



# THE POWER TO CHANGE

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Change. If we're honest, most of us would have to admit there's something we'd like to change in our life.

Maybe it's our job, the quality of our relationships, or even our outlook on life. Deep down, we all desire to be better people.

But how do we do that?

How do we really change"

The answer is found in knowing Jesus.

He gives us the power to change.

who lived 2,000 years ago.

Millions more claim he's living and active today, and consider his teaching to be the most important part of their life.

Some people claim he's just a good man

This book, a gift from your local church, parish, or prayer group, will give you a glimpse of who Jesus is and what he has to say to you today.

Through it, we hope you'll find and experience the power to change.



THE QUESTIONS 4
OF LIFE
What can Jesus do in your life? The answer may surprise you.



THE PERSON 14
OF JESUS
Who is he anyway? A liar, lunatic, or lord?





THE WAY TO GROW 50
Four lessons to help you develop your relationship with Jesus.

EXPERIENCE
THE POWER

TO CHANGE







Does Jesus matter today? Here's what he offers.

### OF LIFE

Life is full of questions.

Some are simple to answer.

What am I going to eat for dinner?

Where did I put my keys?

Others are, well, more challenging.

What's my purpose in life?

How can I find peace?

Can I really change my life?

You can look for these answers in many places—newspaper columns, friends' advice or new-fangled philosophies.
But have you considered how Jesus could answer these questions for you?

"You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." **Augustine** 

Imagine for a moment that you're building a house. You hire a building contractor, but he never consults the blueprints drawn up by your architect, your designer. He works without a plan. An unwise move—because the contractor needs to know where to lay the foundation, erect the walls and place the windows. Only then will the home look the way it was intended.

The same can be said of life. How can we try to build our life without first consulting the great architect of life, the one who created us for a wonderful

purpose? The Bible says, "We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them" (Romans 8:28).

Furthermore, there is more to be gained by living according to God's plan. True fulfillment and meaning in life is found in God. That's why St. Augustine said centuries ago, "You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

By asking Jesus—God's son—to be the biggest part of your life, you will discover the very purpose for which God created you. There is nothing and no one else who can do this—no amount of money, no philosophy, no person. Just Jesus. He said of himself, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).





#### HOW CAN I HAVE PEACE?

Perhaps right now you're experiencing fears and frustrations in your life. Maybe you're worried about your job, relationships, finances or children. You are not alone. Nearly everyone has similar problems. And trusting in God—being a Christian—doesn't exempt you. You'll not suddenly live a problem-free life. Tough times happen to all people.

But Jesus gives strength and peace in each difficulty. He says, "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid (John 14:27). Jesus also says in the Bible, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

### HOW CAN I DEAL WITH PAST MISTAKES?

Let's face it. We all mess up. We all do things we shouldn't. Tell lies. Steal office supplies. Say things we're sorry about later. Spread bad rumours. Swear at other drivers. And we all carry attitudes. We think we're better than others and often care only for ourselves.

All of these wrong actions, harsh words and bad attitudes are what the Bible labels as sin. Now that's not a pleasant word to hear nowadays. We'd all like to think we're pretty good people. Yet we so often find ourselves acting selfishly—that's really what sin is. Going our own way. Doing our own thing. No matter how good we think we are, our sin stands between us and God. All people fall short of his perfect standard (Romans 3:23) and this keeps us from personally knowing God's love.



There is good news though. Jesus has taken care of our sins. His death on the cross some 2,000 years ago paid for the penalty of our sin, just so we could have a right relationship with God and experience his love. Because of Jesus, we can be forgiven of all our shortcomings, our mistakes, our sins. God alone can pardon us, and fulfill God's justice.

Think of it this way. A young woman is charged for speeding and goes before a magistrate. After the charge is read, he gives the sentence. A \$175.00 fine. But the woman is unable to pay. Then the judge, in an unusual move, comes down from the bench, opens his wallet and offers to pay the fine. It's up to the woman to accept or reject the generous offer. The story illustrates what Jesus has done for us. He knows our sin, yet when we stand humbly before him, he is willing to forgive our debt completely. Jesus offers us his free gift of grace. We just need to turn away from selfishness, toward Jesus, and receive his forgiveness.

#### HOW CAN I REALLY CHANGE?

Often when men and women are faced with the person of Jesus, they say something like this: "I'd like to follow Jesus but if I do, I'm sure I'll never be able to live the life. I've made mistakes, I carry resentments, I face temptations, and I say a lot of things I shouldn't. I could never live the Christian life."

In fact, they're right. No matter how good you are, you can't live the Christian life on your own. When you become a Christian, you ask Jesus to live in and through you—so it's no longer what you do, but what Jesus does that gives you the power to change. He's the one who gives you the ability to live a new life, to start over again.

What can Jesus do for you? He can give purpose and meaning to your life. He can grant you peace throughout your day. He can wipe away all your sin, and give you forgiveness. And he can empower you to change. It is when we make Jesus number one in our life that we begin to discover God's best for us.

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#### SHERENE LILBOY



"Our encounter with Jesus in September, 1998 brought an end to years of unbelievable suffering with poverty, sickness and demonic possession."

My husband and I raised five girls under some of the most unimaginable circumstances. I came from a Muslim background, while my husband grew up Hindu.

However, neither of us were committed to any

faith. My husband was heavily into drugs, alcohol and immorality. He could not hold a steady job, so we lived in abject poverty. Our next door neighbor was deeply involved in the occult (Obejah). Out of our despair, we contacted her. What we did not realize at the time was that this was a demonic trap. Instead of things getting better, they grew much worse, with our lives wasting away.

Our home was often troubled by demonic spirits. It was very oppressive, to the point that my girls and I actually attempted suicide. We would often travel to other parts of the country where "Obejahism" was practiced, seeking help from our poverty and sickness. We even participated in dancing over red hot coals, but nothing brought us freedom and peace.

Not far from our home was a church that believed in salvation, healing

#### CHALLENGES OF LIFE

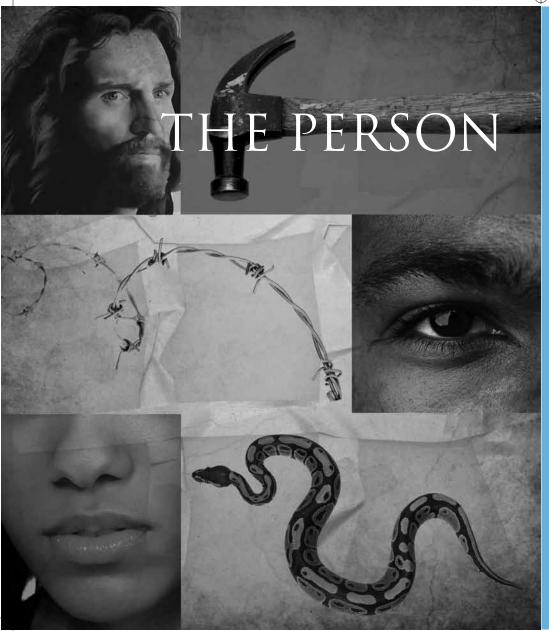
and deliverance in the name of Jesus. We had never visited before, but one day we decided to attend. For the first time we heard the message of salvation and the power of Jesus to cleanse us from sin, bring healing to our bodies and deliverance from oppression.

My husband and I decided to accept Jesus Christ into our lives as Savior and Lord and to lead our children to faith in Christ. That one decision has altered the very structure of our lives as a family. My husband was set free from drugs and alcohol. I was completely delivered from demonic possession, including the sickness it had brought with it. With Jesus at our side, we are able to face the challenges of life and enjoy His peace, forgiveness and mercy. God has also blessed us with our own home and our own business. All praise be unto Jesus! Receiving Jesus was the very best and most important decision of our lives.

