



A NAVPRESS BIBLE STUDY

BEGINNING THE WALK

18 SESSIONS ON JESUS
THE WAY
THE TRUTH
& THE LIFE

BEGINNING THE WALK



18 SESSIONS ON JESUS

THE WAY
THE TRUTH
& THE LIFE

NAVPRESS 

*A NavPress resource published in alliance
with Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*



NavPress is the publishing ministry of The Navigators, an international Christian organization and leader in personal spiritual development. NavPress is committed to helping people grow spiritually and enjoy lives of meaning and hope through personal and group resources that are biblically rooted, culturally relevant, and highly practical.

For more information, visit www.NavPress.com.

Beginning the Walk: 18 Sessions on Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Collected edition copyright © 2018 by Navigator Church Ministries. All rights reserved.

Individual titles (*Jesus the Way, Jesus the Truth, Jesus the Life*) copyright © 2004 by Navigator Church Ministries.

A NavPress resource published in alliance with Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

NAV PRESS and the NAV PRESS logo are registered trademarks of NavPress, The Navigators, Colorado Springs, CO. TYNDALE is a registered trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. NCM and the NCM logo are trademarks of The Navigators, Colorado Springs, CO. Absence of ® in connection with marks of NavPress or other parties does not indicate an absence of registration of those marks.

The Team:

Don Pape, Publisher

David Zimmerman, Editor

Helen Macdonald, Copyeditor

Jennifer Ghionzoli, Designer

Cover photograph of mountain hike copyright © by Galen Crout/Unsplash.com. All rights reserved.

Bridge to Life by The Navigators copyright © 1969. Used by permission of The Navigators. All rights reserved.

Cover title Cache font copyright © by Quill Type Co/Creative Market. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from *THE MESSAGE*, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible,® copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,® NIV.® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked TLB are taken from *The Living Bible*, copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Some of the anecdotal illustrations in this book are true to life and are included with the permission of the persons involved. All other illustrations are composites of real situations, and any resemblance to people living or dead is purely coincidental.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-800-323-9400.

ISBN 978-1-63146-924-4

Printed in the United States of America

23 22 21 20 19 18

6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

Preface *v*

How to Use *Beginning the Walk ix*

INTRODUCTION TO JESUS THE WAY *I*

- LESSON 1: New Connection *3*
- LESSON 2: New Creation *11*
- LESSON 3: New Center *21*
- LESSON 4: New Companionship *29*
- LESSON 5: New Clothes *37*
- LESSON 6: New Calling *45*
- Summary *52*

INTRODUCTION TO JESUS THE TRUTH *53*

- LESSON 7: His Workmanship *55*
- LESSON 8: His Sheep *61*
- LESSON 9: His Child *69*
- LESSON 10: His Follower *79*
- LESSON 11: His Branch *87*
- LESSON 12: His Dwelling Place *95*
- Summary *103*

INTRODUCTION TO JESUS THE LIFE *105*

- LESSON 13: Faith *109*
- LESSON 14: The Word *119*
- LESSON 15: Prayer *129*
- LESSON 16: The Holy Spirit *137*

LESSON 17: Grace 147
LESSON 18: Community 157
Summary 165

APPENDIX 1: Beginning Your Walk 167
APPENDIX 2: Who I Am in Christ 171
APPENDIX 3: Next Steps in Your Walk with Christ 175

Notes 179
About the Authors 181

PREFACE

*Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord,
so walk in Him.*

COLOSSIANS 2:6, NASB

WELCOME TO AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY called “your new life in Christ.” When you came to a personal faith in Christ, you began a lifelong journey that you will complete only when you see Jesus face-to-face. He made this claim and promise in John 10:10: “I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”

Whenever the Bible talks about new life (or as *The Message* puts it, “more and better life”), it is talking about more than just new habits or patterns for daily living. The life that results from faith in Christ is life with a new spiritual dimension. It is a relational journey that has adventure, excitement, and purpose. The Bible uses the term “eternal life” to describe this new reality. Jesus explained it like this in John 17:3: “This is the real and eternal life: that they know you, the one and only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent.”

