

New Friends

A course to introduce the Christian faith

A MULTIPLY 'Let's talk' booklet for those wanting to experience living Christianity



Second Edition

New Friends


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Seven friendly sessions helping
you to experience the life-changing
love and power of Jesus Christ

A MULTIPLY 'Let's Talk' book
for those wanting to experience living Christianity





New Friends is designed both for those enquiring into the Christian faith and for new believers and Christians seeking assurance and commitment.

All **New Friends** sessions include a light meal, followed by the session topic, table discussion and prayer and ending with drinks and biscuits.

There is a series of short films available on DVD which may be shown as part of each **New Friends** session.

Administrative Guidelines are available to help those planning and running **New Friends**. They cover the responsibilities of the working groups required, and of the key staff running each session.

The Guidelines also give a week by week format for **New Friends**, from Session One to the celebration at the end of **New Friends**.

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Foreword

New Friends is an opportunity for anyone to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed setting over seven thought-provoking weekly sessions. Many of us have questions about life, its purpose and its meaning. **New Friends** provides an opportunity to voice some of these deeper searching questions in a relaxed atmosphere.

The format is an enjoyable, relaxed meal followed by a talk and then discussion around the table. It is an opportunity to find out what Christians believe. Hear, first-hand, other people's real experience of Jesus. It helps to make Christianity relevant and can help us become real Christians.

There is a spiritual dimension to life which we can start to understand as we begin to believe in Jesus Christ. We can feel his love and power change us and heal us. It's like a new start in life.

New Friends is for everyone, whether a Christian believer or not. It's friendly and completely non-threatening. It will help many of us find answers in our search, light in our darkness and friends in our loneliness. The friendships we make at **New Friends** will often become deep and last long after the course has finished.

You'll enjoy this booklet and you'll enjoy **New Friends**.

Mick Haines
Jesus Fellowship

This is Jesus

Session One

Jesus is the most alive man in the universe - and he's still gathering people: people who need no qualifications except that they want to be with him and follow him.



Table discussion

✦ Jesus is very famous, but a lot of people aren't really sure why. For some he is just a picture on a stained glass window or a Christmas card.

What do you believe about Jesus?

✦ More was written about Jesus than any other person who lived in those times – even kings. The part of the Bible called 'the New Testament' contains what some of the first Christians wrote about Jesus. They describe Jesus as a real man who got tired, got angry, loved, wept, had a sense of humour and so on. But they also say that he was God's Son – God in human form, who lived a perfect life.

What do you think of this?

✦ It has been said that Jesus must have been 'mad', 'bad', or 'God', because anyone who claimed to be God like Jesus did must either be crazy, lying – or telling the truth.

Which of these three do you think makes the most sense about Jesus?

✦ Christians believe that Jesus is not just someone who lived a long time ago. They believe that he rose from the dead, and that he is alive now in heaven. They look forward to the day when he will return to rule with perfect love. And until that happens, Christians aim, with his help, to live the life of love as they follow him.

Do you long for a better world? Would you like to follow Jesus and join him in living for his way of love?

TESTIMONY

'I was desperate. I typed into Google "What must I do to be saved?" and got to a website that gave me a prayer. I clicked on "prayed it" and the screen told me angels were rejoicing. I started to cry. God healed me on the inside. He wants to be found. He found me – now I want to help many others to find him.'

Jon



FROM THE BIBLE

'Ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature.'

Romans 1:20

'No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. he has revealed God to us.'

John 1:18

(Jesus said) 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'

John 8:12

Going deeper...

- › God created the whole world in love and joy.
- › The world has fallen away from God because human beings rejected God.
- › God loves the world so much that he gave Jesus, his Son, to rescue us.
- › God forgives us and removes the guilt and shame of our sin through Jesus.
- › Jesus died to take on himself the weight of the evil that was crushing us.
- › God loves us, his Son gives himself for us, and his Spirit comes to live in us as we trust in Jesus. We become God's children and know him as our Father.
- › Churches are groups of those who trust in and follow Jesus. They should express God's love by joining together in love and justice.
- › God gives us a new life: fully alive in spirit, mind and body,
- › God brings healing to us, spiritually and physically.
- › Though our bodies still die, we will live on spiritually with Jesus in heaven, until the final resurrection when we will get new, transformed bodies.
- › God will make the whole world new and perfect and we will live with him for ever.

