

Introduction

According to the Bible, nothing in this life can compare with “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:8). But how does one begin a relationship with Jesus, and what does it take to keep that relationship healthy and growing throughout the years? In other words, what is the Christian life all about?

Having served on the leadership team of a couple of growing churches over the past fifteen years, I have become increasingly aware that newcomers to the faith are in need of a clear, concise and contemporary introduction to the Christian life. Many books deal with specific aspects of that life, but surprisingly few provide the “big picture” in a practical and readable way. It is my hope that this resource will help to meet that need. In writing it I have had three categories of people in mind, and my guess is that one of them applies to you.

First of all, if you have recently become a Christian, it is my intention that these pages will be of great encouragement to you as you gain a basic understanding of what a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ involves. Secondly, if you have not yet committed your life to Christ, but have a growing interest in Christianity, it is my desire that your curiosity will be satisfied as you read, and you will come away from these pages a new person. Thirdly, if you have known Christ for some time now, it is my hope that you will find this material helpful in leading others to Christ and encouraging them on toward spiritual maturity.

Throughout the text I have tried to let the Bible speak for itself as much as possible. You may even want to look up some of the passages to which I draw your attention. I have also quoted from some of the finest Christian books available today, in order to introduce you to these

valuable works. Further, I have concluded each chapter with questions for review and reflection, Bible passages for further study, and recommendations of helpful resources to take you further in your learning. And with twelve chapters total, you could perhaps work your way through this study in a couple of weeks, giving attention to one chapter a day.

Just keep in mind that this is merely an introduction to the Christian life. Chapters are fairly short (10-12 pages), with many sub-headings, and the language used is relatively simple and devoid of most Christian jargon (refer to Appendix 1 for a glossary of terms Christians use). However, let me remind you at the outset that the ideal context for your growth as a follower of Jesus Christ is not the reading of a resource like this, but your involvement in a community of believers (more on that shortly!).

Nevertheless, it is my prayer that the following pages will help you gain a solid grasp of what the Christian life is all about and how the various aspects of it relate to each other. Then, as you grow in your relationship with Christ throughout the coming years, you will be expanding on what you have learned here and begun to put into practice. God bless you as you read!

Dave Detwiler

Pastor of Teaching & Ceremonies - BranchCreek Community Church

dave.detwiler@branchcreek.org

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