

STAGE: BELIEVER

# SURVIVAL KIT

## A NEW BELIEVER'S COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

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Real Testimonies. Radical Transformations.

First-Year Roadmap for Living Your New Life in Christ — Bible Reading, Prayer, Church, Baptism, Doubt, Temptation,

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# New Believer's Survival Kit

COMPREHENSIVE EXPANDED EDITION. Complete First-Year Roadmap for Living Your New Life in Christ. Comprehensive Guide Covering Bible Reading, Prayer, Finding Church, Baptism, Dealing with Doubt, Resisting Temptation, Testimony, and Your First Year as a Christian.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Welcome to the Family!

**You just made the most important decision of your life.**

If you've recently trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, congratulations. You're now part of God's family. Your sins are forgiven. Your eternity is secure. The Holy Spirit lives in you.

**This is real. This is permanent. This is HUGE.**

### What Just Happened?

When you believed in Jesus:

- **You were justified** – God declared you righteous
- **You were adopted** – You became God's child
- **You received the Holy Spirit** – God's presence lives in you
- **Your name was written in the Book of Life** – You have eternal life
- **You became a new creation** – Old things passed away; new things began

### How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed as a practical manual for your first year as a Christian. **You don't need to read it all at once. In fact, don't.**

Instead:

- **Week 1:** Read Parts 1–3 (First Steps, Bible Reading, Prayer)
- **Week 2:** Read Parts 4–5 (Church, Baptism)
- **Week 3:** Read Parts 6–8 (Doubt, Temptation, Testimony)
- **Week 4:** Read Parts 9–12 (Foundations, Year Plan, Support)

Then come back to specific sections as you need them.

**This is your spiritual survival kit—keep it handy. Reference it constantly.**

## PART 1 — IMMEDIATE FIRST STEPS

### Step 1: Understand What Just Happened (Deeply)

**Four permanent realities of your salvation:**

#### 1. Justification: You're Declared Righteous

**Romans 5:1:**

*"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

God looked at your sin. Instead of condemning you, He declared you righteous—covered by Christ's righteousness.

**What this means:** God doesn't see your sin anymore. He sees Christ's perfection. You're acceptable to God.

#### 2. Adoption: You're God's Child

**John 1:12:**

*"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."*

You're not just forgiven. You're brought into God's family. God is your Father. You have inheritance rights.

**What this means:** You belong. You have standing in God's family. You're not an orphan or outsider. You're loved as God's own child.

#### 3. Indwelling: The Holy Spirit Lives in You

**Ephesians 1:13:**

*"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."*

God's Holy Spirit now lives IN you. Not just around you. IN you.

**What this means:** You have God's presence with you always. You have power to resist temptation. You have guidance for life decisions. You're never alone.

#### 4. Eternal Life: You're Guaranteed Forever

**John 3:16:**

*"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."*

Your salvation isn't probationary. It's not "try it and see if it works." It's permanent. Forever.

**John 10:28–29:**

*"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."*

**What this means:** You're secure. Death doesn't end you. You will spend eternity with God.

## Step 2: Tell Someone Within 24 Hours

### Romans 10:9:

*“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.”*

### EXERCISE: Today or tomorrow, tell someone you’re a Christian.

#### Who to tell:

- Christian friend
- Person who led you to Christ
- Family member (if supportive)
- Pastor
- Anyone who will celebrate with you

#### What to say:

*“I became a Christian [today/last night]. I trusted Jesus as my Savior. I wanted you to know.”*

#### Why this matters:

- Solidifies your decision
- Creates accountability
- Starts your testimony
- Brings community encouragement
- Acts of obedience strengthen faith

Write their name here: \_\_\_\_\_ Date you’ll tell them: \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 3: Assure Your Salvation Immediately

### The devil will attack with doubt immediately:

Lie the Devil Whispers	God’s Truth
“Did it really work?”	“God promised eternal life to believers. You believed.”
“You weren’t sincere enough”	“God sees your heart. You genuinely wanted Jesus.”
“You felt something, but maybe...”	“Salvation is based on God’s Word, not your feelings.”
“You’ll mess up and lose it”	“Nothing can separate you from God’s love (Romans 8:39).”

### Your salvation depends on:

- Jesus’ finished work on the cross
- God’s promise in His Word

- Your faith in Christ

**Your salvation does NOT depend on:**

- How strongly you felt
- Whether you cried
- Your current behavior
- Other people's approval

**KEY VERSE TO MEMORIZE:**

*"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. — 1 John 5:13"*

**You can KNOW you're saved. Not hope. Not guess. KNOW.**

**Your First 24 Hours Checklist**

Do these things immediately after conversion:

**Hour 1:**

- Tell someone you're a Christian
- Thank God in prayer
- Read John 3:16–18 (small affirmation)

**Hours 2–12:**

- Download a Bible app or get a physical Bible
- Pick up one Christian book (start with this guide)
- Find a church for Sunday
- Tell one more person

**Hour 24:**

- Pray and read a passage (John 1:1–14)
- Commit to church Sunday
- Find a Christian friend to spend time with
- Write down your decision (date, time, situation)

## PART 2 — BIBLE READING: FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICE

### Why Read the Bible?

#### Your Bible is:

- **God's Word** – Not just good advice; God's actual revelation
- **Your spiritual food** – Like physical food sustains your body, Scripture sustains your soul
- **Your guide** – Shows you how to live
- **Your source of strength** – Reminds you of God's faithfulness
- **Your foundation** – Builds your faith in Christ
- **Your weapon** – Protects you against temptation and deception

#### 2 Timothy 3:16–17:

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”*

**You cannot grow without Bible reading. Period. It's non-negotiable.**

### Where to Start: Don't Start at Genesis!

**Biggest new believer mistake:** Opening to Genesis 1:1 intending to read straight through.

**What happens:** You power through Genesis, Exodus, maybe Leviticus. By Numbers you're bored. By Deuteronomy you've quit.