Life, in the language of the Bible, is not a single event. It is a journey of knowing Christ, experiencing the reality of His presence in your life, and discovering more of who He is as you walk through each day. This life has both quality and quantity. In terms of quality, God gives meaning and purpose to the practical experiences of life. In terms of quantity, this relationship with Christ lasts from the moment of your faith discovery until . . . forever.

Jesus Christ is the central focus of this life. As you become more familiar with the Bible, you will discover how important Jesus really is. Most of us have developed a working concept of God based on our past experiences. For some, God is a distant landlord; to others, He is a vigilant policeman. Still others see God as an impersonal force or a cosmic Santa Claus. Jesus Christ came into our world to reveal the true nature and person of God. He came to correct and clarify our understanding of God. To know Christ is to discover God, as we see in Hebrews 1:1-3:

Going through a long line of prophets, God has been addressing our ancestors in different ways for centuries. Recently he spoke to us directly through his Son. By his Son, God created the world in the beginning, and it will all belong to the Son at the end. This Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature. He holds everything together by what he says—powerful words!

The journey of knowing Christ is more than gathering information, yet it needs to be grounded in truth. This journey is more than an emotional event, yet it contains many significant experiences. This relational journey touches every part of who we are. It affects our minds, emotions, and wills. It works from the inside out and the outside in. It is personal. It is private and public. It is visible and invisible, simple and complex. It is incomprehensible yet understandable. It is beyond our experience yet touches everything about us that is real.

God is the designer and author of life, so understanding who He is will help you appreciate the gift of life He has given you. *Beginning the Walk* will move you along on your journey of knowing and experiencing Christ personally.

As you begin your journey, you may wish you had maps or blueprints to show you where to go or what to do. This study can help. Some of the concepts introduced in these pages may be totally new for you, and some may be familiar. Some may challenge what you previously

thought, and others may even be confusing. Remember that this is a lifelong journey—a journey that will take you into new discoveries and experiences. Clarity will come as you continue on the journey.

The Bible is our primary source for truth on this journey. Written over the course of fifteen hundred years by various authors who were inspired by God, the Bible includes a number of literary styles. Some of it is written as history, some as poetry. Some of the books are letters to individuals; others are letters to groups of people. The Bible claims to be the revelation of God to man, God's own story line with man. By studying the Bible, we can move beyond the general revelation of God that we see in nature to discover His character, heart, and purposes.

In the past, you may have found the Bible boring, baffling, or bewildering. Now, however, as you begin your relational journey with Christ, the Bible will come alive. As you read the Bible, you will begin to understand what it means to have a new life in Christ.

The Bible will be your best resource for the journey. But as with any journey, there will be times when you feel lost or unsure about which path to take. That's because a life of faith prompts just as many questions as answers.

A few years ago, an airline company offered mystery trips. People bought tickets and showed up at the airport with bags packed for a three-day journey. All arrangements were made for a surprise weekend in a major city in the United States, but ticket holders wouldn't know which one until they got on the plane. The mystery added a sense of adventure to an otherwise familiar activity.

But what if, instead of US cities, the plane whisked you off to a mystery location unlike anything you had ever known? One where *everything* seemed new and unfamiliar. One where the culture, the government, the language, the currency, even the landscape were foreign.

When you came to personal faith in Jesus Christ, you were given a ticket for this kind of mystery trip. And now that the plane has landed, you have stepped into a place called the Kingdom of God. While you

will probably have lots of questions about this place, you will soon discover that the Kingdom of God promises real-life adventure in the “now” as well as an incomprehensibly exciting “not yet” called heaven. You will learn that living in the Kingdom of God brings new freedoms and new relationships; that it results in a new perspective, purpose, and direction; and that it gives you new resources and responsibilities.

Teaching you how to relate to Jesus Christ and to live successfully in the “now” aspect of the Kingdom is the purpose of *Beginning the Walk*. Regardless of your religious (or nonreligious) background, these lessons will help you understand more about the exciting journey you began by putting your faith in Christ.

