

Your spiritual help line

Meet The Master

your guide to God

Seven Steps In The Right Direction

for new Christians

How To Find A Good Church

where you can grow, serve, belong...

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Seven Steps In The Right Direction *for new Christians*

How To Find A Good Church *where you can grow, serve, belong...*

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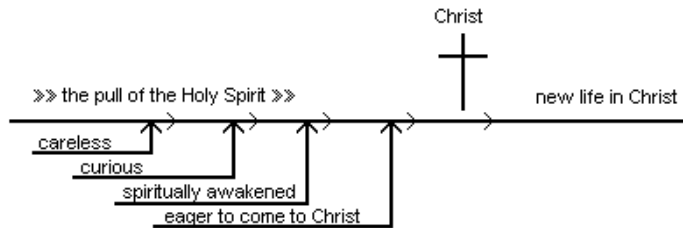
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Meet The Master

Your Guide To God

Welcome, friend. We are glad you are here. You came for a reason. Perhaps you are just curious. Maybe you came for a more important reason--you sense that something is missing in your life and you are hoping to find what you are searching for. We hope you are here for the best reason of all: you are sick and tired of the loneliness, emptiness, and meaninglessness of life without God; you are loaded down with the intolerable burden of sin and guilt; you are desperate to get right with God and you are ready to come to Jesus Christ and find forgiveness and a new life in Him. In any case, you are somewhere on this continuum:



Please consider carefully the following facts:

(1) God created us free moral agents and we are accountable to Him.

(2) All of us have mis-used our free moral agency by choosing to please ourselves in disobedience to God, resulting in harm to Him, to others, and to ourselves. This is called sin. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

(3) The just penalty for our sin is death--everlasting separation from God in hell. "The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14,15 NIV). Because we have incurred the death penalty, we can do nothing to save ourselves. We cannot pardon our own sins or merit their pardon.

(4) By giving His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross as our substitute, God provided the only morally possible way to forgive our sins and reconcile us to Himself. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

(5) To be justified from our sins and reconciled to God, we must sincerely turn to God from sin and put our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal and all-sufficient Savior. This is "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

God loves you. He wants to save you from your sins and reconcile you to Himself. Don't spend another minute in death row. Abandon your sins and hurry to Christ now. Call upon Him in faith, asking Him into your heart and life.

Call on the Lord out of your heart. If you need guidance, the following is provided to help you in praying:

"God, I come to You with all my heart. I turn to You from all sin. I thank You that You love me and sent Jesus Christ to be my Savior. Lord Jesus, I believe that you are the

Son of God. I believe that You took my sins and died on the cross for me. I believe that You rose from the dead. I open my heart to You. Wash away my sins by your blood. I receive you as my personal Savior and as my living Lord. I trust You. I rest my faith in You. I love You, Jesus, and I will follow You. Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul.”

The Bible says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

Now, confess Jesus Christ as your Savior verbally and by water baptism, and follow Him as your Lord in the fellowship of His Church.

Seven Steps in the Right Direction

Getting Off To A Good Start In Your New Christian Life

A New Life

Something wonderful happened to you. Things are different. Maybe you find yourself wondering what really happened. It's hard to explain, even to yourself. "But," you say, "I know something happened. I'm really changed. I'm a new person."

That's right! You are a new person. The Bible says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV).

Now you are justified by faith in Christ. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is a new birth, the beginning of a new life of obedient love and devotion to God--the life of faith.

As a Christian, your motive in everything is to please and glorify God and to serve others. This is your abiding choice, your heart's supreme purpose. This is love--God's love--that now directs your whole life and gives it meaning. No wonder you are different.

1. Live Victoriously By Faith

"But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

"We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4 NKJV).

Your victorious Christian life is not the result merely of your own daily efforts, but of constantly placing your trust in Christ. It is not just trying; it is trusting. It is more than living for Christ; it is letting Christ live in you each moment by faith. Do not try to overcome temptation and solve problems in your own strength. Always look to Christ and trust Him for His strength and help. Christ was your Savior when He forgave your sins, and He continues to be your Savior as He lives in you each day and gives you victory over temptation and sin.

