

FIRST STEPS

One-on-One Discipleship



Discipleship Notebook

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Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the New International Version.

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Introduction

A Question ...

If you were responsible to teach and train a new Christian, would you know exactly what to do to maximize the chances that this new Christian would reach maturity?

Before you answer consider two things: 1) That a significant percentage of new Christians walk away from faithfulness within three months of their initial decision, and 2) while most Christians would be able to do something with a new believer, would you know *exactly* what to do to *maximize* the chances that the new believer would reach maturity in Christ?

A Christian leader was asked this question while traveling on a plane to train pastors in Russia. After thoroughly considering this question he honestly answered “no” ... and became so upset with his answer that he now works for First Steps. Six hundred pastors were asked the same question during a conference in the Philippines, and only fifteen raised their hands to indicate that they knew *exactly* what to do.

by Pastor
Grant Edwards

Discipleship

Jesus said:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you ... (Matthew 28:19&20 NASB)

Most Christians would be able to do something with a new believer, but would you know exactly what to do to maximize the chances the new believer would reach maturity in Christ?

The church today does an excellent job reaching the lost but fails in actually keeping the lost. Jesus instructs us to make disciples of all nations, not only reaching, but also teaching them to observe all that Jesus commands. As Christians, we must reach and also keep the lost. But does this happen?

A major with the Salvation Army said, “Those of us on the front lines see a lot of people come to know Jesus, and then where do they all go?”

Not too long ago a large Christian organization spent one million dollars to show the Jesus Film in St. Petersburg, Russia, during a ten day period of time. Over 160,000 people viewed the film and at least 60,000 went forward to confess faith in Jesus. In St. Petersburg (a city of about 5 million) only 10,000 people attend evangelical churches on a given Sunday. Yet, with 60,000 accepting Jesus within ten days, there was no significant increase in church attendance in the evangelical churches of St. Petersburg.

This type of statistic can be repeated for just about every crusade, evangelistic endeavor (both personal and large scale), Christian television, and even local churches. Many come to know Jesus but most soon walk away from faithfulness!

What is the problem? Perhaps we have missed something. Jesus said to “disciple” and also to “teach”. Are we doing that? Consider the question: *If you were responsible to teach and train a new Christian, would you know exactly what to do to maximize the chances that this new Christian would reach maturity?* Does answering “no” indicate the source and also the answer to the problem? It’s amazing that even though Jesus gave his last and great commission to disciple all nations, most Christians do not disciple and many do not even know how to disciple.

The result is that many come to know Jesus and then many walk away from faithfulness soon after their confession.

The church today does an excellent job reaching the lost but fails in actually keeping the lost.

Two Fears

If you were asked to disciple a new believer, you would probably have two fears:

- What will I teach a new believer?
- Will this discipling relationship take time that I don’t have?

The purpose of this notebook is to give you the teaching material needed to disciple a new believer – the exact teaching that will maximize the chances of your disciple reaching maturity. The Biblical teaching in this notebook has been developed over 35 years and tested with thousands of new believers. The notebook is designed to provide you with the content necessary for a successful and fulfilling one-on-one discipling relationship.

But do you have the time? Okay, you have answered the first question: *what will I teach a new believer?* But there is a second fear. You are busy, perhaps you have a demanding job, young children, or college exams approaching. Maybe you’ve had a recent health emergency or just a very busy life. So you ask the question: *Will this discipling relationship take time that I don’t have?*

A discipling relationship is a defined commitment. It is ten lessons that should take about one hour each. In order to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, to go and disciple, you will spend ten hours with a new believer. Also, you should only disciple one person per year (ideally for the rest of your life). That's the commitment: one person, for ten weeks, per year. You can do this!

Think of the exponential effect of your commitment to discipleship. If you disciple one person per year, that's two disciples at the end of the first year. If both of you then disciple one other person the next year, that's four disciples. Soon four becomes eight; eight becomes sixteen; sixteen becomes thirty-two; thirty-two becomes sixty-four; and in a few short years you will have impacted hundreds if not thousands.