**Better approach:** Start with the New Testament.

### RECOMMENDED NEW BELIEVER READING ORDER

#### Month 1: Meet Jesus (65 chapters)

- Gospel of John (21 chapters) – Who Jesus is
- Gospel of Mark (16 chapters) – What Jesus did
- Acts (28 chapters) – Early church history

#### Month 2: Your New Life (24 chapters)

- Ephesians (6 chapters) – Your identity in Christ
- Philippians (4 chapters) – Joy in Christ
- Colossians (4 chapters) – Christ's supremacy
- 1 John (5 chapters) – Assurance and love
- James (5 chapters) – Practical living

#### Month 3: Your Foundation (27 chapters)

- Romans (16 chapters) – Salvation theology
- Galatians (6 chapters) – Freedom in Christ
- 1 Peter (5 chapters) – Hope in suffering

**After 3 months:** You'll have read 116 chapters of the New Testament. You'll understand Jesus, salvation, and how to live. THEN start the Old Testament.

## How to Actually Read the Bible

### Your Bible Reading Setup

#### 1. Get a good Bible

##### Recommended translations:

- **ESV** (English Standard Version) – Accurate, readable, word-for-word
- **NIV** (New International Version) – Very readable, modern English
- **NKJV** (New King James Version) – Traditional language, clear
- **NLT** (New Living Translation) – Easy to understand, thought-for-thought

**Get a study Bible if possible** (includes notes explaining hard passages)

##### Recommended study Bibles:

- ESV Study Bible
- NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible
- MacArthur Study Bible

#### 2. Choose a time and place

- **When:** Ideally morning (before your day starts)
- **Where:** Quiet place with no distractions
- **Duration:** Start with 15–20 minutes
- **Amount:** 1–2 chapters daily

#### 3. Remove distractions

- Phone on silent (not in your hand)
- Door closed
- No TV or music
- Coffee/water nearby
- Pen and notebook ready

## The S.O.A.P. Method

**How to read Bible passages with deeper understanding:**

**S — Scripture (Write it down)** Write one verse that stands out or speaks to you.

**O — Observation (Notice details)** Answer: What do I see in this verse?

- Who's speaking?
- Who are they talking to?
- What's happening?
- What stands out?

**A — Application (Connect to life)** Answer: How does this apply to me?

- What should I do?
- What should I believe?
- What needs to change in my life?

**P — Prayer (Talk to God)** Respond to God about what you learned.

### S.O.A.P. Example

**SCRIPTURE: John 3:16**

*“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.”*

#### OBSERVATION:

- God is the actor (He so loved, He gave)
- The world (everyone) is the object of His love
- He gave His Son (Jesus)
- Whoever believes is guaranteed everlasting life
- The consequence of disbelief is perishing

#### APPLICATION:

- God loves ME personally (not just the world generally)
- God demonstrated His love by the highest sacrifice (His Son)
- I believed, so I have everlasting life
- I can share this with others who haven't believed

#### PRAYER:

*“God, thank You for loving me so much You sent Jesus. Thank You that I believed and have eternal life. Help me share this good news with someone today who needs to hear it.”*

## Bible Reading Exercises

### EXERCISE 1: Try S.O.A.P. This Week

Pick John 1:1–14 (14 verses)

- **Monday:** Read it three times in three different translations
- **Tuesday–Thursday:** Use S.O.A.P. on one verse each day
- **Friday:** Review all three verses you studied
- **Saturday–Sunday:** Reflect on how these verses changed your understanding of Jesus

## EXERCISE 2: Create a Bible Reading Journal

Get a notebook. For 7 days, record:

- Date
- Passage read
- One verse that stood out
- One thing God taught me
- One prayer I prayed

## EXERCISE 3: Memorize One Verse

Pick John 3:16 (most important verse)

- **Day 1:** Read it 10 times aloud
- **Day 2–3:** Say it from memory (check if you need to)
- **Day 4–7:** Say it 5 times daily from memory

## Common Bible Reading Mistakes

### MISTAKE 1: Reading Without a Plan

**Problem:** You jump around randomly or start with Genesis and get bored.

**Solution:** Use the reading order provided above. Stick with it.

### MISTAKE 2: Reading Too Much Too Fast

**Problem:** You try to read 10 chapters daily and burn out.

**Solution:** Start with 2 chapters daily. Quality beats quantity.

### MISTAKE 3: Not Understanding Counts as Failure

**Problem:** You don't understand a passage and assume you're doing it wrong.

**Solution:** Don't expect to understand everything. Keep reading. Understanding grows over time.

### MISTAKE 4: Not Acting on What You Learn

**Problem:** You read the Bible but don't change your life based on it.

**Solution:** For every verse you read, ask: "How should this change me?"

### MISTAKE 5: Skipping When You Miss a Day

**Problem:** You miss one day, assume you've failed, and quit.

**Solution:** If you miss a day, just pick up tomorrow. No guilt. No shame.

### Making Bible Reading a Habit

**Habit science:** A behavior becomes a habit after 21–66 days of repetition (average 42 days).

If you read the Bible daily for 6 weeks, it becomes automatic.