The apostle Paul said that new life in Christ brings about significant changes. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, he wrote to the new believers in Corinth, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (NASB). As you begin to understand these changes, you will be better able to participate in your new life adventure. You will be able to fully utilize the resources and enjoy all the benefits of life in the Kingdom of God.

Enjoy the journey!

HOW TO USE *BEGINNING THE WALK*

BEGINNING THE WALK is designed to help a person begin a new life with Christ. You can work through this material on your own, with a mentor, or in a small group. You don't need an extensive church or religious background to get started. Each lesson will help you understand an important element of a lifelong relationship with Christ.

Beginning the Walk is divided into three sections:

- Jesus the Way
- Jesus the Truth
- Jesus the Life

Each section contains six lessons, each of which begins with a summary statement and a key Scripture. These provide a quick overview of the lesson content. As you work through the lesson, read through each subheading and underline ideas that stand out to you or concepts that create questions. If you are doing the study with others, stop at the end of each topic and discuss what you have read to gain clarity. If you are working through the material on your own, find a trusted mentor with whom you can explore your questions. Most sections have questions for reflection and understanding. Taking time to answer them will help you grasp what you are reading.

At the end of each lesson you will find a summary statement that

pulls together the key ideas of the lesson. Be sure to read those as a way of clarifying what is important to remember. The last part of each lesson is a prayer. It is best to read this prayer out loud. This will help you respond to God in prayer regarding what He has been saying to you through His Word. This pattern forms a conversational dialogue that is at the heart of this new relationship.

The majority of the Bible passages used in *Beginning the Walk* are included in the text of the lessons. Still, we recommend you have a personal Bible as well. In addition to reading the Scripture in the lesson, you may want to look up the references and read them in your own Bible (see appendix 3 for guidance on Bible reading). This will broaden your understanding as you discover more about the context of the Scripture passages.

Each lesson is designed to help you understand your new spiritual journey. Living your new life in Christ may at times seem at odds with what you have thought in the past. To help you review and remember the important concepts, you will find a summary page at the end of each of the three major sections. These are designed to give you a clear and quick overview of all that you have studied.

At the back of the book you will find three appendixes. The first offers an explanation of how to establish a faith-based relationship with Christ. If you are not sure that you have ever received God's gift of forgiveness and been accepted into His family of faith, this explanation will show you how. It can also serve as a way to explain to others how you have received new life in Christ.

The second appendix offers an extensive set of passages from the Bible that will help you remember what is true about you because of your relationship with God in Christ. These verses can be particularly helpful to counter other voices that might lie to you about who you are in Christ.

The third appendix gives you several ways to continue your walk with Christ beyond this study. It explains how to effectively read the Bible and memorize key verses. These spiritual practices are essential for building a lifelong pursuit of following Christ.

INTRODUCTION TO
**JESUS
THE WAY**



For there is hope to attain a journey's end when there is a path which stretches between the traveller and his goal. But if there is no path, or if a man does not know which way to go, there is little use in knowing the destination. As it is, there is one road, and one only, well secured against all possibility of going astray; and this road is provided by one who is himself both God and man.

As God, he is the goal; as man, he is the way.

SAINT AUGUSTINE, CITY OF GOD

YOU MAY HAVE COME TO FAITH in Jesus Christ at a very identifiable moment in your life or through a process that is less definable. You may have endured significant crises that propelled you along in your search for God, or your story may be one of a quiet heart tug. Regardless of the path you took to Christ, those steps are only the beginning. Faith in Christ launches a relational journey with Christ in His Kingdom. This journey has a beginning but no end. It is the kind of life that is eternal.

Christianity was initially called “the Way.” Followers of Christ were identified with a way of life Jesus demonstrated and taught. Jesus even referred to Himself as “the way” in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (NASB).

Walking with Jesus Christ on this journey will bring both internal and external changes. Some changes will happen quickly, while others will take years. The apostle Paul referred to things being “new” for those in Christ. As we journey on with Christ, our behavior changes, our thinking changes, even our desires and values change. Life really does become new.

