MOVING FORWARD

A GUIDE TO FOLLOWING JESUS
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Congratulations!

You have made the most significant decision you will ever make. More significant than choosing the right university, choosing the right career or choosing the right person to marry, you have made the decision to begin a lifelong journey with God. This trio of articles is designed to help you move forward in your journey of following Jesus. God has provided many resources for your journey, but these three are among the most important: the Bible (his map and directions); the Spirit (his fuel and power for a victorious journey); and prayer (his communication channel, with direct access to him anywhere, anytime). Enjoy the journey!

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If there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than me or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” asked Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver.

“Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

I’ll never forget that night.

I sat in the dressing room staring at the clock—tick, tick, tick! We were all dressed up in our garb, ready to go, but had to wait for the clock to hit the top of the hour. My stomach was in knots—I must have gone to the bathroom 3 or 4 times in 20 minutes. My nerves were almost shot as I rehashed the words I was going to say over and over again in my mind, Fellow graduates, parents, teachers, friends and family...

When I found out a few months earlier that I had been nominated as valedictorian, nobody had told me it was going to be like this. Why was I so nervous? It was just my friends and family, I thought to myself. But it didn’t seem to make a difference.

The orchestra finally started to play and we walked down the aisle,
toward the stage, to take our seats. This is it, I thought, I'll be fine once we get started. What I didn’t realize was that I had to sit onstage for 3 hours, in front of 1,200 people, before I needed to get up and speak. By the time it was finally my turn I was terrified. All I could say to myself was, Don’t say umm or say ahh. Don’t screw this up!

I stood up, walked to the podium and took a deep breath. I was sure you could hear my knees knocking in the third row. I looked down at my speech, looked up at my friends in the crowd and began to speak.

Now that you’ve started this new relationship with Jesus, God has given you one of His most amazing gifts—the invitation to converse with Him. And it is here that you may feel the same tension as I did many years ago.

If you think it’s an intimidating experience to stand up and speak in front of 1,200 people, take a minute and think about what we’re doing when we talk to God. We’re talking to the Creator of the universe! We’re talking to the one who knows everything that was, is or ever will be. He is in control of everything. It is a breathtakingly sobering realization.

On the flipside, at my graduation, I stood up and spoke to my closest friends whom I had grown up with, played hockey with and sat next to in class. Likewise, when we talk to God, we are talking to our friend, our confidant and our Saviour.

There is a portion of Scripture that focuses on this tension. In the Letter to the Hebrews it says, “Let us then [because of our faith in Jesus] with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). In this passage, God calls us to draw near to Him (a.k.a. to talk to Him) so that we can have mercy and grace when we need it. Sometimes we have needs that feel huge, and God invites us to come to him with these needs. Sometimes we have needs that feel small, and God invites us to come to him with these needs. Not only does he invite us to come to Him, He actually reassures us. He tells us to come to Him with confidence because He isn’t going to turn us away. He hears you. He will speak with you. He will answer you.

But it’s vital to know why.

We have this incredible opportunity because of our faith in who Jesus is and what He did for us when He died and rose again. When you accepted Jesus you affirmed the statement, “Jesus’ death and resurrection is the foundation of my life.” It’s because of this foundation that you can talk to God today.

I don’t know about you, but I found this realization to be freeing because it assured me that it wasn’t about me. I couldn’t screw that up — it happened 2,000 years ago. It’s not like I needed to go through a certain set of formulas for God to speak to me. It’s not like I needed to become a spiritual superstar before any of my prayers can be answered. When I’m having a bad day, week or month I can go to God with confidence because of my faith in Jesus.

On the flipside, we see the other half of our tension in this passage too. When we talk to God, we are actually approaching a throne. This isn’t the only time God uses this image. Throughout the Scriptures God describes himself as a King who rules from His throne (Psalms 45:6, Isaiah 9:7, Revelations 7:11, Revelations 20:11). There is one guy in the Old Testament, Isaiah, who was given a vision of God’s throne. Do you know what his immediate reaction was? He was terrified! He fell down on his face in fear because God was so amazing; he was convinced he was going to die (Isaiah 6). My experience of standing in front of 1,200 people was nothing compared to Isaiah’s experience of seeing God on His throne.