### 42-Day Bible Reading Challenge

**Your goal:** Read daily for 42 days

- **Days 1–7:** No excuses. Every single day. Set a phone reminder.
- **Days 8–21:** Should be getting easier. You're forming the habit.
- **Days 22–42:** This should feel automatic now.

**After 42 days:** Bible reading becomes your default. You won't feel right if you skip it.

### 30-Day Reading Plan for New Believers

Day	Passage	Focus
1	John 1:1–18	Jesus is God
2	John 3:1–21	Born again salvation
3	John 3:16 + John 1:12	Memorize these verses
4	John 4:1–42	Jesus satisfies
5	John 8:1–11	Grace and forgiveness
6	John 11:1–44	Jesus gives life
7	John 14:1–14	Jesus is the way
8	Matthew 6:25–34	Don't worry, trust God
9	Matthew 5:3–12	Beatitudes
10	1 John 1:1–10	God is light
11	1 John 2:1–6	Jesus is our advocate
12	1 John 3:1–10	God's love for us
13	Romans 3:20–28	Justified by faith
14	Romans 5:1–11	Peace through Jesus
15	Romans 6:1–14	Freedom from sin
16	Romans 8:1–17	No condemnation
17	Ephesians 1:1–14	Spiritual blessings

Day	Passage	Focus
18	Ephesians 2:1–10	Grace and good works
19	Ephesians 4:1–16	Unity in church
20	Ephesians 6:10–20	Spiritual armor
21	Philippians 4:4–9	Rejoice and peace
22	Colossians 1:1–18	Jesus is supreme
23	1 Thessalonians 4:13–18	Hope of Jesus' return
24	1 Peter 1:1–9	Living hope
25	1 Peter 3:14–16	Always ready for defense
26	James 1:1–18	Trials produce perseverance
27	James 4:1–10	Submit to God
28	2 Peter 1:1–11	Growing in faith
29	1 John 4:7–21	God is love
30	Revelation 3:15–22	Jesus at the door

**After Day 30:** You'll have read the essentials. You know Jesus, understand salvation, and have foundation for Christian living.

## PART 3 — PRAYER: TALKING WITH GOD

### Prayer Foundation

Prayer is simply talking to God.

You don't need:

- Fancy words
- Religious language
- Perfect grammar
- A special location

You just need:

- Honesty
- A willing heart
- A few minutes
- God's attention (which you always have)

**1 Thessalonians 5:17:**

*"Pray without ceasing."*

Prayer isn't a one-time event. It's an ongoing conversation throughout your day.

### The ACTS Model

- **A – Adoration** (Worship God)
- **C – Confession** (Admit sin)
- **T – Thanksgiving** (Thank God)
- **S – Supplication** (Ask for needs)

#### **A – Adoration: Worship God (2–3 minutes)**

**Purpose:** Acknowledge who God is

**Sample prayers:**

- "God, You're holy and righteous."
- "You're more powerful than anything I face."
- "Your love is unfailing. Thank You for who You are."
- "Jesus, You're my Savior. I worship You."

**What it does:** Reorients your heart toward God's greatness. Reminds you that God is bigger than your problems.

#### **C – Confession: Admit Sin (2–3 minutes)**

**Purpose:** Get honest about your failures

**Important:** You're confessing to God, not earning forgiveness (you're already forgiven).

**Sample prayers:**

- "God, I sinned today by [specific sin]. Forgive me."
- "I was selfish/dishonest/angry. That was wrong. Help me."
- "I knew better. I did it anyway. Forgive me and help me change."

**What it does:** Clears the air between you and God. Removes the weight of guilt. Commits you to change.

### T – Thanksgiving: Thank God (2–3 minutes)

**Purpose:** Acknowledge God's goodness

**Sample prayers:**

- "Thank You for saving me."
- "Thank You for my family/health/job/home."
- "Thank You for providing for my needs."
- "Thank You for forgiving me when I sin."
- "Thank You that You never leave me."

**What it does:** Shifts your focus from problems to blessings. Builds gratitude and joy.

### S – Supplication: Ask for Needs (2–3 minutes)

**Purpose:** Present your requests to God

**Sample prayers:**

- "Please give me wisdom about [decision]."
- "Help me resist [temptation]."
- "Provide for [need]."
- "Give me strength to [difficult task]."
- "Help my [loved one] with [situation]."

**What it does:** Acknowledges your need for God's help. Gives you peace that God is handling your concerns.

## Guided Prayer Exercise

**Let's pray together right now. Read this aloud:**

*"God, You're holy and righteous. I worship You. Thank You for being God. I confess that I [name one sin from today]. That was wrong. Forgive me. Help me change. Thank You for saving me. Thank You for my [name one blessing]. Thank You for never leaving me. Please help me with [name one need]. Give me strength to [name one daily challenge]. Help me grow in faith. I love You. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

That's a complete prayer. Takes 2–3 minutes. Do this daily.

