

HOPE.
PURPOSE.
PEACE.
LIFE.

FinditHere
YOUR NEW BEGINNING



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PART ONE

Find It Here at the
C R O S S

Find It Here

The boys had the first clue to finding the treasure but, as time passed, the girls moved ahead of them in the search. They seemed closest to finding the treasure.

It was just before the holidays, and family had come to town. There were lots of kids, so enterprising parents organized a treasure hunt. Clues were written on paper and hidden; each clue led to the location of another one. The first to figure out all the clues would find the treasure.

There were moments when the kids thought there was no treasure. They said things like, “These clues don’t make sense” or “They’re just running us in circles; we’re not getting anywhere.” Finally someone found the last clue and located the treasure: 15 gold chocolate coins!

The others were disappointed until they were told treasure was waiting on them too. Each team received new clues and was promised that, if they searched diligently, they would each find a treasure. It would be worth the effort. Off they went with a new determination to find their treasure.

We feel like there is something more.

For many of us, life is like a treasure hunt. We feel there is something more – something better, out there for us somewhere. As we experience more of life, things that once satisfied us no longer do. We want to find that hidden treasure of happiness. We have tried relationships, money, prestige, power, and pleasure. In the end, we feel like the kids: “These clues don’t make sense. They’re just running me in circles; I’m not getting anywhere.”

Life can certainly seem like it is leading nowhere. Your plans don’t work out. You get sick unexpectedly. You thought the person you loved would always be there. Financial struggles certainly were never part of your plan. Yet we still have to live with these difficulties. Often we turn to God to make sense of it all.

There once was a great man, an intellectual giant of his day, who tried all the things mentioned above and was never satisfied – until he turned to God. He made a statement that has been quoted for centuries by philosophers, counselors and theologians. Augustine said of God that “You [God] have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You.” Augustine wanted to know God and came to know Him in a new and better way.

I think most people would like to know God in a new and better way. Perhaps you feel that way. Maybe that is why you are reading this little book. You are looking for more. You are looking for a way to connect with the Creator. Maybe you’re hoping that connecting with God will solve the question of meaning that looms over your life.

God the Creator designed us to be incomplete without Him. The Bible says, “From one man He has made every nation of men to live all over the earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live, so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-27).

In creating us as seekers after Himself, God is prepared to be found. He guaranteed His presence through the cross of Jesus Christ. You can know God and experience His love for you because of the cross. This is the most important thing that can happen to you. This is the beginning of abundant, eternal life, God's life now and forever.

There is one place where the most important things in life can be found. Hope, purpose, peace, and life are all found at the cross. You've heard about the cross of Jesus, but what makes it so great? The simple word "CROSS" can tell us why. The CROSS, like the "X" that marks the location of hidden treasure, says, "Find it here!" Find your treasure at the CROSS, where God loves you and offers you abundant, eternal life. Take a look at this acrostic, "**CROSS**." Perhaps you will find what you really need.

C

The C in CROSS is for Christ

Jesus as God

When thinking about Jesus Christ, we must consider three important things. First, his nature. Jesus was unlike any other man who ever lived. The Bible teaches that Jesus was both human and God. He was the unique God-Man. This brings up two important questions: How do we know Jesus is the Son of God, and if he is the Son of God, what difference does that make? To answer these questions, you should look at four evidences: (1) the claims Jesus made concerning Himself, (2) what others who knew Him said about Him, (3) His resurrection from the dead, and (4) prophecy about the coming messiah that Jesus fulfilled.

Jesus' claims to be God

Jesus claimed to be equal with God. That was why the religious leaders of his day were so willing to crucify Him. When the high priest asked Jesus if He was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus answered, "You have said it" or "That is true" (Matthew 26:64). The Jewish religious leaders then condemned Him for blasphemy.

On an earlier occasion, Jesus claimed to exist before Abraham lived. "Jesus said to them, 'I assure you: Before Abraham was, I am.' At that, they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple complex" (John 8:58-59). Instead of Jesus saying, "I was," He said, "I am"—terminology that was used only in reference to God. It was the same "I am" designation God Himself used in the book of Exodus. "God replied to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.' God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the Israelites: Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation'" (Exodus 3:14-15). When Jesus spoke of Himself this way, the religious leaders recognized it as God's name and started to stone him for claiming to be equal with God.

Jesus also claimed to be one with the Father. Jesus said, "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30). Jesus said that to see Him was to see the Father. "Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you know Me, you will also know My Father. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.' 'Lord,' said Philip, 'show us the Father, and that's enough for us.'

Jesus said that to see Him was to see the Father.

Jesus said to him, 'Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

(John 14:6-9) By Jesus' own words, He claimed to be the only way to God and that to see Him was to see God.

Another claim Jesus made was the ability to forgive sins—something only God can do. The Bible says, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'" (Mark 2:5).

