

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

Four Self-Guided Bible Studies for New Believers

Study 1

Assurance of Salvation

Study 2

Who Is God? The Trinity & Scripture

Study 3

Prayer, Repentance & Walking With God

Study 4

The Church & Living on Mission

My name: _____ Date I began: _____

How to Use This Guide

Congratulations on your decision to follow Jesus. That decision is the most important one you will ever make, and this guide exists to help you take your first steps in your new faith with confidence and clarity.

These four studies are designed so you can work through them on your own, at your own pace. There is no test, no grade, and no performance required. This is simply time for you and God — reading His Word, thinking carefully about what it means, and responding honestly.

Before Each Study

- Find a quiet place where you can focus without distraction.
- Begin with a simple prayer. You might say: "God, I want to know You. Please help me understand what I read and speak to me through Your Word."
- Have a pen ready. Writing your thoughts helps them sink in.

During Each Study

- Read each Bible passage slowly — once for overview, then again for detail.
- The explanations help you understand the context and meaning of each passage.
- Answer the reflection questions honestly. There are no wrong answers. These questions are for you and God, not for anyone else.

After Each Study

- Sit quietly for a few minutes and think about what stood out to you most.
- Write down one thing you want to remember or act on this week.
- Close in prayer, even if it is just a sentence or two.

A Note on the Bible

Throughout this guide you will be directed to specific Bible passages. If you don't own a Bible yet, download the free YouVersion Bible app or visit [BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com). For new readers, the New International Version (NIV) or the New Living Translation (NLT) are both excellent starting points.

STUDY 1 OF 4

Assurance of Salvation

Key Passage: 1 John 5:11-13 | Supporting: Ephesians 2:8-9, John 10:28-29, Romans 8:16

One of the most common struggles a new Christian faces is doubt. You made a decision to follow Christ, but now you might wonder: Was it real? Am I truly saved? What if I mess up and lose it? These questions are completely normal, and the remarkable thing is that the Bible addresses them head-on.

This first study is designed to give you a firm foundation of confidence -- not confidence in yourself, but in God's promises.

Read the Passage

1 John 5:11-13 (NIV)

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Notice the word "know" in verse 13. John doesn't say "hope" or "feel" -- he says know. The entire point of this letter is to give believers confident certainty, not a nervous wish that salvation might be true.

Understanding the Passage

When does eternal life begin?

Verse 11 says God "has given" us eternal life -- past tense. Eternal life is not something you receive when you die; it's something you receive the moment you place your faith in Jesus. It begins right now.

Think of it this way: if a friend gives you a gift and you receive it, you have it. It belongs to you now, not later. The moment you trusted Christ, eternal life became yours.

Is salvation based on what I do or who I trust?

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast.

Salvation is a gift from God, not a reward you earn. This is called grace -- receiving something entirely undeserved because of God's love, not your own goodness. This means your salvation

cannot be lost by failing, nor is it kept by performing. It rests entirely on what Jesus did on the cross, not what you do.

Can I lose my salvation?

John 10:28-29 (NIV)

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Jesus describes believers as being held in the Father's hand. Notice the double assurance -- no one can snatch you from Jesus' hand, and no one can snatch you from the Father's hand. Your security is not held up by your grip on God, but by God's grip on you. That is very good news.

What about when I sin?

You will sin after becoming a Christian -- every believer does. But sinning after salvation doesn't undo your salvation any more than a child misbehaving undoes their relationship with their parents. The relationship remains; it just needs to be repaired. We'll cover how to handle sin and repentance in Study 3.

How can I feel more certain?

Romans 8:16 (NIV)

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

When you came to faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live inside you. Part of His work is to confirm in your heart that you belong to God. That quiet sense of God's presence, the new desire to read the Bible, the feeling of conviction when you do something wrong -- these are signs the Holy Spirit is at work in you. Trust those signs.

Reflection Questions

Take your time. Write out your thoughts in your own words -- these are for you and God alone.

1. Before reading this study, how confident were you in your salvation? What doubts, if any, were you carrying?

2. In your own words, what is John trying to make sure you understand in 1 John 5:13? Why do you think he felt it was important to say it so directly?

3. Ephesians 2:8-9 says salvation is "not from yourselves" and "not by works." How does that change the way you think about your standing before God?

4. Jesus says no one can snatch you from His hand (John 10:28-29). Does that bring you relief, or does it raise new questions for you? Write honestly.

5. What is one truth from this study you want to come back to when doubt creeps in?

Apply It This Week

Memory Verse

Write 1 John 5:13 on a sticky note or save it in your phone. Read it every morning this week. Let it be the first thing you speak over your day.