“

MY PRAYER

GOD, you've shown yourself in your Son, Jesus. Please answer my questions, meet my needs, and save and heal me. I need your help to know you and trust you.

”

Friend of Sinners

Session Two

An amazing opportunity has opened up before us. Jesus has bridged the gulf between us and God, and us and each other. There's a new life, a new start.

Table discussion

✦ Jesus came to restore broken relationships – to mend friendships.

How important is friendship to you?

✦ “The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart’ – we are affected by sin, the selfishness which shows in our attitudes, thoughts, words and actions and which takes us far away from God and from each other.

Why are human beings so easily selfish? Is there anything we can do about sin or do we need God’s help?

✦ The cross is the central symbol of the Christian faith.
What does the cross mean to you? Would you wear a cross? Why – or why not?

✦ Jesus death on the cross has overcome sin. his death takes away sin’s pollution (guilt and dirt inside us), sin’s power (deep-rooted habits of selfishness), sin’s penalty (death and hell, the punishment we deserve for sin) – and bridges the separation between us and God.

Is it just morbid and depressing to concentrate on Jesus’ death or is there a reason?

✦ Jesus’ resurrection both proves that his death saves and breaks through into a new life beyond death’s reach – we can follow Jesus into this new life.

Are you ready to accept the forgiveness, friendship, family, and new life that Jesus is offering you?

2

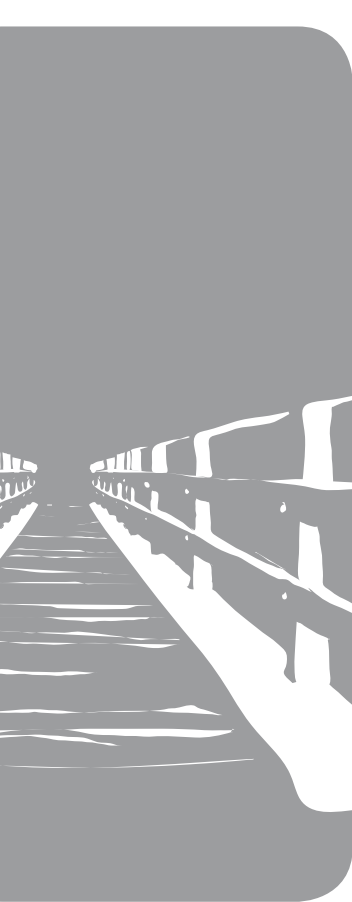


TESTIMONY

“I struggled with love. When people said ‘I love you,’ I couldn’t accept it. But God has shown me that love stands by what it believes in, even when feelings aren’t there.

I’ve found I can let go of guilt I’ve held for years. I can ask for people’s forgiveness and start to love myself.”

Art



Going deeper...

- › God created the human race to know him – to love and worship him.
- › An angel, created good, turned away from God, becoming evil – the Bible calls this angel Satan which means ‘enemy’ or ‘accuser’.
- › Satan has deceived the human race into turning away from God into the rebellion and selfishness which the Bible calls sin.
- › Because of sin, the entire human race (including us) has lost its friendship with God, though we still have a conscience through which we sense what is right and wrong.
- › We are born trapped in a selfish nature and we all sin and die because of it.
- › God still loves human beings and has made a way for us to be saved from sin and Satan even though none of us deserve it.
- › The Son of God was born into the human race as Jesus Christ who lived a sinless life, but was the ‘friend of sinners’.
- › Jesus shows what a human life can be like when it is not ruined by sin.
- › Jesus died on the cross in our place, taking our sin, releasing us from its punishment, freeing us from Satan’s rebellion and from sin’s guilt and power.
- › Jesus rose from the dead to be our living Lord, Saviour and representative at God’s throne.
- › The Bible calls Jesus a new ‘Adam’. Adam was the name of the very first man – and now Jesus leads a new, saved human race.
- › God’s Spirit causes us to see the truth concerning Jesus and to believe in him.
- › As we believe and ask Jesus to save us, God declares us ‘not guilty’ and we receive a sense of being forgiven and saved.

FROM THE BIBLE

‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’

1 Timothy 1: 15

‘God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.’

