

Come Follow Me

Study Book

Third International Edition, 2020

Tim Green



Come Follow Me

www.come-follow-me.org

Acknowledgements

I warmly thank everyone who helped with this project through their encouragement, critique and prayers. Sue devoted hundreds of hours of careful scrutiny in the earlier stages of the first edition, Jacob and Rachel gave untiring help in its latter stages, and Jen was closely involved in the second & third editions. Michael did a magnificent job with the line drawings and David with the cover design. Around forty believers representing the target readership in several countries kindly helped with field-testing and gave insightful comments. They must remain nameless but I am grateful in particular to S, D and J. The translators and editors of the German, Farsi and Arabic editions gave helpful suggestions. A big thanks too to my family and especially my wife Rachel. Together over many years we have shared the joys and heartbreak of those who walk a difficult path of discipleship in hostile surroundings.

Explaining this third international edition

This third international edition has the same text as the second international edition, but with improved formatting to help learners and advisors navigate the text more easily. It is completely compatible for use with the second and first editions.

I originally wrote this course for believers of a particular religious background living in their homeland, but now there are users in many countries including the West. The worldview issues are still relevant but course leaders should adapt the discussion questions to the context.

This is the international English edition. I have used international English spelling whenever allowed under British English. This international edition is available worldwide through the website (come-follow-me.org), which also gives information about the different language translations.

Any profits from the sale of the course are used to maintain and extend this project.

Please send me your suggestions for further improvement in future editions.

Tim Green, April 2020 comefollowme@word.org.uk

For more information

and to download the Advisor's Guide, go to come-follow-me.org



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Dedicated to those who strive to build a new life in Christ
and to find their place in his community,
while still caring for their families and old community
despite misunderstanding and rejection.

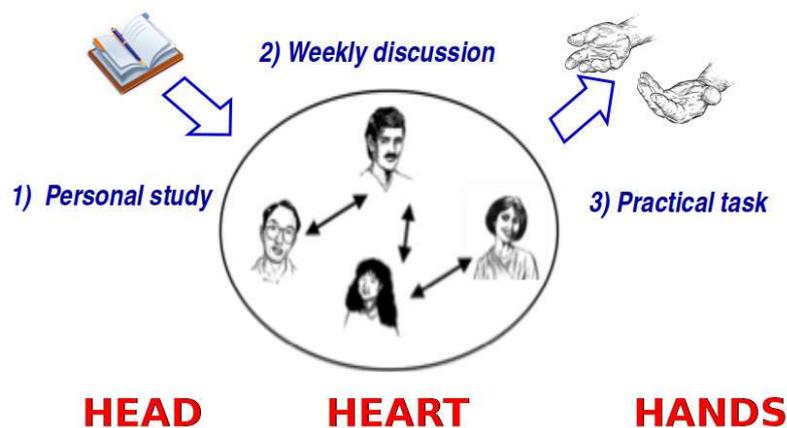
Please Read This First!

The *Come Follow Me* course is to help you grow strong in Christ and in his community.

This study book is not the whole course! It is only the first of three parts. So please follow this method:

- First, complete the self-study questions for one lesson (page vi says how to do this);
- Then, discuss that lesson with your advisor or in a group;
- Then, put the ‘Practical Task’ into practice.

These steps combine together to inform your mind, change your heart and equip your hands for practical service.



So please don't just study this book on your own. Instead, find a wise follower of Christ to help you as advisor. After each lesson's personal study, meet up with your advisor. Discuss together what you are learning and how to put it into practice. Ask advice from that person about issues in your life. Pray together and strengthen each other in Christ. You will gain even more benefit if you do it in a group with other believers.

If you are an advisor using *Come Follow Me*, please obtain the Advisor's Guide which explains how to use the course. The 'cultural clues' will help you understand the topics and there are detailed discussion questions for each lesson. Download the updated Advisor's Guide free from **come-follow-me.org** or follow links from there to purchase a hardcopy.

Whether you are a learner or an advisor, please send me your comments. Give me suggestions for improvement and tell me if you would like to know about other similar courses.

Thank you!

Tim Green

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Contents

Lesson	Page
<i>Guidelines for the Learner</i>	vi
1 Becoming Christ's Follower	1
2 New Life in Christ	8
3 God the Father	15
4 Obeying Christ by the Power of his Spirit	21
5 Talking with God	28
6 God's Word for Us	35
7 Members of Christ's Church	42
8 Members of Two Communities	49
9 Reasons for Persecution	56
10 Reacting to Persecution	63
11 Husbands and Wives	70
12 Solving our Disputes	78
13 Giving Witness	87
14 Baptism	95
15 The Straight Path	102
16 The Law of Love	109
17 Fasting and Giving	116
18 Fate and Magic	124
19 Serving One Another	132
20 Our Pilgrimage to Paradise	140
Supplement 1 My Daily Time with God	149
Supplement 2 How to Reach God	151
Feedback	154

Guidelines for the Learner

1

Welcome to this Course!

It will help you follow the Lord Jesus Christ in your daily life. I am your teacher and here are a few guidelines to help you benefit from this course.



2

Don't study this course just on your own- you will gain little benefit. Please find a wise follower of Christ to help you as advisor. After each week's home study, meet to discuss it with your advisor - and preferably with fellow-learners too.

3

And, most importantly, put these lessons into practice in your daily life! Each lesson has a 'Practical Task' for you to do in the coming week.