## Different Types of Prayer

Beyond ACTS, there are different prayer types:

- **1. Prayer of Petition** (asking for yourself) – “God, help me with this decision”
- **2. Prayer of Intercession** (asking for others) – “God, help my friend who’s struggling”
- **3. Prayer of Praise** (celebrating God) – “God, You’re amazing and worthy of worship”
- **4. Prayer of Thanksgiving** (gratitude) – “Thank You for providing for me”
- **5. Prayer of Confession** (admitting sin) – “I’m sorry for my sin. Forgive me”
- **6. Prayer of Lament** (expressing pain) – “God, why is this happening? I’m hurting”
- **7. Prayer of Surrender** (giving control to God) – “God, I give this situation to You. Your will, not mine”

## Building a Prayer Life

### 14-Day Prayer Challenge

Day	Focus	Prayer Length
1	Praise God	5 minutes
2	Confession	5 minutes
3	Thanksgiving	5 minutes
4	Petition	5 minutes
5	ACTS (all 4)	10 minutes
6	Intercession (others)	10 minutes
7	Praise	10 minutes
8	Specific life area	10 minutes
9	Family	15 minutes
10	Church/community	15 minutes
11	Personal needs	15 minutes
12	ACTS	15 minutes
13	Extended ACTS	20 minutes
14	Free prayer (any focus)	20 minutes

**After Day 14:** Prayer should feel more natural. You’ve established the habit.

## Prayer Journal Template

Use this to guide your prayers:

"DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRAISE (What I'm celebrating about God): \_\_\_\_\_

CONFESSION (What I'm sorry for): \_\_\_\_\_

THANKSGIVING (What I'm grateful for): \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLICATION (What I'm asking God for): \_\_\_\_\_

INTERCESSION (Who I'm praying for): \_\_\_\_\_

GOD'S ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_

MY COMMITMENT TODAY: \_\_\_\_\_"

**Keep a prayer journal. Write these weekly. Over time, you'll see God's faithfulness.**

## PART 4 — FINDING AND JOINING A CHURCH

### Why Church is Essential

#### Hebrews 10:25:

*“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another.”*

#### You **NEED** a church.

Not optional. Not “nice to have.” Essential.

#### Why?

- **Teaching:** Hear God’s Word explained
- **Community:** Build relationships with believers
- **Accountability:** Have people who care about your faith
- **Service:** Use your gifts to help others
- **Worship:** Praise God corporately
- **Growth:** Challenge and encouragement

#### You can’t be healthy spiritually without a church.

### What to Look For

#### NON-NEGOTIABLES

1. **Preaches the Bible** – Pastor teaches verse-by-verse from Scripture. The Bible is central.
2. **Gospel-Centered** – Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus is clearly taught. The cross is central.
3. **Sound Doctrine** – The church affirms:
  - Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
  - Jesus’ deity
  - Jesus’ resurrection
  - Salvation by faith
  - Inerrancy of Scripture
4. **Healthy Leadership** – Pastors/elders are:
  - Humble (open to questioning)
  - Accountable (not dictatorial)
  - Qualified (1 Timothy 3 standards)
  - Faithful (not scandalized by sin)

## RED FLAGS TO AVOID

- **Prosperity gospel** (“God wants you rich”)
- **Doesn't preach the Bible** (motivational talks only)
- **Denies Jesus' deity** (He's just a good teacher)
- **No hell** (everyone goes to heaven)
- **Unaccountable leadership** (pastor is above questioning)
- **Sexual/financial scandals** (leadership is compromised)
- **Cult-like** (demands unquestioning obedience)
- **Works-based salvation** (earn God's favor through behavior)

## How to Find a Church

### EXERCISE: Find Three Churches This Week

**Step 1: Search online** – Google “[your city] Bible church” or “[your city] gospel-centered church.” Look at 3–5 churches. Check their websites and listen to sermons online. Does their theology align with Scripture?

**Step 2: Visit in person** – Attend Sunday morning service. Arrive 15 minutes early. Notice: How welcoming are people? Listen carefully to the sermon. Is the Bible central?

**Step 3: Attend three times** – Don't judge after one visit. Get a feel for the community. Notice the quality of teaching. See how people interact.

**Step 4: Talk to the pastor** – Ask: “What do you believe about salvation?” Ask: “How do you approach preaching?” Ask: “What's your view of Scripture?”

**Step 5: Commit** – After 6–8 weeks, join officially. Don't church-hop forever. Find a solid church and commit.

#### Churches to research:

- Church 1: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date visited: \_\_\_\_\_)
- Church 2: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date visited: \_\_\_\_\_)
- Church 3: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date visited: \_\_\_\_\_)

## Your First Sunday

### Before You Go

- Plan to arrive 10–15 minutes early
- Wear comfortable clothes (no formal dress code needed)
- Bring a notebook and pen
- Find the parking lot
- Plan to stay through the whole service (usually 60–90 minutes)

### During the Service

**Typical order:**

- **Worship/Music** (15–20 min) – Singing praise songs
- **Announcements** (5 min) – Church information
- **Prayer** (5 min) – Corporate prayer time
- **Sermon** (30–40 min) – Bible teaching
- **Response** (5–10 min) – Invitation, communion, or prayer

**What to do:**

- Sing if comfortable (no pressure if you don't know songs)
- Listen to sermon carefully
- Take notes on what stands out
- Participate in prayer if comfortable

**After the Service**

- Find the new members table
- Get information about the church
- Give them your contact info
- Ask about small groups
- Schedule a return visit

**Joining a Small Group****Small group = Bible study with 6–15 people**

This is where real community happens. This is essential.