Four Foundational Principles

One recent book on discipleship concluded by stating that discipleship is needed and that there are many ways to disciple – so pick one and start discipling. Is this true?

Yes, you need to disciple. But, are all methods equally effective? Knowing that there are many child-rearing methods, would you just pick any method to raise your children? Are all the methods of raising children equally effective? Of course not. Few parents follow Dr. Spock anymore, and most Christian parents wouldn't consider the child-rearing philosophy of an atheist. Some child-rearing techniques are more effective than others.

There are many discipleship programs available, but some are more effective than others. A discipleship plan that will *maximize the chances of a new believer reaching maturity* has four basic principles. It includes:

- Four foundational disciplines
- An understanding of similar temptation patterns
- A focus on the first three months of a new believer's walk, and
-

One-on-one relationships!

Four Foundational Disciplines

Christians who faithfully practice the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and evangelism/discipleship stay faithful to Jesus. Christianity is a relationship with Jesus, and all good relationships have discipline. Without discipline relationships will not grow and mature.

As a Christian, you must love Jesus and grow in this love. In all other religions you must work hard hoping to earn God's love; in Christianity God already loves you and sent Jesus to die for your sins (John 3:16). So you have discipline, not to prove yourself worthy of God's love, but to know Him and be like Him because He already loves you! As you grow in this love, sinful habits will diminish because you love God more than sin.

Prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and evangelism/discipleship are the four foundational disciplines that will allow you to have a growing and loving relationship with Jesus. This notebook emphasizes the four primary disciplines of the Christian faith.

An Understanding of Similar Temptation Patterns

All new Christians have the same temptations!

Consider the physical development of new-born babies: they all have the same developmental issues. You would not teach a three year-old calculus and you wouldn't discuss potty-training with a sixteen year-old. Nor would you talk to a ten year-old about retirement plans or enroll a senior citizen in kindergarten. The instruction must match the development.

If you were asked to disciple a new believer, you would probably have two fears:

- **What will I teach a new believer?**
- **Will this discipling relationship take time that I don't have?**

A discipleship plan that will *maximize the chances of a new believer reaching maturity* has four basic principles.

Christians who faithfully practice the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and evangelism/discipleship stay faithful to Jesus.

If all new believers go through similar temptations early in their walk with Jesus, then the discipleship material used to help them grow in Christ must understand these similar patterns and incorporate Biblical principles that are helpful in overcoming the temptations.

These behavioral and physical development patterns are the same for babies born in the Philippines as well as America, in Russia as well as Italy, and in India as well as Mexico. A newborn baby in Buenos Aires would learn to speak about the same time (age wise) as a newborn in Calcutta. All babies, all over the world, have similar physical and emotional development.

Now consider the spiritual development of new Christians. They have similar temptations and growth issues. A new believer in New York City will need to learn to overcome lustful temptation about the same time as a new believer in St. Petersburg, Russia. A new believer in Manila will go through doubt and discouragement at the same time as a new believer in London.

If all new believers go through similar temptations early in their walk with Jesus, then the discipleship material used to help them grow in Christ must understand these similar patterns and incorporate Biblical principles that are helpful in overcoming the temptations. This notebook is structured to help a new believer grow through the similar temptation patterns.

The First Three Months

Most new believers walk away from faithfulness within three months of their confession of Christ as Lord and Savior.

There have been significant studies indicating that it takes about three months for a person making a commitment to actualize that commitment into daily life. Though the commitment is made with sincerity, it takes about three months of hard work for that commitment to actually become a habit. That's why so many sincere New Year's resolutions last only a few weeks. It is why so many fail with a new diet plan, and it is why those who want to quit smoking seldom do.

For new believers who stay faithful for three months, there is a greater likelihood that they will reach maturity in Christ. The first three months are critical for new believers – make it three months and the Christian life gets easier.

