

NOW
THAT
YOU
ARE
HIS

next steps
in your
Christian
walk

DAVID SHIBLEY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am blessed by long-standing friendships with several people at New Leaf Publishing Group. Years ago, when I thought my book writing might be done, Tim Dudley encouraged me and published the first of several books with New Leaf Press. I'm forever grateful to him for providing this platform for ministry. I'm especially thankful to Laura Welch for her excellent editorial skills. It was a joy to work with her again on this project.

Many friends, particularly pastors, use this book as a resource for new believers. Of special note, over the years Brad Howard and Dale O'Shields have shared earlier editions of this book with thousands of new Christ-followers. This new edition was faithfully championed by Caleb Fauber and given a thorough update and theological review by Derek DeMars. Their advocacy for this new edition is deeply appreciated.

As always, my wife, Naomi, has been supportive and encouraging. If ever I were to doubt God's love for me, all I would need to do is take another look at the Cross, then another look at Naomi.

First printing, 1985
Thirteenth printing, September 2020

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New Leaf Press, P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638.

ISBN-13: 978-0-89221-236-1

Digital ISBN: 978-1-61458-069-0

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 93-84142

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Cover design by the Lakeshore Team.

Printed in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

You have launched the greatest of all adventures – a journey through life with Jesus Christ. Now that you are His, everything changes – darkness gives way to light; despair evaporates into hope; fear and hatred melt when exposed to His perfect love. You will view life in a new way. Jesus said, “Look, I am making everything new!” (Revelation 21:5).

All of this began when you believed the gospel, the Good News of what Jesus has done for you. This message is “the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). It is the story of how God, in His love, took action to bring us to Himself. We were all far away from God because we all chose to walk away from His love and His ways. We went our own way instead of God’s way, so we all walked into darkness. With every step away from God it drew darker. No one could find the way back to God. But God loved us still and sent Jesus, His Son, to shine the light to the world and bring us back to God.

Only Jesus always went God’s way and only Jesus can bring us back to God. Going our own way instead of God’s way is sin; we’ve all done it. Jesus paid for every step we’ve made away from God when He died for us on the Cross. When He died, He took

all our darkness and offered us all His light. “God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Three days later Jesus broke free from death and now He is alive forever. Now He offers this same forever life to everyone. Without Jesus we would have remained in the dark, without God and without hope.

But when you opened your heart to Jesus, this forever life became yours! You turned around; you started walking in God’s way. The Bible calls this repentance. You trusted Jesus to take you out of darkness. “For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!” (Ephesians 5:8).

Now that you are His, you have a *new life*. “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone, a new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). It’s just like being born a second time. You’ve been taken out of darkness into His light. “You were cleansed, you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). God created people to flourish. The devil plots to diminish and destroy. Jesus said, “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life” (John 10:10).

Now that you are His, you have *new power*. God Himself now lives in you by His Spirit. God has “put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 1:22; ESV). Directed by God’s truth revealed in the Bible and strengthened by His Spirit, you can live in victory. Whatever the challenges, “the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world” (1 John 4:4). Jesus assures His followers, “Look, I have given you authority over all the power of

the enemy. ... Nothing will injure you. But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven" (Luke 10:19–20).

Now that you are His, you have a *new guide*. The Lord goes before you, clearing the way. As you walk with Him, trusting Him, you will come to know Him as both the almighty God and your faithful friend. On life's journey, Jesus promises, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5).

God is for you, not against you. As you keep walking with Him, He will reveal wonderful things to you and show you awesome acts of His power. He will continue to unpack His great love and amazing grace to you. In fact, at this very moment, Jesus is acting in your behalf. Just think of it — right now Jesus is praying for you! "He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf" (Hebrews 7:25).

Ever since Jesus was here on earth, walking with Him has come at a price. There has always been hostility against Him and, in our day, hatred against Him is growing. Added to that, our old desires try to lure us into the old path that only leads to darkness and death. Furthermore, the devil is always scheming to tarnish and even destroy our faith. Jesus said we would face such opposition. "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows," He told His followers. "But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Every sorrow, every hurt, you can now give to Him and let Him carry the load. "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Just keep walking with Him and let Him lead the way. "And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in

the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness” (Colossians 2:6–7).