A few years after we were serving Jesus, I was diagnosed with a heart condition. I received treatment for seven years. When the doctors decided I needed a triple by-pass because my condition had become much worse, arrangements were made to do surgery. A number of tests were done and analyzed by several doctors from abroad. My pastor and others began to pray for me. I believed the Lord had healed me, I felt it in my body. The day before surgery, they did a final test to confirm what all the other tests had shown. To the utter shock and amazement of the doctors, the blockages were all gone! They concluded that it was a miracle. It was a miracle indeed, Jesus had healed my body.







Jesus offers a lot. But can he really deliver?

## OF JESUS

Jesus of Nazareth.

He's one of history's greatest personalities.
Standing at the very centre of human history,
Jesus changed everything—
from our system of justice to our concept of time.

But who is he, really?

The Bible tells us that Jesus was born to a virgin, lived a sinless life and taught only a few years in Palestine before being crucified on a Roman cross. Three days after his burial, he rose from the dead, was seen by at least 500 different people and shortly after, ascended to heaven.



16 THE PERSON OF JESUS

During his time on earth, Jesus claimed he had the power to forgive sins, cast out demons and determine people's eternal destiny. In short, he declared himself to be God.

Make no mistake, the story of Jesus is an incredible one. But for some people, it just seems too incredible to be true. Jesus may have been an important religious figure, or even a great moral teacher, they reason, but he could not have been God.

This position may seem like a valid one. But as former Oxford university professor C.S. Lewis explained in his book, Mere Christianity, "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher; he'd either be a lunatic on a level with a man who says he's a poached egg—or else he'd be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse."

Lewis went on to say, "You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

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#### LEGEND?

# LEGEND?

Was Jesus' claim to be God nothing more than a figment of the early church's imagination? Something added to the Bible by Jesus' followers? It's an interesting idea, but most scholars believe that at least three of the Bible's gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark and Luke) were written within a generation of Jesus. Many eyewitnesses would still have been alive to disagree with these first century writings. But there is no evidence of that occurring.

In fact, there is more evidence for the reliability of the New Testament writings than any 10 pieces of classical literature put together. Historians of ancient Greece, for example, have to rely on only eight manuscripts of Thucydide's *History of the Peloponnesian War* with the earliest one written some 1,300 years after the originals. Biblical scholars meanwhile, have more than 20,000 New Testament manuscripts at their disposal, with several copied less than 200 years after Jesus' birth.

Lastly, there is no question that the early Christians believed in and worshipped one of their own countrymen as God in human form. It's never been seriously disputed. Which leaves us to wonder at such behaviour. If, in fact, Jesus never claimed to be God, what were a bunch of monotheists (believers in only one God) doing falling at his feet?

"You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill
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C.S. Lewis

#### LIAR OR LUNATIC?

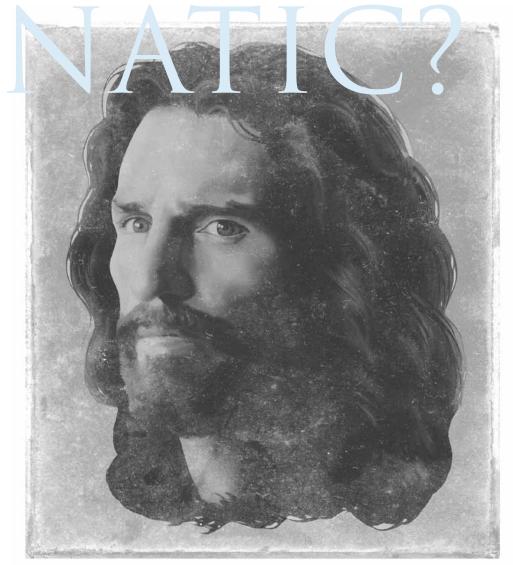
So Jesus really did claim to be God. Now what?

Simply put, his claim can either be true or false. If it's false, then he was a liar, deliberately misleading people. Or, he was a lunatic—a man who sincerely believed himself to be God when he wasn't.

If we accept Jesus as a liar, then we must also call him evil. Let's face it. He told people to be honest whatever the cost, promised them eternal life without sorrow or pain and said he could forgive sin. Meanwhile, he was living a colossal lie? Not likely.

As for the lunatic option, it too is out of the question. Jesus' words and actions just aren't consistent with those of a deluded or disturbed man. Even his harshest critics cannot find fault in his teaching. Instead, he is most often regarded as a man of penetrating insight.

# LIAR?



#### LORD?

It's the only option left. If Jesus wasn't a liar or lunatic, then he could only have been who he said he was—God in human form. The principles of logic demand that conclusion. More than that, it explains why unprecedented and miraculous things happened in Jesus' presence.

Consider the man who'd been lame for 38 years and who, after one conversation with Jesus, was healed (John 5:1-13). Or the man who'd been born blind and started seeing after Jesus touched his eyes (John 9:1-15). Or Lazarus, who'd been dead for four days, but came back to life at Jesus' command (John 11:38-44).

If, in fact,

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It's hard to imagine what it would have been like to witness these amazing events, but nevertheless, they happened. Even Jesus' enemies said so. They saw the lame man walking (John:9-10) and questioned the blind man about his sight (John 9:8-34).

Not understanding who Jesus was, some people wondered: "How could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?" (John 9:16)

But the former blind man knew the true answer. "If this man were not from God, he couldn't do it" (John 9:33).







"I was born into a Muslim family and later came to have a step-mother who was Hindu, so I experienced both Muslim and Hindu religious practices in my early childhood years."

At age fourteen I started to smoke cigarettes, use alcohol and eventually marijuana. Often I would get drunk and became involved in some serious fights. Once, while in a drunken

state, I stabbed a man who was beating up on my brother and ended up in the lock ups. I was an angry, hateful man and easily became involved in conflict. Because of all of this, I was abusive to my parents and later when I was married, my wife suffered under my verbal and physical abuse. I added adultery to my many sins and caused my family much emotional pain and distress. My wife, who is a Hindu would pray and ask God to change me. She would get on her knees and beat the floor with her hands saying – "Oh God, when are you going to change him?". Looking back I don't know which god she was praying to, but I do know that after many years, God Jehovah, the Almighty has changed me by the power of Jesus Christ so much that I cannot cease to praise Him.

I have been a sailor for many years and still work at sea. In 1987 I fell ill while at sea and my wife, without my knowledge consulted the obeah

#### CAUGHT IN A STORM

man (witch doctor). When I came home she told me I had to visit him. At this time I got involved in many evil practices. In that same year, 1987, our family moved and we came to live next door to a Christian family. My neighbor gave me a Bible and told me to read Psalm 3, 7, 10, 18 and 91. I read these Psalms over and over again and God began to speak to my heart. I felt that my life was about to change.

It was then that attacks started happening on my life. Four times I almost died in the Caribbean Sea, it seems to me that the devil was trying to kill me. Twice the vessel in which I was in, sank. Once the lifeboat floated away and had to be retrieved. Once we were caught in a storm and our boat took in as much as three feet of water, so that we had to battle to save our lives. Each accident at sea, was a near death experience, but each time God graciously spared me, so that I would one day come to Him. I will forever give Him thanks and praise for not only saving my life but also that of my crew. I continued to read the Psalms. He was drawing me, even though I still was very far from Him. I recognized that it was only God that could have saved my life so many times. I began to think that if He is the one that is saving me, He must really love and care for me, so I decided to seek Him more.

Years passed and in 2006 I went to the market to assist my wife with the family business. While there, I saw a Christian man that I knew was strong in his faith. I approached him and asked him where he wor-



shipped. After a brief discussion we decided that he should pick me up for church the next morning.

That night, there was so much struggle in my heart. The devil tried every trick possible to keep me from going to church, but he did not succeed. The next morning, I went to church with Joey and accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior and later I was baptized. This was the happiest day of my life.