1 Peter 1: 18-19

‘Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.’

Acts 16: 31

“

MY PRAYER

LORD JESUS, you have died for me, given yourself in my place to save me from my sin. I now give myself to you and receive you as my friend, Saviour and Lord. Forgive me and save me. Thank you, Lord.

Prayer cards, with a prayer you can pray on your own or with someone else, are available on request.

”

New Birth for Me

Session Three

When we're born again, the spirit inside us – the unseen part, deep inside us, that loves and longs and feels – comes fully alive.

Table discussion

✦ People's first experiences of God are often different for different people. Some say they have a deep sense of their need for forgiveness; others sense his love or peace; still others see a vision or have a powerful dream and so on.

Have you ever experienced God? If so what was it like, how did it happen?

✦ Jesus said that we need to be 'born from above', born again, spiritually. This happens when we are re-united with God by receiving the forgiveness available because of Jesus.

Why do we need to believe in Jesus and be forgiven in order to be born again? Have you been born again?

✦ Being born again is not only about feelings. It is based on: God's word (the Bible and more important still, Jesus himself – faith trusts in what God has said through Jesus as written down in the Bible); Jesus' work (dying on the cross and rising from the dead) and the Spirit's witness (God's Spirit enables us to experience now the life-changing power of what Jesus has done). These are like the three legs of a stool – with less than all three your faith will be wobbly!

'God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die' (John 3:16). Are you able to accept this promise?

✦ There are four basic stages on the journey into full Christian faith and new birth: repent (turn away from selfish sin); believe (turn towards God in faith); be baptised in water (more on this in session 4); receive the Spirit (more on this in session 5).

Where are you in this process?

3



TESTIMONY

"One night I heard Jesus speaking to me for the first time, telling me to read a verse from the Psalms which really spoke to me. This brought home to me that God cared about me. It stripped away my cockiness and I began trusting Jesus."

Donna

FROM THE BIBLE

'I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God.'

John 3:3

'Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.'

John 3:6

'I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.'

Matthew 18:3

'Even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

Ephesians 2:5

'You received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.'

Romans 8:15-16

'If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead.'

1 John 3:14



Going deeper...

- › Through natural birth we are born 'in Adam' – basically selfish, spiritually dead, and separated from God.
- › Although we are separated from God, we were made for him and still have a longing to know him deep inside us.
- › As we believe in Jesus Christ, we come alive spiritually – this is what Jesus called being 'born from above' or 'born again'.
- › Faith joins us to Jesus, the 'new Adam'. Through his death and resurrection we receive new life, eternal life.
- › When we are born again, we become God's children and God's Spirit comes and lives within us and helps us to know God as our Father.
- › The New Testament calls this going 'from death to life'.
- › We see things differently, our eyes are opened to the true nature of things – we see God's rulership of heaven and earth.
- › We are humbled, becoming 'like little children' in order to enter God's kingdom.
- › We live a new life of love, belonging together with God's other children in a loving brotherhood.

“

MY PRAYER

O GOD, I want to be born again, to know you are my Father and I am your child. Thank you for powerfully bringing me from spiritual death to spiritual life. Thank you for giving me your Spirit to live in me and for the cry of 'Father' which now rises from me. Thank you, Father, that you have made me a member of your family.

”

here is water

Session Four

Up you come, splashing water everywhere! You join Jesus in his resurrection. The Spirit fills you. You're alive, living a new life full of vision and purpose. You're part of the new humanity.

Table discussion

✦ In water baptism you are plunged in water as a sign that you are beginning a new life as a Christian. (For more on how we baptise people in the Jesus Fellowship, see 'Water baptism in the Jesus Fellowship' later in this booklet.)

Ask someone at your table to describe their baptism.

✦ Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan. He led the way, identifying with us in his baptism, which pointed towards his death on the cross for us. Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead. We now join with him in his death, burial and resurrection as we are baptised in water.

Are there things in your life which you need to bury with Jesus in the waters of baptism?

✦ 'Have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.' Romans 6:3-4.

What does this passage from the New Testament tell us about baptism?

✦ 'Baptism is like a bath. Our sins have been washed away by Jesus and baptism helps us know that we are clean from sin on the inside.'