One-on-one discipleship is the most effective method for helping new believers in the first three months. Personal relationships of encouragement, prayer, and accountability increase the odds that a new believer will mature. Small groups are important, but it often takes a new believer at least 6 months to find a small group. Large group worship is also needed, but a new believer who just attends a weekend worship service will probably have to attend for a year before developing adequate personal relationships.

If a church has developed a one-on-one discipleship ministry, a discipling relationship can begin the very day a new believer makes a confession of Christ!

One On One Relationship

Have you noticed that the phrase "one-on-one" has been mentioned several times in this introduction?

The most effective discipleship is a one-on-one relationship. A classroom, even with an excellent teacher, isn't a good method for instructing new believers. We don't raise our children in a classroom, and a classroom doesn't work well for new believers either. When a local church begins a 10-week new believers' class with twenty five attendees, by the end of the course only seven or eight will still be attending. Where have the others gone?

When you disciple one-on-one and the person that you're discipling doesn't show up for a meeting, you will immediately call to find out what happened. That's the benefit of one-on-one discipleship – it has relationship and accountability. Discipleship works best in a one-on-one relationship.

First Steps is about one-on-one discipleship. This notebook can be used by you to disciple another person. Please note: it is a notebook for a reason. When you use this notebook with the person you disciple, you can review and discuss the questions in the first part of each lesson, then share the outline, and finally share a specific and practical application.

As you disciple through this notebook, the Spirit of God will give you practical insights into making relevant applications of truth that are needed with the person that you're discipling. You will observe your disciple maturing in Christ and find out something else: there is nothing more exciting in the Christian life than enjoying God work through you to impact the life of another person.

Getting Started

You may have already been discipled using this notebook, maybe you attended a First Steps conference, or perhaps, you've just picked up the notebook at a bookstore. How do you use the notebook and how do you begin to disciple another person? Let's examine this notebook and consider the first meeting you'll have with your disciple.

- **The cover:** First Steps is a one-on-one ministry to disciple believers. All those who are discipled should disciple another.
- **The contents:** this notebook has two parts. The lessons are the first part and in the second part contains practical sections on how to effectively pray and use scripture to mature in Jesus. Don't worry too much about the practical sections at first since they will be explained in the lesson outlines.
- **The lessons:** each lesson has three parts. They are *conversation*, *consideration*, and *content*. In *conversation*, Owen (a new disciple) discusses the issues of his new-found faith with Peter (his discipler). In *consideration*, there is a three day Bible study on the topic of that lesson (make sure that they are completed on three separate days). In *content*, there is the lesson outline.

What Is Expected Of You As A Disciple

- **Be committed** to attending all of the discipling sessions. A discipling relationship based on this notebook will help develop the foundational disciplines of prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and discipleship/evangelism in your life. Ask God to give you a desire for these disciplines.
- **Disciple another to love Jesus.** The ultimate goal of discipleship is not that you will be discipled but that you will disciple another person. Commit to discipling another to love Jesus.
- **Be willing to change.** This notebook presents a lifestyle: how to live as a Christian and how to disciple others. To disciple effectively you must be an example. When you disciple you must actually be doing what you are asking others to do. This is why older Christians who use this notebook must be willing to change their patterns of prayer and Bible study so that the principles taught in this notebook become their lives, lives that will be shared with others.

For new believers who stay faithful for three months, there is a greater likelihood that they will reach maturity in Christ. The first three months are critical for new believers – make it three months and the Christian life gets easier.

The most effective discipleship is a one-on-one relationship.

The ultimate goal of discipleship is not that you will be disciplined, but that you will disciple another person to love Jesus.