Jesus calls you to a full and fulfilling life. He has a job for you to do. As you walk with Him, He will keep shaping and equipping you for your special assignment. He wants you to represent Him, as His ambassador, to help bring people to Him and help them in their own walk with Him. He’s calling you, even as you read this, to step away from a small, self-centered life to embrace a Christ-centered life. He’s inviting you now into His big story of revealing His light and life to the world. You are commissioned to be a change-maker, impacting your culture for Christ. Don’t turn away from this assignment. Serving His cause will fill your life to the brim with purpose. Just keep walking with Him. God “continues to lead us along in Christ’s triumphal procession. Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

I don’t have to tell you that much of our world is in agony. But it won’t stay that way. Jesus promised He would return to earth! He will destroy all that destroys people and rule over His creation in love and power. Jesus assures our hearts in this frightening world, “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am” (John 14:1–3).

So be encouraged. Jesus is the King of kings and He’s coming back — to receive you and to rule over the nations! He will set up His kingdom and reign in peace and justice over all the earth. “God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every

knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11).

It’s my prayer that this book will help set you on the path of a lifelong journey with Jesus. Now you walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). But one day He will appear! Your faith will be made sight. Your journey will finally lead you to your true home. “But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior” (Philippians 3:20).

— David Shibley

STEP 1

YOUR MOST IMPORTANT STEP

This book will help you take the first steps in a life-long, growing relationship with Jesus Christ. If you have not yet made Jesus Christ the Lord of your life by committing your life and heart fully to Him, now is the time to start. “If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). This step changes everything, for your life and for eternity.

The most important and thrilling discovery in life is finding the way home to God. There are road signs that help point the way.

Signpost 1: *God’s heart of love for you*

As the Creator of everything, God is perfect and holy. His heart of unending love reaches out to embrace you. He desires

to forgive you of your sins. He longs to give you peace of mind and heart, purpose for living, and eternal hope of a home in heaven with Him.

The Bible says, “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ offers you eternal life forever with Him in heaven. But He also offers you a full and abundant life right now. He said, “The thief’s [the devil’s] purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life” (John 10:10).

At this moment, God is reaching out in love to you. “This is real love — not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Signpost 2: *Your need for God*

The most desperate need of people everywhere is to be forgiven by God and restored to a right relationship with Him. The mad pursuit after pleasure and possessions is often an unconscious search for God. Although we were created to enjoy His presence, humanity’s rebellion against God’s rule has cut off our communion with Him. This rebellion is the root of all sin and has resulted in all the sadness in our world. And none of our self-efforts to reach God can succeed.

Our rebellion against God has separated us from Him. The Bible says, “It’s your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore” (Isaiah 59:2). This problem of sin has stretched over the entire human race. “All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short

of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23). The payment for our sins is certain death and eternity without God. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

But the story doesn't end with your need.

Signpost 3: *God's provision for you — Jesus Christ*

While humanity raced madly toward judgment and doom, God intervened by sending Christ to pay for our sins.

Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. As the eternal Son of God, He lived a perfect, sinless life. His death is the sacrifice God accepts to pay for all your sins. Three days after His crucifixion He physically rose from the dead, forever triumphing over sin, death, and hell. As God's only provision for sin, He offers forgiveness and new life to you right now. Jesus Himself has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Further, the Bible affirms, "There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity — the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Eternal life is a free gift that God offers to you right now. This wonderful gift is provided, not because of what you have done, but because of what God has done for you. "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The proof of God's love for you is Christ's death for you on the Cross. He died so you can experience the way home to God. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18; NKJV).

Signpost 4: *Your commitment to Christ*

What does it mean to commit yourself to Christ? First, it means repenting or turning away from your old way of living. In turning to Christ, you must turn from all your sins and from all your efforts to save yourself. The Bible is clear that it is God who does the work in saving us: “He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

Also, this commitment means trusting fully in Jesus’ death for you as the only payment ever needed for your sins. The Bible says, “. . . to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

Since Christ has purchased you with His own blood, committing your life to Him also means transferring ownership of your life to Jesus Christ. Now there can be no other title for Him in your life than “Lord.” Jesus literally becomes your Master and you become His servant. When you come to Christ you take Him as both your Savior and Lord.

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. . . . For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved” (Romans 10:9–13).

Now, what will you do with Jesus, this One who loved you enough to die in your place? You cannot be neutral about Him. He made it clear, “Anyone who isn’t with me opposes me, and anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me” (Matthew 12:30).

