
I AM A NEW FOLLOWER OF JESUS, NOW WHAT?

As a new follower of Jesus, welcome to God's family. You are His child now, by faith in Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection. Your journey with Jesus has begun, an adventure of growing in your love for Him, following Him and reaching your world for Him. But first, let's take the time to walk through a foundational understanding of your new found faith in Jesus Christ and healthy next steps. So, grab a Bible with a table of contents and jump in. If you don't have a Bible, we recommend purchasing a NIV (New International Version) or an ESV (English Standard Version) online or at a local Christian Bookstore. These are two easy to read versions, and the NIV is the one most used from our pulpit.

Sin

We believe that all people are sinners and yet made in the image of God. This means we are extremely valued by God but we have not chosen to live according to the Truth of His standards (Romans 3:10; 23), and therefore are in need of a Savior. Why? Because we cannot save ourselves out of our own goodness, abilities or status.

Salvation

This is why we believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son—in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, teachings, His atoning death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and promise of His return to earth. And, only repentance and faith in Christ can restore us into fellowship with God, (John 14:6; 3:16-18).

Out of His great love for us, the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ into our world to save us and bring us back into the kind of relationship we were created to have with Him and through Him (John 3:16-18). How did he do this? By taking our place. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to gain victory over the grip that death (eternal separation from God) had over us.

Remember, we cannot save ourselves. The Lord said all that we need to do is *believe* (Acts 16:31). It's about placing our faith in the truth of who God is and His Word, the Bible (John 17:17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9-10). And, one of these greatest truths is forgiveness.

Forgiveness

When you chose to believe and invited Jesus to take charge of your life, *you* were immediately forgiven. You were freed from the power of sin (Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 1:7-8). In fact, God forgave all of your sin, no matter how terrible you might think yours is and He has chosen to not even remember your sin (Psalms 103:12; Micah 7:19). He also gave you His Spirit (The Holy Spirit), who has taken up residence in you.

But as you probably can tell, sin still lingers in all our lives. As followers of Jesus we still battle with our abilities to sin. However, the difference is we now have the Holy Spirit, who gives us the ability to keep a short leash on our sin, (1 John 1:9), and remain in healthy godly fellowship with our Lord being transformed into the people God has designed us to be.

The Church

We believe the Church is the world-wide, living spiritual body, of which Christ is the Head and all regenerated persons are members. And, NCCC is part of Christ's world-wide Church. And part of becoming more like Him, growing in your faith, is to belong to an extended family, in this case, here at NCCC. But what is the church? According to Jesus, the church is not an isolated fortified castle, but a *force* moving forward and taking the Truth, bathed in love, into our world (Matthew 16:18). He also says the church is a *fellowship* marked by love and care for one another (Matthew 18:17).

Our Purpose: TRANSFORMED PEOPLE, TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD

So then, how are we, as followers of Jesus, to function in His church? We are to live out our *purpose*. As transformed people by His grace and forgiveness, we are to transform others through the love and power of Christ working in us and through us. In other words, we are to be *salt* and *light* (Matthew 5:13-14). In short, salt refers to exhibiting Godly character, the best being love (Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:4-8).

This way of life preserves the Truth of God's Word (the Bible) in a world that pushes God away.

In fact, in our world that lives in darkness (separated from God) (John 11:10; Colossians 1:13), the need for being salt and light is vital. We are to put our pursuit of Godly character into practice by being the light of Jesus in our homes, communities, workplaces and the world. (John 3:19-21; Matthew 5:16).

Our Practices

Now the bar has been set and we need to continue in fellowship, growing in our faith and giving our lives away in serving the Lord. Here are our 7 practices according to what God has revealed to us in His Word (the Bible). Remember, like athletes, musicians or artists who practice to become better at their crafts, followers of Jesus practice to become more like Him.

- Worship (1 Peter 2:9)

Engage in worship that touches God's heart. It's much more than singing. Worship is a lifestyle involving prayer, reading the Bible and our attitude and actions. When we worship, we are declaring that God has worth, that He is worthy. In other words, we are praising God for who He is and thanking Him for what He has done for us. Make a habit of regularly and actively participating in a worship service.

- Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Enter into personal time in reading, studying and obeying the Bible. Why should we read and study the Word of God (the Bible)? The short answer is to know God and for Him to guide us into practical Christian living. For further thought, it's because the Bible has no error (Proverbs 3:5-6), it's complete, authoritative and sufficient for our lives as followers of Jesus (Revelation 22:18-19; Psalm 118:89; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Finally, it accomplishes what it promises because God is truth (Isaiah 55:11).

There are a number of good Bibles/Study Bibles available. As was mentioned above, we use the NIV in our services and recommend the English Standard Version Study Bible and The Moody Bible Commentary.

Then, to begin, we suggest reading the Gospel of John looking for what you can learn about the Lord, commands to obey, sin to avoid and promises to hold onto.