1. Read each question carefully.
2. Write or tick [✓] your response in the blank spaces provided. After writing your response, you may check with the answers at the end of the lesson.
3. After completing each lesson, do the Lesson Review to revise the key points.
4. Icons used in this book:
 -  *The discussion icon is next to questions where you need to be ready to bring your own opinion to the discussion time. Make sure you answer these questions and be ready for discussion.*
 -  *The memory verse icon is used when the memory verse in each lesson is first written. Make sure you take time to learn these memory verses.*
5. For the first five lessons the only text book you need is this course book. From lesson 6, you will also need your own copy of the Holy Bible. In this course, we are mostly using the New International Version (2011 edition), but if you have another translation that is fine. There are many translations of the Bible, but they come from the same text in the original languages. The original is unchanged.
6. Around the world there are many followers of Jesus Christ who come from the same former religion as yourself. Some of them are highly educated and some are not. This course is written in a simple way so that even people with less education can understand it. You may find the teaching style quite simple, but will you obey it in your life? God cares more about your obedience than your intelligence. If you obey the teaching you will benefit.
7. Remember, your advisor is giving their own time to help you. Show your respect for that person by arriving on time for each discussion time, and by completing the homework.

Now begin, with the Lord's help

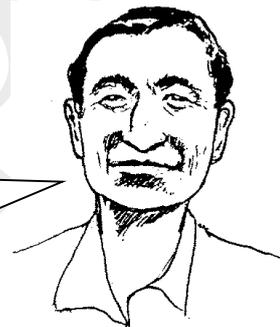


The Purpose of our Lives

Two men were having a discussion. One of them said, "I believe that God Almighty created me to obey his commands. He sent the prophets to show me the Straight Path. If I follow that path, then hopefully God will forgive my sins and let me into paradise. That is the purpose of my life."

The other man replied, "I too want to obey God's commands. But I am not afraid he will send me to the hell-fire. He has already forgiven my sins and has promised to welcome me in paradise. So, on this earth I am glad to know him personally, feel his love and love him too. I want to live for him, every moment of every day. This is the purpose of my life."

To think about: Do you agree with the first man or the second man? Or maybe you have another purpose? What is the purpose of your life?



1 When we think about our lives it can become a burden for us. We get weighed down by our troubles in the present and our worries about the future. In the Holy Gospel (*Injil*) the Lord Jesus Christ made a wonderful promise which is for all of us:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

(Matthew 11:28)



Think of Jesus Christ saying these words to you personally! Keep repeating them until you can say them from memory. Then fill in the gaps below:

"Come to me, all you who are _____ and _____, and I will give you rest."

2 The Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words when he came into the world. He called people to "come, follow me". Some of them responded with gladness and became his followers. Others rejected him. Christ is alive today and he still makes the same invitation to us. What is this? "Come, _____ me".

Becoming Jesus Christ's Follower

3 Let's learn how to become Christ's follower. We can follow the example of a fisherman named Simon Peter who was one of Christ's first followers. Let's read about this in the Holy Bible:

“One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch’. Simon answered, ‘Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets’.

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break... When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken... Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don't be afraid: from now on you will fish for people’. So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”

(Luke 5:1-11 in the Holy Bible)

After you have read the whole passage, tick (✓) this box and continue.

4 It seems that Simon Peter took four steps to become Jesus' follower. By these same four steps people today become followers of the Lord Jesus. Let's learn about them now.

First Step: Turn away from Sin

When Simon saw the miracle of the fish, his eyes were opened. He recognized the Lord Jesus' holiness, and by contrast his own shame. What did he say to Jesus? “Go away from me, Lord; I am a _____” (see the passage above, in the last paragraph)

5 Simon realized he was a ‘sinful man’. Probably he had never murdered anyone, or committed adultery. But Jesus could see right inside his heart. Simon could not hide from the Lord Jesus his shameful secrets or his evil thoughts.

What about you? What are your hidden secrets, which would make you very embarrassed if they were announced aloud from the loudspeaker in your local mosque? Maybe you can hide these secrets from your neighbours and family, but you can't hide them from Jesus Christ. He can see every hidden evil in your life as clearly as a doctor can see, in an X-ray, every hidden bone of your body!

➤ *Pause now, and ask Jesus Christ to show you the dark corners of your life.*

6 Truly every person is stained by sin. As the poet Omar Khayum said,
“Tell me who has not sinned in this world
Tell me where are those who have not sinned,
I wrong you and you wrong me
So tell me what is the difference between you and me.”

Can anyone hide his or her sins from God? [Yes / No] (circle the correct answer)

7 You were previously taught that God loves those who make themselves pure and hates those who do wrong. But did Jesus the Pure One hate the impure Simon? Astonishingly, he did not! What did Jesus say to Simon? (see the passage in question 3 and tick the correct answer)

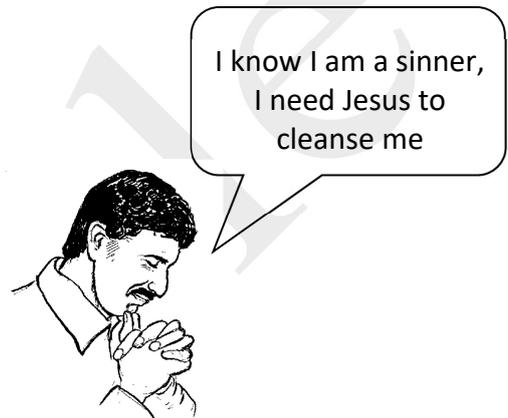
- a) 'Go away from me'
- b) 'Don't be afraid'

8 How relieved Simon was to hear Jesus say 'don't be afraid'! If you, like Simon, realize you are an impure sinner, then take heart. Jesus the Messiah gave his own life as a sacrifice for you, as Supplement 2 makes clear. He is ready to forgive you and wash you completely clean!