Jesus also allowed his followers to worship him as God. Thomas, one of Jesus' disciples, declared Jesus to be God when he said to Him, "My Lord and My God!" (John 20:28) Later, when Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, his other followers worshipped Him. The Bible says, "The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw Him, they worshiped..." (Matthew 28:16-17). Jesus did not hesitate in allowing His followers to worship Him as God.

What others said about Jesus

Another important consideration for determining the question of Jesus' divinity is what others living at that time thought and said about Him. John the Baptist said Jesus was "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The book of Hebrews declares Jesus is the exact representation of God's being (Hebrews 1:3). In the same vein, Paul wrote that Jesus is the image of the invisible God and that all things are held together by Him (Colossians 1:15-17).

In Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he pointed out that the Old Testament prophet Joel refers to the terrible day of the Lord and that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:20-21). This designation of "Lord" is a direct translation of the Old Testament word for "Lord" that was used in reference to God. There is no doubt Peter is referring to Jesus as the "Lord" (God) in this passage. Paul does the same thing in Romans 10:13, "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The apostles, the early church, and Paul, who at one time persecuted the church for believing Jesus was God, believed in the divinity of Jesus.

Jesus fulfilled ancient prophecy

The deity of Jesus Christ also is seen in the fulfillment of his promise that He would be raised from the dead (Matthew 12:40; Mark 8:31; Luke 24:13-27). Coming back to life after being killed proved that Jesus was not just any man, but the very Son of God that Moses and the Prophets had written about hundreds and even a thousand years before. There were prophecies concerning His birthplace (Micah 5:2); a messenger like Elijah to precede Him (Malachi 3:1); the character of His ministry (Isaiah 42:1-4); His betrayal (Psalm 41:9); His being mocked, scorned, and crucified (Psalm 22); and His resurrection (Psalm 16:10). The completion of these ancient Bible prophecies clearly presents Jesus Christ as God.

Jesus was perfect

The second important thing to consider about Christ is His sinlessness. Jesus had no sin of His own. He was pure and holy. The angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her the nature of the child she was to have. He said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Jesus asked the Jews: "Who among you can convict Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why don't you believe me?" (John 8:46) They could say nothing in reply. The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

It's important to understand and believe that Jesus was sinless. How could Jesus be the Savior if He had sin of His own? Who would pay for His sin? How could He pay for ours if He had sin in His own life? Well, He couldn't. Jesus was tempted, but He never sinned. That is what makes Him the one and only Savior.

Jesus' death

The third idea to consider about Jesus is that He died on the cross. The sinless Son of God died on the cross. The Bible says, "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!" (Romans 5:8) Why did Christ die on the cross? That question is answered in the next letter, 'R.'

R

The R in CROSS is for Reason

The reason Christ died is for sin. The Bible says, “For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God” (1 Peter 3:18a). Jesus came and did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took the punishment for our mistakes so God’s justice could be satisfied and we could still live.

What is sin?

In order for us to fully appreciate the reason why Christ did this, we must have an understanding of the nature of sin. By definition, sin is any failure to conform to God’s moral law in thought, word, deed, or attitude.

We can recognize our words and deeds being sinful much easier than our thoughts and attitudes as being sinful.

We can recognize our words and deeds being sinful much easier than our thoughts and attitudes as being sinful. Stealing, lying, and murder are all visible sins condemned both by people and God. This is because

our acts of sin separate us from one another. When you lie to someone, something in that relationship is forever changed. Trust is broken and, in many cases, the relationship will be destroyed. Lies separate friends and families. They ruin reputations and, in the end, the Bible says, “One who tells lies will not escape” (Proverbs 19:5b).

Perhaps we can recognize sins that are said or done against other people, but sin also must be understood as a word, deed, thought, or attitude that is against God. Outward sins involving other people are sins against God because people belong to Him as His creation. Our inner attitudes and thoughts, however, also can be sinful. God knows the heart. The Bible says, “Man sees what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7b). God sees both the outward deeds and the inner motivation.

Of course, some people see both in themselves, too. Our conscience points this out to us. The Bible says, “ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences testify in support of this, and their competing thoughts either accuse or excuse them” (Romans 2:15). So we know that our words, deeds, attitudes, and thoughts don’t live up even to our own standard.

All people fall short of their own standard. Despite the fact that in every society God’s moral law can be found and sociological evidence suggests that every culture believes virtue is better than vice, people still mess up. While everyone knows the good, everyone admits they have not lived up to the good they know. So our conscience tells us the same thing the Bible tells us about sin: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

God's moral standard is absolute. This standard is based on who God is. It is the law of God found in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). The first four commandments refer to our relationship with God: (1) Have no other gods before God, (2) Have no idols, (3) Don't misuse the name of God, and (4) Remember the Sabbath day. The last six commandments refer to our relationship with others: (5) Honor your father and mother, (6) Do not murder, (7) Do not commit adultery, (8) Do not steal, (9) Do not give false testimony about your neighbor, and (10) Don't covet.