Now is the time for you to repent of your sins and commit your life to Jesus Christ. Are you ready to repent, to turn away completely from all your sins, and all attempts to save yourself? “Indeed, the ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

You can come to Christ wherever you are, right now. As you receive Him, He will receive you. You will finally and eternally be “home,” at peace with God. The past will be forgotten. Your sins will be forgiven. A new life will begin for you right now. As the Bible says, “. . . anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Make this the prayer of your heart to God right now:

Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the Cross for me. Right now I repent of my sins and trust Your shed blood as the full payment for all my sins. I believe You are the Son of God and that God has raised You from the dead. I now receive You as my personal Savior. I commit my life completely to You as my Lord. Thank You for hearing my prayer, forgiving my sins, and coming into my life as You promised.

If you prayed this prayer in sincerity and faith, welcome to the family of God! Jesus Christ has promised to come into your life when, in repentance and faith, you receive Him as your Lord. The Bible says, “And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God’s Son does not have life” (1 John 5:11–12). The Son of God now lives in you. You now have eternal life.

This book is dedicated to helping you grow as a follower of Jesus. Now that you are His, I encourage you to take these

important next steps that will help lead you to a life of fruitfulness and fulfillment in your walk with the Lord.

STEP 2

BE CONFIDENT OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST

Congratulations! You have made the most important and most thrilling discovery in life. Nothing is more wonderful than establishing a personal relationship with God. This relationship began the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ. By turning from your sins and committing your life to Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you have begun an entirely new life.

You are proof positive that the age of miracles has not passed, because a miracle — the miracle of a new birth — has happened to you. This transfer of ownership is so life-transforming that Jesus referred to it as being *born again*. This is one of several terms the Bible uses in reference to your experience of coming to know Jesus Christ in a personal way. Your first birth was a physical birth. But now you also have experienced a spiritual

birth. Jesus said, “Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again’ ” (John 3:6–7). Now not only is your body alive, but your spirit — the inner aspect of your life — is alive as well. You have been made “alive to God through Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11).

The Bible also refers to your new condition of being in Christ as being *saved*. You have been saved from the penalty of your sins, which would have been eternity without God and without hope. Those without Christ already live under condemnation for their sins. Jesus, referring to Himself, said, “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son” (John 3:18).

Most people would agree that every person has committed some wrong. The Bible clearly says, “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard” (Romans 3:23). And sin must be paid for. The punishment for sin is death and separation from God. Either you must pay for your sins yourself by being condemned, or you must trust the payment that was made in your behalf when Jesus shed His blood for you. The Bible says, “. . . the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Because you have put your faith and confidence in what Christ has done for you, you will be saved from that coming day when God judges unbelievers for their sin and unbelief. This is the awesome day when Jesus will return

. . . in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don’t know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished

with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power. When he comes on that day, he will receive glory from his holy people — praise from all who believe (2 Thessalonians 1:8–10).

But the Bible assures you, “If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). When you’ve done that — declared Jesus as your Savior — then the Bible says salvation is yours!

Remember, it is God who does the saving. We are the grateful recipients of the work He has done. “He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

The Bible also declares that you have been *redeemed* — purchased from the control of Satan and sin. Jesus Christ has literally paid for you with His blood. “For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God” (1 Peter 1:18–19).

Because Christ has purchased you, He is your rightful owner. As Lord of your life, He should be free to direct and control every area of your life. Suppose you were to go to a car dealer and pay cash for a new car. The dealer receives your money, promising to give you the car in return. But when he comes back, he only gives you the steering wheel, a couple of tires, and the brakes. What would you say? You would probably tell him, “Look, I paid the full price for this car. I have the right to demand the full product!” So it is with Christ. He paid the full price for you. He has

the right to demand the full product of your life. Nothing is to be kept back from His control. Since He created you, He knows best how you should live. “. . . for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

The Bible also teaches that you have been *converted*. To be converted means to be changed. You, my friend, have been changed. Once you were lost; now you are saved. Once you were alienated from God; now you are His child. Once you were on the road to judgment and hell; now you are going to heaven. Once you thought you could make it on your own; now you know you need Jesus. That is why Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

You Can Be Sure

One of the cruelest attacks the devil hurls at new believers is his attempt to make them doubt their salvation. “Maybe I didn’t say the right words.” “What if I wasn’t sincere enough?” “Can I really live the Christian life?” “What if I sin?” Satan tries to haunt people with these and a thousand other little barbs of doubt. But, thank God, there is a way to be fully confident. You need never doubt your salvation. You don’t have to give in to fear or doubt.