Action Step

Tell one person -- a friend, a family member, or someone at church -- about the decision you made to follow Christ. Saying it out loud makes it more real, and it gives someone else the chance to celebrate with you.

Close in Prayer

A Prayer to Close

"Father, thank You for saving me. Thank You that my salvation rests on Your faithfulness, not mine. When I feel doubt, help me to run back to Your promises. I believe I have eternal life because I trust in Your Son Jesus. Amen."

STUDY 2 OF 4

Who Is God?

The Trinity & Scripture

Key Passage: 2 Timothy 3:16-17 | Supporting: Matthew 28:19, John 1:1-14, Psalm 119:105

If your Christian life is a house, your understanding of God and the Bible is the foundation. Everything else -- your faith, your decisions, your hope -- is built on who God is and what He has said.

In this study we will look at two foundational truths: who God is (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and what the Bible is and why you can trust it.

Read the Passage

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

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.

Part One: Who Is God -- Father, Son & Holy Spirit

One of the first things people notice when reading the Bible is that God refers to Himself in ways that suggest both unity and complexity. He is one God, but He exists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. This is called the Trinity.

One God, Three Persons

Matthew 28:19 (NIV)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that Jesus uses the word "name" (singular), not "names" (plural), even though He mentions three distinct persons. This is a window into the nature of God: one Being, three persons who are each fully and equally God.

- God the Father -- the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is the one Jesus prays to and calls "my Father."
- God the Son (Jesus) -- fully human and fully God at the same time. He came to earth, lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose from the dead. He is not a lesser version of God -- He is God in the flesh.
- God the Holy Spirit -- the presence and power of God who lives inside every believer. He guides, comforts, convicts, and empowers us to live for Christ.

A Helpful (But Imperfect) Illustration

No illustration fully captures the Trinity, but water is often used as a starting point. Water exists as liquid, ice, and steam -- three distinct forms, yet all genuinely and fully water. The Trinity is infinitely richer than this analogy, but it helps illustrate that the same substance can exist in distinct ways without contradiction.

Why Does It Matter That Jesus Is Fully God?

John 1:1, 14 (NIV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

If Jesus were merely a great teacher or a moral example, His death on the cross would not have been enough to save anyone. Only a sacrifice of infinite value could cover the sins of all humanity. Jesus, being fully God, is that infinite sacrifice. His resurrection confirms that His sacrifice was accepted and that death itself has been defeated.

Part Two: The Bible -- God's Word to You

What Does "God-Breathed" Mean?

When Paul writes that "all Scripture is God-breathed," he is saying that the Bible did not originate with human ideas or imagination. God worked through human authors -- using their unique personalities, vocabularies, and life experiences -- to communicate exactly what He wanted to say. The Bible is simultaneously fully human in its writing and fully divine in its origin.

This means that when you read the Bible, you are reading what God wants you to know. It is His voice in written form.

What Is the Bible Actually For?

Paul outlines four practical purposes in 2 Timothy 3:16:

- Teaching -- it tells us what is true about God, humanity, sin, and salvation.
- Rebuking -- it shows us when we are heading in the wrong direction.
- Correcting -- it shows us how to return to the right path.
- Training in righteousness -- it shapes our character over a lifetime to look more like Jesus.

Psalms 119:105 (NIV)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

The image is of someone walking in darkness with a small lamp. The lamp doesn't illuminate the entire road at once -- it gives just enough light for the next step. The Bible works the same way.

You don't need to understand everything at once. God will give you what you need for where you are right now.

How Do I Start Reading the Bible?

- Start with the Gospel of John. It was written specifically to help people understand who Jesus is and why He came.
- Aim to read one chapter per day -- quality over quantity.
- Before you read, ask God to speak to you. Even a simple "Help me understand" is enough.
- When something stands out, write it down and ask: What does this tell me about God? What does this tell me about myself? Is there anything I should do differently?

Reflection Questions

1. Before becoming a Christian, who did you think Jesus was? How has that view started to shift?

2. The Trinity can be difficult to fully grasp. What questions do you have about it? Write them down -- it is completely okay to sit with unanswered questions.

3. If the Bible is truly God speaking to you, how does that change the way you approach reading it? What makes it different from any other book?

4. Paul says the Bible is for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training. Which of those four feels most needed in your life right now, and why?

5. What has your experience with the Bible been like so far? What has been encouraging? What has been confusing?

Apply It This Week

Memory Verse

Write Psalm 119:105 somewhere you will see it daily. Let it remind you to open the Bible before making decisions this week -- even small ones.

Action Step

Begin reading the Gospel of John this week. Aim for 3 chapters per day. As you read, underline or circle one verse per chapter that speaks to you, and jot a single sentence about why it stood out.