Without this moral law of God put in front of them, some people will not recognize they are sinners. The ultimate purpose for the law, however, was to lead people to faith. The Bible says, "The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Once you realize that you fall short of either God's law or your own conscience—or both—you realize your need for forgiveness. That brings us to the next letter in CROSS.

O

The O in CROSS is for Outcome

The outcome of sin is physical and spiritual death. The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a).

The Bible teaches that sin is a progression that ends with death. “Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full-grown, it gives birth to death” (James 1:15). Sin is a poison to both our bodies and our souls. God created us to live and not die. At the dawn of creation, God called all that He had made “very good” (Genesis 1:31). It’s through sin--our sin--that death entered the world (Romans 5:12).

Sin cuts us off from the life and power of God.

The outcome of sin also is spiritual, or eternal, death. As we noted earlier, sin causes separation in our relationships with other people and with God. Because of this separation,

we cannot experience the kind of life (eternal life) God has in store for us.

Separation leads to isolation. Sin cuts us off from God’s life and power. When Jesus took our sin on the cross, He felt isolation from His Father. In isolation, we are left alone to continue in our sin. Ultimately, isolation cuts us off from answers and hope in both this life and in the next.

The ultimate isolation is experienced when a person dies and leaves this life, only to spend eternity in hell, away from the presence of God. This is the final state of a person in sin. People choose to spend eternity in hell when they refuse the gift of eternal life God offers. To reject God is to choose hell. Hell is all that is not of God. God is life; hell is death. God is peace; hell is torment. God is love; hell is hate. Hell is more than just the absence or opposite of God. Hell is the culmination of all unforgiven sin for all ages, focused in one place for all eternity.

Each time we fall short, we are earning our way to eternal death. Remember, Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death.” Wages are what we earn. Wages are what we deserve. If you were hired to work for one day for \$100, at the end of the day you would be owed \$100. That is what you earned, and that is what you deserve. What you deserve for your sin is death. This is bad news, but the next letter in CROSS has the Good News. You don’t have to get what you deserve.

S

The S in CROSS is for Substitute

God is a just and righteous God. That means God always does what is right—righteousness flows out of His nature. The Bible states: “His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. A faithful God, without prejudice, He is righteous and true” (Deuteronomy 32:4). The Bible also speaks in terms of God being a righteous judge. “Won’t the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” (Genesis 18:25) A judge who does not punish wrongs cannot be considered righteous. God, who is righteous, must punish sin.

However, God also is a loving and merciful God, so He provided a way to demonstrate both His justice and His love in one act: He sent His Son, Jesus, to die in our place. “But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus said, “No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Our sin deserved punishment, but Jesus took it upon Himself. The Bible says, “God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. He presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26). Jesus was our substitute on the cross.

God did this for us while we were still sinners. He did this before there was any sign of our turning to Him. He did this while we were under His judgment and in rebellion against His ways. Jesus paid the sin-debt we could not pay. God then raised Him from the dead to demonstrate that the debt was paid and that Jesus has been made Lord over all.

By his sacrificial death, Jesus satisfied the justice and righteousness of God, but also displayed the love and mercy of God.

This is a very big idea, so let’s try to understand it through a smaller illustration of the same principle. Suppose you receive your credit card bill, and it is so large you can’t pay it. What if it is so big that you couldn’t pay it even if you worked the rest of your life to pay it off? Suppose your creditors take you to court, and the judge finds you guilty and sentences you to prison until the debt is paid. How is the debt going to be paid while you sit in jail?

Then, just when everything seems hopeless, the judge stands up and says he will pay your debt himself. This judge knows all about you. He knows your irresponsible spending habits, but he loves you—even though you do not love him. You accept his offer, he pays, and you go free. Justice is satisfied in the payment, and mercy is demonstrated in the sacrifice of the one who pays the debt. How would you feel about this person who paid your debt?

In a much greater way, this is what Christ did when He paid our debt of sin. He satisfied God’s righteousness and justice of God and demonstrated God’s love and mercy. The

Bible says, "He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus came to fulfill all that was promised in the Jewish sacrificial system. He was the High Priest and the Lamb. He was the final sacrifice to which all other sacrifices were pointing. The Bible says of Jesus, "... Now He has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

This is a gift from God but, like any gift, it must be received in order to be useful. That brings us to the last S in CROSS.

S

The Last S in CROSS is for Salvation

Because Jesus is our substitute, He is the only one who can offer salvation. Salvation includes the forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

Because of sin, we do not deserve forgiveness. Because of our nature, we cannot earn our salvation. But Christ paid for our salvation. To have forgiveness and eternal life, you must repent, believe, and receive. It's like three branches joined together, making one living plant.