For any journey to be successful, you have to first prepare. This includes knowing where you are going and how you are going to get there. To help you prepare for your faith journey, this study will introduce basic concepts that can help you avoid painful detours and roadblocks.

These concepts are themes taught throughout the Bible. We have chosen to focus primarily on two books in the New Testament: Ephesians and Colossians, two letters written by the apostle Paul during his ministry in the first century. They were written to groups of new believers in Christ who were beginning their own journeys.

These are the concepts you’ll explore in “Jesus the Way”:

- Your New Connection in Christ
- Your New Creation in Christ
- Your New Center in Christ
- Your New Companionship in Christ
- Your New Clothes in Christ
- Your New Calling in Christ

LESSON 1

NEW CONNECTION

Your journey with Christ involves a new relationship with God: a personal connection. Faith in Christ breaks down the barrier separating us from God and gives us access to a deep, personal friendship with the eternal God.

Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.

EPHESIANS 2:7

WHILE IN THE ARMY'S Infantry Officer Candidate School, I (Ron) was part of a military honor guard that welcomed the president of the United States to our military base. He walked so close to me that I could have reached out and touched him. For a brief moment I caught his eye. That is a far cry from having a personal friendship with the president, but it's the closest I've been to a powerful leader. It seems as if the more powerful a leader is, the more distant and unapproachable he or she becomes to ordinary people.

What a contrast this is to the approachability of Jesus! The awesome creator of the universe planned long ago to relate to each person "up close and personal." Jesus' role in history made that possible. Regardless of your past, God wants a personal relationship with you.

There are two key aspects of any relationship: honest dialogue and shared experiences. Both are essential. Dialogue without mutual

experiences leaves you intellectually stimulated but relationally challenged. Shared experiences can be enjoyable, but without dialogue they remain shallow and incomplete. Relating to Christ works in much the same way. He wants both your dialogue and your experiences.

So who is this God who wants a relationship with you? The Bible begins with the words “In the beginning God . . .” (Genesis 1:1, NASB). The Bible doesn’t set out to prove God but rather reveals Him. In the Old Testament, God is described as “powerful,” “holy,” and “mighty.”¹ Unlike most other religions, the God of the Bible is not just the supreme God; He is the one and only God.

The Bible also shows God as having three personalities or distinct persons. This concept is called the Trinity or Tri-unity. Easton’s *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* says,

Trinity, a word not found in Scripture, but used to express the doctrine of the unity of God as subsisting in three distinct Persons. . . .

The propositions involved in the doctrine are these: 1. That God is one, and that there is but one God. . . . 2. That the Father is a distinct divine Person . . . distinct from the Son and the Holy Spirit. 3. That Jesus Christ was truly God, and yet was a Person distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit. 4. That the Holy Spirit is also a distinct divine Person.²

When people relate to God, they relate both to God as “one” and to God as expressed in each person of the Trinity. This becomes more evident in the New Testament, where the persons of the Trinity are referred to more directly in their unique roles. Jesus is often referred to as the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, and is the focal point of the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament. The Holy Spirit, referred to as the third person of the Trinity, is the focal point of the book of Acts. When the apostle Paul and the other writers wrote to

the early churches, they used the term *God*, referring to the first person of the Trinity, or God the Father.

Let's look at how each person of the Trinity is involved in the new connection you have with God.

LOVED BY THE FATHER

In stark contrast to the pagan gods or the sketches of God as expressed in various other religions, our God is revealed not only as powerful and holy but as intimately loving. The apostle Paul described God in Ephesians 1:3-6:

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.

Q1. What do you discover about God from these verses?

Q2. What does it mean to you when someone or something is the "focus" of love?

Q3. Which of these statements have you believed? Why?

- _____ I am too insignificant to be important to God.
- _____ I have too much baggage in my life to ever receive God's love.
- _____ I don't deserve God's love, so I can't accept it.
- _____ God is too distant for someone to relate to on a personal level.

Q4. What does this passage say about your value to God?