God invites us to speak with Him about anything and everything, but we should always keep in mind who we’re talking to. We aren’t just chatting with a buddy in the dressing room after a game. We aren’t just talking to a friend on Skype. In the Scriptures we learn that God is massive—He is in control (Ephesians 1:11); He is all knowing (Isaiah 46:8–11); He is everywhere (Psalms 139:7–10); He sustains the universe.
(Colossians 1:15–17); He never gets tired (Isaiah 40:28); He is the only God (Isaiah 45:22–23); He is infinite (Revelations 1:8) and He is always with us (Matthew 28:20). This is the God who invites us to come to Him and speak with Him like a friend with complete confidence. I love prayer because I find it so amazing. Prayer is a breathtaking picture of God, in His greatness, reaching down to me. And God doesn’t just listen to me when I talk; he also has the power and authority to act on my behalf.

Wherever you might be and whatever your background or your level of knowledge, God is inviting you to come to him and talk. He wants to speak to you and He wants to listen. The beautiful thing about talking with God is that it does not matter how big your need might be, it’s all about how big your God is and our God is huge!

Let me finish up by giving you four suggestions that friends have given me over the years which have made a huge impact on my own life.

1. Set a location. When you want to zone in and spend some concentrated time in prayer, it is wise to choose a place with minimal distractions. I have this really comfy chair in my basement that I love to sink into when I want to talk with God. When Jesus wanted to pray, he went out to a quiet place (Mark 1:35). Find a peaceful place where you can go and talk to God.

2. Pray for specifics. Don’t be afraid to ask God for what you want or believe is best. God invites us, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9). At the same time, because He is wise and good He knows better than us about what is best and therefore may not answer the way we expect.

3. Pray through Scripture or a book of prayers. Using other people’s prayers as a guide has taught me how to pray. This might sound stupid, but it took me a long time to realize that I wasn’t the first person to try and talk to God. Millions of men and women who love Jesus have done the same in the past, and their prayers are a gold mine of wisdom and insight. Using the Scriptures to pray has given me the confidence to accept what I say is in line with God’s heart.

4. Start small, dream big and keep going. No relationship is ever built in a day or a week. If you are expecting your heart to always be in the right place you’re going to be disappointed. We all have bad days but remember that our relationship with God is built on what Jesus has done, not what we have done.

When you wake up in the morning, say Hi to God. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit and guide you throughout the day. As you are walking to class, thank God for some of the things around you or talk to Him about what’s on your mind. The Scriptures encourage us to "rejoice always (and) pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–17). I love to pray as I’m walking, driving or sitting in my backyard. Whenever or wherever, we simply need to take the initiative.

If there is one thing I hope you will remember as you begin this journey with God it is this—it isn’t about religion, spiritual superstardom or the hoops you need to jump through but rather your friendship with your Creator. “Let us then with confidence [because of our faith in Jesus] draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

“Lord, teach me to listen. The times are noisy and my ears are weary with the raucous sounds which continuously assault them. Give me the spirit of the boy Samuel when he said to You, 'Speak, for Your servant is listening.' Let me hear You speaking in my heart. Let me get used to the sound of Your Voice, that its tones may be familiar when the sounds of earth die away and the only sound will be the music of Your speaking Voice. Amen.”
THE SPIRIT:
GOD’S PRESENCE AND POWER IN YOU

BY RICK JAMES AND GABE McREYNOLDS
Welcome to God’s family! Now that you have begun your relationship with God, it’s essential for you to understand certain things about the Spirit. God is extraordinary, unique and exists in three persons (a.k.a. the Trinity)—Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God and fully integrated with one other, though each person has a different role. It is through the Spirit that we experience everything God intends for us.

In this brief article we would like to explain who the Holy Spirit is, why God gave him to you and what it means to live a life controlled by the Spirit.

ASSURANCE
When you received Christ, the barrier of sin separating you from God was removed through God’s love and forgiveness. He began dwelling within you through the person of the Holy Spirit—your heart became his home. Your heart was like a home during a power outage—cold and dark—but when you received Christ, He came in and lit it up.