Christ resides within us by His Spirit, sitting upon the throne of our hearts. He also sits upon the throne at the right hand of the Father as our merciful High Priest. "These things I write unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1 NKJV).

2. Read Your Bible Regularly

"But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."'" (Matthew 4:4 NKJV)

"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2 NKJV).

The Bible is your spiritual food. It is necessary for your spiritual growth and maturity. Read it daily. A good place to start is the gospel according to Mark.

Read the Bible prayerfully. It is more than history and literature. It is the inspired Word of God, a gold mine of truth. As you dig for its treasures, ask God to guide you by His Spirit. Ask Him to make it plain to you and to apply it to your own life. As God speaks to you through His word, obey Him. Follow His instructions and believe His promises.

3. Pray Daily

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Prayer is your means of communication with God. It is your spiritual lifeline. Meet God in prayer first thing each morning. Then cultivate the attitude of prayer throughout the day. When tension and frustration begin, stop everything if possible and spend a few moments in prayer.

A well-balanced prayer life includes praise, worship, thanksgiving, intercession (intense, burdened petitioning), and times of quiet waiting on God to give Him a chance to speak to your heart.

Pray in faith and confidence. Unburden your heart to God and believe Him to answer your prayer. If the answer does not come immediately, continue to wait upon the Lord and thank Him for hearing you. God is answering in His own way and time.

If possible, conduct regular family devotions. Bring the whole family together daily at a convenient time. Read a passage from the Bible and pray, with the members of the family taking turns leading in prayer. If time permits, consider individual prayer requests and needs.

4. Become Involved In The Church

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25 NKJV).

Every Christian needs a church home. As a Christian, you are part of the family of God. Other Christians are your brothers and sisters. It is important to worship God together. Also, you need the strength that comes from regular fellowship with other Christians and from the preaching of God’s Word.

You need the ministry of a Spirit-filled pastor. Your pastor watches over the spiritual life of the congregation just as a shepherd watches over his sheep. You are part of your pastor’s “flock.” From your pastor you receive prayerful guidance, counsel, instruction, and even correction if needed. When you need spiritual help or have questions about the Bible and the Christian life, feel free to go to your pastor. Always honor the position, leadership, and ministry of your pastor. And remember to pray for your pastor regularly.

The church is your God-given opportunity for united Christian service and testimony. Find your place of service in the church. Become a voting member so you can participate fully in the business matters of the church.

Support your church with your tithe and offerings. The tithe belongs to God. It is His method of supporting His work. God has promised to bless those who honor Him with tithes and offerings.

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, *“If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”* (Malachi 3:10 NKJV).

As you grow spiritually, so will your opportunities for Christian service. You will experience the joy and fulfillment that comes not only from being blessed and strengthened but also in being a blessing and strength to others.

5. Be Baptized In Water

“Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:12 NKJV).

Water baptism is a public demonstration of your identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. It is a testimony of your faith in the risen Christ. It is a public

declaration that the old “you” is gone, buried with Christ, and that a new “you” is now alive in Christ.

Because water baptism is a public witness of your conversion to Christ, you should be baptized as soon as possible.

6. Witness For Christ

“If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:9-10 NKJV).

Your witness for Christ only begins with your confession of faith and water baptism. Take your stand for Him immediately. When people ask about your change, tell them cheerfully and without hesitation that you are a Christian. Tactfully and prayerfully endeavor to lead others to Christ. And be sure that your life is your best testimony. A sincere, happy, radiant, kind, considerate Christian is the best advertisement Christ has. Be living proof that Christ and His salvation are real.

7. Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

“But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 NKJV).

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4 NKJV).

Before you were saved the Holy Spirit convicted you of sin. He led you to Christ. When you surrendered to Christ, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in you to generate conscious fellowship with God and to integrate you into the body of Christ, the grand fellowship made up of all true Christians.

But the Holy Spirit desires to do much more than just dwell in you. He wants to fill you completely. Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Spirit if you ask Him in faith. This baptism in the Holy Spirit is a definite experience, the door into a new dimension of the presence and work of the Spirit within you. When the Holy Spirit fills you, your whole being is mobilized by Him for dynamic Christian living and service.