Today, my faith in God is strong. There are still trials in my life. In 2009 while out at sea, trawler fishing at a depth of some 200 feet, the fishing gear ended up in the mud and pulled the boat crossways with water gushing in. We battled for our lives. I prayed to God to help us and He did! My wife and family are not yet saved, but I feel the love and peace of God in my heart. I pray that they will one day come to know Jesus Christ. I feel contentment and joy in my Christian life. God has placed me under the care of a most loving pastor and his wife. I love them dearly. It is my joy to serve as part of the leadership team in my local church.

I say humbly that today – "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me". (Galatians 2:20) Praise God.

#### PATRICIA ALLEN



"The Scriptures say that to 'obey is better than sacrifice'. Disobedience to parents and to the Lord can lead to serious consequences, emotional pain and lifelong scars."

My life is a testimony to this fact. I shall forever be grateful to the Lord for His grace and mercy.

My mother was a believer and faithfully served the Lord. From the time I was little, I grew up in church. By the time I was eleven, I made a personal decision to make Jesus my Savior and Lord. I was determined to follow Him. At age twelve I was water baptized and by fifteen, I became the youth leader in my local church. It was a time of mental strength, courage and most of all the grace of the Lord. I was focused and determined to fulfill the purpose of God in my life.

In school I began to be mentally and spiritually distracted by friends who were not believers. I began to follow their ways and went completely out of the hands of the Lord. During this time, I formed an attachment with a young man and we began to spend time together and I became deeply involved. Several times my mother and pastor warned me about my lifestyle and that I was throwing my life away. I paid no







#### A WAYWARD LIFESTYLE

attention to them or their warnings.

Soon I became pregnant. Teen pregnancy is now very high in Guyana. When my mother found out she could not handle it. My local church also rejected me. I felt shame and embarrassment and for more than two years stayed away from church. I continued my wayward lifestyle with my child's father.

After two years, I wanted to recommit my life to Christ, but sadly, I valued my relationship to this young man more than I did Jesus. Soon I became pregnant for the second time and I went through the most difficult period in my life. My second child was born with brain damage and numerous other serious physical complications. She bled profusely and the doctors couldn't seem to determine the cause. At birth she was nine pounds, but within a few months she was reduced to two pounds and was motionless in bed for months. It was more than I could bear. My heart was eating away slowly and I felt like I was dying with her. To make matters worse, I was charged with poisoning my daughter and was kept under "closed arrest" for one month in the hospital.

One morning at 4 AM I had a vision from the Lord that lasted about two hours. In this vision I was in hell and saw many people I knew in pain and anguish. I saw people like myself, who were backslidden, crying out for help. I was terrified at this scene and knew that this would be my final destiny if I did not surrender my life back to the Lord. In the vision, I

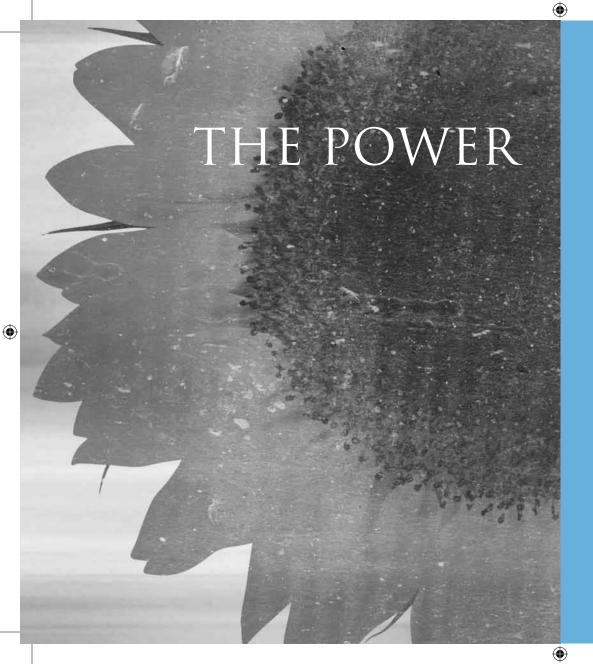
began to cry loudly that God would give me a chance. At that moment, a woman I recognized came up to me and asked what I was doing there? She told me that I was not supposed to be there and to get out quickly and warn others about this place.

Shortly after I came to myself and went to my knees confessing and repenting of my sin. I completely surrendered my life to Jesus. Now I am experiencing His love, peace and forgiveness. My life will never be the same again. Today, I lead worship in my church and my daughter is slowly recovering. He is a God of grace and mercy.









Here's some good news—which can change your life.

## TO CHANGE

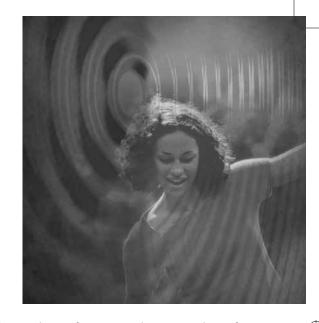
We live in a world where many are pessimistic about the future. The problems of crime, violence, economic uncertainty and human suffering show little signs of going away. Against this background, Jesus Christ offers real hope. He highlights our basic need to find peace with God. He then makes such reconciliation possible.

Power to Change is really about one thing: knowing Jesus. The Bible tells of his birth, his teaching, his death and his coming back to life. It also shares the news of what Jesus offers each of us: love, forgiveness and a new beginning.

These next few pages can help you understand what it means to know Jesus and experience his power personally.



God created you. Not only that, he loves you so much that he wants you to spend eternity with him. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)



God says, "For I know the plans I have for you...they are plans for good and not for disaster, to give a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Jesus came so that each of us could know and understand God in a personal way. Jesus alone can bring meaning and purpose to life.

■ So why is it that most people do not know God in this way?

# OWER



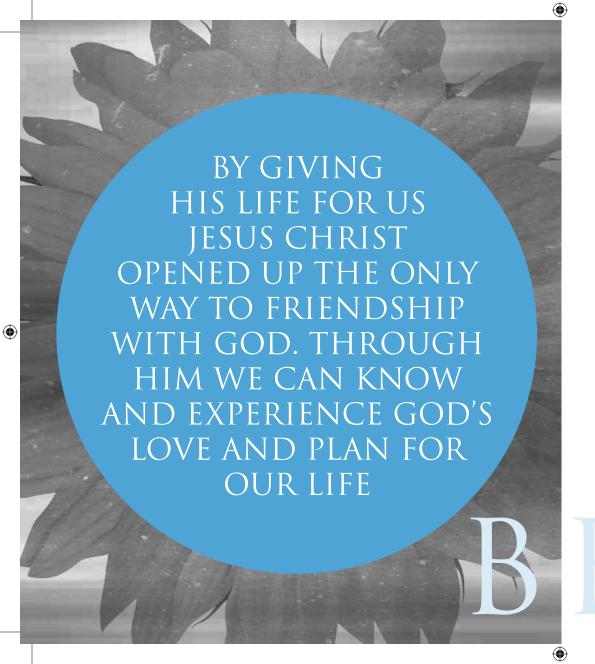
The fact is, we need Jesus. The Bible says, "...all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23b). Though God intended for us to have a relationship with Him, we naturally want to do things our own way. We're stubborn, selfish, and frequently unable to follow through on our promises. Try as we might, we just keep stumbling.

Deep down, our attitude may be one of active rebellion or passive indifference, but it's all evidence of what the Bible calls sin—an old archery term which literally means "missing the mark."