What Can You Expect From Your Discippler

- **Prayer.** Your discipler will pray for you daily.
- **An example.** Your discipler will be doing what is asked of you.
- **No gain.** Disciplers are not to gain from a discipling relationship – financially, professionally, or emotionally. Your discipler will not attempt to sell you anything, get you to join something, or try to manipulate you in anyway.
- **No control.** Disciplers are not to tell you what decisions to make with your life. They will only teach the principles taught in this notebook and help you apply Biblical wisdom to the decisions that you need to make.
- **Follow the plan.** Your discipler will use only the material outlined in this notebook.
- **Proper boundaries.** Your discipler has made a commitment to lead you through this notebook in about ten lessons. (Some lessons may take two sessions.) Your discipler does not have an obligation to spend more time with you than the ten required lessons. You should not look to your discipler as a counselor or therapist but rather as a friend who is walking with you. Your discipler will not be able to help you with severe emotional or financial difficulty. If you have difficulties outside the scope of this discipleship material, your discipler will help you find a Christian leader, pastor, or counselor who can help.
- **Lift up Jesus.** In all things we glorify Jesus. He alone deserves our praise.

Next Steps?

If you were responsible to teach and train a new Christian, would you know exactly what to do to maximize the chances that this new Christian would reach maturity?

When you are finished with the discipling relationship defined in this notebook, you will be able to answer “yes” to the above question. You will know exactly what to do to maximize the chances that a new Christian will mature in Christ.

But what happens when your discipling relationship is over? Obviously the ten week discipling relationship taught in this notebook is not enough. What next?

It is important that new believers get involved in a strong and Biblical local church. One-on-one discipleship works best with a local church that has small groups. After the ten lesson discipleship (often taking about three months) a disciple should join a small group in a local church or be involved in a local church even if it doesn't have small groups.

One final point needs to be made: You will grow in Christ and gain His Kingdom when you learn to lay down your life for his. Discipleship is not about you. Yes, in discipleship you will learn how to pray, overcome temptation, find God's will, and many other necessary things, but discipleship is ultimately about you taking these same lessons and discipling someone else.

A prisoner in Ohio (USA), serving time for murder, felt helpless and worthless as a Christian because of his crimes. He wondered if God could ever use him again. He attended many Christian activities in prison, at the end of which, he would go back to his jail cell and wait for the next program. After being trained with First Steps, he went back to his cell and asked his cellmate if he would like to be disciplined.

During the next ten weeks this prisoner experienced God working through him for the first time in his Christian life as he disciplined his cellmate. Later he gave this testimony: “It is true there is nothing more exciting than seeing God work through me to impact the life of another person.”

That is what First Steps is all about.

You should not look to your discipler as a counselor or therapist but rather as a friend who is walking with you.

More Information

More information can be found at www.disciplinganother.com

Lessons

Each lesson has three parts. They are *conversation*, *consideration*, and *content*. In *conversation*, Owen (a new disciple) discusses the issues of his new-found faith with Peter (his discipler). In *consideration*, there is a three day Bible study on the topic of that lesson (make sure that they are completed on three separate days). In *content*, there is the lesson outline.

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1 Assurance

The point: This lesson is to help you grow in faith by trusting Jesus. By trusting Jesus you will be able to overcome doubt and discouragement.

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:1 . . . *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

Romans 10:9-11 . . . *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”*

Ephesians 2:8 . . . *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

Hebrews 11:6 . . . *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

1 John 1:9 . . . *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 Corinthians 10:13 . . . *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted.*



Conversation

Below is a portion of the dialogue between a discipler, Peter, and a disciple, Owen. Let's listen in during their first one-on-one discipling session...

Peter: How have you been doing since you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

Owen: I've been doing okay, but I really don't understand this whole faith thing. How can I trust someone I can't see? Maybe this sounds silly, but wouldn't it be a lot easier if Jesus just appeared from time to time?

Peter: Well, the Bible says that we live by faith not sight. Of course, it's not a blind faith since Jesus actually lived, and scripture gives testimony of his life, death, and resurrection ...

Owen: Seeing how you're my discipler and everything, I want to be honest with you here. I read what the Bible says about faith, but I still have doubts. I don't feel like a Christian. I doubt, then I feel guilty, then I doubt whether I've been saved, then I feel more guilt and then I just want to quit. Maybe God hasn't really forgiven me. With all of my mistakes, are you sure God can forgive me?