**Types of groups:**

- **Discipleship group** (focused teaching)
- **Life group** (mixed discussion and prayer)
- **Bible study** (deep theological study)
- **Accountability group** (spiritual growth and confession)

**How to join:**

- Ask pastor for small group information
- Find a group that meets at a good time
- Attend at least 4 times before committing
- Ask the leader one-on-one questions

**Why small groups matter:**

- You know 10 people deeply vs. 100 people shallowly

- Real accountability and encouragement
- Space to ask honest questions
- Place to grow in faith together

## Serving in Church

**Don't just attend—participate.**

After 4–8 weeks, find a way to serve:

### **Serving opportunities:**

- Greet people at the door
- Help with children's ministry
- Join worship team (if you sing)
- Serve on a committee
- Help with setup/cleanup
- Visit sick/hurting members
- Lead a Bible study

### **Why serve:**

- Uses your gifts
- Gives you purpose
- Helps the church
- Builds community
- Keeps you engaged

## PART 5 — BAPTISM: YOUR PUBLIC DECLARATION

### What Baptism Means

**Baptism is a public declaration that:**

- You've decided to follow Jesus
- You're committing your life to Him
- You're leaving your old life behind
- You're rising to new life in Christ

**Romans 6:3–4:**

*“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

### When to Get Baptized

**As soon as possible after salvation.**

**Acts 16:33:** Philippian jailer baptized the same night he believed.

Don't wait months or years. Get baptized within weeks.

### Preparing Your Testimony

You'll likely share your story at your baptism.

#### Three-Part Testimony Structure

##### Part 1: Before Christ (30 seconds)

- What was your life like?
- What were you searching for?
- What was missing?

##### Part 2: How You Met Christ (1 minute)

- How did you hear the Gospel?
- What convinced you?
- When did you pray?

##### Part 3: After Christ (30 seconds)

- How has your life changed?
- What's different now?
- Why is following Jesus worth it?

## Write Your Testimony Now

### EXERCISE: Write Your Testimony This Week

**Part 1: Before Christ** Write 2–3 sentences about your life before becoming Christian.

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**Part 2: How I Met Christ** Write 4–5 sentences about your conversion story.

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**Part 3: After Christ** Write 2–3 sentences about how you've changed. \_\_\_\_\_

Practice reading it aloud 5 times. Time it (should be 2–3 minutes).

## The Baptism Experience

### What happens:

- Pastor will ask if you understand what baptism means
- You'll share your testimony (optional at some churches)
- You'll go into the water (pool, river, or baptistery)
- Pastor will say a brief prayer
- You'll be fully submerged under water
- You'll come up out of the water
- The congregation will celebrate

### What to expect physically:

- It's cold water (bring a towel)
- It only takes 30 seconds
- You won't drown (pastor has done this thousands of times)
- You'll feel relief, joy, and peace

## After Baptism

**Baptism marks a major milestone.**

### That night:

- Pray and thank God
- Journal about the experience
- Tell someone how you felt
- Celebrate!

### That week:

- Share baptism pictures/video with others

- Tell your story to friends
- Encourage others to get baptized

## PART 6 — DEALING WITH DOUBT

### Doubt is Normal

#### Even strong believers doubt:

- John the Baptist doubted Jesus (Matthew 11:3)
- Thomas doubted the resurrection (John 20:25)
- The disciples doubted on the mountain (Matthew 28:17)
- David cried out in doubt (Psalm 13)

**Doubt doesn't disqualify you. It's part of the journey.**

### Common Doubts and Answers

#### DOUBT 1: "Am I Really Saved?"

**Answer:** If you genuinely believed in Jesus, YES.

##### 1 John 5:13:

*"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."*

Your salvation depends on God's promise, not your feelings.

#### EXERCISE: Assurance Prayer

*"God, I believed in Jesus. I repented. I chose to follow Him. Based on Your promise, I'm saved. I know I have eternal life. Help me stop doubting and start trusting Your Word."*

#### DOUBT 2: "I Don't Feel Different"

**Answer:** Salvation isn't based on feelings.

Some feel dramatic changes. Others don't. Both are saved if they believed.

#### Changes happen gradually:

- **Week 1:** Relief about forgiveness
- **Month 1:** Wanting to read Bible, pray
- **Month 3:** Relationships with non-Christians changing
- **Month 6:** Behavior changing noticeably
- **Year 1:** Significant transformation visible

Give it time.

#### DOUBT 3: "I Still Sin. Maybe I'm Not Really Saved"

**Answer:** Christians still sin. We're forgiven, not perfect.

## 1 John 1:8:

*“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*

**The difference:** You're bothered by sin now. Before, you didn't care. That's growth.

### DOUBT 4: “What if Christianity Isn't True?”

**Answer:** Investigate your doubts honestly.

#### Resources:

- Read apologetics books (*The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel)
- Listen to Christian podcasts
- Talk to mature Christians
- Pray: “God, if You're real, show me”

God welcomes honest questions. He's not threatened by doubt.

## Fighting Doubt Practically

**When doubt hits, do these four things:**

### 1. Read Scripture

**Memorize these verses to quote when doubting:**

- John 3:16 (salvation promise)
- Romans 10:9 (how to be saved)
- 1 John 5:13 (assurance)
- Romans 8:38–39 (nothing separates you)

Quote them aloud when doubt comes.

### 2. Pray Honestly

*“God, I'm doubting right now. Help my unbelief. Remind me why I believed. Strengthen my faith.”*

Don't pretend to have faith you don't have. Be honest with God.

### 3. Talk to a Christian

Don't struggle alone. Call or meet with:

- Your pastor
- A mentor
- A friend in your small group
- An accountability partner

Isolation amplifies doubt. Community defeats it.

### 4. Review Your Decision

**Remember:**

- Why did you believe?
- What convinced you?
- What has God done in your life since?
- What evidence do you have of His work?

Write these down. Review them when doubting.

### When to Seek Professional Help

#### Talk to your pastor if:

- Doubt is persistent and overwhelming
- You're thinking about giving up
- Negative thoughts are constant
- You're struggling with depression

This isn't weakness. Pastors are trained for this. Get help.