The Bible says the result of sin in our lives is death—spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23). A great gap exists between us and God. While we often try to reach God and find a meaningful life through our own efforts by trying to do good things or adopting a new guiding philosophy—we inevitably fail. We just can't ever be good enough. **HOLY GOD** 

■ *So what is the answer to this problem?* 





Jesus Christ is God's solution to the problem of human imperfection and evil. Because of Jesus' death on the cross, we don't have to be separated from God any longer. Jesus paid the price for our sin and in so doing, bridged the gap between us and God.

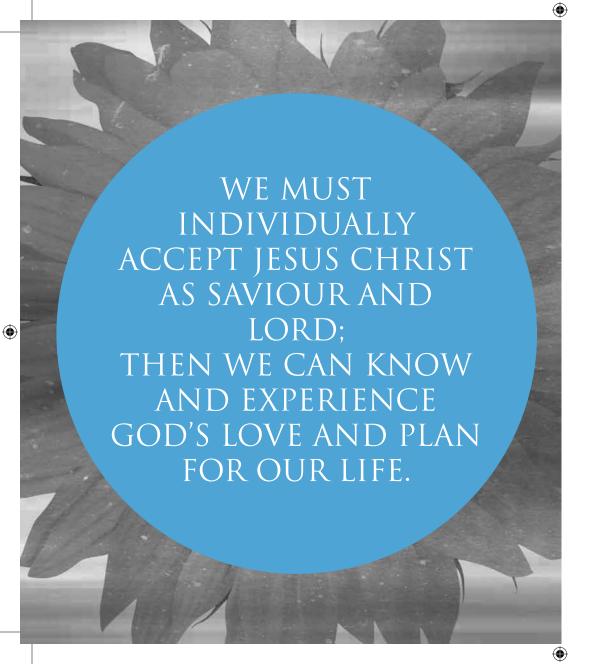
Instead of trying harder to reach God, we simply need to accept Jesus and his sacrifice as the one way to God. "I am the way, the truth and the life," Jesus said. "No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

He also said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish" (John 11:25-26).

But not only did Jesus die for our sin, he rose from the dead (I Corinthians 15:3-6). When he did, he proved beyond doubt that he can rightfully promise eternal life—that he is the Son of God and the only means by which we can know God.

Yet just having knowledge about God's plans and purposes isn't enough. We need to consciously recognize that Jesus has paid the price for our sin and more than that, we need to welcome him into our life.

■ *So what is the answer to this problem?* 



The Bible says, "But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

We accept Jesus by faith. The Bible says, "God saved you by his special favour when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Accepting Jesus means first believing that Jesus is who he claimed to be, then inviting him to take control of our life and make us into a new person (John 3:1-8).

Jesus said, "I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20).



These circles describe two kinds of people.

#### Self-Centered Person



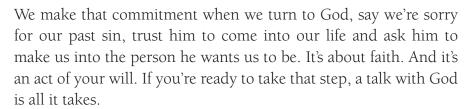
- **S** Self is in control
- † Jesus is outside the life
- Interests centered on self, often resulting in discord and frustration

#### **Christ-Centered Person**



- † Jesus is in the life and in control
- **S** Self is following Jesus Christ
- Interests centered on Christ, resulting in growing harmony with God's purpose
- Which example describes you best?
- Which example would you like to describe you?

Letting God change you into the person he created you to be is the most significant decision you can ever make. It's not enough to just agree intellectually that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died on the cross for our sins. We need to make a personal commitment.



Remember, God knows your heart so the words you say aren't nearly as important as the attitude of your heart. If you're unsure what to say to him, that's OK; here's a sample prayer you can follow:

"Heavenly Father, I am truly sorry that I have been going my own way. I confess with my mouth and believe in my heart that Jesus died and paid the price for my sins, was buried and was raised from the dead. I ask you to forgive all my sins. I accept that you are the only one who can give me the power to change and save me from an eternity apart from you. Take control of my life. Make me the person you want me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen."

#### Could you say this to God and mean it?

If you could, pray this prayer right now and Christ will come into your life as he promised.



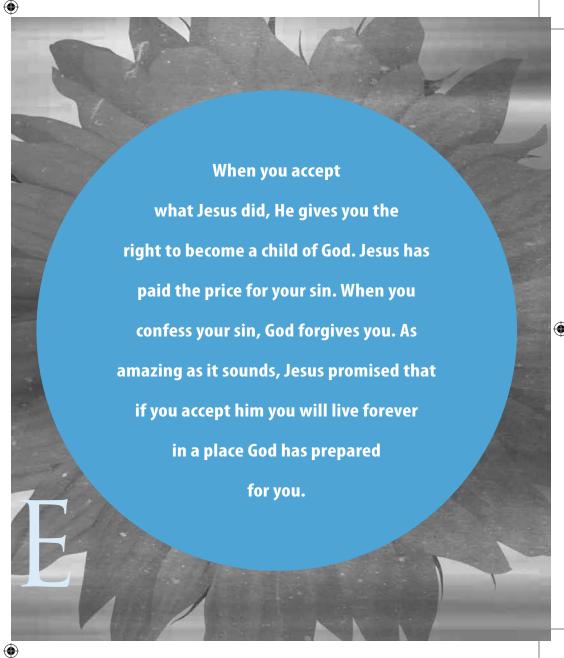


When you accept what Jesus did, He gives you the right to become a child of God. Jesus has paid the price for your sin. When you confess your sin, God forgives you. As amazing as it sounds, Jesus promised that if you accept him you will live forever in a place God has prepared for you.

If you've prayed the prayer and invited Jesus into your life, you've taken a significant step in becoming a follower of Jesus.

In the next section, you'll find some short lessons to help you understand more about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

PROMIS







"Now I know that I have the gift of eternal life and when I die I am going to Heaven."

The idea of following Jesus and more so, being a pastor, never in the slightest way occurred to me in my youth. I came from a Muslim family and although my father was a drunkard, adulterer, wife abuser and never kept a job, he was nevertheless very strict and

ensured that we attended school and Madarsa (school for Islamic training) daily.

We lived in dirt poverty and as far as I can remember, we never had enough to wear or eat. I often wondered what would become of my future and that of my siblings (later, it turned out to be ten brothers and four sisters from three mothers, that we know about).

I felt very fearful, insecure and embarrassed about my condition in life. The thing that mortified me the most and brought so much shame and emotional pain was the fact that at one time my father had two wives living in the same leaking house. Although Islam sanctions the life style, it was never an accepted practice in our culture. Even Muslim women, out of their own free will, rejected the practice. I knew this from my own mother's experience. I know the shame and humiliation my mother

#### FEAR CAME TO THE SURFACE

went through during this period. The men in the Muslim community never supported my mother, as they felt that the practice was quite legitimate in Islam and so we continued to suffer in silence.

I purposed in my heart that I would not be like my father, but the only guidance I had to look to was Islam. What I find strange and ironical to this day, is that instead of hating Muslims and Islam, I found myself drawn closer to it. Even my mother encouraged us to go regularly to the local mosque.

So I began a journey into Islam from a tender age. I prayed five times per day, fasted during the month of Ramadan, memorized the entire Qur'an (all 114 surahs) and practiced every aspect of my religion. However, before long I was plagued by feelings of fear and insecurity regarding my eternal destiny. There was no inner peace and fulfillment, despite the fact that I was very religious. I had no assurance of salvation and a place with God.

This fear came to the surface on the night of the 29th of April, 1973 when I heard the Gospel for the first time as I stepped into a Christian church on my way home from the mosque. The message was simple, but troubling: "Prepare to meet your God". It was then for the first time I realized that despite all my Islamic involvement, I was not prepared to meet God. I felt instantly that if I should die that night, I would not be going to Heaven. I realized that I needed something more than a





ritualistic religious practice, but a fulfilling and meaningful relationship with God. Out of this deep need I made my decision to submit to the call to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. At that moment, a thought came to me – "what if you end up in the same place in this new religion?". But the pull was too strong, as if someone was leading me and I was floating on air. While at the altar at this Christian church, in my full Islamic dress, with my eyes dead shut, a man (whom I now know was Jesus) came to me in a vision and said – "I am the way, follow Me". At that instant moment I felt a flood of love and peace filling my life, all my fears and insecurities were now gone and my life and future took on a different shape.

