



# NOW WHAT?

Living Out Your Christian Faith

WOODROW KROLL



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# NOW WHAT?

## Living Out Your Christian Faith

OK. You've become a Christian. You've told Jesus that you want to receive Him into your life and have everything you've ever done wrong forgiven. But you might be wondering, *So, what am I supposed to do now?*

That's a great question. And there are some specific steps you can follow that will help you find purpose and fulfillment in your life. As you put these steps into action, your life will change, and your new relationship with God will begin to grow.

Deciding to follow Jesus is a very big and important step. But keep walking. Your exciting journey as a Christian is just beginning.

## Know What You Believe

Before you go on much further, it's important to understand what it means to be a Christian.

God's plan is very simple: If you want to live forever, believe in Jesus. That's it. Getting to heaven is not about going to church, following a list of rules and regulations or weighing your good deeds against your bad. Believe it or not, if you want to live forever, God only requires one thing from you—faith in His Son, Jesus.

For some reason, though, a lot of people throughout history have tried to complicate the issue.

Take Saul, for example—a guy whose story you can find in the New Testament.

Before he believed in Jesus, Saul tried to please God by being a religious person. He tried to "follow all the rules," live a moral life, do whatever he could so that the "good" things he had done would outweigh the bad.

But one day, while traveling from Jerusalem to the city of Damascus, Saul heard Jesus' voice. That's when God showed him the truth—no matter how good and "religious" Saul had been, he had still broken God's law, as we all have. That's what the Bible calls sin, and sin is what separates us from God. The consequences of sin is eternal death, but the gift of God through His Son, Jesus, is eternal life (Romans 6:23).

When Saul put his faith in Jesus instead of religion to save him from his sin, his life was changed. Being religious was not his goal anymore—knowing Jesus was. Saul dedicated his life to following Christ and telling others about Him. Eventually God changed Saul's name to Paul, and Paul went on to write much of what we now know as the New Testament.

After Paul believed in Jesus, he studied God's Word, thought about his own personal experience and reached the conclusion that a man can only get right with God by faith alone, not by following a list of rules or doing good things (Romans 3:28).

Believing in Jesus is the only thing that will get us into heaven. No matter how we've lived, it's what we do with Jesus before we die that makes all the difference.

While Jesus was hanging on the cross, a thief hung beside Him on another cross. This man turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). No one could have spoken those words without real faith. Jesus responded, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (v. 43).

That thief had no opportunity to be baptized. There was no time to join a church, no chance to repay those he'd stolen from. He was dying. All he had time to do was trust what Jesus Christ was doing at the cross to pay for his sin. When he did, his faith saved him—not his religion, his deeds or any ritual. Faith was the key.

Like him, all *you* need to do is trust Jesus in order to be with Him for eternity.

But this faith must be yours alone. It must be personal. You don't get to heaven because your parents believe in Jesus. Going to heaven isn't gained through your priest, your pastor or your rabbi. In the end, where you'll spend eternity is a matter that's settled between you and God.

Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Notice the use of the personal pronouns—*you* and *yourselves*. Faith is personal.

Once you have taken this step of faith, you are a part of God's "family." You're His, and nobody can change that.

Here is Jesus' promise to you: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:27–29).

Have you ever told God you're sorry for sinning against Him? Have you ever told Him you believe that what Jesus did at the cross is all God demands to pay the penalty for your sin? If you have, you've done the right thing, the only thing, that allows you to be forgiven and to have a relationship with God. You couldn't be in a better position. You are a Christian, and you have taken the first step to knowing God.

So, now what? What should you do next as a new Christian? Here's what the Bible says.

## Tell Someone

After you've become a Christian, it's important to tell someone about it.

When Andrew, a man who later became one of Jesus' disciples, met Jesus, that's what he did. John 1:41 says, "He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ)."

The story of Andrew's encounter with Jesus was not very long and not very detailed. Andrew was a simple, uneducated fisherman. He didn't use big words or quote a lot of Scripture. He simply told his brother what he had found.

You don't have to have all the answers or use all the right words when you tell someone you've become a Christian. In fact, it's often better if you don't, especially if you're talking to someone who isn't a Christian. Talk about your faith in your own words—tell your story. Don't worry about all the details. Just tell someone that you came to realize you sinned against God, but in His great love for you He has made Jesus real to you. Talk about how your life is different now, or how God helped you to understand that the Bible is true.