To repent, the Bible says, "Repent and turn back, that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19). Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to God. It's changing your view of sin, yourself, and God. When you change your view about what God has done for you, the natural consequence is that the way you live will change. Repentance is like making an about-face and going in the opposite direction. You will turn from sin as you turn to God.

To believe something involves knowledge, agreement, and commitment. This means you need to know who Jesus is and that He, the Son of God, died for you on the cross and then rose again. Second, you must agree it is true. Third, you commit your life to Christ.

Once you believe, you will receive Christ by faith. The Bible says, "...to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). This means you actually ask Jesus Christ to come into your life.

To believe something involves knowledge, agreement and commitment.

As a child of God, you will surrender to the will and ways of God. This surrender will make your life meaningful. It will give you a new and better perspective of God. Jesus said, "If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God..." (John 7:17). You will begin to know Jesus and connect with your Creator.

Perhaps now you understand more fully who Jesus is (Christ) and why he came to earth and died (Reason). You may recognize your mistakes as sin deserving punishment (Outcome) and seek forgiveness and mercy in Christ (Substitute), who saves us from our sin (Salvation.)

Would you like to trust Christ alone for salvation and find the most important thing that could ever happen to you? Why not pray the following prayer of acceptance and commitment to God right now?

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sin and then rose from the dead. I now confess you as Lord and trust you alone for my salvation. According to your Word, I have crossed over from death to life. Thank you for the free gift of eternal life. Amen."

Congratulations! You have made the most important decision of your life. Now that you have received Christ as Savior and Lord, you need to learn more about him, to be like him, and to walk with him. The acrostic "**WALK**" will help you develop the disciplines needed to follow your new Lord, Jesus Christ.

PART TWO

Continue it Here in the
W A L K

Getting Started on the Right Foot

There is more to you than you now realize. The very fact you have opened this small book and are reading this acknowledges that you have made a meaningful connection to God through Jesus Christ and are now beginning a spiritual journey through the Christian life.

You believe in Christ, that He is the Son of God in a way that makes Him fully man and fully God. You believe He lived a sinless life, doing good to all people and teaching the truth He heard from the Heavenly Father.

You believe He then performed his supreme act of service and fulfilled His mission in time and eternity by dying on a cross as a substitute for sin and rising again. You believe this opened the way for us to come to God. Believing all this, however, is only a beginning. What comes next?

Trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord is only the first step in finding out God's purpose and plan for your life. The next steps are about finding more truth, coming to know Jesus better, and changing your habits to begin to live a life that honors the one who died for you.

The Christian life is challenging. There are many spiritual truths to learn and many habits to develop in order to better serve God. This little book will give you a good start in your spiritual walk. The acrostic WALK will help you remember four important spiritual truths and habits that should become a daily part of your life in Christ.

What you will soon discover — and keep on discovering — is that a relationship with God is similar to human relationships and requires time and effort on your part. The more you come seeking God, the more He will reveal himself to you. The more you rely on Jesus, the more He will be there for you.

W

The W in WALK is for Who Needs to Know

Jesus Christ wants you to tell others about the most important thing. If you received a bonus on the job or a special recognition in school, or if someone in your family did something great, you would want to share the news with someone. You might not go tell a complete stranger, but you definitely would tell a friend or someone you cared about. You would tell someone who knew you and would rejoice with you.

With that in mind, it's only natural to share with others what Jesus Christ has done for you. The change in your life should be shared. The Good News you have found in Jesus should be spread from person to person like joyous, infectious laughter.

Who do you know who needs to hear this good news? Begin now to form a habit of becoming a good witness for Christ. That word 'witness' may sound intimidating, but it's really not. To witness simply means to tell others what has happened to you. That's all there is to it. When something wonderful happens, you want to tell others the good news. Telling others will cause you to relive the experience, and you'll be happy all over again. It will inspire other people, who will be happy for you and perhaps want this for themselves.

This is illustrated in the Bible when Jesus called Matthew (also known as Levi) to become His disciple. Matthew invited all his friends over to meet Jesus. He held a reception in honor of Jesus. He wanted the people who were already in his life to know Jesus too. Read what happened:

Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:27-32).

Did you notice what Matthew did? He found true meaning for his life, and he wanted everyone else to know it! He didn't invite strangers to his home for this celebration. He invited the people he worked with, those he spent time with. It doesn't matter if people are rich or poor, the social elite or the outcast, everyone needs to hear about Jesus.

When Jesus told a woman at the Well of Sychar that He had "living water" and that He was the Messiah, she believed Him and ran into town, telling everyone about Him. The Bible says:

Now many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of what the woman said when she testified, "He told me everything I ever did." Therefore, when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed there two days. Many more believed because of what He said. And they told the woman, "We no longer believe

because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world” (John 4: 39-42).

The change that happened to the people of Samaria could happen to the people in your life as well--if you will become a witness.