But are you ready to receive his generous gift? Look at these two contrasting people:



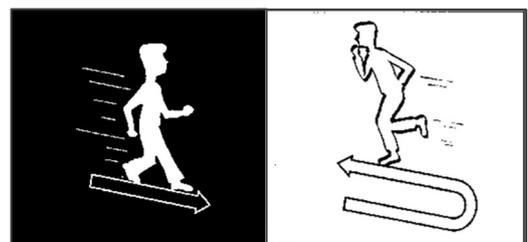
Imran



Shafiq

Which kind of person will Jesus Christ wash clean: a proud person like Imran or a humble one like Shafiq? _____

9 The Lord Jesus said 'I have come to call... *'sinners to repentance'* (Luke 5:32). 'Repentance' means turning around to go in the opposite direction. Look at these two men:



1.

2.

a) Which of these men has repented, 1. or 2.? _____

b) Which of them is continuing in his old ways, 1. or 2.? _____

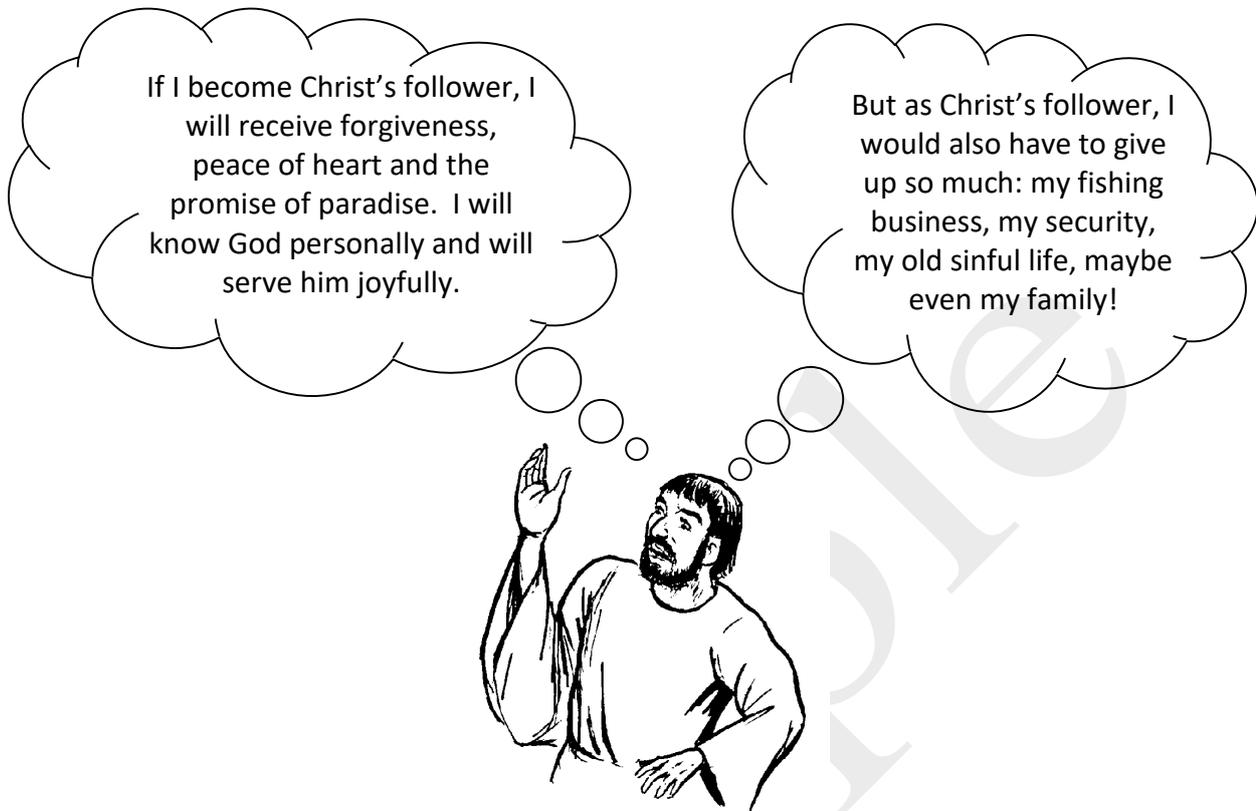
10 'To repent' is more than merely to regret our sins. It means completely to turn away from sin, like man 2 in the picture. Therefore, what is the evidence of real repentance? (tick one answer)

- a) to feel no regret for your sin-stained life
- b) to regret your sins but not to change your lifestyle
- c) to completely turn away from sin and change your lifestyle

11 What was the first step Simon took to become Jesus' follower? Turn away from _____.

Second Step: Understand the Cost

12 The next step for Simon was to understand the cost of becoming Christ's follower. Simon faced a hard choice. He was probably caught between two thoughts:



What did Simon understand? The _____ of becoming Christ's follower.