Sharing your new faith in Christ with others is a good idea for many reasons. It will help define what

you believe; you'll be able to separate the questions you have from what you know. It will help you continue to understand what has happened—what it means to "become a Christian." And it will bring your friends face-to-face with their need for a Savior and God's love for them.

When you talk to people about your new faith, you will probably be very excited about it. It's a pretty cool thing to understand that God is personal, that He wants to have a relationship with you! Just remember to be patient with the people in your life who don't yet understand that.

As badly as you want them to know Jesus, too, only God can change their hearts. Don't argue or push. Just share your story, and pray for them. And love them. Let them see the positive difference in your life, and they'll want to know how that happened. Just share your story.

## Spend Time Alone with God

Getting to know God doesn't just happen. Like any other relationship in your life, knowing God will require some time and effort. Building a relationship with God means that you take time to be alone with Him—time to read your Bible and to pray.

Life can get really busy. Lots of people want your time and attention—your kids, your spouse, your friends, maybe your boss or your employees. Guess what—God wants your time and attention too. He

loves you and is eager to connect with you. He looks forward to spending time with you.

God also wants you to know Him. The Bible is God sharing what's on His mind with you. It's what He wants you to know and to do. God provided His Son, Jesus, so that you can connect with Him. He also provided a way for you to know Him. The Bible gives us a glimpse of who God is, what good things God has in store for us and how He wants us to live to get the most out of those good things.

God won't force you to live life according to a certain "religion." His goal is to foster an intimate relationship with you. His hope is that, as you spend time with Him, you will want to be like Him and live a life that honors Him. God's Word—the Bible—is more than just rules and commandments or Sunday school stories. It is God speaking to you, and it has the power to change your life.

A lot of people own a Bible, but they never read it. Some view it as just not relevant to life in the 21st century. But after you become a Christian, the words in the pages of your Bible will take on a new meaning. You'll begin to learn things you never dreamed possible before. You'll gain insights you had never seen in the Bible previously. You'll find your Bible as meaningful and up-to-date as this morning's newscast.

It doesn't matter when you choose to spend time with God, but it is helpful if you set aside a specific time of the day when you're not easily distracted. Be

consistent. As you spend time with God on a daily basis, you'll see your Christian life begin to grow.

Once you've found a time, you need to know how to spend it. Here are six suggestions that can make your time with God and His Word more meaningful.

1. **Start with prayer.** Ask God to prepare you to meet with Him. If there is something in your life that's causing you to feel uncomfortable with God, confess it. Let Him forgive you so that nothing will hurt your relationship. Sin can break our "connection" with God. Confession reconnects us with Him.
2. **Read your Bible.** It's up to you how much you want to read—you can start with a few verses, or you can read a chapter or two of a specific book. If you are not very familiar with the Bible, you might want to start with the New Testament. The Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which give a record of Jesus' life, are a good place to begin. You could also start reading in Genesis or the Book of Psalms. Basically, you just need to start reading.
3. **After you have read a passage, think about it for a while.** Ask yourself what it means. What is God trying to communicate to you? Is there anything He wants you to do? Anything He wants you to change? Even though you may not understand everything in the Bible, you can act on what you do understand. God doesn't want

you just to know the Bible—He wants the Bible to change your life.

4. **Write down questions about the passage as you read.** It's good to write down the things you learn and the questions you have. Journaling is a great way to record what God is teaching you. Later, you can find answers to your questions as you read more. You can also get help from someone who's studied the Bible more than you have or even from a Bible commentary, a book that helps to explain and interpret Scripture.
5. **Read the passage again.** Reading it the second time usually helps you see things you didn't notice the first time. This is a great way to learn on your own. The Holy Spirit will help you understand God's Word as you spend time in it (John 14:26).
6. **Finally, pray again.** Thank God for sending His Son to die for you. Thank Him for giving you His Word because without it you would have no answers to life's big questions. Thank Him for teaching you from the passage you just read.

Many new Christians are excited to spend time with God at first, but eventually life gets in the way, and it's easy to let other activities and responsibilities crowd out your time with God. Don't let that happen to you.

Consistent time with God is important. The person who just "samples" God's Word never acquires much

of a taste for it. Think of God's Word as you would food. You wouldn't typically eat one meal a week! God has wired us so that we need food regularly to keep our bodies healthy and to keep our energy up. God's Word is like "spiritual food." We need to take it in daily in order to be spiritually healthy.

