

What Has Happened And What Happens Next?

If you have diligently worked through the first five studies and applies the principles outlined in them you will have made a clear commitment of your life to Jesus Christ.

Congratulations! You have made the most important decision of your life and one you will never regret.

As you take these first steps towards Jesus Christ, He will meet you with open arms.

Luke 15:11-20 [NIV] *“Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no-one gave him anything. “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: **Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.**’ So he got up and went to his father. **“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”**”*

Jesus is describing in this parable God the Father’s attitude towards all who repent and return to Him seeking reconciliation.

We have now started on a completely new way of life, a new direction in our life, seeking to walk with Jesus Christ.

Walking with Jesus Christ is a totally different way of life so in the next few studies we will examine these steps.

If, however, you have **not** yet made a clear and total commitment to Jesus Christ, you need to do this before you continue in these studies.

If you need more time to think about it, then go back over the first five studies and on your knees before God ask Him to convict you of your need to repent and commit yourself to Jesus Christ.

How to work through the following studies

There are many things that a new Christian needs to know straight away about how to follow Jesus Christ.

The following studies have been written in a sequence that is generally thought to be the best order to cover these important topics.

Following your decision to follow Jesus Christ, what has already happened

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 [NIV] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”*

When people invite Jesus Christ to come into their lives, their experiences may be very different.

Some people have a wonderful feeling inside of great joy, they know that something has happened.

Others may not have such feelings.

They may not feel any different at all.

The important thing is not to trust your feeling; feelings are not the sign of what has happened inside.

You must trust what God has promised in His Word, the Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, will happen after you have taken the three steps outlined in the last study.

Admit, Believe, Commit.

Something very wonderful **has happened** to you whether you feel different or not.

Colossians 1:13-14 [NIV] *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

Believe and claim this promise made by God.

What happens now?

Forgiveness

Isaiah 1:18 [Living Bible] *“Come, let us talk this over! says the Lord, no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool!”*

When we confess that we were sinners, and ask Jesus to become our Saviour and Lord, God removes all our sins from us, places them on Jesus and offers us forgiveness.

Ephesians 2:8-9 [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast.”*

It is **not** because we are worthy of forgiveness, or that our rebellion doesn’t matter.

Sin is very serious!

Sin is so serious that Jesus, the very Son of God, had to die on the cross to deal with our sins.

God is only able to forgive us our sins because Jesus took the punishment for our sin and rebellion on the cross.

Jesus paid the penalty instead of us.

The Holy God can accept us as justified [just as if we had never sinned] when Jesus, who was and is Holy and perfect, died in our place.

Matthew 27:15-18, 21-22 [NIV] *“Now it was the governor’s custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.” ... “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor. “Barabbas,” they answered. “What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?” Pilate asked. They all answered, “Crucify him!”*

Remember the cross on which Jesus Christ died was prepared for Barabbas an evil rebel.

The cross we as sinners and rebels should be crucified on!

So when we confess our sins to God and put our trust and faith in Jesus, our sins are passed on to Jesus and God’s forgiveness flows to us.

God’s forgiveness is real.

Psalms 103:12 [NIV] *“as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*

Isaiah 43:25 [NIV] *“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”*

No longer remembers our sins.

Micah 7:18-19 [NIV] *“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”*

Buries our sins in the depth of the sea.

Romans 8:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,”*

We are now free from God’s wrath and judgement.

We are clean before God and there is now no condemnation.

This is the first wonderful thing that happens to us the moment we become a Christian.

A new spiritual life

Another thing that happens when we trust in Jesus Christ is we receive a spiritual life.

Matthew 8:21-22 [NIV] *“Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”*

Jesus was telling this man to follow Him so that he would no longer be part of the society who were spiritually dead.

John 5:24 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

Hearing Christ's words and trusting in what He promises causes us to pass from being spiritually dead into being spiritually [eternal] alive.

The "God-shaped" emptiness in our life has been filled.

Ephesians 2:1 [NIV] "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,*"

Even though we may have been "religious" we were dead because of our unforgiven sins.

So we could not respond to God and begin a relationship with Him.

Romans 8:11 [NIV] "*And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*"

When we put our trust in Jesus Christ, God touches our lives, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in us causes us to have a "spiritual birth".

Even if we die physically, the spirit now in us is eternal and we will never die eternally.

After this "spiritual birth" we are like spiritual babies and need to be cared for and nourished if we are to grow and mature.

2 Peter 3:17-18 [NIV] "*Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.*"

As a newly-born child of God we cannot stagnate, or else we may lose the secure condition in which God has placed us.

Jesus Christ now lives in us

John 14:15-21 [NIV] "*If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.*"

Not only do we now experience a spiritual life, we also have something more wonderful happen to us.

Jesus Himself comes to live in us, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of Christ.

Ephesians 1:13-14 [NIV] "*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having 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, to the praise of his glory.*"

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a guarantee of eternal life.

1 John 5:11-12 [NIV] "*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*"

We receive the gift of eternal life right now, while still physical human beings.

Romans 8:9 [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if **anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.**”*

If the Holy Spirit is **not** dwelling in us and directing our lives we are **not** a Christian, for a Christian belongs to Jesus Christ.

The spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit in us, will begin to change us from within as we yield to Him and co-operate with Him.

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] *“But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

The “fruits” of this union with the Holy Spirit are these God-like characteristics.

We will begin to fulfil what God desires to be created in His “likeness”.

This second part of our creation cannot happen in any other way.

John 14:23 [NIV] *“Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

We now carry a part of God around with us in our body!

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 [NIV] *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”*

Jesus Christ lives in us, so to worship Him we do **not** have to wait until we go to a church building to pray and worship. We can do this anytime anywhere.

Talk to God, share our life with Him and put our trust in Him.

These are the first three things that happen to us the moment we put our trust in Jesus.

Memory Scripture:

2 Corinthians 5:17 [NIV] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*

In the next study we will look at another three things that happen to us.