

*There's a new name  
Written down in Glory  
And it's mine,  
Oh yes, it's mine!*

Praise God! There has been a change in your life! Your sins have all been forgiven, and your name is written in the Book of Life. You are beginning a brand new way of living. So, what happens next?

Too often people give their heart to God only to lose their experience a short time later. What happened? Why did they backslide? Staying saved requires building a strong spiritual foundation and establishing healthy habits. Just as a newborn baby will not survive very long without food and care, your experience requires spiritual food and care to thrive and grow. This requires effort and commitment on your part.

A good place to begin is with the basics of Christian living. These need to be part of your daily living. There is an old saying, "Seven days without God makes one weak." However, the truth is that every day you fail to spend time with God is making you more susceptible to the enemy's tactics. You cannot afford to skip any of the basics! Just as food, water, and air are necessary for our

physical bodies to live, so there are requirements that must be met for spiritual life. Making these a priority will give you the strength and power to live for God and to resist returning to the old way of living.

#### BIBLE READING

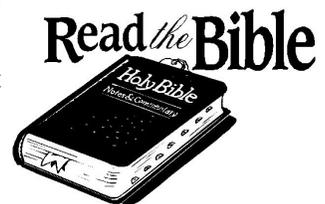
Have you ever tried to put something together without reading the directions? Perhaps you mostly figured it out, but more often than not, the instructions were vital. How much more important that you read God's instructions for your life! If you never read those instructions, you are sure to make a mess of your life.

When you read the Bible, you are storing up God's Word in your heart. Reading and obeying God's Word will keep you from sinning (Psalm 119:11). It will also teach you how to resist the temptations of the devil. As you become familiar with God's Word, you will be able to see through the lies of the devil.

A common complaint about reading the Bible is that it is hard to understand. Sadly, some have called it boring. A good way to think about Bible reading is to consider it as a personal letter from God to you. This very special Book contains His thoughts, His will, and His plans for your life. When you begin to realize the great privilege of reading what God has to say to you, Bible reading will not be boring.

There are many people who claim to be Christians, yet they rarely read their Bibles, perhaps only when attending church services. Is that enough? Would a physical meal once or twice a week keep you from starving?

How little of God's Word can you read before you begin to die spiritually? It would be better to ask yourself, How often do I need encouragement and spiritual direction for my life? The Christian needs God's help every day to live a life pleasing to God. This comes through *daily* Bible reading.



## □ PRAYER

Do you know the key to every good relationship? It is communication. When there is little or no communication, relationships will suffer. Prayer is communication with God. It is telling Him about the problems, burdens, and thoughts that are very important to you. It is also letting Him know how thankful you are for what He has done for you. Prayer is the cable that connects you and God.

Every day brings challenges, problems, decisions, or trials. Life is "full of trouble" (Job 14:1). You will need help, guidance, and direction. Jeremiah 10:23 says that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." If you cannot determine which way to go and which decisions to make, you must talk to the One who is "mighty in strength and wisdom" (Job 36:5). Only He has all the right answers.

Are you limited to praying only once a day? What kind of a relationship would you have with God if you spoke to Him *more* than once per day? Daniel was able to go through a terrible trial of being thrown into a den of lions. No doubt, his habit of praying three times every day (which he established long before this) gave him the spiritual strength he needed.

Think of how many times you could talk to God every day. You could pray before every meal. You could say a prayer before you leave home every day, asking for protection and help. You could talk to God before going to bed at night. It is important that you have a daily time of prayer, a time when you are alone and can tell God all the burdens and concerns you have. Also, you can say quick prayers of thanksgiving throughout the day.

Think of ways you can add extra prayer time during your day. Just as your relationships with family and friends improve with regular communication, so will your relationship with God deepen and improve as you talk to Him more often.

Consider starting a prayer journal where you write down burdens, encouraging things that happen, Scripture verses, and answers to prayer. Use this list to remind you while you are praying.



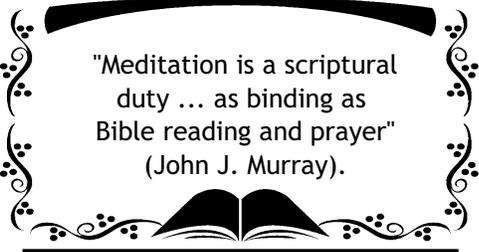
"Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it" (Corrie ten Boom).

## □ MEDITATION

Meditation has often been compared to a cow chewing her cud. Almost one-third of every day is spent chewing her cud. This ensures that the cow gets all the nutrients from the food she has eaten. When you first hear or read Bible verses, you cannot fully take in all the help and encouragement those Scriptures can give. By bringing them to your memory and thinking on them later, you will have a deeper understanding of what those verses are about.

Finding quiet time can seem impossible in the busyness of our culture. There is continually something to see, listen to, or watch. You will never *find* time to meditate; you must *make* time. But when is the best time? God told Joshua to meditate "day and night." In other words, continually or as often as possible. Proverbs 23:7 tells us that we are what we think. The amount of time you give to meditating on God and His Word will become obvious to others. What is in your heart (mind) will come out through your words and actions (Luke 6:45). Your friends and family will be able to tell when you have spent time meditating on the good things of God.