One way the apostle Paul described your new relationship with God was by the term *adoption*. In Paul's culture, people adopted children when they had no legal heir. A child who was adopted gained a permanent legal name and all the privileges of a biological son or daughter—most notably, an inheritance.

The apostle John referred to the same idea in John 1:12: "Yet to all who received him [Jesus Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (NIV).

FREED BY THE SON

Freedom, in part, comes as you are released from your past guilt and separation from God and brought into a personal and vital relationship with Christ. A fish tossed onto the banks of a river is initially very active but not free. Placed back into the water, the fish is truly free. Living without faith in God is like being a fish on the bank. You may be frantically active, but you are doomed. Freedom comes as you are placed into the environment you were designed for, the safe and secure love of God.

To experience your freedom, you must understand two foundational

truths regarding your new connection. One is that you are “in Christ,” and the second is that Christ is “in you.” They are like opposite sides of the same coin, linked together to form the whole. Part of the miracle of experiencing Christ is that both of these truths became a reality the moment you came to faith in Christ. However, it is a lifelong journey to understand and work out the implications of these two truths.

Being “in Christ” means that you now share His identity. It means that God sees you just as He sees Jesus. As Jesus is God’s Son, you are also now one of His children. Because Jesus is accepted before God, you also are accepted, with your sins forgiven.

Christ “in you” means that Christ makes your heart His dwelling place. In the Old Testament, God’s presence was in the Hebrew Tabernacle (or Temple) in a place called the Holy of Holies. Since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God now lives in the hearts of His people. The apostle Paul explained it as follows in Ephesians 1:7-12:

Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we’re a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly* free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.

It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

Q5. As described in the preceding passage, what was accomplished by Christ's sacrifice for you on the cross?

Misdeeds (or *sins*) means missing the mark of God's moral standard. It refers to both the inward state of your heart and your outward behavior.

Q6. Look again at Ephesians 1:7-12. What are the benefits of being "in Christ"?

Both your identity and your destiny are wrapped up in your relationship with Christ. Discovering who Christ is and what He is doing is key to knowing how you should live. He desires to bring you alongside Him and make your life work. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30,

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

CERTIFIED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The role of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, took on a new significance after Christ was crucified, rose again, and ascended into heaven. Jesus told His disciples to get ready because things were going to be different. No longer was God simply going to be present alongside them, but He was actually going to live *in* each person of faith. The Holy

Spirit is also God's seal of certification in your life that you are officially His. The apostle Paul said the following in Ephesians 1:13-14:

It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free—signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. This signet from God is the first installment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life.

God has not only forgiven you; He actually lives in you. The Holy Spirit's presence in your life is a seal (signet) of that truth. Just as a king's seal was the official stamp of authenticity, the Holy Spirit is your seal giving authenticity to your new connection with God. This may not seem real to you now, but it is true nonetheless. You will learn as you walk with Christ how to recognize the reality of God's Spirit within you.

Q7. What did you learn about the Holy Spirit from this passage in Ephesians?

One of the things the Holy Spirit does is help you understand who God is and who you are. He works quietly in your inner person to bring clarity and awareness. The apostle Paul described it as follows in Romans 8:16: "God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children."

The Holy Spirit's presence also serves as a reminder that there is more to come. God has an inheritance for you that is a future reality. We can apply to ourselves what Jesus reminded the disciples just before He was to leave them to take His place in heaven:

Don't let this throw you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so,

would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so you can live where I live.

JOHN 14:1-3

Q8. What do these verses promise you as a member of God's family?

SUMMARY

Through faith we have a new relationship with God that is reflected in each person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our journey is based on a personal, dynamic relationship with God as expressed in each person of the Trinity:

- Loved by the Father
- Freed by the Son
- Certified by the Holy Spirit

PRAYER

Thank You, God, for making it possible for me to relate to You personally. I realize that I have no merit of my own that would earn me the right to come into Your presence. As Your adopted child, I want to know You more and learn how to live as a member of Your family. Open my mind and change my heart so I would know the joy of a deep friendship with You.