

A stylized, abstract figure composed of geometric shapes in teal and orange. The figure appears to be walking or standing, with the teal forming the upper body and the orange forming the lower body and legs. The background is a solid orange color.

FOLLOWER

BEGINNING
YOUR WALK
WITH JESUS

LIFEWAY
STUDENTS



FOLLOWER

BEGINNING
YOUR WALK
WITH JESUS

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ABOUT LIFEWAY STUDENTS

Only God and His Word bring about true heart transformation. Because of this, it is our top priority to ensure our resources are rooted in the truth of Scripture. Our desire is to create trustworthy resources that help fuel ministry.

Follower: Beginning Your Walk with Jesus was written by Kyle Wiltshire. He graduated from Union University with a degree in Christian Ethics and earned a Master's of Divinity from Beeson Divinity School. He has served in local churches in Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee, as well as in other parachurch ministries. He is passionate about helping students know Jesus and grow in their relationship with Him. Kyle is an editor with Lifeway Students and lives with his wife, Joni, and three children, Noah, Micah, and Lilly, in Hendersonville, Tennessee.

INTRO

Maybe you had been thinking about it for a long time, or maybe you decided in a spontaneous moment. You walked an aisle, prayed a prayer, took a class, or spoke with someone you've known and trusted for years or just met for the first time. No matter how it happened, you did it. You responded in faith to God's call, and you've given your life to Jesus. You placed your faith in Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself—give salvation.

So, what comes next?

That's what this book is all about. Think of it like this: right now, you're

a preschool Christian. Don't take that as an insult; to think of it this way is a good thing. Just like school, growing in your Christian faith is a process. The purpose of this book is to help you get from where you are now to the next step in your faith journey.

This book is called *Follower*. When you follow someone, you go where they go and do what they do. And guess what? You're in good company. Right now, millions of Christians around the world are standing shoulder to shoulder with you. We are all in it together, following Jesus. So, let's get started.

HOW TO USE

This book includes eight chapters, each covering an important aspect of following Jesus. Each chapter is divided into four sections, answering essential questions about following Jesus.

▶ **START HERE**

This is a short section that introduces each chapter.

▶ **WHAT?**

In this section, you'll find content to help you grasp a basic understanding of the subject.

▶ **WHY?**

This section explains the reason the subject matters in your life and to your faith.

▶ **HOW?**

This section helps you understand how you might experience or participate in the subject of the chapter.

KEEP GOING

There are four days of devotions at the end of each chapter to help you continue to learn and grow.

GUIDE FOR GROUP STUDY

Both individuals and groups can use this book to learn how to begin a faithful walk with Jesus. See the guide on page 102 for using this study with a group.

WORDS TO KNOW

At the back of this book on page 111 is a list of important words for you to understand as you seek to follow Jesus.

**SCAN QR CODE
FOR MORE
RESOURCES.**





CHAPTER 1

SALVATION

START HERE

We've seen it in movies or TV shows: A person is in a hopeless situation, desperate for help. Just when all hope seems lost, the hero of the story comes to the rescue. These moments are always thrilling and often surprising.

What is your favorite moment in a story when someone is saved from certain doom?

Jesus is the hero of our story; He is the One who saved us from certain doom. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift." When we placed our faith in Jesus, like the characters in our favorite stories, we were saved.

List three words that explain how you felt when you placed your faith in Jesus.

The word we use to describe this experience is *salvation*.

WHAT IS SALVATION?

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21.

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! ¹⁸ Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹ That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." ²¹ He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Circle the word sin each time it appears in this passage. Then, in your own words, write a definition of sin.

Sin is any action, word, or thought that offends God. Simply put, when we disobey God, we offend Him, we sin. Everyone has sinned. As Romans 3:23 states, "all have sinned" and fallen short of God's standard. Another way to think about sin is that it's brokenness. Christians often use the word *brokenness* to describe the way our world has deviated from God's good design.

How have you seen or experienced brokenness?

In verse 21, we see the phrase "the one who did not know sin." This means there was One who was not broken by sin in any way. Jesus is the unbroken

One—the only person who has ever lived and did not sin. This means, unlike us, Jesus never disobeyed God.

In ten words or less, describe what happened to Jesus.

He was wrongly accused, humiliated, beaten, and crucified—an innocent person took the punishment for guilty people. In 2 Corinthians 5:19, we see that because of the sinlessness of Jesus, God does not count our trespasses—or sins—against us.

If we are all guilty of sin, why would God not count our sins against us?

Look at verse 18. God reconciled—or restored—our broken relationship with Himself through Jesus. This means when Jesus was on the cross, He took the punishment that was intended for us.

Has anyone ever been punished for something you did? Or have you ever heard of a situation where a guilty person didn't get punished but an innocent person did? Describe the situation.

Because of Jesus's death on the cross and the forgiveness we receive in Him, we also receive His righteousness and become new creations (see vv. 17,21). We are not just cleaned up, better versions of our old self.

We are completely new creations. Salvation means through faith in Jesus we are saved from the eternal consequences of sin and death, and through God's grace we become new creations.

WHY IS SALVATION IMPORTANT?

We have already touched on two factors that explain why salvation is so vitally important.

- ▶ **Salvation through Jesus is the cure for our brokenness.**
- ▶ **Our brokenness separates us from God.**

If not for Jesus, the punishment we would receive for our brokenness is death. The first half of Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death." In other words, because of our sin we deserve to die. But there is a second half to Romans 6:23: "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried. But He didn't stay that way. He rose from the grave three days later.

Have you ever received a gift or reward for something you didn't deserve? Describe it here.

Because of our sin, we don't deserve life. But because of God's grace we can be reconciled to Him through Jesus and our broken relationship can be restored. If not for salvation in Jesus, we would have no way to be reconciled to God, and we would not have eternal life with Him.