You may ask, “How do I become a witness?” A very moving story in the Bible tells about Jesus crossing a lake with his disciples to save a demonized man. We don’t know how the man got into that condition, and Jesus didn’t blame him for being that way. What we do know is that the man was powerless to save himself, and no one else could save him either. Jesus crossed the lake to find the man and save his life. Here is the story:

Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes. As soon as He got out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met Him. He lived in the tombs. No one was able to restrain him any more—even with chains— because he often had been bound with shackles and chains, but had snapped off the chains and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. And always, night and day, he was crying out among the tombs and in the mountains and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before Him. And he cried out with a loud voice, “What do You have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You before God, don’t torment me!” For He had told him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” “What is your name?” He asked him. “My name is Legion,” he answered Him, “because we are many.” And he kept begging Him not to send them out of the region. Now a large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. The demons begged Him, “Send us to the pigs, so we may enter them.” And He gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs, and the herd of about 2,000 rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there (Mark 5:1-13).

Because Jesus set him free, the man wanted to go with Jesus. The Bible says, “But He would not let him; instead, He told him, ‘Go back home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you’” (Mark 5:19-20). The great change in this man and his telling of the story (witness), prepared the way for Jesus to be accepted by more and more people.

You may be tempted to think that sharing what God did was easier for this man than for you. I don’t imagine it was any easier for this man to go home and tell his family about Christ than it would be for any of us. Besides that, things worth doing aren’t always easy. God wants you to grow in your faith and one of the best ways to grow spiritually is to become a witness to the work of God in your life.

One of the first people you should tell—or witness to—is someone who would be excited about your decision. Tell someone who will encourage you. Who do you know who would be happy you have trusted Christ? Why not tell them? If they are not close enough for you to see them face to face, then give them a call.

God wants you to grow in your faith and one of the best ways to grow spiritually is to become a witness to the work of God in your life.

Go ahead and write down a person’s name. If he or she is not close enough to visit personally, write down the phone number.

Also put down a time when you will see or call this person. Why not make that today or tomorrow? Don’t wait too long!

- This is the person who will be excited for me that I am now following Christ:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

- I will tell them:

Date: _____

Often, the people who will be most excited for us are already followers of Jesus. It will be a real encouragement for you to tell them, but they are not the only ones who need to hear your story. You also have friends and family who need Jesus Christ in their lives. Think about the people you know who need Jesus. Would you write their names down? Would you pray for God to save them? Would you pray for God to give you an opportunity to share your witness with them?

Who in your life needs to make Christ the most important thing that has ever happened to them?

1. Name: _____ Relationship: _____
2. Name: _____ Relationship: _____
3. Name: _____ Relationship: _____

One helpful way to witness is to invite your friends, family, and acquaintances to attend church with you. You can invite them to a small group Bible study or to a special event at the church that might interest them. Introduce them to other people who are Christians and ask other Christians who are stronger in their faith to help you share with your family and friends.

To witness for Christ also involves confessing Christ before others. Jesus said, ““Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33). We should not be ashamed of Jesus. Are you ashamed of Jesus Christ? Are you willing to claim Him in front of other people?

You can make a profession of faith by letting the pastor of a church know you are a follower of Jesus. This is an important step in your Christian walk. It will hold you accountable to a group of believers who also are trying to follow Christ.

Most churches, at the close of the worship service, offer an opportunity called “the time of invitation.” People are invited to make a profession of faith at that time. You won’t have to make a speech or anything like that, but it may involve walking down an aisle and possibly standing beside the pastor or another minister in front of the people who are there. Often a friend who already is a church member can walk down with you. This moment will be very memorable for you and the friend who is supporting you in your decision. Confessing Christ in front of the church can be intimidating, but remember that everyone who is a member of that church probably did the same thing themselves.

To witness for Christ also means you need to be baptized – washed with water as a symbol of being cleaned from your sin, of dying to your old sinful life and rising to a new life in Christ. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. In this act, Jesus

identified Himself with us. You are baptized to identify yourself with Jesus. Through baptism, you confess to others your faith in Christ.

Jesus commands all believers to be baptized in his name. He said in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Later, the apostle Peter was preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. The people saw their need for salvation. They asked Peter what they needed to do. "'Repent,' Peter said to them, 'and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). Baptism is a sign of a new life in Christ and a first step of obedience to Christ.

Are you willing to follow Jesus' command to be baptized? You may have been baptized before, or christened into a church. If this occurred when you were an infant or a young child, you would not have understood the meaning. That kind of baptism was your parents' pledge to raise you in the Christian faith as they knew it. Your baptism as an adult is your personal pledge to follow Christ.

Will you follow in obedience to Christ and be baptized?

A

The A in WALK is for Assurance of Salvation

Assurance is having confidence that God loves you, that He has chosen you, that He has forgiven you of your sin, that He is changing you from what you were into what you one day will be. It also is the confidence that you will go to heaven when you die. Assurance is freedom from the guilt of sin, relief from judgment, and joy in a relationship with your heavenly Father. Thinking and feeling this way—assured of your salvation—should be a normal part of a Christian’s life. This is your faith.