As a result, you became spiritually alive and connected with God. Although we neither know the how nor the where, we do know that the Spirit’s presence in us carries with it the assurance of our new spiritual life: “When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession…” (Ephesians 1:13–14).

We are now God’s possession and the Spirit, in effect, is the down payment on His purchased property. Just like the idea expressed in marriage, receiving Christ is a one-time decision. We don’t wake up each morning with a fresh need to say “I do”—once was enough. Having received Christ, the Scriptures state that we became children of God: “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

In theory we could tell our parents that we no longer wished to be in their family, but we can never change the reality that we are their son or daughter. It’s an established fact on the basis of our birth. We can sever our fellowship but not our relationship. And since there isn’t one thing we did to earn our new life, there is nothing we can ever do to lose it—we are eternally Christ’s.

But the Spirit is more than simply an assurance of a new life in Christ. It is through the Spirit that God enables and empowers us to live the Christian life.

So how does the Holy Spirit exert control over our lives, and what is our role in the process? Perhaps the most helpful passage in Scripture for answering these questions is this one: “Be very careful … how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians5:15–20)

One is compelled to ask, “What does getting drunk on wine have to do with being filled with the Spirit?” Well, though these are two contrasting ideas, they must share some kind of similarity—why compare them otherwise? The link between them, or the similarity they share, boils down to the idea of influence. They are both foreign entities that, when internalized, influence our behaviour.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT.
Alcohol provides a good example of a foreign influence (albeit a bad one) that can affect our will and behaviour. As demonstrated by alcohol, control is always a question of degrees. There are things we can do that hinder the Spirit’s influence and things we can do to increase our sensitivity to the Spirit’s power. This is at the heart of walking in step—or being filled—with the Spirit.

So, what exactly affects the Spirit’s influence? What does it mean to “walk in step with” or “live” the Spirit-filled life? What leads to the Spirit having maximum influence over our lives?

CONTROL
How does one become drunker? By consuming more alcohol. In the case of the Holy Spirit, we already have all of Him, so the major determinant of the Spirit’s influence is how much of us we let Him consume, or how much of our lives we will allow Him to control. We must ask ourselves the following question: “Do we desire to
live for Christ in every area of our life (dating, vocation, relationships and so on)?” When we call Jesus “Lord,” we acknowledge that He is in control of not only the whole universe, but our lives as well. And not only do we acknowledge it, we also desire it.

The Spirit will make you aware of the areas of your life that he wants you to surrender to Him. As you become aware of these areas, you can issue a simple prayer of surrender like this: “Lord Jesus, I realize that I have not been trusting you with the issue of (specify area) in my life. I am sorry for this and now surrender it to your control so that you can do with it what you will.” You may have to do this more than once as you find yourself taking back control of a given area.

Over time you’ll discover the deeper roots of sin and uncover areas disconnected from His control. In submitting these areas to Christ we continue to affirm that he is the Lord and that we are committed to giving him control.

CONFESSION

Sin is choosing to live life our own way in order to satisfy our needs, wants and desires rather than living in accordance with God’s way. Sin is a seizure of control, like a coup d’état. Confession involves admitting the coup took place, receiving God’s forgiveness and returning that area of our life back to its rightful owner—God. All three aspects comprise confession, but unfortunately here’s where the process usually breaks down.

When we sin, we instinctively feel the impulse that someone must pay a price. No one gets off easy. What we need to decide is who is going to pay.

Three common responses are...

1. is to berate and heap guilt upon ourselves. Someone must pay, and rightfully it should be us, so we punish ourselves.

2. is to blame. “You made me sin.” That “you” could be anyone or anything. Either way, someone needs to take the fall for our sin, and it ain’t gonna be us.

3. is to justify ourselves. “Now that you mention it, I’m not really sure that was a sin.” Recognize it? As the word implies, we decide to make a judgment over and against our conscience, declaring that what we did was actually right, or at least not very wrong. With this approach, we avoid the issue of admitting and confessing sin by simply redefining it and thereby eliminating the offence.