Since you have made this commitment of your life to Christ, the Bible says that Christ now lives in you. Remember this: *The ultimate assurance of your salvation is that Jesus Christ lives inside of you.* Jesus has made a wonderful promise to all who receive Him. He promised, “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in. . .” (Revelation 3:20).

When you opened the door of your life to Jesus, He took up residence within you! You opened the door. He responded and

came in. His life inside of you is your guarantee of salvation and eternal life. “And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God’s Son does not have life” (1 John 5:11–12).

“But,” you may be saying, “you don’t know some of the terrible things I’ve done. How can God accept me after all that?” Remember, God doesn’t accept you on the basis of what you have or have not done. He accepts you on the basis of what *He* has done for you on the Cross. He accepts you because Christ, the holy One, lives in you. Christ is in you and you are in Christ. When you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are put in the secure place of being “in Christ.” God accepts you because Christ is in you and you are in Him. The Bible says that “He made us accepted in the Beloved [Jesus Christ]” (Ephesians 1:6; NKJV).

The devil knows you will never grow much in your relationship with Christ if you fear that your salvation is in jeopardy. But don’t let him defeat you with doubts. You are not on probation with God. He has not only given you life, He has given you *eternal* life. You have been born into His family and you cannot be “un-birthed.” You have been “born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God” (1 Peter 1:23).

The Bible is clear that you are saved by the grace of God. This means that God, because of His infinite love, saves us when we put our trust in Christ, even though we do not merit or deserve His favor. “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

When you get to heaven, you will not see anyone boasting about how he or she deserves to be there because of their good life. No, everyone in heaven will know they are there only because of God's amazing grace. In gratitude to God for His wonderful salvation, you will want to live a life that is pleasing to Him. "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God" (Titus 2:11–12).

As a young child in Vacation Bible School, I trusted Christ as my Savior. Since that day, I have never seriously doubted my relationship with Him. I believe the reason is that from those early days my parents and teachers helped me see that my security rested, not in my attempts to hold onto Jesus, but in the settled fact that He is holding onto me.

Perhaps you have been plagued with doubt from time to time. Let me give you three simple steps to bring you a confident assurance of your salvation,

First, realize that *salvation is not your accomplishment but His accomplishment*. As the old hymn says, "Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe."¹ What more could be added to the blood that Jesus has spilled for you? You must be persuaded, as the Apostle Paul was, that Jesus is perfectly capable of protecting and keeping what He has purchased. Paul wrote, "I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return" (2 Timothy 1:12).

It is God who does the saving. Therefore, your salvation does not depend upon your strength but upon His strength. Salvation is not something you do, it is something God has done for you. All the religions of the world begin with dos and don'ts.

1. Elvina M. Hall, "Jesus Paid It All," 1865.

But biblical Christianity begins with *done!* On the Cross, Jesus cried, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). The price for your salvation has been paid in full. Now you can know you are saved, not only because you have given your life to Jesus, but because Jesus has given His life for you.

Second, *trust God’s promises to you*. God is perfect in all His ways. God will not lie to you; indeed, the Bible says He *cannot* lie about His promises to you as a believer. Because of your faith in Christ, you now have “eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” (Titus 1:2; NKJV).

No person has ever been as trustworthy as Jesus Christ. And it is Jesus Himself who has promised, “I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

Again, He has promised, “I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures” (John 10:9).

Still again He has assured you, “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father’s hand” (John 10:28–29). And still another time He promises, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you” (Hebrews 13:5).

So put your confidence in God, who cannot lie, and in His Word which endures forever.

Third, *don’t trust your feelings*. Perhaps the two most changeable things in life are the weather and human emotions. One minute you can be on the mountaintop of exhilaration and the next minute in the valley of despair. Many times our emotions are subject to the circumstances surrounding us. How tragic,

then, if your faith rests in how you feel at any particular moment rather than in God. Your hope of salvation simply cannot rest on how you feel, but, rather, your hope of eternal life must be squarely planted in this settled fact of history — Jesus Christ died for you and rose again.

Of course, there will be times when you feel especially close to Jesus and are enjoying your relationship with Him. This is a good thing. I'm not saying that your faith should be void of emotion. On the contrary, any healthy relationship includes our emotions, and you have entered into a relationship with Jesus. I'm simply saying that you cannot depend on your feelings for the assurance of salvation. So when in doubt, doubt your doubts and trust the promises of God.