However, many Christians live under a cloud of doubt concerning their salvation. Some have been taught there is no way to know whether a person will go to heaven until Judgment Day. But the Bible teaches differently. The Bible teaches that where you spend eternity is decided in this life.

In 2 Peter 1:10, God actually commands us to pursue the assurance of our salvation: “Therefore, brothers, make every effort to confirm your calling and election, because if you do these things you will never stumble.” And the clearest of all is 1 John 5:13, “I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” This means it is possible and even normal for Christians to have assurance in their salvation. This is not a prideful thing, because you didn’t do anything to deserve it. Your salvation is a gift of God’s grace.

How can I be assured of my salvation?

You also should understand it is possible for a person who is not a Christian to have a false assurance of salvation. Some people do not doubt their salvation, but should.

Some people are relying on their Christian actions to make them acceptable to Christ, rather than relying on the relationship they develop with Jesus. Jesus, speaking about the Day of Judgment said, “On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name? Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!’” (Matthew 7:22-23) There will be a lot of surprised people in eternity. They will be shocked when they are not accepted. They will be rejected because they never really knew Jesus.

The Pharisees were the most prominent religious group during the time of Jesus. They went to great lengths to keep religious rites and laws. They felt assured of their relationship with God, but what was their assurance based on? It was not based on their heart for God, but on their deeds. People with a false assurance of salvation often talk about their good deeds—or their lack of bad deeds. This is not what Scripture says brings salvation. Assurance of salvation does not rest in our performance.

The question is, “How can I be assured of my salvation?” Look for three evidences in your life.

The first evidence is the commitment you made to God. Acts 3:19 says, "Repent and turn back, that your sins may be wiped out." "Repent" means to have a change of mind. You changed your mind about how you view yourself. You changed your mind about God. You turned from sin and turned to God. Repentance is a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of will. In essence you said, "I do not want my sin any longer or the way I was living. I choose God." This repentance will result in a change of behavior, but it is important not to think your actions accomplish your salvation. The commitment you made was to trust the grace of God alone for salvation. The Bible says, "For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Your salvation is a gift from God, received by trusting in the work of Christ on the cross.

You will behave differently as a believer in Christ, but what you do as a Christian is a sign of your faith, not a requirement for salvation. This faith in Jesus Christ is based on what Jesus did—not on what you do. The Bible says, "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus alone makes us acceptable to God.

The last words of Christ on the cross were, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Then He bowed his head and gave up His spirit. "It is finished" is a translation of one Greek word: *tetelestai*. It means "paid in full." You have nothing else to add to accomplish your salvation.

Assurance is actually giving your life to God and knowing He will take you to heaven because of what Jesus Christ did for you.

Having salvation is not just believing in something, either. The devil believes in God, but the devil will not go to heaven (James 2:19). The devil will be in hell for all eternity. Just believing there is a God will not save anyone. You must trust Jesus on the basis of what He did for you on the cross. That is a saving commitment.

To have salvation is not just thinking or understanding something in your head. It is also about trusting with the heart.

The second evidence of your salvation is the Word of God. You can trust God to keep His promises. The Bible says, "God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes His mind. Does He speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19). The apostle Paul could have assurance of salvation because he knew the character of God. He said, "I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). God is perfect; perfect love, perfect holiness, and perfect justice. He is perfect in keeping His promises. The apostle Paul also writes: "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

The Bible is full of promises for salvation. God promises to save everyone who calls upon Him in faith. In Romans 10:9-10; 13 the Bible says:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. With the heart one believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Eternal life is available for everyone who comes to God through Jesus Christ for salvation.

God gives eternal life in relationship to His Son, Jesus Christ. 1 John 5:11-13 says, “ God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn’t have the Son of God does not have life. I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” According to this passage, if you have the Son of God, what do you have? You have life. You have God’s kind of life. If you don’t have the Son of God, what do you not have? You don’t have life.

The Word of God promises we will not be condemned for our sins. John 5:24 says, “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.” These are the words of Jesus, who Himself is the Word of God. If you hear His word and believe in the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ, you have eternal life. This is the God-kind of life. This is the witness of the Word of God.

The third evidence of the assurance of salvation is the work of God in your life. Jesus never saved anybody that He didn’t also change. An evidence that salvation has come into your life is the change taking place. The first thing that happens is that you have new desires in your life. You may have been religious before and in church all the time, or you may have run from church, but now you have an inner desire for the things of God that you didn’t have before. You want to pray. You want to read the Bible. You want to be around other believers. You have a desire to do the will of God. What happened? God has made you into a new person, a new creation. The Bible says, “ if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

You not only have a new desire because you are a new creation, but new desires translate into new behaviors.