## PART 7 — RESISTING TEMPTATION

### Temptation is Universal

#### 1 Corinthians 10:13:

*“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.”*

**Every Christian faces temptation. You're not alone. You're not abnormal.**

### Recognizing Temptation's Pattern

#### James 1:14–15:

*“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”*

#### The pattern:

- **1. Temptation** – You're offered something sinful
- **2. Lust** – You start desiring it
- **3. Sin** – You give in and do it
- **4. Consequences** – You face the fallout

**Key insight:** Stop at stage 1 or 2. Don't let it reach stage 3.

### The Escape Plan

**When tempted, follow these 5 steps:**

#### STEP 1: Recognize You're Tempted

Don't deny it. “I'm being tempted right now. This is real.”

#### STEP 2: Flee

Don't resist in place. RUN.

#### 2 Timothy 2:22:

*“Flee also youthful lusts.”*

#### Examples:

- **Tempted by pornography?** Delete the app. Throw out the magazines. Install accountability software.
- **Tempted by an ex-relationship?** Block their number. Delete their contact. Unfriend on social media.
- **Tempted by old drug friends?** Stop going to those places. Change your routine.

**Radical? Yes. Necessary? Also yes.**

### STEP 3: Quote Scripture

Memorize your weakness area's Scripture.

**Tempted by:**

- **Sexual sin?** 1 Corinthians 6:18 – “Flee fornication”
- **Lying?** Ephesians 4:25 – “Speak truth”
- **Anger?** Ephesians 4:26 – “Be angry and sin not”
- **Worry?** Philippians 4:6 – “Be careful for nothing”
- **Greed?** 1 Timothy 6:10 – “Love of money is root of evil”

**Quote the verse OUT LOUD when tempted.**

### STEP 4: Pray Immediately

*“God, I’m being tempted right now by [specific temptation]. Give me strength to resist. Help me. I need You.”*

God will provide a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13).

### STEP 5: Tell Someone

**Call or text:**

- Your accountability partner
- A trusted Christian friend
- Your mentor
- Your pastor

**Secrecy empowers temptation. Confession disarms it.**

## Accountability Framework

**You need someone you report to about temptations and sins.**

### Finding an Accountability Partner

**Who to ask:**

- Mature Christian of the same gender
- Someone further along in faith than you
- Someone willing to ask hard questions
- Someone who won't judge you

**How to ask:**

*“I’m new to this faith thing and I want to stay strong. Would you be willing to be my accountability partner? I’d like to check in with you weekly and be honest about my struggles.”*

Most mature Christians will say yes.

## Weekly Check-in Template

**Every week, contact your accountability partner:**

*“Hey, how are you doing spiritually? How was your week? Any struggles? What temptations did you face? Did you read the Bible daily? How’s your prayer life? How can I pray for you?”*

Then answer the same questions.

**This is powerful.**

## When You Fail

**And you will.**

**1 John 1:9:**

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

**When you sin:**

- Confess it immediately to God
- Thank Him for forgiveness (you’re forgiven)
- Repent (determine to change)
- Tell your accountability partner
- Get back up and keep fighting

**Don’t wallow in guilt. You’re forgiven. Move forward.**

## PART 8 — SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

### What is a Testimony?

Your testimony is your story of how Jesus changed your life.

Revelation 12:11:

*“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.”*

Your testimony is powerful. It's evidence Jesus is real and changes lives.

### Three-Part Structure (Refined)

#### Part 1: Before Christ (30 seconds – 2 sentences)

**Answer:** What was your life like before Jesus?

**Describe (not preach):**

- Your spiritual condition
- Your emptiness or searching
- Your bondage to sin
- Your hopelessness

**Examples:**

- “I was searching for meaning but felt empty inside.”
- “I was addicted to drugs and couldn't stop.”
- “I tried everything to find happiness but nothing worked.”

#### Part 2: How You Met Christ (1 minute – 4–5 sentences)

**Answer:** How did you come to faith?

**Describe (the story):**

- How you heard the Gospel
- What convinced you
- The prayer/decision moment
- What you understood

**Example:**

*“A friend invited me to church. The pastor explained that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead. I realized I couldn't save myself—I needed Jesus. That night after church, I prayed and asked Jesus to forgive me and save me. He did.”*

#### Part 3: After Christ (30 seconds – 2 sentences)

**Answer:** How has your life changed?

**Describe (the transformation):**

- Specific behavioral changes
- New peace/joy/purpose
- Relationships restored
- New direction

**Examples:**

- “I have peace I never had before. I have purpose and hope.”
- “My family relationships have been restored. I’m clean and sober.”
- “I have joy regardless of circumstances. Jesus changed everything.”

### Writing Your Testimony Now

**EXERCISE: Write Your Testimony Today**

**Part 1: My Life Before Christ** \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2: How I Met Christ** \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 3: My Life After Christ** \_\_\_\_\_

**Now:**

- Read it aloud 5 times
- Time it (should be 2–3 minutes)
- Refine any awkward phrases
- Memorize it

### Tips for Sharing Effectively

**DO:**

- Be specific (name actual changes, not generalities)
- Be brief (2–3 minutes max—respect people’s time)
- Be honest (don’t exaggerate or embellish)
- Point to Jesus (not yourself or your cleverness)
- Include the Gospel (sin, Jesus’ death/resurrection, faith)
- Speak conversationally (like you’re talking to a friend)

**DON’T:**

- Bash your past (no need for gory sin details)