My parents, especially my father was not very happy, due to constant pleading from the Muslim community. They came down on him hard, I knew he was not sure how to handle the situation. My father & eldest brother made a decision to give me six months after which they felt sure I would turn back. That never happened. The Lord gave me all I needed to serve Him faithfully.

Now I have the assurance of salvation. I know that when I die I will go to be with the Lord in heaven. My fear of death and insecurity are gone forever and I am safe in His hand. "For he who has the Son has life."

#### **DIOMATTIE GOVINDA**



"I was raised in Hinduism. At the age of sixteen, I met a handsome young man. He asked my hand in marriage, my parents agreed, we were married and lived with his parents."

My mother-in-law is a Christian and took me to church with her. In Hinduism, you do not understand what is being taught, but are required to accept what they teach anyway.

But this pastor read from the Bible and spoke in a way that I understood. I was given a choice to accept or reject what was said. I chose to receive Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

Shortly thereafter I became sick with a disease that the doctors could not diagnose. My mother-in-law invited her pastor and other Christians to come and pray for me. My face started to contort and as they prayed for me, I was delivered from the demons that had made me sick. I was completely healed!

Just after the birth of our first son, I discovered my husband was having an affair and the lady he was now with was pregnant. I was deeply hurt and returned to my parents with my son.

One night my husband came to my parent's home and demanded I





return with my son. My father objected and all of a sudden, I felt this burning sensation in my head and lost consciousness. Six weeks later I regained consciousness in the hospital. My head was shaved, bandaged and I was in great pain. I soon discovered that my husband had shot me and my parents. They had died instantly, and here I was with a bullet lodged in my brain. The bullet had shattered my right ear drum, damaged vital nerves, I was paralyzed on the right side, could not walk and my face was badly twisted on the right side.

Surgery was required to remove the bullet, but since my family could not raise the money, I was sent home. I knew that only God could help me. I began to pray that God would heal me and I started to get well. Six weeks after they took me home, I was able to walk with some assistance. Six weeks later I was walking and doing things for myself and my face started to become normal again. God told me He would heal my ear and one day my right ear popped open and I can hear perfectly!

I hated my husband and never wanted to see him again. God told me to forgive him and pray for him. As I prayed for him, I found myself asking that God would save him from a death penalty. God began to work forgiveness into my heart. Before his case was started, I sensed that he would get five years and that is exactly what happened.

One day I received a letter from my husband, asking for forgiveness and said that he was praying for me. I wrote him back and told him I was

praying for him too. Over time, I began to feel that God wanted me to take him back. My family was very angry at me for this.

When he was released from prison, God put such a love in my heart for him. It flooded my entire being. At that moment the hurt and pain went away and we were reconciled. Family and friends thought our marriage would never work. We started over with nothing and nobody wanted to have anything to do with us. I soon became pregnant with my second son. Because of our poverty, everyone was telling us to abort the baby, but we decided to keep the baby and trust God to provide. From the time we made that decision we never had to ask anyone for anything. God miraculously provided.

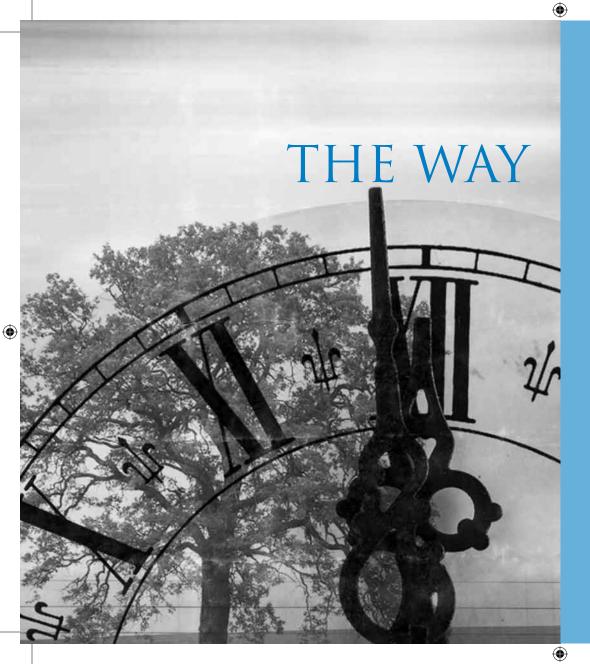
Through the years we have had many challenges, but we fought for and never gave up on our marriage and family. Twenty-six years later we are still a family and God actually blessed us with another child, a daughter. We also have been blessed with our own home and business. To God be all the glory, honor and praise for all that He has done. Amen.











Four lessons to help you develop your relationship with God

## TO GROW

"Now that I've asked God to forgive me and change my life, do I have to be perfect?"

No, being a Christian isn't about doing or saying all the right things. It's based on a vital, personal relationship with God.

As you start out, you will probably have many questions, and maybe even a few doubts. The following four lessons will direct you to some of the answers. It often helps to share with a Christian friend that you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. You'll soon discover that developing a relationship with God is a lifelong learning process.



### WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES JESUS MAKE?

#### Understanding your relationship with Jesus Christ

By sincerely asking Jesus to come onto your life, you can know that your relationship with God is secure. You've embarked on a life of adventure with an all-loving, all-powerful God.

■ So what happened when you invited Jesus into your life?

#### 1. He forgave your sin.

"[God] is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven" (Ephesians 1:7—you'll find this verse in the New Testament book of Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 7).

Jesus has paid the price for all our sins. What difference do you think it makes to know that God has purchased our freedom?

### 2. He gives you the right to become a child of God.

"But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan—this rebirth comes from God" (John 1:12,13).

■ What did you do to be given the right to become a child of God?

#### 3. He came into your life and will never leave you.

(Jesus speaking) "And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

(Jesus speaking) "Those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them" (John 6:37).

- *Is there anything that might cause Jesus to leave you?*
- According to the verse John 6:37, how many times do you have to receive Jesus? See answers on page 96.

#### 4. He gave you new life.

"Those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

You have a chance to start over, to begin a new spiritual life. God will develop new qualities in you as you get to know him better.

#### 5. He gave you eternal life.

"And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life. I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life" (1 John 5:11-13).

If you have sincerely prayed a prayer along the lines of the example given on page 41, this is truly the first day of the rest of your life. If you were to die tonight, you can have the assurance that you will spend eternity with him.







All these benefits are possible only through Jesus Christ. None of them can be earned, they are God's free gift to those who put their faith in him.

- Which of these five truths are especially meaningful to you now?
- Why?

#### **Dealing with Doubts**

Once you've made a decision, it's natural to have doubts. Tomorrow, you may not "feel" like a Christian.

Remember, though, that many things affect our feelings—friends, health, weather, and more. Don't gauge your relationship with Jesus by your emotions, which may change. Instead, trust in God and the truths set out in the Bible, which don't change.

#### Suggestions for Further Growth

Every day throughout this week, reflect on one of the five truths you've just read. Read the accompanying verses and thank God for each one of these truths.

If you don't already have a Bible, you can get one from your local bookshop. There are many excellent Bibles written in modern English. Or, ask a church leader, member of the clergy or Christian friend for suggestions. Find out about your local church, fellowship, or prayer group. Tell someone this week that you have a relationship with Jesus.

#### **Summary**

Because you've accepted Jesus, you have now entered a new relationship with God as your Father. You are his child. He forgave your sins and gave you a new life with the promise of eternal life. He will not fail you or desert you. When facing doubts about your decision, rely on these and other truths in the Bible, not on your feelings.

