

RESCUED!

Conversation Guide

Leader's Guide

Rescued

A Conversation Guide
for the person just beginning
or contemplating the new life as a disciple

Designed for
one-on one sessions
or small group study

By Larry Suttle

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About the Author

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Session Leader: Please read before leading the sessions...

1. Every effort has been made to put these lessons in conversational style and in a way to be understood by the person with little or no Bible background. At the same time, effort was made to be informative and helpful to the person of some background in the study of Scripture.
2. All Scripture references are printed out so that no one has to turn to each passage and endure the awkwardness of not knowing where to find a particular passage. The passage is also printed out in its full context as faithfully as possible so that no argument can be legitimately made that a passage was taken out of context. It is also important for a person to have to struggle with the teaching of a Bible passage rather than have an argument with the lesson guide. It's important to let the Scripture speak for itself.
3. Though the information shared in these conversation guides is vital for one's becoming a committed Christian, there is something else very important. These lessons are designed for relationships to be formed over several weeks. Hopefully, the relationships will grow and even become "mentoring" relationships between the seeker and the guide. Nurture the relationship above everything. Include your own personal stories of failure and God's redemption throughout the sessions. Allow your student to see a fellow-traveler on this new road. Never feel that you must have all the answers. Providing your student with an authentic example of Christian love and grace is a primary objective.
4. There is nothing new or novel about these studies. They are simply a tool for you to use. Adapt the sessions as you see fit. If you think of better ways of stating what I have tried to explain, feel free to do it your way. But if not, these guides are humbly offered for your use. The intent is to meet people where they are, acknowledging the obvious: that we find seekers at different points in each one's life journey. Hopefully, these lessons will weave the simple gospel message of grace and salvation throughout regardless of the particular conversation guide chosen.
5. Never worry about "closing the sale" or in any way manipulating the person during these studies. Be open, honest, humble, and thoroughly Christian in dealing with a student. The Lord simply told us to spread the Word and sow the seed. It is furthermore not our purpose to force ourselves or the study on people if they have lost interest or for whatever reason do not want to continue. At the end of every session ask them if they want to continue and give them every opportunity to get out of it if they so choose. Do not feel badly if this approach is not meeting their needs. Offer an alternative if you can. But do not feel you have failed if the study is not what they thought it would be or if it ceases to be effective. Use the apostle Paul as a model who remembered his dealings with the people of Thessalonica:

1 Thessalonians 2:3-8

³ For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. ⁴ On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the

gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed--God is our witness. ⁶ We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, ⁷ but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. ⁸ We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. NIV

6. Do let them know that their obedience to the Lord can take place anytime they are ready and they don't have to wait for the next church service. Also let them know that you can be reached anytime they need to talk with you. If a conversation guide ends without any response on their part, ask if they would like to pursue another conversation guide and let someone else lead the sessions so that another relationship can be formed. Keep checking with them to assure them that the relationship is genuine and that you remain friends regardless of their response.
7. Always pray privately before the study and with them as you get underway with the study that the Lord will use this time together and bless it with His magnification. We are nothing without Him!
8. Do your best and leave the rest to the Lord. Make the creed of the medical professionals your own: "Do no harm." Regardless of the outcome, you can know that they're contemplating the love of God, and His Scripture will leave them in a better place. If they are honest searchers, God will see to it that they will be captivated by His love and grace. The power will always be in the Word of God itself, not the presentation!

1 Corinthians 3:5-9

⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. NIV

9. Finally, at the end of each session, as a small home-assignment, have the student mark the passages used in the session in his or her own Bible. Recommend they use colored pencil rather than ink that tends to bleed through pages. This little exercise will reinforce the Biblical truth, show them that their Bible teaches the same lesson and gets them accustomed to using their own Bible.

*God bless you as you guide and develop a relationship
with your special learner.*

* If you have not yet experienced baptism go directly to question 4 (skipping questions 1-3).

**RESCUED
Session #1**

1 If you have recently been baptized into Christ: Congratulations!

It's the most important day of your life. You have had and will have many wonderful times in your life. None, however, like your baptism. Its effects go beyond this life into eternity.

It's a once-in-a-lifetime event. It will never have to be repeated. From this day forward you are a Christian, and nothing or no one can change that. You will forever be treated as a Christian by God. You are now His child and an heir.

Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. NIV

2 To help you remember this most special occasion, let's record certain details:

The setting was: [date; place & surroundings; time of day or night; weather outside; your age; etc.]

_____ immersed me. This person is special to me because:

Who were present and got to witness your baptism? [List as many as you can remember or even better, have as many of them as possible sign their names below.]