## Pray

The best way to get to know a new friend is to spend time with him or her, to talk with them. The same is true in your relationship with God. God looks forward to spending time with you, to having regular conversations with you. That's what prayer is all about—simply talking to God.

God loves to have intimate and honest conversation with us any time of the day or night about anything at all. Prayer is especially good when you're spending time each day reading the Bible and thinking about the same things that are on God's mind.

When should you talk to God? There's no wrong time. You can pray whenever you want to. But having a specific time to pray is as important as having a specific time to read His Word. When you pray, you talk to God. When you read His Word, He talks to you.

Psalm 55:17 says, "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray." That's a good pattern, but not a magical formula. God wants to hear from you at any time. However, if you're not really in the habit of praying, then remembering to pray at these times might be a good place to start. And you can talk to



God about anything. You can tell God how much you love Him, talk about the day you just had, thank Him for being with you, confess your fears and failures to Him. God is interested in even the smallest details of your life.

Your prayer doesn't need to be eloquent or long—remember, you are talking to a Friend who loves you deeply. He knows you and wants your honest thoughts. A sincere prayer that uses only a few words is better than a lengthy, insincere prayer.

And don't be concerned if you're not a polished "pray-er." God prefers sincerity to eloquence. If you can't pray as you want, pray as you can. God knows your heart; He knows what you mean.

The great thing about prayer is that it's not something you have to figure out alone—Jesus and the Holy Spirit have promised to help you as you pray. So, just jump in and let Him help.

When you have sinned and need to talk to God about it, God's Son, Jesus, is there to help you. "And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

And when you don't know what to say, God's Holy Spirit helps you. "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:26).

You can pray to God about anything and know that He will hear you and answer in your best interests. Just remember that prayer isn't *all* about you and your desires. It's not a spiritual (or physical) shopping list. It's about having a conversation with your Creator—the One who knows you better than anyone else. He may not always agree with you on what you think is best. He may even leave you in difficult circumstances to help you grow in your faith.

No matter how God answers your prayer, you can know that His goal is to make you more like Jesus. God will always do what He knows is best for you.

## Make Christian Friends

After you become a Christian, you'll probably want to find some other people who are also growing in their relationship with God. It's important to find people who share the same outlook on life, the same values and priorities as you and who can encourage you in your new faith. Christian friends will be able to understand the highs and lows of what it means to "walk with God."

This doesn't mean that you should abandon your old friends. In fact, it's important for you to maintain those friendships—you may be the only way they get a glimpse of Jesus. Some of your old friends might struggle with the changes they see in your life, but you can still love and encourage them toward a relationship with God.

But having Christian friends can help you to stay on track with your commitment to look at life from God's perspective. They can help you learn how to grow in knowing God and building a life that honors Him. God created us to be interdependent—that is, to need each other, to rely on each other through both the good and the bad times.

The ancient philosopher Aristotle said that a friend is a single soul dwelling in two bodies. But Christian friendship goes deeper than that. Two Christian friends have the added advantage of the same Spirit residing in each of them—the Holy Spirit. “And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:24). The apostle Paul mentions the “fellowship of the Spirit” (Philippians 2:1). He also mentions that we are of one Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Christian friends can be a huge support system for you on your journey to know Jesus. They can share their spiritual wisdom with you. The next best thing to being wise yourself is having a circle of friends who are wise. Ask them to help you understand what you need to know.

They can also help you in many other ways. They can tell you where to go for answers to your questions. They can help you in your Bible study. They can assist you in locating a church where you can worship and grow in your faith.

Making Christian friends is an important step for a new Christian. But what if you don't know any Christians? Keep reading for some suggestions.

## Find a Church

Finding a church where you can learn more about the Bible and your new relationship with Jesus is important. You may want to look for a Bible study or a small group to join. You may want to ask about volunteer opportunities in the church. The faster you get “plugged in” to a church, the better. Not only will this help you make Christian friends, but it will help you grow in your faith.

Why is it so important to become part of a church? There are many reasons. One is to worship God, to honor Him and His Word. The Bible says we should make it a priority to get together with other Christians (Hebrews 10:25). The church in the first century, according to the Book of Acts, met together constantly. They praised God, they worshiped Him and they learned about Him together.

A church exists for the dual purpose of bringing Christians together to help them grow and also sending them out to tell others about Jesus.