What happens when you struggle and fall short in your efforts to live the Christian life? You'll find the answer in the next lesson.







#### HOW DO I DEAL WITH SIN?

#### Experiencing God's love and forgiveness

It was a small thing—a driver cut you off, a classmate insulted you, your partner forgot to pick you up—but suddenly you're swearing and yelling, out of control. Or, you find yourself tempted by other actions and attitudes, like gossip or bitterness, that take your focus off God.

The word "sin" carries the idea of falling short of a target, missing the mark. When we do what we want instead of what God wants, we sin.

When old habits and attitudes creep up, don't get discouraged. You're still God's child. Sin, however, disrupts our closeness to God, our communication with him. It keeps us from experiencing his love.

And we all sin, even as Christians. That's why we all need God's forgiveness regularly.

#### 1. The basis for God's love and forgiveness

"Christ also suffered when he died for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18)

When Jesus died for us, he made it possible for us to have a relationship with God. His death also allows us to claim God's forgiveness daily.

"You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. He cancelled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross" (Colossians 2:13-14).

When this passage was written, a "record" was an itemised list of crimes for which a prisoner had been convicted. It was nailed to the prison door. Once the sentence was served or the debt paid, the prisoner could use the cancelled record as proof he could never be tried for those crimes again.

Similarly, when we trust in Jesus' payment for our sins, we can never be tried for them again. We have a full pardon from God.

"He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our rebellious acts as far away from us as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:10-12).

- According to this verse, what has God done with your sins?
- For how many of your sins did Jesus die?

# Answers to these questions are on page 96.



#### **(**

### 2. Experiencing God's love and forgiveness daily

Although you are totally forgiven, you still need to deal with your sins day-to-day to keep a close relationship with God. You need to confess your sin.

#### Confession—Agreeing with God that you have Sinned

"But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong" (1 John 1:9).

When God brings to mind some sin in your life, confess it.

Confession includes:

- Agreeing with God that you have sinned.
- Thanking God for his forgiveness
- Asking God to change your wrong attitudes and actions and trust that he will.

Instead of feeling guilty, turn back to God and away from your sin. This repentance allows you to experience God's love and forgiveness. It restores you to a close relationship with him.

#### Putting it into Practice

Right now, or tonight before you go to bed:

- Ask God to reveal any sin in your life.
- You might even find it helpful to list these on a piece of paper.
- After completing your list, write over it the promise of 1 John 1:9 (written on page 62).
- Thank God for providing forgiveness through Jesus' death on the cross.
- Tear up the list and throw it away.
- How often do you need to confess a sin to God?
- When should you confess a sin?

See answers on page 96.





#### **Experience the Results**

"Finally, I confessed my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.' And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone" (Psalm 32:5).

■ What if you still feel guilty after you have confessed your sins?

Count on God's Word, the Bible—it says you're forgiven. Don' rely on your feelings. God also encourages us to make whatever reparation we can with other people in cases of injury or hurt to others, e.g. to ask for forgiveness from any individual involved in the injury or hurt.

If you don't confess sin, however, there's a good reason for feeling guilty.

■ In light of what we have looked at concerning guilt and forgiveness, how would you complete this statement? When I have confessed all my sins, I...

#### **Suggestions for Further Growth**

Try to spend 15 minutes or so each day alone, getting to know God better through Bible reading and prayer. Here are some suggestions:

- 1. If you don't already have a Bible, get one (see page 57).
- 2. Read Jesus' story of the young runaway who wasted his inheritance (Luke 15:11-32). What does the story illustrate about our relationship with God, about forgiveness, and our fellowship with him?
- 3. Read Galatians 5:16-23. Notice how allowing God to work in your life makes a difference. As you become aware of an area of your life that displeases God, deal with it according to 1 John 1:9 and then enjoy a renewed closeness with him.









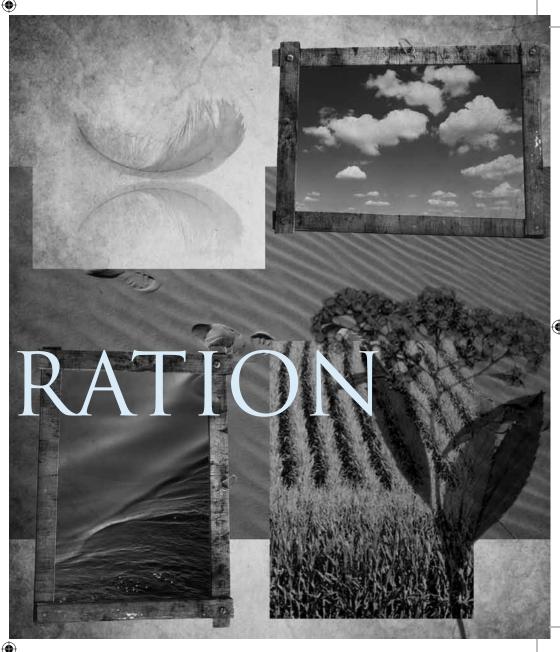
#### **Summary**

By continually confessing our sins to God and trusting in his forgiveness, we can experience his love and grow closer to him daily.

By making appropriate reparation with other people in cases of hurt or injury, e.g. asking for forgiveness from any individual involved, human relationships may be restored.

God has provided you with the power to live the Christian life. The next lesson explains how you can draw upon God's power source, the Holy Spirit.

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### HOW CAN I DO WHAT GOD WANTS?

#### Power for living a dynamic Christian life

Every day, we face choices. What we say, where we go, what we do. As we make those choices, how do we see life from God's perspective and live in a way that pleases him?

#### 1. The Holy Spirit is the power source for the Christian life.

Just as our relationship with God depends totally on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live the Christian life also comes totally from God. To live the Christian life as God intends, we must continually draw upon God's power, through the Holy Spirit. But who or what is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

# CHOIC

#### He is God.

"No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:11,12).

#### He came to dwell in you.

"But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you (and remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all)" Romans 8:9).

#### He came to convict the world of sin and justice.

"And when he comes, he will convince the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment" (John 16:8).

#### He came to teach you the truth.

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).



#### He came to glorify Christ.

(Jesus speaking) "He will bring me glory by revealing to you whatever he receives from me" (John 16:4).

#### He confirms your relationship with God.

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family—calling him 'Father, dear Father.' For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our heart and tells us that we are God's children" (Romans 8:14-16).

#### He is the source of Christ-like qualities in your life.

"But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22, 23a).

■ Which of these qualities would you like God to begin developing within you?

(Jesus speaking) "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

Jesus said we are to rely on and stay close to him in order to see his qualities produced in us. And he also gives us the power to tell others about him.

(Jesus speaking) "But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8).

### 2. Not all Christians experience the Holy Spirit's power.

Although the Holy Spirit lives within all Christians, not all Christians are directed and empowered by him. The Bible tells us there are three kinds of people—natural, spiritual and carnal—representing different responses to God (see 1 Corinthians 2:12-3:3).





#### The Natural Person

This circle represents a person's life, and the throne represents control. The natural person (S) has not trusted Christ (+) and the Holy Spirit does not dwell in him or her. Christ is not part of the person's life' he is outside the circle. The natural person directs his or her own life.



#### Spiritual Person

The spiritual person has accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and trusts in the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. Christ is not only in this person's life, but also directs it.



#### The Carnal Person

The carnal person has also accepted Jesus as Saviour, but trusts in his or her own efforts to live the Christian life. This person remains in control of his or her life and acts like the natural person. Christ is in the carnal person's life, but does not direct it.



■ Which of the circles best represents your life?

#### 3. You can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 18, God commanded us:

"Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead let the Holy Spirit fill and control you."

As we allow the Holy Spirit to fill and control us, he will produce godly character in us and enable us to tell others about Christ.