Peter: Listen to the Bible, not your feelings. The Bible says you're saved by faith and not by your good deeds. It also says that if you confess your sins, God forgives you. (1 John 1:9)

Owen: But when I first became a Christian I felt great, Peter. Then some of my friends told me they didn't want to be around me any more, and I started doubting...now I feel awful. Does the Bible say anything about doubt and discouragement?

Peter: Plenty! The Bible says God forgives you and will give you strength to overcome temptation. And that Jesus will be with you during difficult times — times like now.

Owen: Fine, but I don't see any way I can make this Christianity thing work. Everything's changing so fast. It's so overwhelming.

Peter: Owen, you're not alone. God is with you and I'm here, too. Promise me this: if you feel like quitting, call me first. I'll be praying for you daily. God doesn't intend for you, or any other new Christian, to try to work it all out by yourselves.

Owen: Well...okay. I promise.

Consideration

*Each one of these studies has Day One, Day Two, and Day Three sections.
It is best to study these on different days during the week.*

Day One

Read: John 3:16; Romans 1:4; Romans 10:9-11; Hebrews 2:14-18; and Hebrews 11:1.

- 1) Based on these scripture references, which of the following statements is true?
 - a. Faith is blind and not based upon facts.
 - b. Faith is a growing confidence and trust in the living Christ.
 - c. A person with strong faith in any religion will be saved.
- 2) What word could be a synonym for faith?
 - a. Love
 - b. Doubt
 - c. Trust
- 3) Write a sentence explaining why you became a Christian.

Day Two

Read: Romans 10:9-11; Galatians 3:11; Ephesians 2:8; and Hebrews 11:6.

- 1) Is it possible for you to earn your salvation? Why or why not?
- 2) Based upon the above scripture references, which of the following statements are true? God requires faith because ...
 - a. Faith is expressed through the humility of a believer who knows the need for God.
 - b. A Christian cannot earn God's favor.
 - c. Belief in God means that we will no longer have problems.
- 3) In one sentence, define God's grace.

Day Three

Read: John 3:16; Romans 8:38-39; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 3:12; 1 John 2:3; and 1 John 1:9.

- 1) Have you had doubts as a Christian? What are they?

- 2) What does 1 John 1:9 say about forgiveness?

- 3) Read 1 John 2:3 again. It teaches that we know God if we ...
 - a. Obey His commands
 - b. Feel like we have salvation
 - c. Know all the facts about Jesus

- 4) If you get discouraged as a Christian, list or describe two things that you can do.

Content: Assurance

One: Jesus Is The Object Of Our Faith

A. Christian faith is ...

Hebrews 11:1 . . . *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

1. Trust
2. Confidence in truth
3. Based upon the historical Christ
 - a. Read “We Walk By Faith, Not By Sight” illustration on this page.
4. Focused on a relationship with Jesus
 - a. It is difficult to trust a philosophy or even a religion, but as you get to know and experience Jesus, you will be able to trust Him.
 - b. Note: Christianity is a relationship, not a religion — it’s knowing and following Jesus and not just a list of rules to obey.

B. The object of a Christian’s faith is Jesus. Is He worthy of our trust?

Romans 10:9-11 . . . *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”*

illustration

We Walk By Faith, Not By Sight

2 Corinthians 5:7 . . . *We live by faith, not by sight.*

Two friends are hiking in the mountains.

At first it is a beautiful day with perfect fall weather. As is often the case, a storm moves in, quickly dropping temperature and rain, causing the path before and after the hikers to become impassable with ice.

They are stuck on a ledge, exposed to the cold, and their situation will prove fatal unless they receive help.

A couple of hours after darkness, a voice cries out from below. *“I realize that you can’t see, but there is a small cave about ten feet below the ledge where you are stranded. If you jump off the ledge, you will land beside the cave and find shelter for the night.”*

The friends can’t see and are exposed to the elements of weather. But they have been offered a chance of salvation if only they can trust the voice.