When we gather together in a church with other Christians, God shows up and draws us to Him through the preaching of the Word, through teaching and through our worship. While we are in the church, our spiritual batteries are “recharged.” As He changes us, we can then go and be an example of God's love to people outside the church.

Christians make up Christ's church (Matthew 16:18). He is the Head of the church (Colossians 1:18). The

church is His Body (Ephesians 1:22–23). Members of the Body of Christ aren't perfect, but they are forgiven, and that's important to remember.

Look for a church where the Bible is treated as God's Word—His authoritative Word. Find a place where people express a loving concern for those who don't know Christ and where they worship God with deep respect.

Avoid a church where you feel like a spectator at an event rather than a member of the family. I wouldn't want to be a part of a church where you don't need a Bible during the whole service, where you never hear the name of Jesus Christ and where there is no concern for those who don't know Him.

## Be Baptized

There are some people who believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. But the Bible clearly teaches that while baptism is necessary for obedience, it is not a requirement for salvation. True, the apostle Peter did say, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). But the context of this verse does not link baptism with personal salvation. Besides, again and again faith is stated as the requirement for salvation, with no mention of baptism. (See John 3:16–18, 5:24; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9–13.)

If baptism doesn't wash away sins, what good is it? Why is it one of the things you should do as a new Christian? Here are three reasons:

1. **Water baptism identifies your desire to obey Christ** (Matthew 28:19–20). If you know that He wants you to be baptized and you refuse, you are being disobedient to your Savior, the One who died for you.

2. **Water baptism identifies your desire to be joined to Christ** (Romans 6:1–4). Through the symbolism of water baptism, you can show others a good visual picture of what it means to become a Christian. Being baptized shows that when Christ died, we died. When He was buried, we were buried. And when He rose from the dead, we rose from the dead—to a new life and a new purpose.

3. **Water baptism indicates your desire to follow Christ** (Romans 6:4). It symbolizes your final break with your old life, with the past and its sin. And although you will continue to sin, being baptized tells the world you are headed in a new direction, you are taking your first steps on a new road.

Getting baptized means following Jesus' example (Matthew 3:16–17). It means telling the world you're under new management (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). It means following Jesus and giving up the way you used to live (2 Corinthians 5:17). Baptism is a way of telling everyone, "I'm a new person, a new creation in

Christ. My old life is gone; all things in my life have become new. I'm off to a brand-new start."

Baptism is going public for God. It's telling the world that you've decided to follow Jesus.

## Learn to Give

Learning to give is one of the first lessons God teaches new Christians. And for good reason—giving is important to God. In fact, one-sixth of the Books of Matthew, Mark and Luke and 12 of the 38 parables that Jesus told have to do with money.

There are three reasons why God places so much emphasis on learning to give.

1. **Learning to give is important because God wants us to be like Him.** God said, "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 20:7). Since God is a giver by nature, He wants you to learn to be a giver as well. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Giving glorifies God because it makes you more like God.
2. **Giving is a principle found throughout the Bible.** Giving is to be regular (1 Corinthians 16:1–2); it's to be in relation to your ability to give (1 Corinthians 16:2); it's to be

sacrificial (Mark 12:43–44); and it's to be spontaneous (Acts 2:44–45). From the beginning, it's important to learn the principles found in the Bible about giving; they can help you figure out how and what to give.

3. **Learning to give is important because it's a practical way you can express how we feel about God.** Heart and hand go together. When your heart is filled with praise to God, your hand will express that praise by giving. Who is more deserving of our thanks than God? He loved you; He sent His Son to die for you. Now you are taking steps to become more like Jesus, and one of those steps is learning to give.

God loves a giver—one who has learned to give thankfully and with joy (2 Corinthians 9:7). Each week set aside some of your time for God, by spending time alone with Him and by serving Him in your church. And each week set aside some of your income for God. Give it where you are blessed—both to your church and to other ministries that have helped you.

Whatever you do, get into the habit of giving back to God a portion of what He has generously given to you. Giving is one of the joys of being a Christian, and it's an important step on your journey to become more like Jesus.

## Memorize God's Word

Memorizing God's Word is a privilege, not a duty. But if you need a good reason to do it, here are three:

1. **Memorizing God's Word honors Him.** Read Psalm 119, and notice the honor the writer heaps on God and His Word:

"Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven" (v. 89).

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (v. 105).

"Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it" (v. 140).

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure" (v. 162).