■ But how do we let the Holy Spirit fill and control us?

#### First, confess all known sin.

"If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened." (Psalm 66:18)

■ Why do you think it's important to confess all known sin in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

See answer on page 96.





### Second, yield every area of your life to Christ.

"Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give into its lustful desires. Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness. To be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God" (Romans 6:12,13).

### Third, trust the Holy Spirit to fill you.

This is only possible by faith—trusting God to shape your life as you yield control to him. All you have to do is ask. God has promised to answer your requests which are in accordance with what he wants for you.

"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!" (Luke 11:13)

Since it is God's will to fill you with his Spirit, you can trust him to do so when you ask. Here is a suggested prayer:

"Dear Father, I know I have been directing my own life and, as a result, I have sinned against you. I thank you for forgiving my sins through Christ's death on the cross. I now invite Christ to take his place on the throne of my life. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. As an expression of faith, I now thank you for taking control of my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If so, pray it right now and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

### •

### 4. You can be continually empowered by the Holy Spirit

If you find you have retaken control of your life through sin, try "spiritual breathing." You need to exhale the impure by confessing your sin, and inhale the pure by yielding control to Jesus and asking God, in faith, to fill you with his Spirit

### Exhaling

"But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong" (1 John 1:9). Also read Hebrews 10:1-25.

Remember, confession includes:

- Agreeing with God that you have sinned.
- Thanking God for his forgiveness.
- Asking God to change your wrong attitudes and actions and trust that he will.

#### Inhaling

- Surrender control of your life to Christ.
- Trust him to direct and empower you.
- Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit

### Suggestions for Further Growth

Continue to spent 15 minutes alone each day with God in Bible reading and prayer.

### **Summary**

The Holy Spirit is the power source for living out the Christian life. You need to continually confess your sins and trust God to control your life, asking him to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

You can only trust God as much as you know him. How can you get to know him better? The answer is in the next lesson.







## NOW WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE

#### Growing in your relationship with Jesus

With the Holy Spirit directing your life, you will experience a deeper relationship with God and you will grow in your ability to trust him.

## 1. What does it mean to grow in your relationship with Jesus?

Growing in your relationship with Jesus means to know him better, to love and obey him more.

"And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth" (John 17:3).

"Jesus replied: 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38).

Your growing love for God will lead you to obey his commandments.

(Jesus speaking) "Those who obey my commandments are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them, and I will love them. And I will reveal myself to each one of them." (John 14:21).

Just as it's natural for a child to grow in a loving relationship with a parent, it's also natural for you to grow in your love relationship with God.

### 2. How can you grow in your relationship with Jesus?

Communication is vital to any relationship. There are four aspects of communication that will help you develop your relationship with Jesus.

i) God communicates with us in various ways, including through the Bible, revealing his character and his will.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

■ Which of these benefits of Bible reading would be most helpful to you right now?

ii) We communicate with God through prayer—sharing our thoughts, our needs and our desire to do his will.

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7).

"And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for" (1 John 5:14-15).

These verses tell us we can pray about everything. When we pray according to God's will, he hears us and answers us. Thanking God





is also a part of praying.

"No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

"Always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

By thanking God, we express our trust in him.

■ What are some things you can be praying about?

*iii)* We communicate with Christians through fellowship—encouraging and building up one another.

"Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

It is important to spend time with other Christians—to encourage each other to love and do good. The Greek work for fellowship, *koinonia*, means "sharing in common." There is a famous saying used in the early church in Ireland that a person without a soul friend

(anamchara) is like a body without a head. A soul friend is simply a support person who challenges you to grow—a friend along the spiritual journey who is an equal, not a superior. We need to share our Christian experience with others who love God, and likewise allow them to share with us. God appoints the church as a place for us to meet other Christians and learn about God. Bible studies and other meetings are also helpful.

*iv)* We communicate with others who don't know God personally by witnessing—sharing about our relationship with Jesus in word and deed. Jesus is the only name by which we can be saved.

"There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them" (Acts 4:12).

- What would motivate you to tell another person about Jesus?
- Who would you like to tell about what Jesus has done in your life?

#### Suggestions for Further Growth

Set aside a time and a place for daily personal Bible study and prayer.





A good book to begin with is the New Testament Book of John. As you read, underline verses you find particularly meaningful. Pray and ask God to show you who he is and how you can respond to him.

Study other passages, such as the ones in this lesson and Psalms 1, 34, 103 and 145; Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 9:23-26; John 15:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; and Colossians 1:9-12.

This is the beginning of your new life in Christ and there is much more to discover than what's covered in these four lessons. Take the initiative today to find a church, fellowship, parish, community or prayer group that is Christ-centred and has a focus on the Scriptures and make plans to attend regularly. For additional Christian materials, look in your local bookshop or Christian bookshop.

### **Summary**

As you rely on the Holy Spirit for power, read the Bible, pray, spend time with other believers and share Jesus with others, God will produce his character in you and you will mature spiritually.

#### **DIL MOHAMED**



"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

I was born in DeKinderen, a village in West Demerara, on the east bank of the Boeraserie River. My father left us when I was about three, so I grew up in a single parent home. I attended Zeelugt Primary School and Stew-

artville Secondary School, but as a Muslim, also attended Madarsa in Zeelugt, where we were taught all the tenets of the Islamic faith. Interestingly, my siblings and I (six of us) were also allowed to attend the Church Of The Nazarene Sunday School at the Ten Pows from Vreed-en-Hoop. I remember that my favorite Bible verses were John 3:3 and 3:16. The seed of God's Word was planted.

When I was about eleven we moved to Cumming's Lodge on the East Coast of Demerara. Life was very difficult for us there. My mother worked all day doing domestic work, so we as children were left to ourselves. Many times we went without food and even proper clothing. The place we lived in was infested with rats, to such an extent, that they would take the skin from the bottom of our feet and off the tips of our toes and fingers.







THE VILLAGE "PUSHER-MAN"

During high school, I became very involved in the sports of football and cricket. I worked every afternoon after school at the Beer Garden/Pool Shop, clearing tables, among other chores. It was also at this time that I embraced communism/socialism and honestly believed that this was the answer to all of mankind's problems.

By the time I was out of high school, I started using drugs, alcohol, marijuana, amphetamines, even cocaine, which was just then coming on the scene in Guyana. I was also the village 'pusher-man'.

After more than ten years of drugs, alcohol and immorality, I realized that I was losing a grip on life. I started looking for help. I went back to Islam, but something was still missing. So I tried Hinduism, embracing the worship of Kali and Ganga ... I actually was doing the Ganga Mai pooja by the seaside. At first, it was intriguing, but soon I was as empty as ever. In desperation, I heard of a crystal ball reader and sought out her help, to no avail. I then tried 'Brother Moore', who supposedly communicated with the spirits of the dead, but I just got more empty.

In July of 1986, a home group from People's Assembly of God Church in Industry came into our home for four Wednesday nights to share the love of Jesus. I chose not to attend that meeting. It seems that even though I was willing to try many religions, I was running from Jesus. The following Saturday, I broke my left foot while playing soccer, with my foot in a cast, I was at home all the time, except when the group came

to our house for the Bible study...then I would leave, cast and all. The meetings went by and I continued on my path of destruction. I sensed that my memory was going because of all of the drug abuse. I was desperate, but blind to Jesus, the only One who could help me.

In March of 1987, the home group ministry returned to our home. I was again injured playing soccer, but this time, it was so bad, I could not leave my bed ... I could no longer run. That evening, after hearing the message of Jesus, from my sick bed, crying like a baby, I cried out to our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, and by His grace and mercy, he lifted me out of my pit of drug addiction, alcoholism, immorality, desperation and restlessness and gave me His peace!