Were there special people in your life that helped you reach the decision to be baptized? Why are they so special to you?

Are there any other things you want to remember about your baptism or the occasion of your baptism? [serious, sad, funny, uplifting]

3 When you were baptized, you felt that something happened; something was different.

What did just happen here? What do you think?

4 The title of this New Life Conversation Guide is: **RESCUED!**

Not to be melodramatic, but this is the language and picture of Scripture regarding what has just happened.

The apostle Paul wrote...

Colossians 1:13-14

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. NIV

5 To be rescued is to be saved by some bold, dramatic effort on the part of someone who has risked or made great personal sacrifice to save one's life.

Think of examples from the news or your personal experience of a dramatic rescue:

6 Jesus Christ risked everything and made a tremendous personal sacrifice to save us from the dominion of darkness.

He left heaven.

He confronted evil and the evil one.

He bore our curse on the cross.

He experienced death and triumphed over it.

7 Our lifeline is Christ.

He changed what seemed inevitable (life in the kingdom of darkness).

He placed us in His own kingdom where we became His subjects and the recipients of His unending grace.

grace (definition) – His love and favor lavished on us though we don't deserve it.
This love and favor is given throughout our lives.

Ephesians 1:7-8

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. NIV

There is a direct connection to Christ's rescuing us and baptism.

When can we meet next to study this vital connection?

RESCUED Session #2

1 The Old Testament is filled with examples of God rescuing people from horrible circumstances.

The first one is also the most dramatic and well-known: Noah and the building of the ark before a gigantic flood. It's an amazing but true story.

Noah had found favor in God's eyes because of his good life. He, however, was an exception to the rule. The predominant culture and lifestyle of the general population was very wicked.

Genesis 6:5-8

⁵ The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. ⁶ The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. ⁷ So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air for I am grieved that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. NIV

2 Noah was told by God that there would be a general flood to destroy human beings so that a clean start could be made on earth.

Noah and his family would be spared.

He was instructed to build an ark (which in reality was a massive ship) that would float above the doomed inhabitants of earth below and save all who would seek safety inside. Besides Noah's immediate family, the ship would also include animal species in order to continue animal life after the flood waters subsided.

Noah was faithful to build such a craft which took many years to complete. During this time we can only imagine the many questions that friends and neighbors asked about Noah's building this huge craft on dry land. With words of explanation, together with his obedient action as he built the ark, Noah in effect warned people of coming disaster. Doubtless they were invited to board the ark with the others.

The apostle Peter indicated in the New Testament that all these people had a chance to escape the devastating flood waters. There was ample room in the ark for all who believed Noah and believed a flood was coming. They had their chance. But they likely laughed and ridiculed God's and Noah's efforts. Peter described these people as having "disobeyed" long ago when God waited "patiently" in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. He seems to agonize that with all the possibilities of rescue "**only a few people, eight in all, were saved...**" [1 Peter 3]. How sad! And unnecessary! We'll come back to Peter's statement shortly.

3 Fast-forward thousands of years following the tragic deaths of the unbelievers of Noah's time. Their spirits are still very much alive, as are all people of all times who have died physically.

death (definition) – separation. The spirit and the body are divided for a time.

The physical body is buried or cremated. It returns to dust. The spirit, however, lives in the spiritual realm that is bustling with activity. The spirits of God's faithful ones go immediately to be with the Lord while the spirits of the faithless and unbelieving go immediately to a place of torment.

Philippians 1:21-24

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. NIV

Luke 16:22-24

²² "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' NIV

The spirits of those who lived as Noah's neighbors and friends remain to this day in a spiritual prison awaiting formal judgment that comes at the end of time.

4 During the three days that Christ's body was in the tomb, the Apostle Peter wrote that Christ's spirit went to visit these tormented souls in their prison. It was not to give them another chance. He proclaimed His Lordship of all things. They had, centuries before, given their final answer, and it was "No!" God and Christ accepted that answer as they do now. Never will anyone be coerced or forced to be a follower.

They had been given a lifeline: the ark of Noah that would have lifted them safely from a condemned earth. They could have been **rescued!**

5 Peter compared this lifeline offered to those people of Noah's time to the lifeline offered to us by Christ.

1 Peter 3:18-21

¹⁸ For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also...

6 The Apostle Peter hastened to add, however, that it's not the water that saves a person in baptism.

-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.

Baptism is a pledge of a good conscience toward God. This may mean:

>an appeal to God for a clear conscience through baptism.

>a pledge of commitment to God through baptism that results in a good conscience.