The initial, physical evidence of this experience is speaking a new language as you are prompted by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). This definite, observable, uniform sign demonstrates the personality of the Holy Spirit. It is evidence that He has filled you. This is the beginning of the Spirit-filled life.

Believe God’s Word; continue to trust Christ; and the success for your new life is guaranteed: “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6 NKJV).

How To Find A Good Church

where you can grow, serve, belong...

People look for a church for a variety of reasons, some right and some wrong. Wrong reasons are selfish reasons: social status, business and professional contacts, political advantage, to create a religious image, a personally beneficial relationship.

Right reasons flow naturally out of a right heart: to worship God, Christian instruction, Christian fellowship, spiritual growth and development for ourselves and our family, Christian service and witness.

The Church is a fellowship of believers who have a living relationship with one another because they have a living relationship with Jesus Christ. The Bible likens the Church to: a family, a flock of sheep, a bride, a temple, and a body. If you are spiritually “connected” with the Head, Jesus Christ, you are part of His body, the Church. It is very important that you find your place in His body where you and your family can function and be nourished spiritually.

So, how does one find a good church?

Let’s start with a general overview of the various kinds of churches. When Jesus Christ established His Church, it was of one faith and fellowship. As the Church grew and expanded, it encountered a variety of cultures. These cultures had an influence on the Church. The Roman Empire itself left its organizational and cultural stamp on the Church, especially after the emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the empire. The organization of the Church became more centralized, formal, and rigid. After a dozen or more centuries, the Church bore little resemblance to the dynamic, Spirit-filled fellowship of the first century.

The church became politicized. Attachment to the organized Church and the observance of its rituals became more important than a personal relationship with Jesus Christ Himself. The condition of the Church declined.

Then came the Reformation. Probably the best known reformer was Martin Luther. One day he discovered (or re-discovered) the simple basic truth of the gospel: “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

That revolutionized Christianity, resulting in the great reformation churches (Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc.). The actions of King Henry VIII separated the Church of England from Rome.

Things did not stop there. The movement to restore Christianity to its original Biblical purity continued. An emphasis upon one doctrine and practice or another resulted in the Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Christian Church and Church of Christ, Nazarenes, Church of God, and others.

Then, in the early 20th century the Pentecostal movement and its resulting denominations arose.

The religious dynamic at work in the United States during the 19th century also spawned several groups that identify themselves as churches but that in reality are outside of the historic Christian faith. These include: Mormonism, Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the metaphysical cults.

Today, churches are grouped together under two general headings: Catholic and Protestant. Protestant churches are generally of two kinds: liberal and evangelical.

Liberal churches tend to deny the literal teachings of the Bible and thus the historic Christian faith, including the need for personal salvation, emphasizing social issues instead. Liberal churches in America are declining.

Evangelical churches are those who regard the Bible as the inspired and infallible word of God and thus hold to the essentials of the original Christian faith, including the need for personal salvation. Evangelical churches are growing.

So then, in finding a good church, prayerfully follow these important basic criteria:

(1) Find out what the church and the pastor believe. What is their statement of faith regarding the Bible and its teachings, God, Jesus Christ, salvation, the Holy Spirit, etc. This not where most people start, even though it is of first importance. Failure to start here is a big mistake.

(2) Once a church passes the first test, experience its services and listen to the preaching. Is the worship sincere and vibrant, or mechanical and cold? Does the pastor preach the word of God or his/her own opinions? Are the people loving, friendly and united? Do you feel “at home” and accepted?

(3) If a church passes these first two tests, next evaluate its ministries. Does it provide resources for your spiritual growth and the Christian education and development of your family? Does it provide opportunities for Christian service and evangelism? Does it have a strong missionary emphasis?

Every Christian needs to find his or her place in Christ’s Church. “God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (1 Corinthians 12:18 NKJV).

If you are a Christian, you are a part of the Church. Find your place in a local unit of the Church. Join it; support it; become involved in it; be faithful to it; share in its benefits.