What is something in your life you highly value? How do you treat this thing?

The reason we have the opportunity to receive salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus is because God values us so greatly. He shows us this truth through His actions.

READ JOHN 3:16-17.

¹⁶ For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Name two pieces of evidence from these two verses where you can see how much God values us.

If God didn't love us, He would let our sin keep us separated from Him forever and our eternity would be spent apart from Him. But He loves us so much He sent Jesus, not to condemn the world, but to save it. Salvation is important because it is the key to a restored relationship with God and eternal life.

HOW DOES SOMEONE RECEIVE SALVATION?

If we understand what salvation is and why it's important, then it's vital to know how a person receives salvation.

READ ROMANS 10:9-10.

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.

Let's look at two key words in these two verses, confess and believe. Circle these words every time they appear in verses 9-10.

1. Confess

What do we need to confess in order to receive salvation?

We must accept that we have sinned and that we can't fix the brokenness sin causes in our lives. But Jesus can!

READ 2 PETER 3:9.

⁹ The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

How do you react when you are going somewhere and realize you've made a wrong turn?

When we confess that we are sinful, we must do the same thing as when we realize we are going the wrong way—turn and go in the right direction. That's what it means to repent. It is God's desire that all people turn away from their sin and turn toward Him.

We must confess both that we have sinned, and Jesus as the Lord or leader of our lives. This makes us followers of Jesus. He now sets the agenda for our lives.

2. Believe

When we believe something, it affects our lives and decisions. It makes an impact on who we are. We prove we believe in Jesus through the way we live our lives. When we believe the truth about who Jesus is and what

His death and resurrection mean, then we receive the righteousness of Jesus, which replaces our own (see 2 Cor. 5:21). This reveals the truth of Ephesians 2:8-9, “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.”

We can’t earn our salvation—it is a free gift from God.

How would you describe to someone else the way a person receives salvation?

Here is a simple explanation of the way people receive salvation.

- ▶ **Admit** we are broken by sin, **turn** away from our sins, and **ask** for God’s forgiveness.
- ▶ **Believe** Jesus died and rose again.
- ▶ **Confess** Jesus as the Lord of our lives, and **commit** to follow Him.

When people do this, they receive salvation and become followers of Jesus!

NEXT STEPS

If you have placed your faith in Jesus, the next step is to follow Him in baptism.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

WHO WROTE IT?

Paul

WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

Paul wrote this letter to the churches in a region called Galatia to help these Christians understand that all people receive salvation through faith and not by keeping the Jewish law.

READ GALATIANS 2:20-21 IN YOUR BIBLE.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

When we are saved, we become new creations in Jesus. While we are not physically crucified like He was, we must put to death our old way of life because now we are Christ-followers. Jesus lives in us when we are saved. These verses clearly show that we live by faith in Jesus—we do not earn or maintain our salvation through keeping rules—and that Jesus loves us so much He died for us.

What do these verses teach you about salvation?

Why are these verses important to your understanding of salvation?

How can you help others understand salvation better?

PRAY Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me and dying on the cross for my sins. Help me walk by faith and in Your grace.

DAY 2

READ 1 JOHN 1:5-10 IN YOUR BIBLE.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

John makes it clear that if we confess our sins, God will forgive us (v. 9). Remember, confession and repentance are tied together. It's not enough just to admit we have sinned, we must turn from our sins too. John also said all have sinned—to say we've never sinned is a lie—and when we seek to live in the light, Jesus gives us life. God is trustworthy and faithful and will guide us to live in a right way.

WHO WROTE IT?

John

WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

John wrote to believers to help them know the truth of salvation and how to live out the love of the Savior, Jesus.

What do these verses teach you about salvation?

Why are these verses important to your understanding of salvation?

How can you help others understand salvation better?

PRAY Lord Jesus, forgive me when I sin. I want to walk in the light as You are in the light and practice living in truth.

DAY 3

WHO WROTE IT?

Paul

WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

Paul wrote to Christians who lived in Rome. He wanted the people of the church there to know their relationship with God was restored through their faith and not because of following the Jewish law or because of their racial identity.

READ ROMANS 5:1-11 IN YOUR BIBLE.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

We are justified—or made right with God—through faith. This is an act of His grace, not because we deserve it. Through salvation we receive both peace with God and the gift of His Holy Spirit who comes to live in us. The Holy Spirit guides us, convicts us, encourages us, and helps us as we follow Jesus. Ultimately, God proved His love for us by sending Jesus to die on the cross to restore our broken relationship with Him. He did this even before we ever knew Him or showed any love or affection toward Him.

What do these verses teach you about salvation?

Why are these verses important to your understanding of salvation?

How can you help others understand salvation better?

PRAY Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me before I loved You. Thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit who guides me, encourages me, and convicts me.

DAY 4

READ JOHN 6:35-40 IN THE BIBLE.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Jesus sustains us spiritually like food and water nourish our bodies. When we come to Him in faith, He receives us and will never let us go. We cannot lose our salvation. Jesus came to do the will of the Father, which has provided a way for us to have a restored relationship with Him. Salvation brings us eternal life, and we will be resurrected to a new life when Jesus returns.

What do these verses teach you about salvation?

WHO WROTE IT?

John

WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

John wrote as an eyewitness of who Jesus was and what He did during His time on earth. In these verses, Jesus was speaking to an audience that was captivated by His miracles but wasn't really interested in following Him. They liked what Jesus could give them but didn't want to give Him their lives.

Why are these verses important to your understanding of salvation?

How can you help others understand salvation better?

PRAY Lord Jesus, I have given You my life and I trust it in Your hands. I look forward to the day when I will see You face to face and be resurrected like You.