'Baptism is like a door. It's an exit from an old life lived for self and an entry to a new life lived for Jesus.'

Which of these statements about baptism do you find the most helpful? Why? Do you want to be baptised? What is most exciting or scary about the thought of baptism?

4



TESTIMONY

'On the day of my baptism, I was nervous, but as soon as I got into the water, all my worries disappeared. Coming up out of the water, I felt full of God's power. It overflowed in worship and tears. My baptism was a key moment for me. It helped me to find freedom.'

Beth



FROM THE BIBLE

(Jesus said) 'Anyone who believes and is baptised will be saved.'

Mark 16:16

(Jesus said) 'Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.'

Matthew 28:19

'Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

Acts 2:38

'For you were buried with Christ when you were baptised. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead'

Colossians 2:12

Going deeper...

- › To decide to be baptised is a free decision made by adult believers – those who make their own decision to follow Jesus declaring 'Jesus is Lord!'
- › The words spoken when someone is baptised are not 'magic words' but they do declare authoritatively what is happening. Phrases like 'baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus,' 'baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,' 'baptised by the Spirit into the Body of Christ' and 'baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ' sum up New Testament teaching about baptism.
- › Baptism can take place anywhere, indoors or outdoors, where there is enough water!
- › Those baptising should be respected as men of God.
- › Baptism is a joyful occasion which will involve worship, encouraging and prophetic words spoken to the person being baptised, and celebration as someone is accepted into the church family.
- › In baptism God affirms his love for us and his acceptance of us in Christ.
- › In baptism we leave behind an old, sinful system and enter into God's new society.
- › Baptism gives us power over the sinful urges of our old nature – spiritually, they are now dead and buried and we are living a new life with Jesus.
- › We must believe in the power that baptism brings us and learn how to 'put off' our old nature and 'put on' our new nature.
- › We rise in resurrection life full of pure Holy Spirit released in praise, promising to believe in Jesus for the rest of our lives.

For more on baptism see '*Your Baptism*' by Noel Stanton, published by Multiply Publications, available from Jesus People Shop (www.jesuspeople.biz)

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MY PRAYER

LORD JESUS, I must follow you in baptism. I need to obey you and be baptised into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. My sinful, old life needs to be joined to your death and burial. And I want to rise in you to live a new life.

”

Welcome Holy Spirit

Session Five

You'll experience power changing you,
charging you up to live as a Christian.
And you'll be filled with love for your
Christian brothers and sisters.

Table discussion

✦ The Holy Spirit brings reality to our experience of a real, living, active God.

Have you ever experienced a miracle or the obvious, supernatural working of God?

✦ The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force like electricity. Jesus described the Holy Spirit as a “counsellor” or “comforter” who strengthens those who follow Jesus.

In what ways might the Holy Spirit help you to follow Jesus?

✦ As well as the Holy Spirit being alongside us, he also fills us on the inside. The New Testament calls this being ‘baptised in the Holy Spirit’. This results in spiritual gifts like the gift of tongues (speaking in a new spiritual language) and in powerful love for God, for brothers and sisters and for people generally.

Have you been baptised in the Holy Spirit? Would you like to be?

✦ Once you have been baptised in the Spirit, you will need to keep on being filled with the Spirit day by day. You will need to grow in your relationship with the Holy Spirit (the New Testament calls this ‘walking in the Spirit’).

Practically speaking, what does it mean to ‘walk’ or ‘live’ in the Spirit?

✦ Suggested steps to being filled with the Spirit:

- Get a Spirit-filled Christian who you trust to pray with you and lay hands on you.
- Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.
- Begin to praise and thank God.

5



TESTIMONY

‘God filled me with his Spirit at a time in my life when I’d found forgiveness in my heart. The more I prayed, the more God filled me. I fell to the ground, crying out to God, knowing his overwhelming love. Every emotion was taken over by him – tears and laughter all mingled together. It was awesome.’

Kerry



> *continued from previous page*

- Begin to praise God in your new tongue (remember, you speak, the Holy Spirit will make the sounds into language).

- You may feel heat or the sensation of something flowing within you; you may find emotions well up (tears or laughter); you may fall down or shake; or you may just quietly 'soak' in the presence of God.