Meditation requires unplugging for a little while from things that interfere; things like music, electronics, books, and technology. Psalm 46:10 and Psalm 37:7 (Amplified Bible) talks about the importance of becoming "still." Psalm 4:4 says to "commune [think] with your own heart ... and be still." To be still does not mean that you must stop all physical movement, close your eyes, and sit still. But it is to stop all the noise of everyday life in your mind (thoughts about things you need to do or thoughts of something that bothers you). It is removing everything from your mind that is not about God, making room for the meditations that are "acceptable" in God's sight (Psalm 19:14).



"Meditation is a scriptural duty ... as binding as Bible reading and prayer" (John J. Murray).

## □ BIBLE STUDY

Is Bible study the same as Bible reading? Daily Bible reading will give you spiritual strength and guidance, but the deep truths that God wants to share with you are found through Bible study. Both are necessary if you want to continue to grow spiritually.

Before beginning a Bible study, you should consider gathering some tools that will help you. You will need your Bible. Next, you might want to get a notebook and a pencil or pen to write down what you are studying. Many Bibles have a concordance in the back. This is a great study tool that will help you look up words and phrases in the Bible. Also, a dictionary is useful for looking up the definitions of words.



Before beginning a Bible study, wouldn't it be best to speak to the One who knows exactly what the Bible contains (the Author)? Ask Him to guide you in finding the right Bible study.

God has placed spiritual people in your life who know how to search out the deep treasures of God's Word. Ask them to share the ways they study the Bible, how they know what topics to study, and what their favorite Bible study tools are.

There will be times in your life when you will need to know what God's Word says and what it means. You might be questioned by others concerning what you believe. Do you *know* what you believe? Knowledge comes from studying your Bible. Understanding comes from letting God talk to you about what you have read. Then, when someone asks you what you believe or why you believe it, you will "be ready always to give an answer" (1 Peter 3:15).

## □ ATTENDING CHURCH SERVICES



In Psalm 122:1 David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." We read in Hebrews 10:25 of the danger of "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." What is the purpose of church services, prayer services, and Sunday school? Why are they so important? It is in these worship services that you will be encouraged by hearing the testimonies of other Christians. You will be strengthened and challenged through the preaching of the Word. You will also be blessed by "hymns and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16).

Just as Jesus needed to regularly attend the house of God ("as his custom was"; Luke 4:16), every Christian must make it a top priority to attend worship services. Hypocrites did not stop Jesus; do not let them hinder you. Isolation from God's people will make you more likely to give in to the temptations of the devil. If you are spiritually struggling, often the last place you want to be is where you are reminded of that. However, that is when it is vital that you do not neglect the worship services.

## □ PERSONAL TESTIMONY

A Christian with a testimony is worth a library of arguments. Even if you are very young or have only been saved a few days, you have a testimony! The longer you live for the Lord and the more He does for you only strengthens your testimony. People might try to argue about doctrine or religion, but a personal testimony is hard to refute.

Pray about giving your personal testimony in a church service. This is a wonderful way to encourage others, and it will strengthen you spiritually as well.

## □ GET INVOLVED

When you have a heart full of love for God, you will want to serve Him. One of the ways you serve Him is by becoming involved in the work of God. This could include raising your hand or saying "Amen" during the church service, helping on church work days, visiting the sick, volunteering to clean the church building, or letting the pastor know



that you are available to help in whatever way is needed.

God's people are to be "workers together" (2 Corinthians 6:1). This will be a help to your local congregation, it will be an outreach to lost souls, and it will strengthen you spiritually.

#### ☐ **BE ON YOUR GUARD**

There are warning signs that alert you when you are becoming spiritually weak. Signs of backsliding include: becoming critical of others, being discontented, loving the world, neglecting the basics, and lacking a burden for others. Be careful of spiritual junk food and of procrastinating when it comes to reading, praying, and Bible study. Do not be surprised when trials, temptations, and persecutions come ("think it not strange"; 1 Peter 4:12). These are working for your good.

Be on the lookout for the desire to withdraw from other Christians. We need each other! When you are discouraged, depressed, and weak spiritually is the worst time to miss church services and avoid God's people. This is your spiritual support system. Use it! Ask someone to pray with you. Do not be afraid or too proud to ask for help and advice.

Do not be surprised when you do not feel like reading, praying, attending church services, or doing any of the other things mentioned here. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). The Apostle Paul gave good advice on how to handle this: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (1 Corinthians 9:27). You cannot be spiritually lazy and stay saved. You CAN stay saved if you "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard" (Hebrews 2:1).



If you feel yourself becoming spiritually weak, it might be good to reread this. Have you been neglecting some of the basics? If so, ask God to forgive you and to help you. Ask a saint to have prayer with you.

We are so thankful for what God has done for you, and you are in our prayers!

#### **SUGGESTED STUDY MATERIALS**

- *The Gospel Trumpeter*  
(free monthly publication)
- *A Quick Trip Through the Psalms*  
(a devotional)
- *The Christian's Toolbox*  
(set of 13 Bible study lessons)
- *How to Study* (booklet)
- The Amplified Bible
- *Adult Sunday School Quarterlies*

## **A Fresh Start Without God's Power Is Just Good Intentions**

#### **STUDY WEBSITES**

- *GospelTrumpeter.com*  
(several years of back issues can be printed out or read online)
- *GodsAcres.org*  
(study materials and youth lessons)
- *PrintableLessons.com*  
(adult, youth, and primary Sunday school lessons)
- *OnlineAudioFiles.com*  
(several years of preached messages and choir songs)

**Date You Were Saved:** \_\_\_\_\_

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