13 Jesus Christ told this story about how much it might cost to become his follower:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46)

As Jesus' follower, what are the most costly things you might have to give up? Tick one or more of the following: (*your own answer*)

- a) your reputation in the community
- b) your job or business
- c) your family
- d) your property or inheritance
- e) other (*write it here*) _____

14 But 'the pearl of great value' is worth it! And whatever sacrifice we made for Christ's sake, remember that he made an even bigger sacrifice for us on the cross!

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)

So, who paid the greater price: we or Christ? _____

In lessons 9 and 10 we will learn how Jesus Christ helps us to face persecution.

Third Step: Entrust yourself to Christ

15 To become Christ's follower, Simon had firstly to turn away from sin, and secondly to understand the cost. Then he came to the third step: "Entrust yourself to Christ".

In question 3, read again the last sentence in the passage. What did Simon and his companions do in response to Jesus' call? (*fill the blank spaces*)

"They pulled their boats up on shore, _____ everything and _____ him."

16 Simon entrusted himself completely to his new master Jesus.

How do we entrust ourselves to someone in everyday life? Here are some examples:

- ✓ **A tired child** entrusts himself to his father when he jumps into his arms to be carried.
- ✓ **A patient** entrusts himself to the doctor when he takes the medicine.
- ✓ **A passenger** entrusts himself to the bus driver at the start of a dangerous journey.

Just like the child, the patient or the passenger, we entrust ourselves to Jesus when we place ourselves in his hands. We trust him to protect and guide us. We obey him as our master.

What is the third step in becoming Christ's follower?

1. Turn away from sin
2. Understand the cost
3. _____ yourself to Christ

17 After entrusting himself to Jesus Christ, Simon Peter travelled with him for the next three years. He shared in his master's joys and sorrows. He saw Jesus heal sick people and even raise the dead! He learned to love people as Jesus loved people. Gradually the apprentice Simon became more and more like his teacher Jesus. Later he was better known by his second name Peter.

How did Simon Peter become Christ's follower? (*tick the better answer*)

- a) By entrusting himself to Christ
- b) By reciting a new creed (*kalima* or *shahada*)

18 As you know, an apprentice learns from his master by watching and copying what he does. This is how Simon Peter developed as Jesus' apprentice or 'disciple'.

We too become like apprentices when we follow Jesus our master. Even though we cannot see him with our physical eyes, we learn to copy what he does and we become like him. We have the honour of sharing in his work.

What is the third step in becoming Christ's disciple? _____ yourself to Christ



Fourth Step: Join Christ's Community

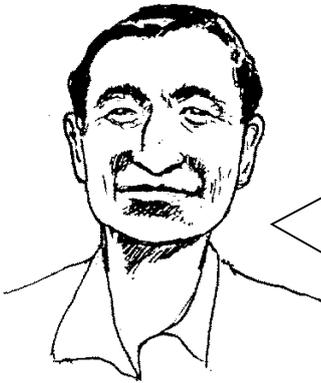
19 When Simon obeyed Jesus' call, he was not alone. He joined Christ's community. Together Christ's disciples lived as one group and shared their lives. They were from different tribes and different social levels. But they learned to love each other.

This was not easy. Sometimes they had arguments. But they solved their disputes and forgave each other. Simon Peter learned that all those who belong to Christ must also join his _____.

Joining Christ's community is essential for every believer!
We will learn more in lesson 7.

20 Jesus Christ called Simon Peter to be his follower. What four steps did this involve?

1. _____ away from sin
2. _____ the cost
3. _____ yourself to Christ
4. _____ Christ's community



Finally, what does today's lesson mean for you personally?

- **Maybe you are already Christ's follower?** If so, this course will help you to keep growing in Christ.
- **Maybe you are ready to become Christ's follower now?** Then talk in private with your advisor, and he or she will help you to take this step.
- **Maybe you want more time to think about this important step?** That's fine, but don't delay the decision forever, for one day it may be too late. Keep studying this course if you wish, but you will gain more benefit from it after you decide to follow Christ.

LESSON 1 PRACTICAL TASK

This week, find a place alone and think seriously about these questions. Are you already Christ's follower? Or are you ready to become his follower? Or do you want more time to think about it?

Now do the Review.

LESSON 1 REVIEW

1. What wonderful invitation of Jesus Christ did you memorize from Matthew 11:28? (*see question 1 if you can't remember*)

"Come to me, all you _____."

2. Name four steps in becoming Christ's follower:

1. _____ away from _____
2. _____ the _____
3. _____ yourself to _____
4. _____ Christ's _____

LESSON 1 ANSWERS

- 1 weary, burdened
- 2 follow
- 3 read the passage
- 4 sinful man
- 5 personal response
- 6 No
- 7 b)
- 8 a humble person
- 9 a) person 2 b) person 1
- 10 c)
- 11 sin
- 12 cost
- 13 personal response
- 14 Christ
- 15 left... followed
- 16 entrust
- 17 a)
- 18 entrust
- 19 community
- 20 1. turn 2. understand 3. entrust 4. join



Study tip: You can't study this course on your own. Find an advisor or a friend and discuss each lesson with him or her.