- Use Christian jargon (“washed in the blood,” “born again”—speak plainly)
- Make it about you (make it about Jesus’ impact on you)
- Apologize for believing (be confident and humble)

## PART 9 — SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS: BUILDING DISCIPLINE

### The Non-Negotiables

If you do nothing else, do these four things:

#### 1. Read the Bible Daily

- **Minimum:** 15 minutes
- **When:** Same time each day
- **Where:** Quiet place
- **How:** S.O.A.P. method or simple reading
- **Why:** This is God's food for your soul

#### 2. Pray Daily

- **Minimum:** 10 minutes
- **When:** Morning and night
- **How:** ACTS model
- **Why:** This is your lifeline to God

#### 3. Attend Church Weekly

- **When:** Every Sunday
- **Why:** Community, teaching, accountability
- **Add:** Small group 1–2x per month

#### 4. Tell Someone Your Faith Matters

- **Who:** One Christian friend/mentor
- **How often:** Weekly check-in
- **Why:** Accountability and encouragement

If you do these four things consistently, you WILL grow in faith.

### Daily Spiritual Practices

Your ideal daily rhythm:

#### Morning:

- 5 min prayer (ACTS)
- 15 min Bible reading (S.O.A.P.)
- Set one spiritual goal for the day

#### Throughout Day:

- Pray when stressed
- Quote Scripture when tempted
- Thank God for blessings
- Witness to someone if opportunity

**Evening:**

- 5 min prayer review (confess, thank)
- Journal one thing God taught you
- Prepare for next morning

**Weekly:**

- Sunday church (60–90 min)
- Small group (60–90 min)
- Accountability check-in (15 min)
- Extra prayer/Bible study (30 min)

## PART 10 — YOUR FIRST YEAR: QUARTER BY QUARTER

### Q1: ESTABLISHMENT (Months 1–3)

**GOAL:** Establish basic spiritual practices

**Tasks:**

- Read Bible daily (following reading plan)
- Pray daily (using ACTS)
- Attend church weekly
- Join small group
- Get baptized
- Find accountability partner
- Share testimony with someone

**Success:** You're reading Bible, praying, and attending church regularly

### Q2: STABILIZATION (Months 4–6)

**GOAL:** Make spiritual disciplines automatic habits

**Tasks:**

- Bible reading is feeling like a habit
- Prayer is flowing more naturally
- You're building relationships at church
- Small group is becoming community
- You've shared faith with someone
- You're memorizing Scripture
- You're serving in a church ministry

**Success:** Spiritual disciplines feel less like obligations, more like normal

### Q3: STRENGTHENING (Months 7–9)

**GOAL:** Deepen your knowledge and faith

**Tasks:**

- Read through entire New Testament
- Study one book of the Bible in depth
- Attend a Christian conference or retreat
- Take a discipleship class

- Mentor a newer believer
- Identify your spiritual gifts
- Join another ministry serving opportunity

**Success:** You understand Scripture better and feel more confident in your faith

#### Q4: SERVING (Months 10–12)

**GOAL:** Use your gifts to serve church and others

**Tasks:**

- Lead something (group study, prayer time, etc.)
- Mentor a new believer intentionally
- Share your testimony publicly (church service)
- Serve in a major church initiative
- Evangelize (tell 3+ people about Jesus)
- Build deep relationships with 2–3 church family
- Commit long-term to church and small group

**Success:** You're not just a consumer of church—you're a contributor

## PART 11 — TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON ISSUES

### ISSUE 1: “I’m Not Seeing Change in My Life”

You expected instant transformation. It hasn’t happened.

**Root cause:** Unrealistic expectations about sanctification speed.

**Solution:**

- **Spiritual growth takes time** – You’ve been Christian for weeks/months, not years
- **Change is gradual** – Like physical training, it builds slowly
- **Look back, not down** – You HAVE changed since conversion (just maybe not as much as you expected)
- **Keep obeying** – Continued obedience produces continued growth
- **Lower your self-expectations** – You’re not supposed to be perfect yet

**Reality:** After 1 month, you should see habits changing (Bible reading, prayer). After 3 months, behavior changing. After 1 year, significant character growth.

### ISSUE 2: “I Feel Guilty About My Past”

Shame about your pre-Christian life is haunting you.

**Root cause:** You understand you’ve been forgiven, but don’t feel forgiven.

**Solution:**

- Remind yourself: “God forgave me completely. That’s fact, not feeling.”
- Confess to God: “God, I regret [specific thing]. Thank You for forgiving me.”
- Don’t dwell: When shame pops up, redirect your mind
- Make restitution if possible: Apologize to people you wronged (if safe and appropriate)
- Remember: Your past is gone. You’re new now

**Key verse:** 2 Corinthians 5:17

*“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away.”*

### ISSUE 3: “My Relationships are Changing”

Your non-Christian friends don’t understand your faith. Your relationship is strained.

**Root cause:** You’re changing. They’re not. That creates distance.

**Solution:**

- **This is normal** – Changing values produces changing relationships
- **Pray for them** – Pray for their salvation

- **Share gently** – If opportunity, tell them about Jesus
- **Set boundaries** – If they're pulling you into sin, distance yourself
- **Find Christian friends** – Build relationships with other believers
- **Be patient** – Some non-Christian friends will also convert

**Reality:** Some relationships will fade. New ones will develop. This is part of following Jesus.

**Key verse:** 2 Corinthians 6:14

*“Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers.”*

#### ISSUE 4: “Temptation is Overwhelming”

You're being tempted far more than you expected. You're struggling.