Well, we’re all brilliant lawyers, but try as we may God the judge isn’t hearing any of it. It’s true that when you feel the conviction of sin, someone must die, but that person already has—over 2,000 years ago—so your plea bargaining was really a waste of time. What’s needed is confession—the acknowledgment of sin and the acknowledgment and personal application of Christ’s death for that sin.

The Greek word for confession actually means, “to say the same thing along with.” In other words, you are agreeing with God that you have sinned, agreeing that Christ’s death on the cross has already paid the penalty for that sin and agreeing to turn away from that sin and back to Christ.

While confession should occur daily, there is no set quantity for daily confessions—it could be twice a day or 20 times a day. Whenever the Spirit reveals sin to you, you confess it, turn back to Christ and continue in fellowship with Him.

FAITH

Confession, like many areas of the Christian life, carries with it the need to exert faith. You may not feel forgiven after you’ve confessed your sin, but on the basis of God’s word you need to believe that you have been forgiven. There are many times in your relationship with Christ when you’ll feel a lack of emotional affirmation. Faith is choosing to believe God’s word and acting upon it in spite of, or even in opposition to, our feelings and circumstances.

RELIANCE

We all rely on different people for different needs. If we need comfort, we might seek out a parent or close friend. For managing our money, we might have a financial advisor. When we are ill, we rely on a doctor. If we are married, we depend on our spouse in many ways. But whom can we turn to throughout the day for every need? Who is close at hand to meet our deepest needs?

While there is a place for all the people who help us in our lives, the living Spirit of Christ is with us wherever we go and is always ready to help. In fact, one of his names is Helper, sometimes translated as Counsellor or Comforter (John 14:26). In your time of need, when you need hope or inner strength in the face of adversity, he is the only one who can see us through.

Throughout the day, we feel the need for empowerment. Whether we’re eaters, coffee drinkers or smokers, all of us have tend to turn to these practical saviours. But while there is an immediate satisfaction, these crutches never truly fulfill our need. When I’m done eating, for example, I’m just as lonely.

A life fully influenced by the Spirit is one in which we reflexively turn to Christ throughout the day, asking for comfort, empowerment, wisdom and direction. Before we turn to others, we first connect with God: “Oh Lord, I’m nervous. Will you please strengthen me?” or “Oh Lord, I don’t know what to do. Will you please give me wisdom?” All day long, in every circumstance, we turn to the
When it comes to a lifestyle of worship, people tend to move in one of two directions. There are the engineers of the world who like to have a period of time rigidly planned in their schedule where they can pray, sing, praise and graph out the Scripture. Then there are the artists of the world, like pottery makers, for who time with God is an ongoing process, like going to and from the kiln. To enjoy the fullest influence of the Spirit we need to be both artists and engineers. We need to schedule time every day to pray and to reflect on the Scripture, and we need to keep that vital connection with God throughout the day.

It is in community with other Christians that we experience a dynamic of the Spirit-filled life we can never experience alone. Notice again that Ephesians 5:19, “Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...” There are many passages in the Bible that promote community through the phrase “one another”—love one another, serve one another, encourage one another and so on. Often, when God wants to fulfill our need for love, encouragement or help, He will do it through our relationships with other Spirit-filled believers. We find fresh life when we share our sins and struggles. We are blessed as we pray together and sympathize with one another. Without this community we would miss out on the Spirit’s blessings to us through them. Moreover, we learn about who God is and how He acts by seeing His work in the lives of others in our community.

Consider this: your experience of Christ will not rise above the water-line of your community. Life-giving relationships with other believers, characterized by love and truth, are the primary means by which Christ produces growth and maturity in our lives.

God, your spiritual Father, has given you the amazing gift of his presence and power through his Spirit. Take advantage of it! Just as you began your relationship with God by faith, so by faith you can be assured of his power in you moment by moment. You will be able to resist the destructive power of sin through confession. Regularly spending time in quiet meditation on his Word and in prayer, as well as with a community of believers, will enrich your experience of the Spirit. As you rely on Him, you will find it possible to give God praise and thanks in every circumstance, both good and bad. Study and employ the practical teaching found in the booklet entitled “Satisfied” and learn more about how to be filled with and walk in the power of the Spirit.
The Bible is pretty huge and can be rather intimidating. Hearing people drop names like Corinthians, Genesis or Habakkuk may make you wonder if you will need to learn a foreign language just to get past page one. But don’t worry, soon you’ll be zipping between Daniel, Jeremiah, John and Matthew with ease.

