
I AM A NEW FOLLOWER OF JESUS, NOW WHAT?

As a new follower of Jesus, welcome to God's family. You are His child now, freed from the grip that sin has had on you, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Your journey with Jesus has begun, an adventure of growing in your love for Him, following Him and reaching your world for Him. But first, let's take the time to walk through a foundational understanding of your new found faith in Jesus Christ and healthy next steps. So, grab a Bible with a table of contents and jump in. If you don't have a Bible, please email pastor Jim Doyle at jim@northcoastcalvary.org and let him know.

Sin

A definition of sin is doing what is wrong or not doing what is right according to God, who is *the* high moral standard (Exodus 20: 1-17). It's choosing to think, feel and do things your way instead of God's way, which we all do (Romans 3:23). Since God says "Do not lie," and we lie, then we have sinned, and according to Him, sin separates us from Him (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; James 1:13-15). We have no excuse (Romans 3:10), and no one is exempt.

That's not God's intention for any of us. He, who loves you so very much, created you to have a relationship with Him. He not only placed great value on you, but also gave you the ability to make choices. His desire is for you to choose Him out of the capacity you have to love Him. However, you could not do it in your own goodness, abilities or status. In fact, we all are in need of a Savior.

Salvation

To begin, we are to worship and follow One God, yet three Persons. Don't worry, the most learned scholars are still trying to wrap their minds around that. But the Bible is clear that our God functions in three major roles as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 14:15-21).

Out of His great love for us, the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ into our world to save you and bring you back into the kind of relationship you were created to have with Him and through Him (John 3:16-18). How did He do this? By taking your place. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to gain victory over the grip that death (eternal separation from God) had over you.

Remember, You cannot save yourself. The Lord said all that you need to do is *believe* (Acts 16:31). It's about placing your faith in the truth of who God is and His Word, the Bible (John 17:17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9-10). And, one of these greatest truths is forgiveness.

Forgiveness

When you acknowledged who Jesus is and what He did for you on the cross and through His resurrection, followed by asking Him to forgive you of your sins, and inviting Him into your life, you were immediately forgiven. In other words, you were cleansed of your sins by the *only* One (Jesus Christ) who could save you, (John 14:6). You are free from the power of sin (Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 1:7-8). In fact, God forgives any sin, no matter how terrible you might think yours is and He chooses to not even remember your sin (Psalms 103:12; Micah 7:19). He not only forgave you completely, but also His Spirit (The Holy Spirit) takes up residence in you.

However, because we all were born with a sin nature (ability to sin), there is a presence of sin that we are still faced with. But now with God's Spirit in you, He gives you the ability to keep a short leash on your wrong choices (sin). It's about practicing the presence of Jesus Christ in your life, which should always begin with acknowledging your selfish desires, attitudes and actions (1 John 1:9). Then through your mended relationship with Jesus, you can keep following Him becoming more like Him (2 Corinthians 3:16-18).

A Few of Our Practices

Now the bar has been set and we need to continue in fellowship, growing in our faith and giving our lives away in serving the Lord. Here are our 4 key practices out of the 8 practices according to what God has revealed to us in His Word (the Bible). Remember, like athletes, musicians or artists who practice to become better at their crafts, followers of Jesus practice to become more like Him.

Worship (1 Peter 2:9)

Engage in worship that touches God's heart. It's much more than singing. Worship is a lifestyle involving prayer, reading the Bible and our attitude and actions. When we worship, we are declaring that God has worth, that He is worthy. In other words, we are praising God for who He is and thanking Him for what He has done for us. Make a habit of engaging in our online weekend worship service.

Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Enter into personal time in reading and obeying the Bible. Why should we read and study the Word of God (the Bible)? The short answer is to know God and for Him to guide us into practical Christian living.

For further thought, it's because the Bible has no error (Proverbs 3:5-6), it's complete, authoritative and sufficient for our lives as followers of Jesus (Revelation 22:18-19; Psalm 118:89; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Finally, it accomplishes what it promises because God is truth (Isaiah 55:11).

There are a number of good Bibles/Study Bibles available. We use the NIV in our services and recommend the English Standard Version Study Bible and The Moody Bible Commentary. Then, to begin, we suggest reading Ephesians, chapter 1 and then 1 John looking for what you can learn about Jesus, commands to obey, sin to avoid and promises to hold onto. Also consider plugging into a virtual group with either our one-on-one focus called TRUST or a small group. You'll find links to these opportunities back on the New Believer's webpage.

Prayer (Psalm 145:18; Jeremiah 33:3)

Commit to developing your relationship with God through prayer. Prayer is talking with God and being quiet enough to hear Him talking to us in our minds and hearts. He wants us to communicate with Him, like a person-to-person phone call. Not sure how to pray, use the Lord's Prayer as a guide (Matthew 6:9-13), or the ACTS acrostic, which is *Adoration* (praising God); *Confession* (Acknowledging sin before the Lord, asking for forgiveness from others and even forgiving others who have wronged you); *Thanksgiving* (remembering what Christ has done and continues to do for you); *Supplication* (talking to the Lord about your needs).

Fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)

Seek to develop friendships through one of our virtual groups (we primarily use the platform Zoom). Groups are wonderful for support, accountability and spiritual growth. Fellowship means *joint participation* or *sharing something in common*. It is thus a kind of partnership. It means making an effort, beyond attending a service, to know others and be known.

The Church

All our practices, (link on the New Believer's webpage) play a vital role in you becoming more like Him and growing in your faith as you begin to belong to an extended family, the church. But what is the church? According to Jesus, the church is not an isolated fortified castle, but a *force* moving forward and taking the Truth, bathed in love, into our world (Matthew 16:18). He also says the church is a *fellowship* marked by love and care for one another (Matthew 18:17).

Sounds a bit challenging as we are to remain in our homes as much as possible and to practice social distancing. However, we have options for you to still do church in and through NCCC for your personal growth in your relationship with Jesus and in ways to serve. Simply return to the New Believers webpage for further information and resources.