The reason the writer values God's Word so much is that he values God. God's Word is a reflection of Himself. It is a revelation of His mind. Memorizing Scripture is sometimes called hiding God's Word in your heart. When you do that, you are also hiding God there.

Remember, God wrote only one Book, and you honor Him when you show respect for that Book by hiding it in your heart. "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

2. **Knowing God's Word helps you make good choices.** The psalmist said it this way: "Your word

I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11). When you are tempted to sin, you need a strong defense. God has provided that defense in His Word. If you have memorized part of God's Word, you will be ready to defend yourself against Satan. When he makes sin look attractive—when he tempts you—you will need a "weapon." You can defend yourself with God's Word.

3. **Memorizing verses in the Bible helps you answer those who challenge your faith in Christ.** Not everyone may be happy that you have become a Christian. Some of your old friends may be confused and upset by the changes in you. If they come to you with questions, if they make fun of your faith, if they challenge your belief in Jesus, you will be prepared to answer them if you have memorized God's Word.

The apostle Peter gave us great advice in 1 Peter 3:15. He said, "Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Since you never know when your faith might be challenged, it's a good idea to prepare in advance. Memorizing God's Word consistently will help prepare you.

## Find an Accountability Friend

help keep yourself on the right track is to find another Christian who will be your accountability friend.

An accountability friend is a mature Christian who agrees to help you grow and mature in your new faith in Christ. It is someone who agrees to hold you accountable, someone who will help you carry through on what you determine to do.

If you tell your accountability friend that you are going to spend time with God every morning for half an hour, he or she may call you later in the day and ask if you did what you said. An accountability friend makes sure you do all that you told God you would do.

But the street goes both ways. Frequently two people will be accountability friends for each other. They will encourage one another and support the other when one is struggling. And if one should fall, the other will help him up.

There is a striking image of this in Ecclesiastes 4:9–10: “Two are better than one. ...For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.”

This principle works not only in the physical realm but also when you’re struggling spiritually. With an accountability friend, you know that someone is there for you when you stumble, someone who can keep you from falling. For example, if your time alone with God somehow gets bumped from your schedule, an accountability friend can help you get back on track.

An ancient proverb from the Near East says, “A friend is one who warns you.” But an accountability

friend, a true friend, never stops with a warning. He will also pray with you, encourage you and guide you back on the right track. That’s what accountability friends are for.

Friends don’t just criticize, they help. And a true friend doesn’t just sympathize with your weakness; he helps you summon your strength. When you and another Christian make a commitment to be accountable to each other, you’ll both bring out the best in each other.

## A Final Word

When you decide to follow Jesus Christ, it’s important to get off to a good start. Now that you have new life, God wants you to succeed in it, to develop a relationship with Him that will give your life new meaning, purpose and direction. It would be a shame for a tiny baby to remain small all of his life—think about all he would miss! It would be too bad for you, as well, to come to the starting point of a new life, but never grow spiritually.

The steps we’ve outlined in this booklet for a new Christian aren’t some magical formula. But they are taken from the Bible, and they have been successfully practiced by mature Christians for generations.

If you follow them, you’ll find the journey to know God to be both challenging and rewarding. But more than that, your first steps will not be your last. They will be, in fact, just the beginning of an eternity of discovering your Creator and an adventure like no other.



In the meantime, if you have questions about being a Christian or if you'd like to know how to grow more in your faith, we'd like to help.

Just contact us at Back to the Bible by calling 1-800-759-6655, or send an e-mail to [info@backtothebible.org](mailto:info@backtothebible.org).

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**It's an exciting journey you're on. Enjoy the ride.**



## So, what's next?

If you've recently become a Christian, you may be asking, "What do I do next? How do I develop this relationship with Christ?" This booklet presents several practical steps to growing closer with your Lord and Savior.

Receiving Christ into your life is only the first step in what will be an exciting journey, and this guide will help steer your first steps. With practical suggestions for moving forward in living out your faith, you'll find the foundation you need for building a solid relationship with Christ Jesus.

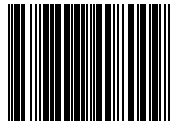
**W**oodrow Kröll's speaking, writing and radio ministries have clearly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ for more than 30 years. He serves as President of the international ministry *Back to the Bible* and is heard daily on the nationally-syndicated radio broadcasts *Back to the Bible* and *The Bible Minute*. His numerous books include: *How to Find God in the Bible*, *An Interview With God*, *Places in the Bible* and *People in the Bible*.

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