While the word Bible comes from the Greek word biblia, which means “book,” it may be helpful to know that the Bible isn’t an ordinary book that reads smoothly from cover to cover. It’s actually a library, or collection, of books written in several languages over 1,600 years ago by perhaps 40 different authors. Its books are “shelved,” or ordered, by type and topic rather than chronologically. Before diving into the book’s order and structure, let’s pause for a moment to consider the heart and message of the Bible.

THE BIG STORY
All the different parts the Bible come together to form one narrative. It’s a true story with a courageous main character and features great adversity and conflict that ultimately ends in triumph.

Listen to this description of the grand Biblical story by Sally Lloyd—Jones in The Jesus Storybook Bible:

“Now, some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn’t do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn’t mainly about you and what you should be doing. It’s about God and what he has done.

Other people think the Bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy. The Bible does have some heroes in it, but (as you’ll soon find out) most of the people in the Bible aren’t heroes at all. They make some big mistakes (sometimes on purpose). They get afraid and run away. At times they are downright mean.

No, the Bible isn’t a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story…

It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby.

Every story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in a puzzle—the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture.”

UNDERSTANDING THE STRUCTURE
Grab your Bible and open it up to the Table of Contents. You should see that it’s divided into two basic sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Testament is another word for covenant or promise. Thus, the Bible is a book about God’s promises to us.
THE OLD TESTAMENT
The bulk of the Old Testament covers a period of time from about 2500 B.C. to about 400 B.C. It specifically focuses on God’s historical and prophetic interactions with the Hebrew people. There are 39 books or sections written by a number of different authors.

The Old Testament is divided into at least three major sections. The first part, Genesis to Nehemiah, contains the history of the Jewish people. It’s roughly chronological, and everything that follows this first section somehow fits back into the times described in these books.

The next section, Job to Ecclesiastes, is all poetry. Much, but not all of it, was written during the kingdoms of David and Solomon (roughly 1000 B.C.).

The last section, Isaiah through Malachi, contains the writings of the prophets. Though they wrote about a great deal of things, they mostly spoke about two major catastrophes in Israel’s history. In 722 B.C., Israel was destroyed by Assyria, and then in 586 B.C., Babylon attacked and captured Jerusalem. By and large the prophets wrote to warn of these events. The final prophet, Malachi, wrote around 400 B.C., and then there was silence until Jesus’ arrival.

THE NEW TESTAMENT
The New Testament has 27 books, which were all written from around 40 to 90 A.D. during the reign of the Roman Empire in the Middle East. They focus on the life, ministry and ultimate effect of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament is also divided into three main sections. The historical section contains four biographical accounts of Jesus known as the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. (Gospel means “good news.”) There is also Acts, which is a record of the activities of the early followers of Jesus for the first few decades after Jesus’ resurrection.

The next section, Romans through 3 John, contains epistles, or letters, written by early church leaders to various congregations or individuals. They struggled with and celebrated the same things we do today.

The final section of the New Testament (Revelation) is also prophecy. It’s primarily about Jesus’ second coming and how to live in the interval between His two appearances.

THIS IS GOD’S WORD
You may have heard the Bible referred to as “The Word of God.” This idea comes from within the Bible itself. The authors of the Old Testament referred to the words they recorded as “the Word of God,” and in the New Testament, Jesus himself referred to the words recorded in the Old Testament as such. This means that those very words carried God’s authority and spoke the truth about God’s character, His actions and His plans for the world.