Both interpretations are valid and can describe the results of baptism.

7 This explains why a person feels different after baptism. One comes up out of the water pledging commitment to God for a new life under His direction that will result in a good conscience. It also signifies that one's faith has gone the distance. It's led one to do all he or she can do to demonstrate faith in God. It is grabbing the lifeline!

Once again, it's not the water that saves. It's what Jesus Christ did on the cross and the power of God to change death to life. Peter continued...

²¹ It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. NIV

It's that same power that will change your life. The power that enabled Jesus' resurrection will make possible your new life.

The good news is that your new life will not come as a result of will power or even the strength of your personal character. You have tried those means before and failed, haven't you?

Your new life will come through a super-natural power that God gives you at the point of baptism. As mentioned earlier: it's amazing, but true!

Something indeed happened at your baptism. You realized it!

*Let's talk about something else that happened at your baptism. You will be amazed!
When would be a good time for you?*

RESCUED Session #3

1 You sensed that something happened when you were baptized.

Something like a nuclear power core was implanted into your being.

I said “something like” because that doesn’t even begin to explain what happened at your baptism.

Scripture describes it this way...

Acts 2:38-39

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." NIV

2 In your newly-washed state with all your past sins forgiven, for the first time in your life you are a fit host for the Holy Spirit of God.

You become what the Bible calls the temple, or dwelling place of God’s Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. NIV

In the Old Testament there was only one temple where God met human beings and was said to dwell. Of course, we know that God did not dwell in a structure built by men, so the language was figurative. This temple was in Jerusalem, in Israel. Some Old Testament books like Leviticus go into great detail as to who was qualified to approach God in His temple and how He was to be approached in the Temple. All of this was to teach human beings the concept of God’s absolute holiness and purity. This is very important in understanding how we are saved.

The New Testament teaches that every Christian is God’s temple. Christ has qualified us to not only approach God but to have Him actually dwell within us through His Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

3 You will never be the same because of your baptism.

One question you may have is: How can I remain a fit host for the Holy Spirit? I know I will sin again!

That is correct. You will sin again even after being cleansed through baptism. Christians have an assurance, however, that becomes a new reality.

1 John 1:5-2:2

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

1 John 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. NIV

Message: God is totally pure and cannot even look upon sin. In forgiving our sin God never merely overlooks or excuses our sin!

Christians do continue to sin. The blood of Jesus, however, continues to wash our sins away after baptism as we maintain our connection to Him and to His people.

So, even though we sin, the Holy Spirit has a fit host because of Christ's blood that washes us clean continually.

4 That doesn't mean we ever take sin lightly. One of the ways that the Holy Spirit works in our lives is to give us a new perspective on sin. We view sinful behavior differently now.

Never again do we sin flippantly or with a shrug.

When we know God is offended, we are wounded. We never look upon sin or people with whom or against whom we sin the way we did before the Holy Spirit came to live within us...in our heart.

The Holy Spirit's presence makes us forever different and changed in our view of sin.

5 Another question that is sometimes raised is: "Is there anything we can do that hurts or kills God's Holy Spirit within us?"

A Christian will always have the freedom to turn away from God.

Hebrews 3:12

¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. NIV

A Christian can so live that the Holy Spirit's influence is extinguished or reduced to a mere flicker and thus becomes easily ignored.

1 Thessalonians 5:19

¹⁹ Do not put out the Spirit's fire...NIV

Never forget, however, that even a flicker can again become a flame. The truth is that even faithful Christians can grow weak and fail to live up to the Spirit's work in their lives.

2 Timothy 1:6

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God...

The Holy Spirit within us can be grieved because of our behavior or attitude.

Ephesians 4:30

³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. NIV

6 On the other hand, when treated with respect and awe, the Holy Spirit's presence will make all the difference in our lives.

Galatians 5:16-26

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ¹⁷ For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. ¹⁹ The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. NIV

7 So don't think that you are left on your own to live this new life. You are not alone with your will-power or even strength of character to make this transformation that may seem so impossible based on past experience.

You have certainly known people who tried and failed.

You may have tried before under your own power and have failed.

Know this: the reasons for these failures have to do in some way with not relying on Holy Spirit power within.

You don't change yourself by rearranging or eliminating externals. You are changed by God from the inside by His Holy Spirit. The externals will change by a power greater than you!