Close in Prayer

A Prayer to Close

"Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- I confess I don't fully understand who You are, and I'm still learning. Thank You for revealing Yourself through the Bible. Help me to love Your Word and trust it more than my own feelings or opinions. As I read, open my eyes to see You more clearly. Amen."

STUDY 3 OF 4

Prayer, Repentance & Walking With God

Key Passage: 1 John 1:9 | Supporting: Philipians 4:6-7, Matthew 6:9-13, Romans 8:1

Becoming a Christian is like being born into a family. The birth is a single, decisive moment -- but everything that follows is a lifelong relationship. That relationship is built primarily through two things: talking with God (prayer) and staying honest with God when you fall short (repentance).

This study will equip you to maintain and grow your relationship with God day by day -- even on the days when you feel like you have failed.

Read the Passage

1 John 1:9 (NIV)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Part One: Prayer -- Talking With God

What Prayer Actually Is

Prayer is simply talking with God -- and listening. It is not a religious ritual, a formula to recite, or a performance to impress anyone. It is a conversation with a Father who already loves you and already knows everything about you.

Many new believers feel self-conscious when they pray, worried they are doing it wrong. But Jesus gave His disciples a model prayer not as a script to memorize, but as a pattern to follow:

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Notice what Jesus' model prayer includes:

- Worship -- acknowledging who God is ("hallowed be your name").
- Surrender -- offering your plans to God ("your will be done").
- Dependence -- asking God to meet your daily needs ("give us today our daily bread").
- Confession -- coming clean about where you have fallen short ("forgive us our debts").
- Request -- asking for protection and guidance ("lead us not into temptation").

You don't need a specific posture, a special room, or a certain length of time. What matters is sincerity. God responds to the heart, not the performance.

What to Do When Prayer Feels Hard

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

There will be days when prayer feels hollow, distant, or forced. This is normal -- every believer experiences seasons like this. On those days, simply be honest with God about it. "God, I don't feel close to You right now" is a perfectly valid prayer. He is not put off by honesty. He is put off by pretense.

Notice that the promise in Philippians 4:7 is not that your circumstances will immediately change -- it is that God's peace will guard your heart. Prayer doesn't always change your situation, but it changes you in the middle of it.

Part Two: Repentance -- What to Do When You Sin

You Will Sin

The Bible does not promise that conversion removes your capacity to sin -- it promises that sin no longer has the final word over you. When you sin, one of two things can happen: you can run away from God in shame, or you can run toward God in repentance. The whole New Testament encourages the second response.

The Difference Between Guilt and Shame

- Guilt says: "I did something wrong. I need to make it right." This is healthy and God-given -- it is the Holy Spirit prompting you to return to God.
- Shame says: "I am something wrong. I am beyond repair." This comes from the enemy, not from God. Shame wants to keep you away from God; true conviction always draws you back toward Him.

Romans 8:1 (NIV)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

"No condemnation" does not mean sin doesn't matter -- it means your standing before God is not determined by your most recent failure. Your standing is determined by what Jesus did on the cross. When you confess, you are not begging God to restore a relationship He has abandoned. You are agreeing with God about what you did and receiving the forgiveness He has already provided.

What Repentance Actually Looks Like

The word repentance means a change of mind that leads to a change of direction. It is not just feeling bad about sin -- it is turning away from it. True repentance involves three things:

- Acknowledgment -- agreeing with God that what you did was wrong, without minimizing or excusing it.
- Confession -- bringing it before God openly and honestly.
- Turning -- choosing, by God's help, to go in a different direction.

1 John 1:9 makes a profound promise: when you confess, God is "faithful and just" to forgive. Faithful means He will always do it. Just means it is legally right for Him to do it because Jesus already paid the price. You are not asking God to overlook your sin -- you are receiving a forgiveness that has already been secured.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you tried praying on your own since becoming a Christian? What has that been like? What feels natural? What feels awkward?

2. Looking at Jesus' model prayer in Matthew 6, which element -- worship, surrender, dependence, confession, or request -- comes most naturally to you? Which feels hardest?

3. Think about the last time you did something you knew was wrong. Did you feel drawn toward God or away from God afterward? What does that tell you?

4. What is the difference between guilt (healthy) and shame (unhealthy) in your own experience? Have you ever confused the two?

5. Romans 8:1 says there is "no condemnation" for those in Christ. What does that mean to you personally? Does it feel true yet, or is it still hard to believe?

Apply It This Week

Memory Verse

Write 1 John 1:9 on a card and place it somewhere you will see it every day. When you sin this week -- and you will -- come back to this verse immediately rather than waiting.

Action Step

Set aside 10 minutes each day this week to pray. Use the five elements from Jesus' model prayer as a guide: worship, surrender, dependence, confession, and request. Don't worry about doing it perfectly -- just be honest.