Now you could pray for each other to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

FROM THE BIBLE

'He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'

Matthew 3:11

'If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.'

Luke 11:13

'Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! ...Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'

John 7:38

'You will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

Acts 1:5

'And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other tongues, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.'

Acts 2:4

'The gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out... For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.'

Acts 10:45-46

Going deeper...

> The Holy Spirit is the Life-giver; along with the Father and the Son, he is creator and rescuer of the world.

> The Holy Spirit honours Jesus and points people to him always.

> The Holy Spirit is often described in the Bible using picture language such as wind or breath, living water, holy fire, and anointing oil.

> God the Father has promised to give the Spirit to those who ask him.

> Jesus loves to give the Spirit to those who are spiritually thirsty.

> It is the Holy Spirit who joins us together as the church, the 'body of Christ'.

Many people will be baptised with the Holy Spirit (or 'filled', or 'anointed') and speak in tongues at this session.



MY PRAYER

LORD JESUS, I long to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit, and fill me. I thirst for the living water. Come, Holy Spirit, and burn in me. Set me on fire with love. Now I receive the gift. Come, Holy Spirit! Bring power, love, joy, and purity. Free me and overwhelm me. I love and worship you, Lord. I praise you with a new tongue.

Prayer cards, with a prayer you can pray on your own or with someone else, are available on request.



The church is us

Session Six

Real church is the most exciting thing on earth – because it's a group of people who are being changed by the power of God and the truth of Jesus in their lives: changed to being a people who really love one another.

Table discussion

✦ Church is exciting! The church is not about ancient buildings or religious professionals like priests and vicars. Living churches are certainly not dull or boring!

Has tonight (or New Friends generally) changed your view of what church is?

✦ Church is people! The church is a people called to be different from the society around and to show God's new society.

Do you find the idea of living a 'different' lifestyle as part of God's people exciting or scary – or both?

✦ Church is family! We are joined together to form the church, the body of Christ. God gives us real, true, deep love for each other.

Do you feel you belong to the church, not just because 'it's nice' but because you have been changed inside?

✦ Often when the church meets, bread and wine are shared (this is sometimes called holy communion). The broken bread is a symbol of Jesus' body broken on the cross; the wine is a symbol of Jesus' blood shed on the cross. Through Jesus' death we have been united into one body; when we share bread and wine, we share in his life together.

Talk about what this simple meal means for Christians.

✦ Jesus loves the church. He died for the church and the Bible describes the church as his 'bride'.

How important is the church to you?

6



TESTIMONY

'If it wasn't for the church, I would never have learnt to love people who are different from me. In the church we become real, true friends. Church is relationships. God is real – I can't deny it. And he joins people together in real love.'

Ian



FROM THE BIBLE

'I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.'

Matthew 16:18

'We have all been baptised into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.'

1 Corinthians 12:13

'Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.'

Romans 12:4-5

'Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean.'

Ephesians 5:25-26

'You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people.'

1 Peter 2:9-10

'Love your Christian brothers and sisters'

1 Peter 2:17

Going deeper...

- › The New Testament describes church in many ways: a spiritual family of brothers and sisters; a spiritual building built with people and filled with God; a spiritual flock with elders as shepherds and Jesus as chief shepherd; the body of Christ with each part having a role; the bride of Christ that he loves and died for.
- › Churches are made up of people who have been born again, baptised in water and Spirit, and who love each other as brothers and sisters.
- › In the church barriers such as race or class are broken down between people.
- › When people are new disciples, 'babes in Christ', they will need help to grow strong in God. More mature Christians can help them learn to pray, read the Bible and tell others about Jesus.
- › Churches will meet together often, to worship, pray, share bread and wine (holy communion) together.
- › Members of the church share their lives and possessions and learn to live for Christ's cause.
- › Every member has a part to play in growing and strengthening their church.
- › Churches bring praise and worship to God.
- › Jesus is the head of the church, which is his great body, made up of churches throughout the nations.
- › The church has a mission from Jesus: to make disciples and grow the church.
- › Jesus will come again, bringing all his people together to be his triumphant church forever.



MY PRAYER

LORD JESUS, you have saved me and, through your Spirit, I am baptised into your church. Thank you for the love which joins us together. Thank you that each one of us belongs and strengthens the church through our life and work. Thank you that your Spirit lives in us, the church.