A person who becomes Christ's follower does not merely recite a new creed. Rather, he or she receives a brand new life in Christ! This includes:

- A. A new identity
- B. A new birth
- C. A new nature



- 1** Let's learn about this wonderful new life from a part of the Holy Bible called 'The First Letter of Peter', or 1 Peter for short. Simon Peter, about whom we learned in lesson 1, wrote this letter under God's guidance. The letter begins like this:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ"

(1 Peter 1:1)

What title does Peter have here? (*tick the correct answer*)

- a) disciple b) apostle c) prophet

- 2** In the Holy Bible, the word 'apostle' means a person who is sent with a special task (not someone on whom a holy book descends). The Lord Jesus chose twelve men, trained them and sent them out with a special task. That is why they are called 'apostles'. Their leader was the apostle Peter.

Which part of God's Word will we study in this course? The first letter of the apostle _____

- 3** The first verse of 1 Peter tells us who wrote this letter under God's guidance. It also tells us who received the letter. They were followers of Christ living in the country we now call Turkey. In this verse they are called "God's chosen people" (*New Living Translation*).

➤ **Pause and thank God for making us his chosen people!**

- 4** The same verse also calls them 'foreigners' (*NLT*). Maybe you live far from your homeland. Or maybe you still live in your country but you are separated from your family because they rejected you. This is a very hard experience!

But in God's sight, what new identity do we have? We are 'God's chosen _____'

A) Our New Identity

- 5** Yes, we are 'God's chosen people'! Our old community may reject us, but

"if God is for us, who can be against us?... Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?" (Romans 8:31, 33). *"Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?"* (Luke 18:7)

As Christ's followers, what is our new identity? (*tick the correct answer*)

- a) God's chosen people b) infidels c) apostates

- 6** The next verse says "God the Father knew you and chose you long ago" (1 Peter 1:2, *NLT*)

The story is told about a boy who had lost his real parents. Another couple brought him up as their own adopted son. One day other boys were mocking him about this. He replied, “No, I feel more honoured than you. Your fathers did not choose you but my father chose me as his very own!”

What an honour it is to be chosen by God! Did we deserve this by our good deeds?

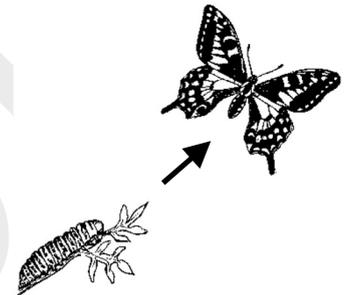
[Yes / No]

7 God chose us because he loves us, not because we deserved it. It is also true that we chose to follow God through Jesus Christ. Somehow God’s choice and our choice work together.

What is our new identity in Christ? We are God’s _____ people.

B) Our New Birth

8 You know the difference between a worm and a caterpillar. Although they look rather similar, there is actually a huge difference between them. A worm crawls around without any change until it dies. But a caterpillar goes through a marvellous change. Instead of dying, what does it become? (*see the picture*)



9 Isn’t it amazing that the ugly caterpillar, which merely crawled along a leaf, is changed into a beautiful butterfly which soars in the sky? It is like going through a completely ‘new birth’ to become a new creature.

What change takes place in the caterpillar? A kind of ‘new _____’

10 Have you become a follower of Jesus Christ? When you look in the mirror you see the same person as you were before, on the outside. But in fact, the change inside you is as great as a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. This amazing change through Christ is called ‘new birth’.

Which people experience this new birth? (*tick one*)

- a) all those who live in our country
- b) all those who personally entrust themselves to Christ
- c) all those who were born in a Christian family

11 The next verse of 1 Peter tells us about this new birth:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”

(1 Peter 1:3)

According to this verse, who has given us this new birth?

- a) God in his great mercy
- b) we by our good deeds
- c) a holy man by his prayers for us

Have you experienced this New Birth?

12 God offers this new birth to everyone, but not everyone receives it.

Look at what the doctor says to the three patients, and their replies:

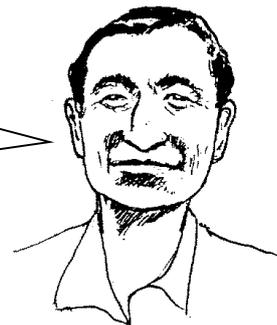


Which of these three sick people, A. B. or C. will get better? _____

13 In the same way, which of the three people below will receive new birth in Christ? (tick one)

- a) The one who says, "I believe your teaching, O Christ, but I am afraid to receive you into my life"
- b) The one who says, "I do not believe you"
- c) The one who says, "I believe you, Lord Jesus. Now I entrust myself to you. Please come into my life".

Which one of these describes you – A., B. or C.? If you have not yet entrusted yourself to Christ, please talk about it in private with your advisor. The rest of this course assumes that you have taken this step.



C) Our New Nature

14 We have learned about our 'new identity' and 'new birth' as Christ's followers. Jesus Christ also gives us a 'new nature', which is his own nature in us.

