

NOW THAT YOU HAVE TRUSTED CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR,

WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?©

By Pastor Greg Hooker

Let me be the first to welcome you to the family of God!

When you trusted Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and invited Him into your heart by faith, you took the first step of a wonderful, life-long journey of growing and maturing in the Christian life. You are now officially a member of God's family with man privileges, freedoms and a shared inheritance. While the Lord doesn't promise us a life free of troubles and trials just because we are now a part of His household, He does promise to provide us the grace, strength and wisdom to face them with His power and leadership of the Holy Spirit. You will find that living for Jesus Christ is the best life – the 'only' life - you could ever have upon this earth.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things [your past sins] are passed away; behold, all things are become new [a clean slate]" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Now that you have received the Gift of salvation, God says you are a brand-new-person! Like water under a bridge, all the bad things and sins of your past are gone! Your sins are completely vanished away like a puff of smoke carried away by the winds and God has elected to completely forget about them! Psalm 103:12 tells us:

"As far as the east is from the west, So far has He [God] removed our transgressions [sins] from us."

My friends, you are completely washed clean of all your sins by the blood of Jesus Christ that He shed for you on the cross! You may say, 'What about all my future sins, how can God forgive those?' When Jesus died on the cross for you, your sins were all future – you were not to be born for another 2000 plus years! They have all been taken care of when Jesus cried out, "*It is finished*" (John 19:13). Not one sin remains that would send your soul to hell. Listen to Romans 8:1,

"There is therefore now no condemnation [nothing to condemn you to hell] to them which are in Christ Jesus [in Christ and covered by His blood]...!"

Because you have accepted God's Gift of salvation by faith, the Lord will now help you to mature and grow as a young child of God. Each day is a new opportunity to learn more from His Word and let the Holy Spirit teach you, who, by the way, now resides permanently in your heart. This is what the Bible refers to as 'progressive sanctification' – a process of daily developing and growing in your new Christian life.

When you were an infant for example; you didn't know how to talk, walk, crawl, stand, or take care of yourself. But over time you began to develop physically and mentally, and before long these skills were learned and mastered. It's the same way with a person who has been 'born a spiritual infant' into God's family. At first you don't know what to do, how to act, or talk; but as you begin to feast upon the 'milk' of the Word of God, your spiritual body begins to grow stronger each day. You learn about the basic doctrines or teachings of the Scriptures – God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, etc. Moreover, you begin to learn how to 'act' like a Christian; how to walk, talk and speak as a child of God; how to share your faith with others; and how to overcome temptation and avoid the entrapments of the enemy.

So now that you are forgiven and saved, what do you do next? How do you get off on the right foot in your new and exciting life for Jesus Christ? Here are a few things that will get you started.

1. READ YOUR BIBLE EVERYDAY

As a new born babe in Christ, you will need nourishment for your spiritual life – that comes from reading, studying, and meditating upon what God has written in the Bible. The Bible is our 'spiritual milk' that feeds our souls. Later, after you have grown and matured enough, you will begin feasting upon the 'spiritual meat' of the Word – after all, who would ever give an infant meat to eat!

TAKE NOTE: I cannot stress enough the importance of developing the habit of consistently reading the Bible. If you neglect the milk of the Word; like a new-born-infant, you will waste away and eventually die of malnutrition.

What exactly is the Bible? The Bible is a collection of books written over the course of 5000 years by over 50 authors, recording the heart and mind of God. It is therefore, God's revelation to us. It is 'truth' without error. It teaches us how to live in such a way that will be pleasing to the Lord and provide a positive witness to the world. Every scenario life may throw at us has a solution in the Scriptures through comparing Scripture with Scripture. When we have questions, God has answers – we just need to search the Scriptures for solutions.

The Lord doesn't leave us in the dark concerning how He wants us to live for Him. The Bible gives us detailed instructions to follow, but don't just start anywhere. If you were to start say, in the book of Numbers, you would not understand much, if anything, written there. Later, when you have matured enough, you will find golden nuggets in every 66 books of the Bible. Here are my suggestions of books to read first to get you started:

- ✓ **The Gospel of John**
- ✓ **The Gospel of Mark**
- ✓ **1 John**
- ✓ **2 John**
- ✓ **3 John**
- ✓ **Genesis**
- ✓ **Ephesians**
- ✓ **Galatians**
- ✓ **The Gospel of Luke**
- ✓ **The Gospel of Matthew**
- ✓ **1 Corinthians**
- ✓ **2 Corinthians**
- ✓ **Romans**
- ✓ **Psalms**
- ✓ **Proverbs.**

2. PRAY EVERYDAY

When you received Jesus as your Savior, you were given a direct communication link to God. This is made possible by the Holy Spirit, who, by the way, ‘is’ God living in your heart. Along with your daily reading of God’s Word, it is very important to spend some time each day praying, or talking to the Lord. Keep in mind, however; it isn’t necessarily the ‘quantity’ of time you spend praying that is the most important, but the ‘quality’ of time. It’s much better to spend 5 minutes of ‘to-the-point’ praying, rather than 5 hours of ramblings, gripes, complaints and gossip!

Bible reading is ‘God’ speaking to you and prayer is ‘you’ speaking to God – both go hand in hand. Never neglect one at the expense of the other. At first, prayer may seem awkward and boring to you, but as you begin talking to God you will form a close relationship with Him. Soon prayer will become second nature and you will find yourself “*praying without ceasing*” throughout the day, singing and making melody in your heart.