The Bible says, “For we are His creation—created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). The

most powerful passage in the Bible expressing the truth about new behavior is 1 John 2:4-6: “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: the one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked.” It is not that you have to do these things, but you now want to do them.

Because of this change, you are bothered in your heart when you sin. Perhaps you are troubled by sins that never bothered you before. This is part of God’s work in your life. The Spirit of God, who lives in you, is telling you, “You are a child of God.” The Bible says, “The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16).

Now you have three kinds of assurances of your salvation: the evidence of the commitment you made to God, the evidence of the Word of God, and the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in your life.

Have you turned from sin and turned to Christ? Do you believe God’s Word? Is there evidence of change and growth in your life?

Two things can cause you to doubt your salvation. The first is the presence of sin in your life. Is it possible that your relationship with God is hindered because of sin? If this is true, you should turn away from sin and ask God's forgiveness. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). God will always forgive when you try to view sin the way God does, turn from it, and ask for His forgiveness. Second, God may be revealing to you that you have never fully trusted Christ. If that is happening to you, you need to trust Christ now. This is not something you have to take a course on, or get a diploma in, or join a group of some kind. I am talking about your relationship with your Creator and making him fully your Savior and Lord. I am talking about you not holding anything back. I am talking about having all of your past--no matter what it was or how bad it has been--being totally removed and forgotten, cast away as far as the east is from the west, buried as deep as the depths of the deepest seas.

This is your chance for a new and fresh start. Whether you now realize you need to fully trust Christ for your salvation or are just not sure of your salvation, you need to make that right with God. Below is a prayer you can use as a guide to help you to tell God you now trust him for salvation because of what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross.

Prayer: "Dear God, I confess to you that I have not trusted in you alone for my salvation. Today, I confess and believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for all my sin and then rose from the dead. I now confess you as Lord and trust you alone for my salvation. According to the holy commitment I am making, your Holy Word that promises it, and the Holy Spirit that I invite into my life to change me, I receive you by faith. Jesus, I thank you for the free gift of eternal life. Amen."

L

The L in WALK is for Learn the Bible

The Bible is the most important book in your life because it is the very Word of God. "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The phrase "inspired by God" means that Scripture came from the heart and mind of God. The Bible is your source of instruction for a successful life. As you live according to its instructions, you will find abundant blessing. When you live contrary to what the Bible says, you will lose blessings God would otherwise have given you. To be blessed, you must make it your aim to thoroughly know the Word of God. This is a lifelong goal, but you must begin somewhere.

The Bible is actually made up of 66 books that are divided into two sections. The first section of 39 books is called the Old Testament. They span from creation and mankind's first sin to God's promise of a Savior who would deliver us from our sins. The second section, called the New Testament, is made up of 27 books. It begins with the fulfillment of the first section's promise of a coming Savior. This Savior is Jesus Christ.

The New Testament section begins with four accounts called "Gospels," which describe the life and ministry of Jesus. The rest of the New Testament gives us a blueprint for how we are to live our lives in light of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

The best place for most new believers to start reading the Bible is the Gospel of John. You can find John in a Bible by looking at the table of contents, which will be divided into two sections in most Bibles. The Gospel of John will be in the New Testament section. John is the fourth book in the New Testament. Some Bibles refer to it as the Gospel of St. John. You will notice that the Gospel of John is divided into 21 chapters. In each chapter, small numbers separate sentences and phrases. These numbers are called "verses." The first sentence in the Gospel of John is designated as "John 1:1." The word "John" refers to the Gospel of John. The first "1" refers to the chapter and the second "1," after the colon, refers to the verse. The whole Bible is divided this way so a person can find a passage or single sentence by looking up the book and the numbers.

It is a good idea to read one chapter a day and make notes on what the chapter says to you. The easiest way to do this is to sit down with a Bible, pen, and notepad, asking God to speak to you as you read. Then read each paragraph or section of the chapter with these questions in mind:

What does it say?

What does it mean?

Is there a truth for me to learn?

How can I apply this to my life?

Make notes on the notepad as you read. Write down any questions that come up. You can take these questions to a Christian friend or pastor for answers.

There are lots of different kinds of Bibles. They all say the same thing, but some of them are phrased in a different way and some have extra helps written by Christian scholars, pastors, and teachers. These features will help you understand what you are reading. The best way to find out which kind of Bible is best for you is to talk to a pastor or mature Christian friend who is familiar with the different kinds of Bibles.

If you do not constantly take in God's Word, your faith will become weak. God's Word is to your soul what good food is to your body. You should remember, however, that a baby doesn't begin by eating full-course dinners. Don't become discouraged if it takes a little while for you to get as much out of your time in God's Word as you would like. You need to study the Word every day. The best time is in the morning before you leave home. This way, you are better prepared for the day because you have spent time listening to what God has to say to you.

What time will you need to get up in the morning to spend time reading a chapter in God's Word? _____. Will you do it every day?