Many people from the same previous religion as you have become Christ's followers. Here some of them describe the positive changes he has made in their lives:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Talib: | "Life in Christ is an exciting and soul-satisfying life" |
| Hasan: | "Jesus gave me joy and peace" |
| Shamim: | "My tension and worry disappeared" |

Shaheeda: “My burdens and fears have gone”
Lena: “I know that God accepts me just as I am”
Ahmad: “The colour of my past was black and its smell was of alcohol, women and sin. The colour of my present is light, covered with joy and peace”
(from ‘Jesus More than a Prophet’ by Ralph Wotton)

These are all real people. What difference came in their lives? *(tick one)*

- a) Jesus Christ gave them a new nature with many positive changes
 b) Their lives became worse than before
 c) They were left unchanged in their old nature

15 Jesus Christ gave his new nature to all these his followers. Like them, we too will experience new feelings of joy and peace. But our feelings are not the most important thing. More important are the changes Jesus brings to our character. Here are some more true examples:

Hasan: “Jesus enabled me to break my smoking habit”
Jehangir: “Jesus changed my old attitude of pride”
Razzaq: “My stammer and inferiority complex disappeared”
Saeed: “I stopped being a troublemaker”
Shamim: “I became more interested in other people”
Parwaiz: “The spirit of service has taken the place of pride and conceit in my life”
Reza: “I learned to rely on the Lord in my business and to work with honesty”
Mariah: “I long to bring others to know Christ’s love”
(from ‘Jesus More than a Prophet’ by Ralph Wotton)



What actual changes has Christ brought in your own life? Write your ideas, and be ready to share them in the discussion time: _____

16 If you have not immediately experienced all the above changes, don’t worry. They will come gradually as you grow in Christ. It takes many years for a baby to grow into an adult, and in the same way it takes many years after receiving ‘new birth’ to become spiritually mature.

But because Jesus lives in you, which ‘nature’ should be seen more and more in you?

- a) your old sinful nature b) your new nature in Christ

Our Spiritual Battle

17 Even though we already have a new nature in Christ, we must also fight a kind of spiritual war against our old nature - every day for the rest of our lives! God’s Word gives us this command:

“Now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self [nature] with its practices and have put on the new self [nature], which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”
(Colossians 3:5,7-10)

According to the above verses, (put a circle round the correct answers)

- a) which nature have we ‘taken off’? [old nature / new nature]
 b) which nature have we ‘put on’? [old nature / new nature]

18 The pictures below show Christ’s followers doing different things. In the blank space by each name, write ‘old’ if the person is behaving according to their old nature, or ‘new’ for their new nature:

Person a): _____ nature

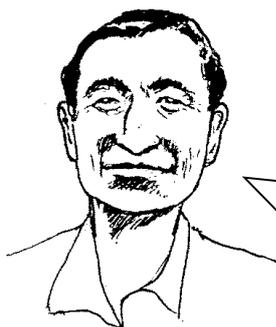
Person b): _____ nature

Person c): _____ nature

Person d): _____ nature

19 Every day our new nature, which is Jesus’ nature put into us, fights against our old sinful nature. A simple farmer once described this struggle like this: “I feel as if two goats are fighting in my life, a black one and a white one.” His listener asked him, “So which goat wins?” He replied, “Whichever one I feed the most”!

➤ **Think about the farmer’s parable. The black goat represents our old nature and the white goat our new nature. Which one is winning in your life these days? Why? Be ready for the discussion time.**



From today’s lesson, let’s remember three great privileges we have in Christ:

- We have a new identity as God’s chosen people
- We have gone through a new birth, like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly
- With Christ’s help, our new nature gradually replaces our old sinful nature

20 The following verse from God’s Word summarizes what we have learned today:



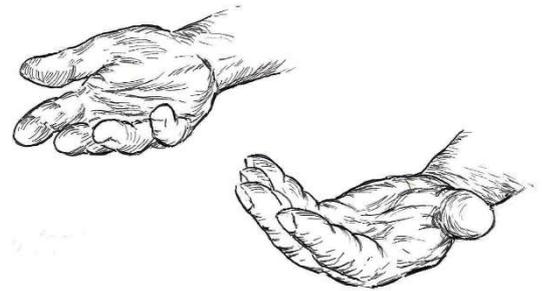
“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
(2 Corinthians 5:17) *NIV 1984*

Fill the gaps and repeat the verse until you know it by heart:

“If anyone is in _____, he is a _____ creation; the _____ has gone, the _____ has come!”
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Now say this prayer:

“O Lord,
In your great mercy you made us your own
chosen people – thank you!
Thank you for giving me new birth and a new
nature.
By Christ’s power, help me daily to fight the
spiritual war against my old sinful nature.
Amen.”



LESSON 2 PRACTICAL TASK

Make a list of three positive changes in your life, which come from your new nature. Thank God for these changes. Also make a list of three habits from your old nature which still persist in your life. This week, with God’s help, fight against these bad habits.

LESSON 2 REVIEW

- 1 a) When a person entrusts himself to Christ, what change takes place in him or her?
_____ birth
b) What new identity do we have as Christ’s followers? We are
God’s _____
- 2 Our spiritual battle is between our [old / new] sinful nature and our [old / new] nature in Christ (*cross out the wrong answers*)
- 3 Give two examples of changes which Jesus Christ brings in the life of his followers (*if you can’t think of any, see questions 11-12*):

- 4 From memory, fill the gaps from the verse 2 Corinthians 5:17:
“If anyone is in _____, he is a _____ creation; the _____ has gone, the _____ has come!”

LESSON 2 ANSWERS

- 1 b)
- 2 Peter
- 3 personal response
- 4 people
- 5 a)
- 6 No (but if you are not sure about this, talk with your advisor)
- 7 chosen
- 8 a butterfly
- 9 birth
- 10 b)
- 11 a)
- 12 C
- 13 c)
- 14 a)
- 15 be ready for discussion
- 16 b)
- 17 a) old nature b) new nature
- 18 a) new b) new c) old d) old
- 19 be ready for discussion
- 20 memorize the verse

Study tip: Don't rush through the course. Instead, put each lesson into practice before going to the next lesson.