*There's another reason you are not alone in this new quest.
Shall we talk about it? When is a good time for you?*

RESCUED Session #4

1 Something else happened at baptism. Having been redeemed by the blood of Christ, you were placed by God into the safety of the body of Christ, Christ's church.

church (definition)- not a building or a place but people; the people whom God has redeemed by the cross. They are also the people who answered the call of the gospel or good news.

redeemed (definition)- Christians are said to be redeemed, which means "to have been bought back." When Christ died on the cross, His sacrifice bought back all people who had been sold into the slavery of sin and its consequences. In other words, they are rescued.

No longer under Satan's total control and influence, all redeemed people are in Christ's church.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

¹² The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. NIV

Ephesians 1:22-23

²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. NIV

2 Speaking of the first people to come into the church after their baptism, the book of Acts says:

Acts 2:47

...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. NIV

3 Jesus spoke of His church as His kingdom on earth.

Matthew 16:18-19

¹⁸ "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." NIV

The Apostle Paul surely had this in mind when he wrote to the church in the city of Colossae [pronounced: *Kuh-lah-see*]. It was a Roman city in what is now Turkey. Much of the New Testament is a collection of Paul's letters to churches of the Roman world. [Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Philippi, Rome]

Colossians 1:9-14

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. NIV

All of God's saved people are members of His church.

To leaders of a church mentioned in the book of Acts, Paul said:

Acts 20:28

²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. NIV

4 The word and concept of the church is used in two ways in the New Testament.

God's list in heaven. God knows who are His and only He knows who is on this list. This list is of all the saved of all time and places. This is the church of Christ in the universal sense. The New Testament will occasionally use the word church in this way. For example...

Colossians 1:18

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. NIV

Scripture pictures a Book of Life in which names of the saved are recorded.

Philippians 4:3

³ Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. NIV

Revelation 20:11-15

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. NIV

A local church at a particular place and time. This is how the word church is used most in the New Testament. For example...

1 Corinthians 1:1-2

¹ Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,
² To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--their Lord and ours...NIV

Most of the letters of the New Testament were addressed to local churches, and they all confronted real life issues of Christians.

God expects His people to be involved in a local church.

5 God in His wisdom has definite reasons for wanting you in His church!

The church is God's instrument to do His work. It is the body of Christ. What God did through His Son when He lived on earth is what the church does now.

In reading the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we come to know what was important to Jesus, how He used His time, what were His passions.

The church will follow in His steps.

1 Peter 2:21

²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. NIV

6 The church is your protection and your care and feeding.

Ephesians 5:29

²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church...NIV

A person who sees baptism as the end of responsibility rather than part of a life-long process is setting himself or herself up for failure.

One reason is that dangers lurk after baptism.

1 Peter 5:8

⁸ Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. NIV

An intense period of temptation faced Jesus immediately after His baptism.

Matthew 3:16-4:3

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." NIV

temptation (definition)-To be enticed by Satan or by one's own desire to do something that is against God's will.

To be tempted is not to sin. Everyone, including Jesus, was tempted.

Hebrews 4:14-15

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. NIV

Temptation can be resisted and sin avoided. When we resist temptation, we have scored a great victory! God's Spirit will help us do it!

1 Corinthians 10:13

¹³ No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. NIV

Ephesians 6:10-18

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. NIV

Only within the church will you be regularly and nutritiously fed spiritually.

John 21:15-17

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."
Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. NIV

1 Peter 5:1-2

¹ To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve... NIV

1 Peter 2:1-3

¹ Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. NIV

Functioning as a member of the body of Christ (the church), you will be exercising your spiritual muscles and using God-given gifts, becoming the person God intends you to be.

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. NIV

Philippians 2:12-13

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. NIV

Ephesians 4:11-16

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. NIV

Recommended for further study: The Answer (A Conversation Guide for Christians ready to get to work. Learn how God has uniquely designed and equipped you to be a functioning part of the body of Christ.)

*Some information that will be very valuable for your new life
will be discussed in the next session.*

Are you interested?

When can we meet next?

RESCUED Session #5

1 Your new life has begun.

John 3:1-6

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³ In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

⁴ "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

⁵ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. NIV

Romans 6:4

⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. NIV

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! NIV

2 It's time for a big reality check! You've begun a new life, but...

You live in the same world you lived in before.

God had wonderful designs for His created world, but sin entered the picture.

We all, even Christians, live in a fallen world.

Human beings sin has messed up much of God's world. It is no longer a perfect place, but it remains your home.

You will have to deal with it, and it won't always be pretty!

Your new life makes you want to soar like an eagle. The force of gravity, figuratively speaking, will always have to be resisted. It's not just you; it's every person who has become a Christian.

As excited and optimistic as you may be about your new life, you still have family and friends who do not yet share your new life and thus do not have the new vision of life being better. You might say they are still stuck.

The apostle Peter warned Christians about a very real possibility...