The Bible reveals that God is a God who speaks with authority. Much of the Bible is a recording of God’s instructions, corrections and blessings that He spoke both vocally and through His Spirit in visions and dreams to His people. It’s difficult to pick just one example from the Bible that illustrates this idea because there are so many. The words, “God said” or “The Word of God” or “The Voice of the Lord” are constantly repeated in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, the author of the Book of Hebrews explains it like this:

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.” (NIV, 1:1-2)

Jesus isn’t only called the Word of God (see John 1) but also demonstrated in his life that he spoke with the authority and power of God. He spoke with authority over creation (storms and water), people (healing and blessing), spiritual realm (demons and spirits) and the future (his own death and the coming of the Holy Spirit). The first four books of the New Testament recorded Jesus’ words in order for us to read and understand His words, much like the first disciples who originally heard the words straight out of Jesus’ mouth.

Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, wrote to a young man named Timothy to encourage him to look to the Bible to grow and become wise in Christ. His instructions illustrate the early church’s understanding of the nature of Scripture:

“… you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:15 –17)

IS THIS TEXT A TRUST-WORTHY TRANSLATION?
There is a popular myth that the English translations of the Bible have been translated from translations that came from other translations and so on, far removed from the original writings like distant cousins of your great—great grandparents. The fact is that modern translations, whether in English or in other languages, all go back to the oldest and best preserved manuscripts, portions of which date to within 100 years of the death of Christ. You simply have to look at the preface of the Bible to see what principles the committee of scholars used to guide their translation. This isn’t a secretive process conducted by some sinister illuminati but an open collaboration that holds to the highest academic standards.
The key to verifying the accuracy of any ancient manuscript, whether it’s the Bible or Plato and Homer, is the number of copies available. If you only have one copy of an ancient book, it’s hard to know how accurate it is because you don’t have any other copies to compare it to. If you have several copies, you can compare them—if there are discrepancies or variations, you put those passages in parentheses and call them doubtful (at best). What remains can be considered authentic. The more copies you have, the more opportunities there are for crosschecking.

Now consider this: of some of the writings of Plato, we have 7 copies—not bad. Of Homer’s epic poem, The Iliad, we have a whopping 643 portions and copies, plenty of material to work with. Of the New Testament, however, we have an unbelievable 5,366 portions, complete books or complete copies. No contest.

Another important factor in determining the accuracy of the text is the amount of time that has elapsed between the original composition and the writing of the copy. With Plato, an estimated 1,300 years had elapsed between his death and the oldest manuscript copy available to us; with Homer, they estimate 400 years. With the New Testament, it’s 50–100 years for some portions and just over 200 years for a complete copy.

We won’t go into detail about the Old Testament, which obviously has a much longer history of textual analysis, but we will mention this: a large portion of the Dead Sea Scrolls consisted of multiple fragments of many books from the Old Testament and a complete copy of the book of Isaiah. These manuscripts were older than the previous manuscripts in existence and yet found to be in remarkable agreement with them.

**WHICH TRANSLATION?**

Now that you have some reassurance about the trustworthiness of the Bible, you may be asking, “There are many English translations of the Bible, but which one should I read?” That’s a good question.

Bible translations can basically be divided into two categories: word-for-word translations (more literal) and thought-for-thought translations. If you are new to the Bible, usually a thought-for-thought translation like the New International Version (NIV) or the New Living Translation (NLT) is recommended since it’s more readable. Afterwards, you could pick up a more literal translation like the New American Standard Bible (NASB) or the English Standard Version (ESV) for more in-depth study.

**WHERE TO START**

Like any great story it makes sense to start at the beginning, but perhaps skipping ahead to the climax of the story is also very attractive. It’s up to you to decide where you start and hopefully as you read, study, discuss and digest God’s truth you’ll learn that each new page is God speaking to you and into your life. Enjoy every page—it’s a book you’ll never get tired of.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, the following passages can be a good place to start as you seek to understand the overview of God’s story. Once you have read through these passages, dig deeper into the life and teachings of Jesus Christ starting with the Book of John in the New Testament.

