meadowlands
BAPTIST CHURCH

FIRST THINGS FIRST
INSTRUCTION FOR NEW BELIEVERS IN CHRIST



Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

—Matthew 16:24

Congratulations in the Lord!

Did you know that for every sinner who confesses their sin and turns from it and believes on the Lord for their salvation is celebrated in heaven? It says in scripture that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance (Luke 15:7). The Lord is also recorded to be One who sings over His people (Zephaniah 3:17) and loves them and will never forsake them. John 10:27-29 tells us about the security of His love for us,

> *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* ***28*** *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ***29*** *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."*

I suppose now you might be looking for instruction now how to grow closer with God and enjoy Him. What do I do now that I am a forgiven and new Christian? How do I grow with God in fellowship and become more faithful? We are now called to walk like Christ and deny ourselves and follow after Him (Matthew 10:38-39; 16:24-27; Philippians 2:1-18; 3:1-21; Colossians 3:1-17; James 4:1-17; 1 Peter 2:21-3:12; 1 John 4:7-21) Here is what I would recommend for you in these early stages of your faith with regards to the most important parts of your Christian faith: prayer, Bible reading, and attending church for both personal growth, community fellowship, and Christ-like service.

Prayer

Spend some time everyday praying privately, which is merely talking to the Lord. It does not have to be with fancy words or repeated phrases but just talk with Him as you would with

anyone else because He hears you. There is no set time during the day or a time limit either. One option is that you can make a list of items you want to pray about on paper or in a journal. You can list things like family and their salvation or growth in the Lord, to understand the word of God as you hear teaching from the church and your bible reading, and pray for growth in the Lord in the ways revealed in scripture such as in Romans 8:1-11; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:1-5:21; Philippians 3:1-4:9; Colossians 3:1-17. Prayer is a part of what it means to have a relationship with the Lord. You can come to Him with all your fears and anxieties, and He will watch out for you (Matthew 6:25-34). You are His child now. He wants to hear from you. Here are some good scriptures to read on how to pray… Matthew 6:5-15, Philippians 4:6-7, James 5:13-16, 1 John 5:14-15.

Reading the Bible

The Bible is the inspired and God-breathed word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The more your read and know your Bible the more you will know your God—who He is, what He has done, what He is capable of and how you ought to live and think in this confusing and sinful world. The Bible is for the whole of your Christian Walk and will be a guide for your entire life (Psalm 119). But where should you start? Obviously, you would want to read all of scripture but for your first walk through I would recommend the following outline to read so that your get a decent well-rounded understanding…

1. Genesis 1-11
    - *Why should I read this?* This is the beginning of everything (marriage, sin, creation etc.). With these chapters understood most of the Bible will make sense.
2. Exodus 20
    - *Why should I read this?* This is the law and commandments of God that He gives to

mankind. These are rules for life and how a person might be able to walk obediently before Him as well as a reminder of just how high God's standard for goodness is and how we tend to fall short of it.

3. Psalms 1-23
    - *Why should I read this?* These are song of praise that have instruction as well as being a comfort for us in the various stages of life such as fear, anxiety, and even anger.
4. The gospel of John
    - *Why should I read this?* This is the story of Jesus' life and accomplishments. It is the good news to the world and reveals how man is made right with God.
5. Romans
    - *Why should I read this?* This book walks through sin, the gospel and the cross, a description on what faith looks like, and the Christian life.
6. Colossians
    - *Why should I read this?* This book is a great letter that summarises quickly many aspects of our faith such as the glory of Christ, warnings against false teaching, the new creature in Christ, and how to serve the Lord in faithfulness in society.
7. Revelation 19-22
    - *Why should I read this?* This book and these chapters particularly look towards our future hope for all who are saved and in Christ. They reveal our hope of Jesus one day coming back and what the future holds for those who persevere and walk by faith in the Lord.

When you read, don't try to race through the passages but go slowly seeking to understand what you read. This is called

meditation, and it will be a blessing to you if you slow down and think deeply upon the word of God (Psalm 1). As you read it, try to read a chapter or one of the section headings in that chapter per day. For example, in my Bible in John chapter 14 has a heading that says," Jesus Comforts His Disciples" for verses 1-6. The next heading is "Oneness with the Father" for the following verses etc. It would be beneficial to get a cheap notebook and write down what you learn from the passage that you are reading. For example, you can write down the heading, "Jesus Comforts His Disciples" and write down:

1. What does this passage tell me *about God?*
2. What does this passage tell me *about mankind (good or bad things)?*
3. Is there a *promise or warning* in this passage?
4. Is there a command for me to *do something?*

In this way you will not just be reading but meditating on what you have already read, and you will be blessed and grow quickly in your knowledge of the Lord.

Attending Church for both personal growth, community fellowship, and Christ-like service.

The two greatest commands in the Bible are to love the Lord with everything that you are and to love your neighbours as you love yourself (Matthew 22:36-40). The Lord therefore desires that you live righteously and serve your family for His glory and love others in His name. God also desires especially that you love His people and in the spirit of unity worship together in corporate prayer, singing, and listening to the word of God (Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians 4:1-5:21; Hebrews 10:23-25). At church is where you can meet other Christians and surround yourself with godly friends so that you can remove the bad influences out of your life that may cause you to be tempted into foolishness and sin (Proverbs 27:9). Jesus is also very much

concerned with how we serve Christ's church family (Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 25:31-46). I do recognize that getting to church could be a challenging situation.

1) If you have ***family that already attends church*** great! Make sure that you go with them and gather with them for worship since everyone is called to do this physically (not online) at a local church.
2) If you ***do not have family who is Christian but who are willing to take you to church***, you will need to try to find a good church yourself first. Because there are so many bad churches out there, the type of church that you are to seek after is one that baptizes believers, participates in the Lord's Supper, and preaches through books of the Bible. You do **NOT** want sermons that are self-help lectures and opinions of man but ones where you learn more about God in the scriptures. Find a pastor who preaches the Bible whether it is a comfortable truth or not. We want to grow in Christ knowing **ALL** of what the Bible tells us not just easy and convenient passages. Sometimes the passage preached will need to be harder sermons that speak on hell, sin, holiness, and repentance. We need a spiritual diet of everything that God says, not just on love, faith, hope, and other "positive" passages.
3) If you ***do not have family who go to church and are unwilling to take you*** then you may need to wait until you are able to drive or go yourself with a friend. If you can't go to church, then you may need to wait until you can drive and let that be a motive for getting your licence! Until then, there are numerous sermons that you can listen to through podcasts, YouTube videos, and other media platforms that will cause you to grow in Christ being a spiritual encouragement to you such as any sermon by John Piper, John McArthur, R.C. Sproul, and Voddie Baucham. Listen to these regularly and at

least weekly for growth until you are able to get in person to a real local church.

These three things are what we call "spiritual disciplines" which means that we must endure with these practices and fight to press into our faith. Try to do these things continuously…

- **Prayer** and **Bible reading**—daily
- **Church attendance** or temporarily sermon listening—weekly.

There will be times when you feel tired but commit to the Lord to persevere and ask the Lord for strength and he will provide it. Continue in your faith and do not give up. As the apostle Paul says, "let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." Galatians 6:9. What shall we reap at the end of our lives? Access to the eternal tree of life (Revelation 2:7), eternal life in the presence of God.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

—Revelation 2:7