1 Peter 4:3-4

³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do--living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. NIV

3 With a new life, what about the old relationships? Scripture has much to say.

Continue to love them, and in a quiet way, live a new life before them. Words are of no use if they do not see a changed life.

Some new Christians mentioned in the New Testament wondered if they should divorce husbands or wives who did not share their new dreams and goals. Paul's answer:

1 Corinthians 7:12-17

¹² To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

¹⁵ But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶ How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

¹⁷ Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. NIV

The apostle Peter added...

1 Peter 3:1-2

¹ Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. NIV

Marriage is a covenant relationship--a covenant made before God. Becoming a Christian does not cancel this covenant even if one's mate is not a Christian.

Malachi 2:13-14

¹³ Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

¹⁴ You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. NIV

In all relationships, becoming a Christian should make one better: a better mate, better employee, better boss, better parent, etc. The New Testament instructs Christians to be good examples to all who see their lives.

Titus 2:6-10

⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. ⁹ Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, ¹⁰ and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. NIV

4 Of course, there are relationships that are destructive and should be changed. Scripture is full of warnings about the influence of others.

The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament is full of warnings about the danger of choosing wrong friends. For example,

Proverbs 2:12-15

¹² Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, ¹³ who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, ¹⁴ who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, ¹⁵ whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. NIV

Proverbs 13:20

²⁰ He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. NIV

Proverbs 17:12

¹² Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly. NIV

The teaching of scripture is clear that relationships will determine the quality of your life.

1 Corinthians 15:33

³³ Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." NIV

5 There are only two covenant relationships that must be treated specially and must not be needlessly broken: our covenant with God and our covenant in marriage. All other relationships must be evaluated on the basis of whether they help or hurt one's relationship with God. It may be necessary to end active relationships that obstruct either of the covenant relationships.

Jesus taught that being a disciple of Him might mean giving up other relationships.

Matthew 10:32-39

³² "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. ³⁴ "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- ³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' ³⁷ "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of

me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.
³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. NIV

6 God's people were taught from the beginning to honor father and mother. Christ never taught against that principle but instead condemned those who might be inclined for selfish reasons to put it aside. He did deepen the principle, however, when He answered a woman this way...

Luke 11:27-28

²⁷ As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." ²⁸ He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." NIV

The most important relationships in life are those who help a person grow closer to God.

Another way you need to face facts right now is to realize that...

7 You are physically, mentally, intellectually, and emotionally the same person you have always been.

You were born with a personality. Your DNA gives you tendencies and preferences. Your upbringing has helped you think and react in certain ways. Those inclinations do not change with your baptism and your becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Some of those inclinations will need to be fought because they are unhealthy and rooted in sin. God's Holy Spirit within you and the encouragement of other Christians who fight similar inclinations, along with God's Word, the Bible, can make you adequate for the task.

Many of your inclinations, however, are good and have just been waiting to be directed by God. God created you just as He wanted you to be. Now that you are a Christian you can really be effective.

Don't waste precious time wishing to be someone you are not or to be some place you aren't where you imagine the circumstances so much better. Christians are called to confront the reality of their new lives in an imperfect world filled with imperfect people.

8 Though you are beginning a new life, remember also that you too will remain imperfect.

The new life is one of a disciple: a student or learner. We never become an expert or an authority. Never are we to feel superior or in any way above others.

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and

the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."
NIV

1 Timothy 1:15-16

¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. NIV

We have been saved by grace, which means the undeserved favor of God.

A Christian's constant prayer is that their lives will reflect their new Lord and that others will look to Christ because of the difference He has made in them.

9 Your new life will certainly call for new thinking, new reactions, new habits.

You can do it!

Remember, it's no longer just you trying to be better. You now have a new power within.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. NIV

*Let's visit about some new ways to approach life.
Still interested? If so, when is a good time?*

RESCUED Session #6

1 Now that you are a Christian, other big parts of your life will be impacted besides the ones examined in the last session.

It's important that someone shoot straight with you about your new life and not just pretend it's going to be a bed of roses from the first day. There are some **tough battles ahead**.

Much of the New Testament is made up of letters from apostles to real people in real churches about real problems.

One of the evidences that the Bible is real is that it is real! Does that make sense? There is never any sugar-coating about what it is like to be a disciple of Jesus. In fact, Jesus sometimes purposely discouraged people from following Him by pointing out the hazards and the sacrifices that would have to be made. He knew they had not fully counted the cost.

Luke 14:25-33

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

³¹ "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. NIV

A cross was an instrument of death. Jesus was saying that a Christian must be willing to put to death those human desires that are contrary to new life in His kingdom.