One of the friends asks the name behind the voice, and both quickly recognize him as a park ranger with many years of experience in the region. Trusting this ranger, they jump and find shelter from the storm.

The Christian faith is not blind because it is based upon Jesus Christ ... someone who can be trusted. Faith is also trust, because a believer follows Jesus into areas of obedience without actually being able to see the outcome—at least in the beginning.

But as the words and promises of Jesus prove trustworthy, faith grows.

1. Can you trust someone who is willing to die for you? Jesus died for your sins. (John 3:16; Romans 4:25)
2. Can you have confidence in someone's message as being from God if that person, after being put to death, was later resurrected? Jesus was resurrected from the grave. (Romans 1:4; 1 Peter 1:3)
3. Can you have confidence that a person who spoke, lived, died, and was resurrected like Jesus can save you from sin, help you during difficult times, and protect you from the devil? (Hebrews 2:14-18; John 14:6; Luke 4:17-19; Hebrews 7:25)

C. Reviewing the commitment!

1. Have you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
2. Do you have confidence of your salvation, forgiveness of sin, and hope for eternal life?
3. Do you understand that only Jesus can save you from sin and death?

Two: Salvation Is By Faith And Not By Your Effort

A. God's grace

Ephesians 2:8 . . . *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

1. Grace is unmerited favor.
2. **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**
3. Religion is *do*; Christianity is *done*. All of the world's religions, except Christianity, emphasize that a person must work to be good enough. But Christianity teaches that we are saved by the work of Christ on the cross, by faith in Jesus, and not by our good deeds.

B. Received by faith

Hebrews 11:6 . . . *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

1. Faith reaches to God for His free gift of salvation.
2. True faith recognizes the inadequacy of human effort and humbly seeks God's help.
3. Faith is not blind, because it is based upon scripture and our relationship with Jesus.

testimony

Faith is the channel through which we receive God's gift of eternal life; it is not the cause. - James Ryle

God gives grace where he finds empty hands. - Augustine

If and when a horror turns up, you will then be given grace to help you. I don't think one is usually given to it in advance ... life has to be taken day by day and hour by hour. - C.S. Lewis

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times. - Martin Luther

Three: Doubt Is The Opposite Of Faith

Romans 8:38-39 . . . *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

A. Doubting is ...

1. A lack of trust (Can God really forgive my sins?)
2. A lack of understanding (How do I know God exists? Isn't the Bible full of errors?)
3. A wavering of belief (I know God answers prayers, but will He answer mine? Can God really keep *me* safe from temptation?)
4. A lack of biblical knowledge (I don't *feel* like a Christian.) Read 1 John 2:3; Romans 10:17.

B. God's plan for doubt ...

1. To point out a weakness in our walk with Jesus
2. To develop faith
3. To increase knowledge

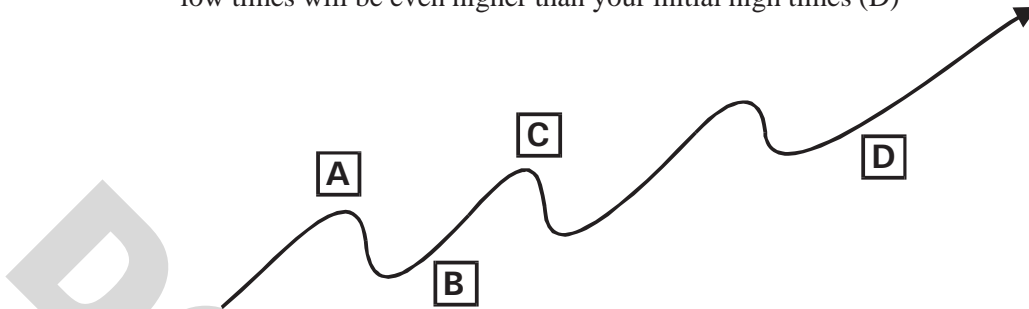
C. Satan's plan for doubt ...