I'm saying 'Yes!'

Session Seven

When you say 'yes' to God, you open yourself up to his power. When you say 'yes' to God, he can get to work in your life. When you say 'yes' to God he can pour his life and strength and grace and hope into you.

Table discussion

✦ God gives us the power to say 'Yes' to Jesus and 'No!' to sin, selfishness and Satan.

✦ Talk through this checklist:

YES to God, my Father.

YES to God, who loves me.

YES to God, who made the world.

YES to God, who gave his Son for me.

YES to Jesus, my Saviour who died for me.

YES to Jesus, my Lord who is alive.

YES to Jesus, who baptises me with the Holy Spirit.

YES to Jesus, who heals and frees me.

YES to Jesus, who prays for me in heaven.

YES to Jesus, and his church.

YES to Jesus, who will return from heaven.

YES to the Holy Spirit who brings me new birth.

YES to the Holy Spirit who fills me with love and power.

YES to the Holy Spirit who joins me to the church.

YES to the Holy Spirit who gives me spiritual gifts.

YES to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – my God!

NO to the guilt and power of sin.

NO to selfishness.

NO to the wrong around me in the world.

NO to Satan and demons.

How did you do? Are you saying a big 'Yes!' to God and a strong 'No!' to sin and Satan?

✦ The Christian life is all about making these choices, again and again, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Will you carry on saying 'Yes' to God with his help?

7



TESTIMONY

'I've found myself getting restored and healed – and deepening in faith towards Jesus. I don't trust quick, sudden dramatic changes. They can be quickly, suddenly reversed! But I know that Jesus is a friend who is for you even if you mess up. Now I have a new chance to get life the right way round!'

Trudy

FROM THE BIBLE

'For Jesus Christ, the Son of God, does not waver between "Yes" and "No." As God's ultimate "Yes," he always does what he says. For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!"'

2 Corinthians 1:19-20

'Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you...'

Acts 2:37-39

'It is God who enables us to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first instalment that guarantees everything he has promised us.'

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

'I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.'

Philippians 1:6



Going deeper...

- › The Holy Spirit gives us the strength and power to live as Christians. It is important that Christians go on being filled and refreshed by the Holy Spirit day by day.
- › Jesus' call to his followers is: 'take up your cross daily'. Every day we must choose to follow him and choose to kill our selfish or sinful desires.
- › You're not on our own! Fellowship, friendship and help from other Christians is vital and helps us live a healthy Christian life.
- › Spiritual disciplines like prayer and reading the Bible help us to grow and mature as Christians.

“

MY PRAYER

LORD GOD, I'm saying 'Yes' to you: I need you. Thank you for rescuing me from sin and Satan. Lord Jesus, I am yours: I choose to be your disciple, your servant and your friend. I want to be like you, even when it is hard. I want to love your people and build up our church. Come, Holy Spirit, fill me, and join me forever to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God my Father.

”

Grow stronger

So you've begun! Born again, baptised, and belonging to the Christian church, God's family.

Now you will grow stronger through your friendship with other Christians, through prayer and worship – and through being discipled, taught, trained, as the New Testament says.

In your church there will be leaders (sometimes called pastors, shepherds or elders). They are there to help you. In the Jesus Fellowship we also appoint 'caring brothers' or 'caring sisters' to each new disciple. Some churches have cell groups or other mid-week groups meeting regularly.

Talk to leaders of your church. Continue the journey you've begun. There's more to receive from Jesus!

Church membership

As this handbook has made clear, all who receive Jesus as Saviour and are born again and fully baptised belong to his church.

However, churches differ as to how they see membership.

Some have a variety of membership categories. Some do not have a structured membership at all.

The Jesus Fellowship has a variety of membership styles suited to the different commitment levels of those who join the church. Recognition of new members usually takes place at large meetings.

There are four main categories of membership in the Jesus Fellowship:

- › Covenant membership (these members form the committed heart of the church and are active as the Jesus Army).
- › Baptised membership.
- › Congregational membership.
- › Cell-church membership.

Please talk to the leaders of the church responsible for this New Friends course to share on your own position.

Be a witness!

We live at a time when there is great interest in the Christian faith, if it is presented as up-to-date, relevant and alive.