2 The first big part of your life that will be affected is time.

Until now you have thought of time as your own. You give some up to earn a living, but you have thought of time as basically yours to do as you want.

Scripture, however, confronts us with the truth that time is not our own.

James 4:13-17

¹³ Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is,

you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. NIV

Time, like all blessings, comes from God. Christians allow God to direct the use of time.

3 The first big test of your new life will likely come in regard to the use of time.

For example, God in the Old Testament taught that one day of seven is devoted to Him for a special purpose. It was called Sabbath, which means to rest. One of the Ten Commandments is:

Exodus 20:8

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." NIV

For Christians under the new covenant, the day has changed, but the principle remains.

All people need regular times for rest and renewal, maybe now more than ever.

However, no New Testament passage teaches the continuation of observing Saturday as the day of rest.

The special day for Christians is the day of Christ's resurrection: Sunday, or, the first day of the week. From earliest times Christians called Sunday the Lord's day.

Revelation 1:10

¹⁰ On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet...NIV

Acts 20:7

⁷ On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. NIV

Christians met for worship on the Lord's Day.

The apostle Paul said that the Lord Jesus is present in this assembly.

1 Corinthians 5:4

⁴ When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present...NIV

It is also a day of spiritual renewal as God's people worship the Lord.

Christians encourage one another on this day and in the worship assembly.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. NIV

4 Frankly, unless you grew up going to church, you may find it difficult to get up every Sunday and attend the assembly of Christians when you have been in the habit of sleeping late, enjoying a casual brunch, enjoying some recreational activity, etc.

Many people's church-going is limited to two or three times a year: Easter, Christmas, and maybe Mother's Day.

The temptation to miss the assembly is compounded when children have to be awakened, fed and dressed. It will be further complicated when one's husband or wife chooses not to help or participate and may even openly oppose attending.

Satan or one's own natural self can find many excuses not to attend the Christian assembly on the first day of every week.

Warning: Many new-born Christians lose the battle at this early stage.

Will you be different? Will you commit yourself to faithfully attending the assembly unless illness or some other major obstacle forbids it? This will be your first real test!

You will find it much easier to live the Christian life if you commit at this point to be in the assembly regardless! Case closed! It's settled! That way you will not have to fight a battle every week. Decide now where you will be on the Lord's Day.

5 The next major test will involve money.

Christians are commanded to financially support the Lord's work. No one else has the responsibility to give to the Lord's work.

Part of this responsibility is because of the Lord's teaching about money. He taught generosity as the antidote to selfishness, one of the cancers of the spirit.

Thus, God's people from the earliest times were commanded to give a tenth part of their total income. In the Old Testament it is called a tithe or as we would say: ten per cent.

Christians were taught a much greater standard of giving.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. NIV

6 The earliest Christians were not wealthy. Yet they often gave so much that the apostles were greatly impressed with their love, even as new Christians.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

¹ And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵ And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. NIV

7 Giving of one's financial means remains a command of God.

Televangelists or some so-called preachers living luxurious lifestyles while their followers sacrifice have caused people to become cynical about churches and money.

There have always been those who have taken advantage of people in the name of Christ. There will always be dishonorable people, some even in churches.

That does not void the command nor the need for money to minister in Christ's name.

8 Churches continue to be the primary source of help in most communities.

Every day in big and small ways churches feed the hungry, clothe the poor, care for the sick, the homeless, the orphaned, the widowed. Churches are among the first to send volunteers to help rebuild after natural disasters. All of these acts are in the name of Christ.

Matthew 25:31-40

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' NIV

Furthermore, the Lord has commanded that the gospel is to be preached throughout the world.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." NIV

These opportunities are both a blessing and responsibility.

What is true about all these ministries is that they all cost money!

Christians have the responsibility to give. Christians also enjoy the benefits of giving.

Jesus taught that blessing comes through giving.

Acts 20:35

³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." NIV

Christians are taught to give in proportion to their income.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

¹ Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. NIV

Now for a reality check!

9 When one comes to Christ after living for themselves a long time, personal finances are already committed and maybe over-committed to others.

There's the house payment, car payment(s), credit card bills, cell phones, TV cable, internet, clothing, health-care costs, vacations and recreation commitments.

There's no room for Christ and His church's ministry.

The lessons and sermons on giving can be hard to hear and even resented.

10 What does a beginner Christian in that life situation do?

Begin!

Liberal giving can't happen quickly due to already-made commitments for your money. Begin now, however, making room for the Lord in your life and future commitments.