1. Satan deceives by making you think that God can't forgive, that God can't give you strength, that you are unworthy of His love. (Read Romans 8:31.)
2. If you believe a deception, you will act as if it is true.
3. Satan will try to get you so discouraged that you will quit.

D. Moment of discouragement: rashly forsaking Christ

1. There will come a time in your new relationship with Christ when discouragement occurs for the first time. Don't get upset. All Christians go through discouragement and emotionally low times. This is normal. Stay faithful, and the joy will return.
2. When you decide to stay faithful during a trial or even during a time of emotional distress, you base your relationship with Christ upon your will and not your emotions.

3. Look at the diagram below. The pattern of the Christian life should be constantly upward, even though there are emotionally low times and even trials. It is a high point when you accept Jesus, and this high lasts for a while (A). Sooner or later, you will experience your first valley (B); if you get through this low time without quitting, you will soon have another mountain top experience (C). Eventually your low times will be even higher than your initial high times (D)



4. Do not walk alone. When you feel discouraged or experience a difficult temptation, call your discipler.

Four: Faith Is Assurance Of ...

- A. Forgiveness: if you can confess it, God will forgive it.

1 John 1:9 . . . *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

If you doubt that God can forgive your sins or that your sins are too big for God, remember that if you can confess it, God will forgive it. Some believe that they have committed the “unforgivable sin” mentioned by Jesus in Luke 12:10, but the unforgivable sin is an unwillingness to yield to the Spirit’s conviction of sin.

- B. Salvation and eternal life: salvation is based upon scripture and not feeling.

1 John 2:3 ... *We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.*

You may not feel like a Christian. But your salvation is based upon scripture and not your feelings! If you believe, you are saved. Feelings will eventually follow obedience.

- C. Strength to resist temptation: you may feel inadequate to change bad habits and attitudes.

1 Corinthians 10:13 ... *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

You may be overwhelmed with the thought of changing your lifestyle, actions, and attitudes as a new believer. You may worry that you will not be able to resist temptations. Yes, you will not be perfect; but God is able to forgive you when you stumble and continually strengthen you so that you will be able to resist successfully.

memorize

1 John 1:9

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

- D. A relationship with God and a new family: even if your family and friends reject you because of your new faith.

Ephesians 2:19 ... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.

After accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, former relationships may become strained. Others may not understand or accept your new commitment. However, as you remain faithful to Jesus, you will experience complete love and also experience the joy of fellowship with other Christians.

- E. Jesus is the only way to Heaven.

John 14:6 ... Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the way to Heaven. Jesus died for our sins, and because of His death we receive grace and mercy! No other religion has a savior who died for our sins and gives us grace.

- F. Joy in the midst of trials and difficulties.

James 1:2-4 ... Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trails of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

It is possible to have joy even in the midst of difficult times. If the most important thing in your life is Jesus, then, even in the midst of trials you will find yourself growing closer to Jesus and Jesus is the source of your joy!

Five: Review ... Increasing Faith To Overcome Doubt And Discouragement

Luke 17:5 . . . The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

1. Walk in relationship with Jesus through prayer, Bible study, evangelism, and fellowship.
2. Be committed to your discipleship relationship and, afterwards, to your small group (if your church has small groups). Then commit yourself to discipling another to love Jesus.
3. Learn to confess your difficulties, doubts, discouragements, and sins to your discipler or members of your small group.
4. Understand that doubt and discouragement are a natural part of the process of growing in Christ, and then you will increasingly learn to trust Jesus as He helps you grow stronger in your faith.

specificity . . .

I will ...

- Meet faithfully with my discipler, and then I will disciple another to love Jesus!
- Call my discipler during a Moment of Discouragement. I will not attempt to walk through this discouragement alone! My discipler's phone numbers are:

My discipler will ...

- Pray for me daily
- Be there to help encourage me during the Moment of Discouragement.

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