**YOU ARE PART OF THE STORY**

The Bible is an amazing story. It pulls no punches in portraying the good, the bad and the ugly of the human condition. It truly is the greatest story ever told, and now you are part of the story. Enjoy reading it, digging into it, wrestling with it, reflecting on it and putting it to use in your own life. It will change you forever!
READING GOD’S STORY IN FIVE ACTS

ACT I: CREATION
The Creation, Genesis 1-2:3
Praise God for his creation, Psalm 8
Praise to the Creation of all things, Psalm 104
Praise God for creating me, Psalm 139
God the Son at creation, John 1:1-14

ACT II: THE FALL
The fall into sin, Genesis 3
Noah, the flood and the ark, Genesis 6-9:17
God’s Law reveals sin, Exodus 20:1-18
A prayer of repentance, Psalm 51
No one is righteous, Romans 3:9-26

ACT III: ISRAEL
SCENE I:
GOD CHOOSES ISRAEL AS HIS PEOPLE AND MAKES A COVENANT
God’s covenant with Abraham, Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-21
Abraham shows his absolute love & trust in God, Genesis 22:1-19
Jacob receives his father’s blessing, Genesis 27:1-40
Jacob’s (Israel’s) family, Genesis 29:16-30
Joseph the dreamer, Genesis 27:2-36; 39-50

SCENE II:
ISRAEL ENSLAVED IN EGYPT AND RESCUED BY GOD
Moses is born in Egypt, Exodus 1-2:10
God demonstrates his power over Egypt through the 10 plagues, Exodus 7:14-11:10
The Passover, Exodus 12:1-17
The Israelites leave Egypt, Exodus 12:18-15:21
God’s covenant with Israel, Exodus 19-20; 24

SCENE III:
GOD DELIVERS ISRAEL THE PROMISED LAND & GIVES ISRAEL KINGS TO RULE OVER THEM
God keeps his promise, Joshua 23-24
Rahab hides the Israelite spies, Joshua 2
David kills Goliath, 1 Samuel 17
David becomes king, 2 Samuel 5:1-5
God makes a covenant with David, 1 Chronicles 17:10-14
David and Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 11-12:25
David’s prayer, Psalm 23; 100

ACT IV: JESUS
The birth of Jesus, Luke 1-2
The sermon on the mount, Matthew 5-6
Jesus shares his calling with the people, Luke 4:16-30
The lost son, Luke 15
New birth, John 3
Jesus is the resurrection and the life, John 11
Three prayers of Jesus, John 17
Jesus’ last meal with his disciples, Luke 22:7-38; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34
The resurrection of Jesus, Luke 24; John 20
Jesus ascends into heaven, Acts 1:1-11

ACT V: THE NEW PEOPLE OF GOD
The Great Commission from Jesus, Matthew 28:16-20
The Church is born, Acts 2:22-47
Jesus, the fulfillment of Abraham’s covenant, Acts 3
Salvation in Jesus alone, Acts 4
Paul’s conversion, Acts 9:1-31
Paul’s testimony before King Agrippa, Acts 25:23-26:32
Israel and Gentiles as God’s chosen people, Romans 11:1-36
God’s great love for those who believe, Romans 8:31-39
The fruitful life of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23
The armour of God, Ephesians 6:10-18
Imitating Christ, Philippians 2:1-11
Heroes of the faith, Hebrews 11
Faith in action, James 2:14-26
The return of Christ, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:3-14
The new heaven and earth, Revelation 21-22
END NOTES

FRIENDSHIP WITH A KING: LEARNING TO TALK TO GOD

1. Lewis, C.S. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. New York, NY.

THE SPIRIT: GOD’S PRESENCE AND POWER IN YOU


GOD’S STORY: NAVIGATING THE BIBLE


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Check out www.powertochange.org for more resources or get connected through movingforward@mycravings.ca.
“Congratulations! You have made the most significant decision you will ever make. More significant than choosing the right university, choosing the right career or choosing the right person to marry, you have chosen to begin a lifelong journey with God.” –excerpt from Moving Forward

If you have just made the decision to begin a lifelong journey with God, you are probably wondering, What just happened? and What do I do now?

Well, we’ve all been there! At the start of any journey, we all need a little help to get moving in the right direction.

Moving Forward has been designed to help you foster your new relationship with God. This three-article booklet will help you understand and experience the power and presence of God (the ministry of the Holy Spirit), the joy of a talking to God (prayer) and our greatest resource (the Bible).