Learn skills and habits that will not only make possible the ability to give but will enable you to finally live a life of financial health.

The Lord's way is always the best way to live in all areas of life.

Putting Him first will lead not to poverty but to health, wholeness and ability to give to many good and lasting causes.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11

¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. NIV

A hard truth we all must confront: We have gotten into binds financially and in other ways because we have been living for ourselves with little or no regard for the Lord's way. We are in bondage to debt. We see no way out!

But here is the good news: Christ has come to win our release from all forms of bondage! The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, pointed to a new day under the reign of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 61:1

¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners...NIV

You have been rescued!

11 You will never be able to repay Christ for His death for you; the joy of being forgiven; the purpose you feel now in living; your rescue!

God doesn't need your money. He owns everything. He will accomplish His work whether or not you participate.

The greatest honor He bestows is to offer to us the opportunity to be workers together with Him.

1 Corinthians 3:9

⁹ For we are God's fellow workers...NIV

Talk about adding a new dimension to life!

To begin living with a sense of new purpose is beyond a money value.

Warning: Some new Christians will fail the test of money. Don't be one of them!

1 Timothy 6:6-10

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. NIV

Jesus says: Learn to give and you will learn the secret of authentic joy!

I am praying that you succeed where countless others have failed.

You can!

Remember, you have within you someone very special and very powerful: God's Holy Spirit!

*Are these lessons meeting your needs?
When would you like to meet next?*

RESCUED Session #7

1 When someone is rescued from a catastrophe, news reporters will often interview the person who has just escaped the horrible fate. Frequently the person will say something like: "I have been reborn!" "Never again will I take my life for granted!"; "I feel like I've been given a second chance at life, and I'm going to make the most of it!"

Becoming a Christian is not like being rescued...it is being rescued. Remember the statement of the apostle Paul,

Colossians 1:13-14

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. NIV

2 Hopefully, the person mentioned above will indeed become new. Life, at best, is too short to dwell in the dark shadows of the lowlands. God intended us to live with an upward climb and to get frequent, exhilarating visions from life's mountaintops.

We can't live, however, on the mountaintops. The air is too thin, and the space too small. Besides, there is work to be done on the flatlands and valleys. God didn't put us here to be constant tourists only seeing the sights. He has work for us to do.

This is illustrated in an account found in the life of Jesus and his apostles.

Matthew 17:1-9

¹ After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴ Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." ⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." NIV

What it must have been like upon that mountain with Jesus and living beings from the past! We can only imagine the excitement and wonder of it all. Peter, for one, wanted to invest and stay. Who wouldn't!

But they had to come back down. It's like vacation. It's wonderful to see and experience new sights and sounds, but you always have to go back home.

Let's continue reading...

Matthew 17:14-23

¹⁴ When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him.

¹⁵ "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

¹⁷ "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." ¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

²⁰ He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

²² When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. ²³ They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief. NIV

From the mountaintop experience to the real world full of disease, heartbreak, and despair, that's the world we all live in, and that's the world to which God calls you and me.

There's much to be done, and the risen Christ is the only answer.

The disciples were filled with despair. One can be overwhelmed with the demands and with one's own seeming inability to respond appropriately or with effectiveness.

You know something, however, that not even the apostles really understood at the time. There is incomprehensible power in faith. It doesn't even have to be gigantic faith. It can be just a little faith in the right object or person: Jesus Christ.

3 You've been on the mountaintop with the experience of your baptism. We celebrate!

Soon it will be time to go down where the people are with all their problems and dysfunction.

Where to begin?

Quickly you must get to work on building up your faith.

You can't be of help to others until you are on solid ground yourself. Let's start there!

4 Allow me to introduce you to someone. His name is **Judas**.

No, not the one who betrayed Jesus.

Rather, one of the brothers of Jesus. You see, Jesus grew up in a large family of a dad (Joseph) who may have died when Jesus was young, a mom (Mary), and brothers as well as sisters.

Matthew 13:55-56

⁵⁵ "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" NIV

God wanted His Son to experience all of life. He indeed experienced birth, childhood, being a teenager, being a son to a widowed mother, being a brother, a carpenter. He would also be destined to experience unimaginable suffering and death.

He was the first, but, because of what He accomplished by the resurrection, not the last person to experience resurrection or new life, never to die again. We will follow in that procession.

Back to Judas. He was one of two brothers who came to eventual faith in Jesus as the Son of God and would write some of the New Testament. One brother, James, wrote what we know as the Book of James, and Judas, would write the little book known to us by his shortened name, Jude.