How do I begin to pray, you may ask? Just start at the beginning and talk to the Lord as you would a good friend. Tell Him how you feel. Talk to Him about your day, your problems and needs. Share with the Lord the difficulties in your family and friends, asking Him to help them. Always let the Lord know how glad you are that He forgave your sins and made you His child. In short, anything that is on your mind is acceptable to tell God. He understands all about your problems, heartaches and needs.

In addition, ask the Lord for wisdom and understanding to read and comprehend the Bible. Tell Him the things you don’t understand and ask Him to open your spiritual eyes to learn and mature in His Word. Be certain, however, to “be still” before the Lord that you may hear what He wants to say to you

Lastly, be sure to thank God every day for His blessings. Lift Him up through praise and adoration. Tell Him how much you love and appreciate Him. Just like an earthly father, our Heavenly Father loves to hear that from His children. So don’t be shy, let Him know how you feel and what you are thinking.

3. FIND A GOOD CHURCH

After becoming a Christian, you will want to find a good, Bible-believing, Holy-Spirit-filled church. Hebrews 10:25 says,

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

While church attendance certainly is not required to be saved or go to Heaven, it's a place where you can meet other Christians and fellowship together – share your burdens, heartaches and joy. Moreover, you will learn from the preaching and teaching of God's Word and receive encouragement as you walk with the Lord.

Seek out a church in your area that preaches the Truth of God's Word – one that is active and supports missionaries and is dedicated to reach the lost for Christ. 'Shop around' and visit various churches. Ask your neighbors and friends where they go to church and get some recommendations. Should you be home-bound, there are good church programs on TV and the radio. Whatever you can do to fellowship and learn more of God's Word will make a great impact on your Christian life.

4. FOLLOW THE LORD IN BELIEVERS BAPTISM

Someone once defined baptism as: 'The outward showing of an inward work of grace'. In other words, baptism by immersion in water is a testimony to the world that you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. It also shows that you aren't ashamed to identify yourself with Jesus and His teachings. It serves as a beautiful picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ – we are buried with Him in death (going under the water) and raised to walk in newness of life (lifted out of the water).

Once you find a good Church you feel the Lord is leading you to, be sure and tell the pastor about your salvation experience and ask him to baptize you and become a member. He will be more than happy to do that for you!

5. TELL OTHERS ABOUT JESUS, TOO

Jesus told all Christians to be witnesses for Him about His death, burial and resurrection for the sins of all mankind. In fact, He said this,

“...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Although all of us cannot leave our present lives and travel around the world to preach the Gospel, we can witness to our families, friends, neighbors and co-workers about Jesus. Just tell them about your salvation experience – how that you realized you are a sinner, how Jesus paid for those sins, and how He will save them if they only believe and ask Jesus to forgive them.

‘WARNINGS’ ABOUT YOUR NEW CHRISTIAN LIFE

As I stated earlier, the Christian life does not guarantee that trials, troubles and heartaches will cease. In many cases they will increase! However, living for Jesus Christ is loaded with joy, peace and contentment! The Lord promises to give us grace to overcome any and all things life has sends our way. Here are some things to watch and expect as you begin your new life in Christ.

1. SATAN WILL TRY HIS BEST TO MAKE YOU DOUBT YOUR SALVATION & GIVE UP

Once you become a Christian in God’s army, the enemy will take up arms against you. Satan will do everything within his power to get you to doubt that God forgave your sins and saved you. He will try to get you to return to your old sins and evil ways. He will try to rob you of your joy in Christ and cause you to become discouraged and depressed. When these things begin to happen, that’s when you especially need to read your Bible, pray and associate yourself with other mature Christians for support and encouragement. Don’t think it strange when the Devil does these things – after all, that is his mission in life. Just remember “... greater is He [God] that is in you, than he [Satan] that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Simply ask for the Lord’s help and strength and He will gladly give it.

2. YOU WILL STILL HAVE TRIALS AND PROBLEMS IN YOUR LIFE

Just because you are a Christian now doesn’t mean your life will be a bed of Roses without the thorns. On the contrary, we live in a world that is wreaked by sin. Death, sickness and disease will continue to invade your life and heartaches, trials and troubles will surely visit your home. But remember this, God is faithful to watch over His children and even though we will encounter these unfortunate results of sin, the Lord will not allow anything to come into our lives without His say-so.

3. YOU WILL HAVE FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, ETC. THAT WILL LAUGH, MOCK AND EVEN MAKE FUN OF YOUR NEW BELIEF IN JESUS CHRIST

It's a sad fact, some of your closest family members and friends will not understand your decision to become a Christian. They will not comprehend the love and goodness of God in your life, thus mocking your new faith. When this happens, it's important not to lash out with anger toward them, but show them love and compassion. By doing so, your positive testimony of the love of Christ may draw them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, too. You can never go wrong by 'loving them to Jesus'!

WRAPPING IT UP

So, now that you are beginning your new journey for the Lord, great opportunities await you around every bend. Just make sure you stay on the straight and narrow path and it will lead you into joy, peace and contentment – even though the path may get muddy, the cobblestones become cumbersome, and the slope becomes slippery. *Just 'Keep on praising, praying and proclaiming God Word'* and the Lord will take care of you through any and all situations. I hope our paths cross someday as we journey to our final Heavenly home, but until then; enjoy the journey!

"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).

For more information on living the Christian life, go to: www.PastorGregHookerMinistries.com

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