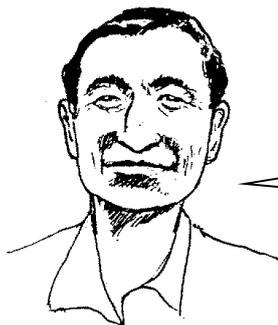


In this course, you will read many true accounts about people who had the same previous religion as you. One of these was named Bilquis Sheikh.

Whenever Bilquis tried to reach out to God, he always seemed so far away. She could not communicate with him. Then one day a follower of Christ suggested to Bilquis, 'Try speaking to God as your Father'. At first she was horrified! This idea seemed to be *shirk* (associating something with God). But later she tried it. This is what happened:

" 'Oh Father, my Father'. Hesitantly, I spoke His name aloud... 'Father, oh my Father God', I cried, with growing confidence.... He was there! I could sense His Presence. I could feel His hand laid gently on my head. It was as if I could see His eyes, filled with love and compassion. He was so close that I found myself laying my head on His knees like a little girl sitting at her father's feet. For a long time I knelt there, sobbing quietly, floating in His love."

(from her book 'I Dared to Call Him Father')



So, is it blasphemy to call God our Father? Let's continue our study in 1 Peter chapter 1.

1 1 Peter 1:3 says:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Peter 1:3)

What title is used for God in this verse?

___ a) Lord ___ b) Father ___ c) Creator

2 Yes, God's names include not only *Rabb* (Lord) and *Khaliq* (Creator), but also 'Father'! Many people have heard 99 other names for God, but never this one. Yet Jesus Christ himself called God 'Father' and he even taught his followers to do the same.

By what title did Jesus speak to God? _____

A) Jesus Christ called God 'Father'

3 Many times in the New Testament we read that Jesus Christ spoke to God as 'Father' or even 'Abba' (which means 'Dad'). Some Jewish people were shocked by this. One time they tried to kill Jesus because

"he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18).

Of what did they accuse Jesus? (*tick one*)

a) *shirk* (associating someone with God) b) murder c) theft

4 Let's read how Jesus Christ responded to these critics:

“Whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does... Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him... For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge”.
(verses from John 5:19-27)

In the box, put a circle round all the places where it says ‘Son’ or ‘Father’.

5 Christ's followers are not embarrassed by these words ‘Son’ and ‘Father’ but we do need to explain them carefully. Does the passage above say anything at all about God having physical relations with a woman to produce a son? [Yes / No]

6 The idea of God having a physical union with a woman is very offensive to Christians! The Holy Bible never teaches anything like that! In fact, it uses the title ‘son of God’ for different beings including Adam, angels, the anointed king, and even the whole nation of Israel. They lived close to God, showed some of his qualities or ruled as his representatives on earth.

In what way could such creatures be called ‘sons’ of God? (*tick one*)

a) in a physical way, through union between God and a woman
 b) in a descriptive way, to explain truths about them and God

7 In our everyday speech too, we use ‘son’ and ‘father’ in a descriptive way, not just a physical way. The founder of Pakistan is given the title ‘father of the nation’. This does not mean that he physically gave birth to all the Pakistanis! In Afghanistan, a ‘son of Herat’ just means someone who belongs there. It is the same idea in Egypt when they call someone ‘son of the Nile’ – this does not mean that the Nile literally gave birth to this person.

When people talk about ‘son’ and ‘father’ do they always mean this in a physical way?
[Yes / No]

8 The words ‘father’ and ‘son’ are used in a descriptive way to show how Jesus Christ shared God's qualities and his authority. But Jesus Christ is the Son of God in an even greater way, in fact a unique way. He said “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9) !

We cannot see God with our own eyes, but he became visible on earth in Jesus Christ! Christ is somehow like an exact photocopy of God's nature. Therefore we can know the Father through knowing Jesus his Son.

a) Can anyone see the invisible God here on earth? [Yes / No]
b) Did God show himself on earth in Jesus Christ? [Yes / No]

9 We have learned a little about why Jesus Christ called God ‘Father’. Don't worry if you don't understand it all, as we will learn more later. To summarize:

a) By what title did Jesus speak to God? _____
b) In the Bible, is the term ‘son of God’ used in a physical or a descriptive way? _____
c) In whom did the invisible God become visible on earth? _____

B) We too may call God ‘Father’

10 Normally no one would dare to speak to the Almighty God as ‘Father’. But Jesus Christ taught his followers to do that. And God’s Word says:



“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”
(1 John 3:1)

By what title do we dare to speak to God, through Jesus Christ? _____

11 Of course God does not have children in a physical way. Rather, God has adopted us as his spiritual sons and daughters. He has generously poured out (‘lavished’) his love on us!

Here again is the verse from question 10. Fill the blanks, and keep repeating the verse until you can say it from memory:

“See what _____ the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called _____ of God! And that is what we are!”
(1 John 3:1)

The character of our heavenly Father

12 No doubt your parents love you very much. But some parents show conditional love to their children. They love the child who brings them honour, but not the child who disappoints them. Or maybe it seems that your parents love your brother or sister more than you?

Our divine Father is not like that! His love is unconditional and unlimited. We don’t have to earn it. He loves us just the same whether we come ‘top of the class’ or ‘bottom of the class’!