It's interesting that neither James nor Jude attempted to claim superiority because of their being earthly brothers of Jesus. In fact, both of them simply referred to themselves as "servants of Jesus Christ," which, after all, is the greatest honor any of us will ever hope to attain.

Both of them wrote very practical books on how to live and grow as Christians.

5 Judas, but let's call him Jude, was concerned about spiritual nutrition. And, like all writers of the Bible, he never tried to sugarcoat or gloss-over the realities of life. Notice what he said:

Jude 17-21

¹⁷ But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.

¹⁸ They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." ¹⁹ These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. NIV

There are people who will try to divide you or separate you from your new calling.

You will be around those who scoff at your new life. To scoff means to scornfully disregard something or someone.

In other words, the law of gravity, using a figure, is always present and the constant pull of the world is downward. There are people who want to and will try to bring you down. After all, that's where they live, and they don't want you climbing up and out. They can't imagine another kind of life than the one they are living, as unpleasant as it so frequently is. But it's the only life they know or have ever experienced.

You know people like that in your family, at work, at school. Love them, but recognize them for what they can do to your new life.

6 God wants and you want to go the other way: Upward! So, your first responsibility begins here. Jude continued...

²⁰ But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

²¹ Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. NIV

You have the responsibility to build yourself up in your newly discovered faith.

To put it in a way we should all understand: God prepares a nutritious meal, but you must get yourself to the table at meal time.

When one is a child, he may have to be repeatedly told to get up and get to the table. Children are pleaded with, scolded, entreated and enticed to get to the table. But as the apostle Paul wrote...

1 Corinthians 13:11

¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. NIV

If you are mature enough to have faith in God, repent of sins, and be baptized, you are mature enough to take responsibility for building yourself up in the most holy faith.

7 What does that mean in a practical way? What new habits will you need to form?

We have already talked about going to church. One reason you go to church is to be built up.

The apostle Paul wrote a lengthy section about Christians meeting together in **1 Corinthians 12-14**. In this section, he gave instructions about the Christian assembly. Many times in that section he used the word: edify or build up or strengthen.

A big reason you go to church is to be built-up or strengthened in your faith.

That will happen in little and big ways. It may happen with a wonderful experience of singing praise to God in worship or hearing an uplifting sermon. Even when those aspects are deficient, you may be built up by a needed hug from a loving brother or sister in Christ. You are built up when you see great living examples of faith.

8 The church will likely offer many opportunities for you to be built up in faith. All of these opportunities need to be grasped with regularity and commitment. They all fill different, yet very inter-connected, purposes for growing up in faith. Think and discuss how each activity can help one grow up in faith.

Worship

Bible Classes

Small Groups

Fellowship

Ministry

9 The church cannot fill all the needs or demands for growing up in faith. We grow as individuals, not only as a group. In between church meetings or activities, we must learn to:

Pray

Luke 11:1-13

¹ One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

² He said to them, "When you pray, say:

‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation.”

⁵ Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

⁷ "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

⁹ "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" NIV

Read scripture

1 Peter 1:24-2:3

²⁴ For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands forever."

And this is the word that was preached to you.

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. NIV

Apply what's read to one's life

Psalms 119:9-16

⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?

By living according to your word.

¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.

¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

¹² Praise be to you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.

¹³ With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.

¹⁴ I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.

¹⁵ I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.

¹⁶ I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word. NIV

Engage other people by bringing up the Lord in conversation

Philemon 6

⁶ I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. NIV

10 Right now your emotions are high. Emotions won't carry you all the way. Feelings rise and fall with circumstances.

That's where commitment comes in. Commitment will push you forward even when you have temporarily lost the feelings.

There will eventually be heard a whisper in your head that may become a shout. It says: "You can't do this"... "Give it up"... "Come back to your old friends who know the real you"... "Come on, sleep in Sunday morning"... "Don't mess with those classes and groups"... on & on.

11 Right now commit to go **all** the way with the Lord, not just part of the way.

Some try to go with the Lord as long as it is convenient, if they haven't other things to do.

Or, they hold back on God and not give him the best of their lives, only the leftovers.

They give the minimum and thus never receive the **full joy that only commitment can give**.

Closing Words...

The other brother of Jesus who wrote a part of the New Testament described a person you don't ever want to be!

James 1:6-8

⁶ ...he...is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. NIV

Don't just put on the veneer of being a Christian. Don't just give the Lord lip-service. Don't just have enough of Christ to be torn. That's a miserable life!

Give Him the best you have to offer, and you will be blessed beyond all your dreams!

The apostle Paul wrote toward the end of his life...

Philippians 3:7-14

⁷ But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. NIV

Rescued!