K

The K in WALK is for Kneel in Prayer

Jesus was a praying person. The Bible says in Mark 1:35: “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He got up, went out, and made His way to a deserted place. And He was praying there.” If Jesus, the Son of God, made it a practice to start the day in prayer to God the Father, shouldn’t you do the same? As your prayer life goes, so goes your relationship with God. This important truth has been affirmed and proven through the centuries. It is impossible to have a powerful relationship with God without spending significant time and energy in prayer.

You may have a desire to pray but are not sure how to begin. Prayer has been described as talking to God. It is that—and much more. Prayer is discovering God’s heart and praying for what God desires. God desires for you to know Him and love Him. He already loves you. His love will not be complete until you realize His purposes and His love for you. The regular practice of prayer, combined with consistent Bible study, will direct you in God’s purpose for your life.

By reading and studying God’s Word, you will learn what God desires. One way to guarantee answers to prayer is to pray the Word of God back to God. The Psalms in the Old Testament are heartfelt cries to God. Reading and praying the Psalms will help you in your prayer life. The Psalms are ancient songs in which the writers struggled with sickness, betrayal, disappointment, and other problems just like the ones we struggle with today.

You also can learn to pray the way Jesus taught His disciples. “He was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). Jesus then instructed them how to pray a model prayer. It is commonly known as “The Lord’s Prayer,” but it was a prayer that we as children of God are to pray and use as a model for prayer:

“Therefore, you should pray like this:
Our Father in heaven,
Your name be honored as holy.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever.” (Matthew 6:9-13)

The prayer is divided into two sections. The first section instructs us to pray for God's glory. In this section, there are three petitions, or requests. The second section instructs us to pray for our needs. In that section, there are four petitions, or requests.

PRAYING FOR GOD'S GLORY TO BE SEEN (Matthew 6:9-10)

Prayer Petition #1 "Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy,"
This is where you praise God for who He is and what He has done for you.

Prayer Petition #2 "Your kingdom come,"
This is where you pray for God to align your life to His kingdom purposes.

Prayer Petition #3 "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
This is where you pray for knowledge, wisdom and empowerment to do God's will in your life.

PRAYING FOR YOUR NEEDS TO BE MET (Matthew 6:11-13)

Prayer Petition #4 "Give us today our daily bread."
This is where you consider the needs you have today and ask God to meet them as you walk in faith.

Prayer Petition #5 "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."
This is where you forgive and release people who have harmed you. You forgive them, and then God forgives you. Forgiveness is a choice you make that will benefit you.

Prayer Petition #6 "Do not bring us into temptation,"
This is where you confess your weaknesses to God and ask for strength and wisdom. You should ask God to show you the way of escape that He provides (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Prayer Petition #7 "Deliver us from the evil one."
This is where you ask God for protection from the enemy's deception and control. Pray for the armor of God to protect you, according to Ephesians 6:10-18.

You can pray the Lord's Prayer just the way it is written, but the major purpose of the prayer is to give you an outline of how to pray. It shows what should be included in your prayers so you honor God as you make your requests. God wants you to talk to Him from your heart. This prayer is a guide. Do not let it keep you from revealing your personal wishes and desires to God. The Lord's Prayer is to be an aid, not a hindrance, to heartfelt prayer.

Many people use the **ACTS** acrostic to help them remember how to pray.

A is for Adoration. Adoration is a time to adore God and give Him glory. This is much like the first petition in the Lord's Prayer.

C is for Confession. Confession is when you agree with God concerning sin in your life and ask for His forgiveness. This part of the prayer also is when you tell God you are forgiving others, like the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer.

T is for Thanksgiving. This is when you thank your Heavenly Father for the blessings in your life. This mirrors the first petition of the Lord's Prayer.

S is for Supplication. This is much like the whole second section of the Lord's Prayer. Supplication means "to ask." Supplication includes intercession and petition. Intercession is prayer offered for other people and their needs. Petition is prayer offered for yourself and your needs. Both these kinds of prayers are important and should be practiced.

You should personally spend time in prayer and include all these elements in your prayers. Many people have found it helpful to write their prayers in a journal. You also will have personal prayer needs you want other Christians to be praying about for you. Journaling your prayers will help you remember the requests so you can look back at a later date and see how God answered them. The best time to pray using the ACTS method is after you have finished your Bible study. Bible reading and Bible study prepare you for prayer.

These four disciplines of **W**itnessing to others, having an **A**ssurance of salvation, **L**earning the Bible, and **K**neeling in prayer should be an active part of your daily life as a Christian. These disciplines will help you progress in your walk with God. As you begin to **WALK**, get involved in a Sunday school or small group at a church. Your spiritual journey will be an adventure of discovery. It is better than finding buried treasure because you will have found the One who makes all the treasure! You will find it here when you **WALK** with Him each day.

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