It has been more than twenty-three years and I am still free! God has blessed me with a wonderful family and I am presently the pastor of Emmanuel's Tabernacle in Kitty, Georgetown, an Assembly of God church. Even after all of my issues with drugs and memory loss, I was able to attend an Assembly of God Bible college, the University of Guyana and now, I am pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Theology with the Caribbean School of Theology. Many of my relatives have also come to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. After I started to follow Jesus, my estranged father's heart was turned back to me. I witnessed to him and prayed for him, but he told me that he was born a Muslim and that he would die a Muslim. On Father's Day, 1987, the day I was baptized, my father walked





into church and surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and proclaimed Him as his Lord and Savior. Praise God!

In my village of Cumming's Lodge, where I was once known as the village 'pusher man', I am now a person that people know that if they need spiritual or natural advice, I am someone they can come to.

More than anything else, I have peace in knowing Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, knowing that my sins are forgiven and my eternal destiny is secure in Jesus Christ.



#### **AMY GERALDINE LANE**



"Who is this who comes from Edom?
With garments of glowing colors from
Bozrah, this One who is majestic in His
apparel, marching in the greatness of
His strength? It is I who speak in righteousness, MIGHTY TO SAVE." Isaiah 63:1

This was the Scripture reading. It was Palm Sunday and as usual seven year-old Tavia and her mother had attended Vergenoegen

Wesleyan Church. The power of the Holy Spirit had moved mightily on the church that day. Tavia recalled her mother lifting her hands high in praise and worship.

Later that same day, Tavia was at home when her mother asked her to fetch some water. In those days trenches and canals were the main source of water supply and every day residents in the village would fetch buckets of water to wash, cook and perform other domestic tasks. It was in that spirit that Tavia went to a near-by trench in the company of Paul, her next door neighbor. She let down her bucket and up came a fish. Paul got excited and wanted one too! So she leaned over the trench once more. But this time she toppled head over and was immersed in water.

Quite often, the first reaction to such a crisis is fear. One feels out of





control, threatened by present danger. Tavia, recounting her story some eighteen years later said – "I started shouting for help because I did not know how to swim. My friend who was with me, kept stretching his hand out to reach me, but to no avail". Paul then rushed from the scene, but soon returned bringing his mother and brother with him.

Tavia continued to describe her experience as a strange encounter—
"I was at the bottom of the trench and there was total darkness. Fear
had me cowering in the shadows, trembling. All of a sudden, I saw
some strange people dressed in white glowing clothes! Among them
was a long-haired man dressed in a long robe and he wore sandals. He
touched me and said: 'Be not afraid, I am with you.""

By now almost the whole neighborhood had arrived on the scene. They looked expectantly to see if she would emerge from the water, but that was not to be. Her brother then plunged into the trench and desperately searched for her. It was not long before he found her lifeless body. As her body was put on the road, it was obvious to all, she was dead.

Tavia's distraught mother thought there was no hope and cried mournfully and then suddenly, as if new strength overtook her, she cried out '"JESUS! JESUS!". And Tavia shouted—"Mommy!". In that instant, Tavia's life was restored. The crowd stood in awe and astonishment at the power of the name of Jesus.

Wasn't there similar reaction by the crowd at the rising of Jairus' daugh-

(Matthew 9:23); Tabitha (Acts 9:40); Lazarus (John 11:38-44) and even Christ's own resurrection (Luke 24:6)?

Tavia now expresses her gratitude thus – "I truly thank the Lord for sparing my life and I will always want to live for Him and tell others about His saving power." Today, she is holding on to Jesus at the same church which she attended on that day which began as an ordinary Palm Sunday.

So dear friends, if you have not yet experienced this power of Jesus in your life, you can begin today by asking Him to forgive you from all the wrongs you may have committed. Most assuredly, He will do it for you.





# What Christians Need to Understand About Islam and Muslims

Islam is the name of the religion. A Muslim is a person who accepts and follows the religion of Islam.

The word "Islam" means submission and not peace as we are so often led to believe by Muslims. A Muslim then is one who submits to the will of "Allah" and the practice of the religion of Islam, as set out in the Qur'an.

Sometimes, Christians are led to believe that Islam and Christianity are one and the same, as they both talk about Jesus. But we must not be mislead by this. Islam and Christianity are not the same. In Islam, Jesus was a mere man and prophet who came with a message from "Allah" for the Jewish people only. In Christianity, Jesus is God, who came to the earth to die for the sins of the human race, and rose again the third day from the dead and is now with the Father in heaven.

According to Islam, Jesus did not die on the cross for the sins of humankind. So, they do not believe in redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus. That concept is totally lost to the Muslims.

What is most important for us at this time, is to understand how we can share our faith with a Muslim, rather than trying to deal with complex theological issues.

We must understand that Muslims are people whom the Lord loves and died for. We have an obligation to bring the gospel to them, which must be done out of pure and genuine love.

As we seek to ascertain the precise method of approach with respect to sharing our faith with a Muslim, we are immediately confronted with a number of challenges. The challenges include that the Bible is not regarded by Muslims as the Word of God. The concept of the Trinity is not understood and is therefore rejected. The deity of Christ or to refer to Jesus as God is blasphemous in Islam. Calling Jesus the Son of God, makes him a partner with God and that is as well blasphemous. The concepts that the human race is born in sin is a foreign concept to Muslims, therefore Jesus did not NEED to die on the cross and no one needs a Savior. In fact, what we do need, according to Islamic teaching, is a guide and the Qur'an and Mohammed (the prophet of Islam) serve as the guides.

The central concept of God in Islam is: "God is great. There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet."





How can we share our faith with a person who is in the category described above, and at the same time, not compromise the deity and redemptive sacrifice of Jesus? This is an uphill task, but is nonetheless achievable.

The following points may be quite useful when we are seeking to share our faith with Muslims:

- 1. Build genuine friendships with Muslims. Experience has show that Muslims are not won to Jesus by well crafted arguments against Islam, but rather through genuine love and friendship. We must not see them as a potential convert, but as a person and friend.
- **2.** Avoid arguments, it lead nowhere, but instead generates anger, hate and can often lead to violence. We can easily win the argument, but lose a soul. At all times, seek to avoid the negatives of Islam and highlight the positives of Jesus. Speak more of having or building a relationship with Jesus, rather than having Him in your heart...which makes no sense.
- **3.** *Try to center your discussion and presentation on Jesus*, rather than on Christianity as a religion.
- 4. Cultivate an atmosphere that can lead to conviction. Always remember this is the work of the Holy Spirit. We must there-

fore be praying and having others pray for us while we are engaging with Muslims. Muslims do not have the assurance of eternal salvation. They do NOT know for sure that when they die they will be with Allah in paradise. In this context, we would want to let them know that this assurance can be had in a relationship with Jesus.

- **5.** *Prayer and intercession:* Islam is more than a religion; it is a spiritual force and can only be taken down by intensive prayer and intercession. It may be a good strategy to select a Muslim family and pray continuously for them. Constantly asking the Lord to open doors to minister effectively to them.
- 6. Personal life style: We can never be effective as a witness if our credibility as a believer is destroyed. Our life is constantly under surveillance, not only by our Muslim neighbors, but also by the community in which we live.
- 7. The demonstration of the supernatural power of God: Never be afraid to pray for a Muslim friend, when they REQUEST it (sickness, demon issues, direction, protection). Look for those opportunities, for they will come.

Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6)."







### ANSWERS

#### PAGE 54

- 2. •You received Jesus, you put your faith in him.
- 3. •No
  - •Once.

#### PAGE 61

- 1. •God has forgiven them.
  - •All.

#### PAGE 63

- 2. •Only once.
  - •As soon as you realize it is sin.

#### PAGE 73

3. •Until we consciously have clean hands before God, he cannot have fellowship with us.