Friendship and openness to the good news of Jesus is growing everywhere. All kinds of barriers are being broken down. There is a flowing of the 'river of the Holy Spirit' around – a loving, joyful, powerful and godly movement among people.

Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit is received we become his 'witnesses'. Now is the time for you to talk about what you've found, to help others in their search. They, too, need a living experience of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray for our families, relatives, neighbours and others we know or meet. Let's witness through our new lives – relaxed, confident and non-religious. Let's witness by who we are, showing Jesus in our lives and lifestyle.

Feel able to invite people to your home. Take them out for a meal. You may be able to start a little group in your home.

Be a witness!

Celebrating New Friends

Celebration

It is good to finish New Friends by celebrating with those who have completed the course. It may be appropriate to run a celebration event some time during the week after New Friends is completed or, alternatively, to celebrate over a special weekend – or just on a Sunday.

Meal

This celebration should include a celebration meal for all who have attended the course. This meal can be a friendly, joyful occasion, possibly including worship, prayer for people to receive the Holy Spirit and testimonies. All who have attended New Friends can be asked to bring another friend with them. These friends may want to be enrolled for the next New Friends course! A good target would be for twice as many people to attend the celebration meal as have attended New Friends.

Sunday

All those who have attended New Friends are given a personal invitation to take part in local church events on the Sunday following New Friends. There they should be introduced and welcomed. This is a time of celebration suitable for all kinds of people, including those interested, but not yet believers. Include a response time with prayer for those wanting to receive.

Water baptism in the Jesus Fellowship

Preparation

Everyone who is to be baptised should have been given basic teaching about baptism, either by reading a booklet like *'Your Baptism'* (available from the Jesus People Shop: www.jesuspeople.biz) or by a leader – perhaps someone they have got to know during New Friends.

Location

Baptism can take place anywhere, indoors or outdoors, where there is enough water. Jesus Fellowship baptisms should always follow as closely as possible to the procedure described here, though, inevitably, there will be some differences between indoor and outdoor baptisms, so some adaptation may be necessary.

The health of those to be baptised must be considered, too. It may be best in some cases (such as elderly, sick or disabled people) to baptise by pouring water over the person while they are in a standing or seated position.

Occasion

There is a need for life and power wherever baptisms take place. Whoever is leading must be inspirational, anointed with the Spirit's power. Time should be given for worship. Before each baptism, anointed 'body' ministry, when people speak out words from God, should be encouraged.

Introduction


Each baptismal candidate should be briefly introduced (name, background, testimony) by their particular leader. This can take place before all the baptisms or before each baptism.

Invocation

The person about to be baptised should declare 'Jesus Christ is Lord' before being baptised.

Baptism

Before each baptism the baptising leader should pray powerfully, lay hands on the head and say these words: 'We baptise you into the death, the burial and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and



the Holy Spirit. By that Spirit, you are baptised together with us into the body of Christ, the church. In the name that is higher than any other name, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we now baptise you!

Then the candidate is taken fully under the water and then lifted up to stand glistening with water – and glowing with the Spirit!

After Baptism

When the newly-baptised person rises from the water, expect a release in the Spirit, with tongues, worship and even prophecy. The spiritual baptism of praise and love at this time is vital.

Either straightaway or shortly afterwards the newly-baptised person will be prayed with to ensure that they have a full release in the Holy Spirit.

Before the person who has been baptised leaves the water, they are asked, ‘Will you be true to Jesus your Saviour and Lord?’ and ‘Will you be true to your brothers and sisters in the church?’ Then the people around them are asked, ‘Will you be true to him/her?’ The expected answer to all these questions is ‘yes!’

The newly-baptised person is asked ‘Who is your leader/elder?’ and ‘Who is your caring brother/sister?’ to ensure that they will have the pastoral support they will need in the future.

New Friends

A MULTIPLY 'Let's talk'

booklet for those wanting to
experience living Christianity

New Friends is for everyone,
whether a Christian
believer or not. It's friendly and
completely non-threatening.
It will help many of us find
answers in our search, light in
our darkness and friends in our
loneliness.

- Mick Haines, from his foreword

‘By believing in
him you will have
life in his name’

John 20:31, The Bible

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there is a series of seven
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