Write ‘True’ or ‘False’ by the following statements:

- God our Father loves us if we do good and hates us if we do bad _____
- God our Father always loves us, whether we are good or bad _____
- We should love our own children even when they are bad _____

13 Some people don’t like to think of God as ‘Father’ because their own human fathers were so bad. Sadly, some human fathers are addicted to alcohol, beat their wives and abuse their children in different ways. Some fathers abandon their families or never show love to their children.

I once heard about a human father who told his son to stand on a low wall. He said, “Now jump into my arms. Don’t worry, I will catch you”. But when the boy jumped, the father deliberately let him crash to the ground. Then he said “That is to teach you a lesson of life. The lesson is – never trust anyone!”

Is our Father God like that untrustworthy father? No! No! No!

➤ ***Pause now, and think about your own human father:***

- ***Thank God for any good qualities in your human father.***
- ***Ask God to heal you from any hurts in your heart about your father.***
- ***Let God show you much he loves you as your perfect heavenly Father.***

If you feel deep hurts about your human father, keep praying about this in the coming weeks, and ask another follower of Christ to pray with you.

14 A story is told about a man who had two sons. The younger son grew impatient living at home, for he wanted to see the world. So he asked his father to give him his inheritance even before he died (what an insult that was!). Then the son went far away, wasted his money on parties and expensive living, and became so poor that he even had to eat pigs' food. He was a disgrace to his family's name.

Finally he became so desperate that he decided to risk coming home and asking his father's forgiveness. How would you expect the father to react? In your opinion, do you think he would:



- a) welcome his son with open arms?
- b) reject him and send him away?
- c) let him back into the home, but with a heavy punishment?

15 In fact, this story was first told by Jesus Christ, who continued in a surprising way:

“But while [the son] was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”
(Luke 15:20-24)

- a) What did the son deserve: to be welcomed or rejected? _____
- b) But what did the father in Jesus' story actually do, welcome or reject his son? _____

16 By contrast, let me tell you about my friend Nazir (the account is true but I have changed his name).

Around 1990 Nazir was sent by his father, a senior religious leader in Uganda, to study at a religious college (*madrassa*) overseas. But during that time Nazir became a follower of Christ. Several years later Nazir returned to his home in Uganda, hoping to be accepted by his father. Instead, from behind the locked gate, his father asked him ‘We have heard rumours that you became a Christian – is it true?’ ‘Yes’, Nazir admitted. ‘Then you are no longer my son!’, replied his father. Then, from behind the gate, he threw stones to drive Nazir away. Later Nazir told me, ‘That day was the hardest day of my life’.

Which father is God like?

- a) the father of Nazir, who rejected him because he brought dishonour
- b) the father in Jesus' story, who welcomed his son even after he brought dishonour

17 We try not to cause dishonour to God our Father. But if we do, we must come back to him and apologize with our whole heart, like the son in Jesus' parable. When we do that, we can be sure the he will [never / probably] reject us. (*circle the correct answer*)

18 It is written “*Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me*” (Psalm 27:10). Often we are emotionally closer to our mothers than to our fathers. But God's love for us is even stronger than our mother's love!

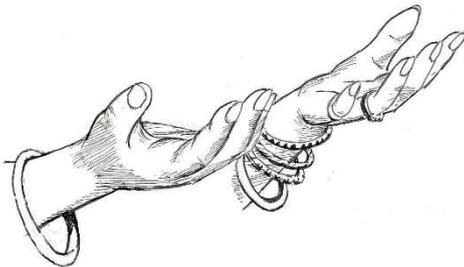
Which one of the following will definitely never ever reject us? (*tick one only*)

- a) our father
- b) our mother
- c) God

Isn't it wonderful to know that our Father God loves us without limit and will never reject us!



Now say this prayer:



“Father God,
Thank you very much for adopting me as your spiritual child and loving me without limit. I too love you, and I want to bring you honour. Amen.”

LESSON 3 PRACTICAL TASK

This week, think of two ways to show unconditional love to the members of your family and try to act on them.

For instance, how is your relationship with your father? Ask God to help you in this. How is your relationship with your children or your relative’s children? Could you give them more time this week by paying attention to them and listening to what they want to tell you? Could you take them with you to the market, or give them a ‘well done’, or lovingly guide them to change a bad habit in their life?

Thank God that he always loves you unconditionally!

LESSON 3 REVIEW

- 1
 - a) By what title did Jesus Christ speak to God? _____
 - b) Therefore, by what title do we dare to speak to God? _____

- 2

By each of the following statements, write ‘True’ or ‘False’:

 - a) God our Father loves us even when we fail _____
 - b) We can trust God our Father all the time _____
 - c) God our Father will never reject us _____

3 Write the verse you memorized:

“See what _____ has _____ that we should be called _____. And that _____!” (1 John 3:1).
(if you can't remember, see question 10)

LESSON 3 ANSWERS

- 1 b)
- 2 Father
- 3 a)
- 4 put a circle round 'Son' or 'Father' in the box
- 5 No
- 6 b)
- 7 No
- 8 a) No b) Yes
- 9 a) Father b) descriptive c) Jesus Christ
- 10 Father
- 11 great, love, children
- 12 a) False b) True c) True
- 13 your personal response
- 14 for the discussion time
- 15 a) rejected b) welcome
- 16 b)
- 17 never
- 18 c)



Study tip: Is your discussion leader using the Advisor Guide? It is helpful, and available free on the website.