelism?

What is God's role in the process of evangelism?

Finish off the day by reading I Timothy 2:1-7.

Thank God for his enduring love and that he doesn't give up on us.

Day 20:

Before Jesus left this earthly world, he gave all of his followers a basic assignment. This assignment can be found in 5 different passages. Read the following passages and answer the questions below:

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:15-20

Luke 22:45-49

John 20:22

Acts 1:8

What are some of the common factors in all of these passages?

The Holy Spirit seems to play a very important role in all that Jesus commands here. What is the job of the Holy Spirit? (John 16:7-11)

How does Jesus describe his ministry? (John 5:19)

How should that affect the way that we look at ministry? Who should we look to for tips on doing ministry?

How do you feel knowing that Jesus has entrusted you with such a great assignment?

Close in prayer by thanking God for his direction and willingness to use you to accomplish his goals.

Day 21:

Read I Corinthians 10:26...based upon this verse what does God own?

If God owns everything, who owns you?

According to Philippians 4:18-19, what promise does God make to you?

How does this make you feel?

Jesus deals more with our view of the world and wealth in Matthew 6:24-33. Read this passage. What command does Jesus give to you at least three times in these verses? Why?

God is great at providing. Read I Kings 17:8-16, this is a great story about God's provision to the obedience of the person who trusts Him. What three principles concerning wealth can you take away from this story?

Close in prayer thanking God for all of His provision in your life.

Great job!

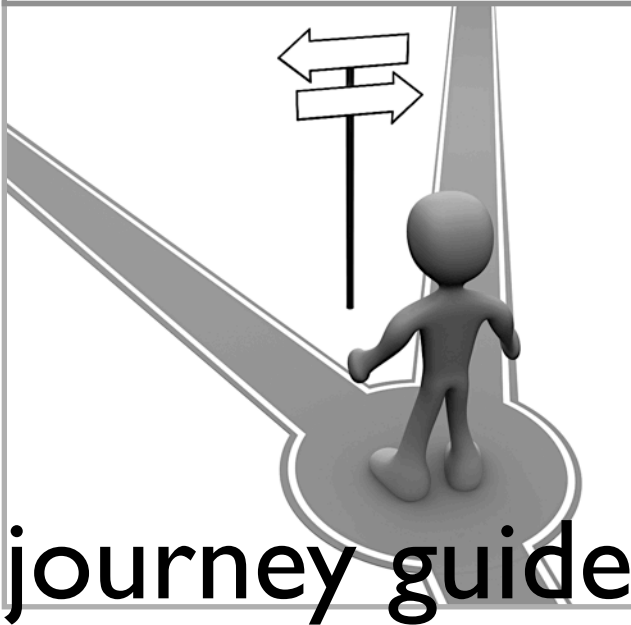
You have just made it through the first 21 days of your new journey with Jesus. This is only a beginning to the greatest journey you have ever experienced. Hopefully, now you know a little more about the new relationship you entered into. However, you will still have questions and life still happens. Don't give up. Below are some tips of where to go now...as you continue to develop your relationship with your Creator and Savior.

Now what?

Here are some steps you can take to keep growing:

- Join a Life Group
- Find an area to serve in the local church
- Go to *Connection Point*
- Grab coffee with someone further into the journey, tell them what has been going on, and ask them to pray for you.
- Begin reading the Gospel of Luke.
- Celebrate your new life! Plan to get baptized, and let someone else know what God has been doing in your life.
- God has blessed you so deeply in Jesus, find a way to bless others in return.

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