**Root cause:** You underestimated temptation's intensity. You need better strategies.

**Solution:**

- **Confess it** – Tell your accountability partner immediately
- **Flee** – Don't resist in place. Remove yourself from the situation
- **Find accountability** – Check in daily (not just weekly) if necessary
- **Quote Scripture** – Have verses memorized for your weak areas
- **Change your environment** – If certain places tempt you, avoid them
- **Find a mentor** – Get one-on-one guidance from someone further along

**Reality:** Temptation will be strong. You have tools to resist. Use them.

#### ISSUE 5: “I'm Bored Reading the Bible”

The Bible doesn't excite you like you thought it would.

**Root cause:** You might be reading wrong passages, or you need better methods.

**Solution:**

- Are you reading boring passages? (Try the reading plan provided)
- **Use a different method** – Try S.O.A.P., verse mapping, or commentary
- **Use a different translation** – Sometimes a new translation makes it come alive
- **Read with purpose** – Ask God to speak to you specifically
- **Set realistic expectations** – Some passages are complex. Keep reading anyway
- **Pray before reading** – “God, help me understand and apply this”

**Reality:** Consistent Bible reading eventually becomes automatic. Push through the boredom.

#### ISSUE 6: “I'm Discouraged and Depressed”

You're spiraling emotionally. Your faith feels pointless.

**Root cause:** This could be spiritual attack, chemical imbalance, or circumstantial difficulty.

**Solution:**

- **Reach out for help** – Don't suffer alone. Talk to your pastor, mentor, or counselor
- **Keep the disciplines** – Bible reading and prayer especially important now
- **Get professional help if needed** – Depression may require therapy/medication (not weakness)
- **Remind yourself of truth** – Feelings lie. God's Word doesn't
- **Be patient with yourself** – This will pass

**When to see a counselor:**

- Persistent depression lasting 2+ weeks
- Thoughts of harming yourself
- Overwhelming anxiety
- Inability to function
- Any mental health crisis

**Get help immediately. No shame. God provides healing through professionals too.**

## PART 12 — YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

### Finding a Mentor

A mentor is a Christian 3–5 years ahead of you spiritually.

#### What a Mentor Provides:

- **Guidance** – Answers to your questions
- **Modeling** – Shows you what mature faith looks like
- **Accountability** – Asks hard questions
- **Encouragement** – Believes in your growth
- **Correction** – Gently points out spiritual blindness

#### How to Find a Mentor

##### 1. Identify someone at your church who:

- Has strong faith
- Is humble and teachable
- Has time to invest
- Is same gender as you

##### 2. Ask them:

*“I’m new to following Jesus and I’d really like someone to help me grow. Would you be willing to be my mentor? I’d love to meet with you once a month.”*

- Most mature Christians will say yes.
- Meet 1–2 times per month for coffee/lunch
- Be coachable – Take their advice seriously

### Accountability Partnerships

An accountability partner is someone at your level who keeps you honest.

#### What to Share in Accountability:

- Temptations you faced
- Sins you committed
- Bible reading habits
- Prayer life consistency
- Areas you’re struggling
- Victories and breakthroughs

#### Weekly Check-in Questions

- How's your walk with God?
- Did you read the Bible daily?
- Did you pray daily?
- What temptations did you face?
- Did you resist them?
- Any sin to confess?
- What did God teach you this week?
- How can I pray for you?

## Small Groups

**Small groups are where real community happens.**

**What happens in small group:**

- Bible study/teaching
- Discussion and questions
- Prayer for each other
- Social time and fellowship
- Accountability and encouragement
- Real relationships develop

**Why small groups matter:**

- You're known deeply
- You have space to ask real questions
- You get support through difficulties
- You feel less alone
- You find your people

**Join a small group in month 1–2. Stay for years.**

## When to Get Professional Help

**Talk to a therapist/counselor if:**

- You're depressed or anxious constantly
- You have trauma from your past
- You're struggling with addiction
- You have relationship problems
- You're thinking about harming yourself
- Your church community can't address your need

**This is not weakness. Professional help is God's provision too.**

**Resources:**

- Your church likely has counselor recommendations
- Psychology Today has therapist finder
- BibleCounseling.com for Christian therapists
- If suicidal: 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988)

## CONCLUSION — YOU'RE NOT ALONE

### You Have Everything You Need

In this first year, you've been given:

- God's Word (the Bible)
- God's Spirit (inside you)
- God's family (your church)
- God's presence (constantly)
- God's power (to overcome)
- God's promises (eternal life)

You have everything.

### This is a Marathon, Not a Sprint

Growing as a Christian is a lifelong journey.

You will:

- Stumble (and get back up)
- Doubt (and find answers)
- Fail (and be forgiven)
- Struggle (and be strengthened)
- Succeed (and give God glory)

That's normal. That's expected. That's okay.

### Final Encouragement

**Philippians 1:6:**

*"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."*

**God started this. God will finish it.**

**Your job:** Show up, stay obedient, keep growing, trust God.

**He'll do the rest.**

### Resources for Next Steps

On [kylelauriano.com](http://kylelauriano.com):

- 30-Day Bible Reading Plan

- Prayer Journal Template
- How to Find a Good Church
- Understanding Baptism
- Spiritual Gifts Assessment
- How to Share the Gospel
- Common Questions About Christianity
- Spiritual Warfare Guide

**Books to read next:**

- *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren
- *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer
- *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis
- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster

**You can do this.**

**God's got you.**

**Welcome to the greatest adventure of your life.**

*"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. — 2 Timothy 4:7–8 (KJV)"*