You Are a New Person

The rate of growth for every Christian is different. Some new believers seem to grow rapidly, while others seem to grow slowly but surely. But you can be certain of this: you *will* grow. Every created thing grows if it is alive. This is true physically as well as spiritually. Just as living plants and animals grow, so will you! You have been made alive in Jesus Christ. And because there is new life in you, you will grow spiritually.

You may already be discovering something fascinating and exciting happening to you. You are beginning to think differently. You are beginning to act differently. Things you once hated you now love. Things you once loved you now despise. Whereas once you were tolerant and accepting of sin, now you reject it. Whereas once you were indifferent or even hostile to spiritual things, now you “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matthew 5:6; NKJV). Indeed, you are a new person. “This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Not only have you changed, but you are also continuing to change. God will continue His work in your life. His ultimate purpose in bringing you into His family is to make you Christ-like.

Now you can rejoice that every circumstance of life will be used by God to bring about this transformation of your life into the image of Christ. No matter what happens to you, you can know that God's purpose behind it is to make you more like Jesus.

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:28–29).

The moment you come to Christ, a wonderful transaction takes place. God forgives your sin. “You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins” (Colossians 2:13). God puts His righteousness in you, “even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe” (Romans 3:22; NKJV). God makes you forever His child. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12; NKJV).

You Have a New Destiny

God has taken you on as a lifetime project. From now on you will be aware of His presence in your life, ever seeking to bless you, strengthen you, and shape you into the very image of Christ. Although life will continue to have its problems, you have met the problem-solver.

Some people seem to have the idea that if a person becomes a Christian all the joy and excitement will be stripped out of life. This is one of the devil's most ridiculous lies. Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person comes to Christ, that's when the excitement really begins. Those who have no relationship with God seek joy and, at best, only find surface happiness. But Christians in fellowship with their Lord have the deep-seated joy of knowing that they have found meaning for their lives. They have the anchored peace of knowing their sins are forgiven and covered by the blood of Christ. They have the profound thrill of participating in God's lofty purposes in the earth.

Because Christ is in you, you have the promise of abundant life now and eternal life with Him in heaven. Jesus said, "The thief [the devil] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10; NKJV). As you live in fellowship with Christ, your life will be full, meaningful, and abundant.

In Christ, you have both abundant life and eternal life. Yes, eternal life means that you will live forever with the Lord in heaven. But to have eternal life also means that you have the very life of God living in you right now. The life of God, the uncreated One without beginning and without end, is now in you. Just imagine! Because you belong to Christ, God's life is now coursing through you.

So welcome to the adventure! The God of the universe has staked His claim on you. And He will continue His loving, transforming work in you until all of His designs for you and through you are completed. You can be sure of it. "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns" (Philippians 1:6).

The Importance of a Public Confession

Have you noticed that important transitions and transactions in life are almost always made publicly? Graduation is a transition that is declared publicly. Marriage is a transition that is declared publicly. Even the mergers of companies are publicly announced. Yet, as important as these events are, they are not as important for this life or the life to come as the transition out of death into life that occurs when you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior. This most important of life's decisions should certainly be declared publicly.

Whenever Jesus challenged someone to follow Him, He always called that person publicly. In this way, Jesus stressed the importance of a clear-cut commitment to Him. By publicly declaring your faith in Christ, you announce to the world that you are not ashamed to claim Jesus Christ as your Lord. Also, this public confession of faith helps to seal your decision for Christ in your own heart and mind.

You should confess Christ publicly for a number of reasons. First, your public declaration of loyalty to Christ puts your faith on the line. By making a public confession of your faith in Jesus Christ you pass a "point of no return." You are proclaiming to a watching world that you are devoted, now and forever, to Jesus Christ.

Second, this public confession of faith helps to seal your decision for Christ in your own heart and mind. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34; NKJV). As a natural response, you will express outwardly what God has done inwardly.

Third, your acknowledgment of Jesus publicly encourages you that He will one day publicly acknowledge you. Jesus promised, "Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I

will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32–33).

If you have not already done so, take this first step of obedience and publicly declare your faith in Christ. Attend a church this week where an opportunity will be given for you to make a public confession of your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. In the next chapter, we will look at another key step in your new journey of faith: water baptism.

NEXT STEPS

- Share with someone your decision to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and that you are following him as your Lord.
- Begin learning more about Christ by reading about Him in the Bible. A good place to begin is the Book of John.

Key Verse:

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved (Romans 10:9–10).