Close in Prayer

A Prayer to Close

"Father, thank You that You are not far away and hard to reach. Thank You for the gift of prayer and the freedom to come to You at any moment. Forgive me where I have fallen short this week. Help me to run toward You when I fail, not away from You. Amen."

STUDY 4 OF 4

The Church & Living on Mission

Key Passage: Hebrews 10:24-25 | Supporting: Acts 2:42-47, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Matthew 28:18-20

The Christian life was never meant to be lived alone. From the very beginning, God has been forming a people -- a family, a body, a community -- not just a collection of isolated individuals. The church is not a building you attend; it is a family you belong to.

In this final study, we will look at why the local church is essential (not optional), what your place in it is, and why your story -- exactly as it is -- is one of the most powerful tools God wants to use in the world.

Read the Passage

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

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

Part One: Why You Need the Church

Community Is Not Optional

The author of Hebrews writes "do not give up meeting together" -- which implies that even in the early church, some people were tempted to skip it. The reasons then are probably not so different from today: busy schedules, past hurt, disappointment with other Christians, or simply the feeling that you can follow Jesus fine on your own.

But the New Testament never envisions the Christian life as a solo journey. Every command about how believers are to treat one another -- love one another, forgive one another, bear one another's burdens, encourage one another -- requires other people to be present. You cannot love "one another" alone.

What the Early Church Looked Like

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Four things defined the early church community:

- Teaching -- they were committed to learning God's Word together.
- Fellowship -- they did life together, not just Sunday services.
- Breaking of bread -- they shared meals and remembered Jesus together in Communion.
- Prayer -- they prayed together regularly, not just privately.

Notice what happened as a result: "The Lord added to their number daily." The community itself became a witness. People were drawn to the church not just by programs, but by the quality of love they saw among believers.

Part Two: You Have a Role to Play

Every Part of the Body Matters

1 Corinthians 12:12, 27 (NIV)

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

The church is described as a body, and a body only works when every part is functioning. You are not a passive observer in the church -- you are a necessary part of it. The gifts, experiences, personality, and background God has given you are not accidental. They are intentional, and the church needs them.

You may not yet know what your specific gifts or role are -- that is completely fine. Clarity often develops over time as you get involved. The key is to show up, stay engaged, and be willing to serve in whatever capacity is needed, even in small ways.

Part Three: Your Story Is a Powerful Tool

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

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

This passage -- known as the Great Commission -- is Jesus' final instruction before ascending to heaven. It is not given only to pastors or missionaries. It is addressed to all His followers. "Go" is the command; "make disciples" is the mission.

Making a disciple doesn't require a theology degree or a perfect track record. It begins with sharing your own story -- what your life was like before Jesus, how you came to faith, and what has changed. That story is uniquely yours. No one can argue with it, and no one else can tell it.

How to Share Your Story

A simple framework for sharing your faith story has three parts:

- Before -- What was your life like before you came to faith? What were you searching for, or what were you living for?
- How -- How did you come to trust Christ? What happened? What shifted?
- After -- What is different now? What has changed in how you think, feel, or live?

You don't need a dramatic story. You just need to tell the truth. God can use a quiet, simple testimony just as powerfully as a dramatic one.

Reflection Questions

1. What has been your experience with church in the past -- positive, negative, or somewhere in between? How does that history shape your feelings about getting involved now?

2. The early church in Acts 2 devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Which of those four comes most naturally to you? Which feels most unfamiliar?

3. 1 Corinthians 12 says every part of the body matters. What gifts, experiences, or qualities do you think God might want to use in you within the church?

4. Using the before/how/after framework, try to sketch your own faith story in a few sentences. What would you say if someone asked you why you became a Christian?

5. Is there one person in your life right now who doesn't know Jesus? What would it look like to begin praying for them and looking for an opportunity to share your story?

Apply It This Week

Memory Verse

Write Matthew 28:19-20 and keep it somewhere visible. Let it remind you this week that you are not just a recipient of the gospel -- you are now a carrier of it.

Action Step

Take one concrete step toward deeper involvement in your local church this week -- introduce yourself to a pastor, sign up for a small group, or volunteer to serve. Also: write out your faith story using the before/how/after framework and share it with one person this week.

Close in Prayer

A Prayer to Close

"Father, thank You that I don't have to walk this road alone. Thank You for the church -- imperfect as it is -- and the family You have placed me in. Help me to be a giving member of this body, not just a receiving one. Give me courage to share my story with the people around me who need to hear it. Use my life for something bigger than myself. Amen."

You have completed all four studies. Well done.

The foundation has been laid. Now keep building.