Also consider:

TRUST: Our one-on-one focus for men: www.northcoastcalvary.org/men

or women: www.northcoastcalvary.org/women

Biblical Training Center: <http://northcoastcalvary.org/ministries/connect-learn-grow/biblical-training-center/>

Small Groups: <http://northcoastcalvary.org/small-groups/>

- Prayer (Psalm 145:18; Jeremiah 33:3)
Commit to developing your relationship with God through prayer. Prayer is talking with God and being quiet enough to hear Him talking to you in your mind and heart. He wants you to communicate with Him, like a person-to-person phone call. Not sure how to pray, use the Lord's Prayer as a guide (Matthew 6:9-13), or the *ACTS* acrostic, which is *Adoration* (praising God); *Confession* (Acknowledging sin before the Lord, asking for forgiveness from others and even forgiving others who have wronged you); *Thanksgiving* (remembering what Christ has done and continues to do for you); *Supplication* (talking to the Lord about your needs).
- Fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)
Seek to develop friendships at church for support, accountability and spiritual growth. Fellowship means *joint participation* or *sharing something in common*. It is thus a kind of partnership. It means making an effort, beyond attending a service, to know others and be known. We encourage you to plug into a small group or life-stage ministry. (See our notes on Membership and Giving.)
- Ministry (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20)
Find a place to give your life away in serving the Lord. All followers of Jesus are called to minister God's love to others and His mercy to the lost, the sick and the poor.
To this end, consider what you love to do and inquire how you can get

involved in the area(s) you're passionate about, or simply find out a need in and through the church and jump in. (See our notes on Spiritual Gifts and Heart For God.) If you need help, please contact Pastor Jim Doyle at jim@northcoastcalvary.org or 760-579-4101.

- *Training* (Ephesians 4:11-13)
Attend educational classes and workshops for personal spiritual growth and emotional health and training for serving in volunteer ministry. Here are some great examples:

Biblical Training Center: <http://northcoastcalvary.org/ministries/connect-learn-grow/biblical-training-center/>

Skills Classes: <http://nc3marriageandfamily.com/>

Small Groups Training: <http://northcoastcalvary.org/small-groups-leaders-training/>

- *Outreach* (Colossians 3:12-17)
Seek out opportunities to go and serve in our local communities or internationally with any one of our local or global missions partners or organizations.
Website: <http://northcoastcalvary.org/missions/> or contact
Cindy Gray at cindy@northcoastcalvary.org. (See out note on Sharing.)

Baptism

Baptism is a public declaration of your faith in Jesus Christ. It's a symbol of your new life as a follower of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). Since salvation is by the grace of our Lord alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), it precedes baptism. Baptism, then, is an outward act of obedience to Jesus. At NCCC, we practice baptism by immersion (dipped under water) as it provides a complete picture of what Christ has done for you (Colossians 2:12). As you step into the water, it's symbolic of Christ's death on the cross. As you are taken under the water, it's symbolic of Christ's burial, and as you come up out of the water, risen to a new life in Christ, it's symbolic of His resurrection, (Romans 6:3-4).

Take the next step in your faith journey by being baptized. For more information and dates go to our website: <http://northcoastcalvary.org/im-new/baptism/> or contact Pastor Jim Doyle at jim@northcoastcalvary.org or 760-579-4101.

Membership

We consider Biblical membership to be more of an organic connectedness than a formal process or piece of paper. Therefore, the way we "belong" to one another is through relationships (connecting), serving each other, and being financially responsible by giving (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25)

To simplify it, we offer 4 expectations in developing a sense of belonging ("membership") to NCCC:

- Attend a service regularly (Sat 6PM; Sun 8:45am, 10:45am, 6pm)
- Plug into a small group or ministry life-stage group (<http://northcoastcalvary.org/small-groups/>)
- Practice giving your tithes and offerings (see note on Giving)
- Find a place to serve (see note on Spiritual Gifts)

If you need direction on where and how to connect, grow and serve please email Pastor Jim Doyle at jim@northcoastcalvary.org.

We encourage you to take some time to reflect on our church's values, which will help you understand who we are and what drives us:

Web page: <http://northcoastcalvary.org/our-church/>

Giving

As a follower of Jesus, it's important to develop the habit of giving to the work of the ministry, the church. But what is tithing? Here is a helpful response from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association:

The dictionary defines the word "tithe" as "a tenth part of something paid as a voluntary contribution or as a tax especially for the support of a religious establishment." It was a common practice in the Old Testament and required of members of the nation of Israel. Some Christians who tithe in this way do so simply because they respect the Old Testament principle and find it a helpful place to begin in their giving.

A New Testament teaching on giving which may be helpful to you is found in 1 Corinthians 16:2: "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income."

This passage brings out four points: we should give individually, regularly, methodically, and proportionately.

The matter of your giving is between you and God. He always takes into account our circumstances and He knows when they are beyond our power to direct and control. The important thing is that we see giving as a privilege and not a burden. It should not be out of a sense of duty, but rather out of love for the Lord and a desire to see His kingdom advanced.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 says: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Offerings are anything over and above your regular tithe. In other words, if it's giving to a church building project or to a friend's ministry outside of the local church, that's an offering. Remember, everything we have belongs to God anyway and we cannot out give Him.

To this end, we encourage you to pray, asking the Lord to give you peace about the amount you should start giving. Then be watchful on how the Lord will bless you, especially as you faithfully increase your giving over time.

Sharing

How do I share with others about Jesus?

It's important to begin by encouraging you to step out in your faith, not waiting until you think you know the Bible or have a better understanding of your faith. If you do, you will never be satisfied. You will always feel you should know more. Remember God is with you and in you to empower you.

The best way to start sharing your faith is through your actions, which we all know "speak louder than words," (John 13:35). People will see a difference in your attitude and actions and begin to inquire about it. Then you will have opportunities to share how Jesus has changed your life.

To help you in talking more about Jesus, here are a few key verses:

- John 3:16-17 & 5: 8-9 - The extent to which God went to share His love with us.
- Romans 3:23 - The state we are all in apart from a personal relationship with Jesus.
- Romans 6:23 - The consequences of our sin and, again, God's free gift to us because of Jesus.

You are an integral part of God's plan to bring others into His Kingdom. Pray for opportunities, build relationships with others or work through existing ones and always speak with love and grace.

Spiritual Gifts & Your Heart For God

Spiritual gift is a special ability (one or more), given by the Holy Spirit to every believer, to be used to minister to others and therefore build up the body of Christ. (Romans 12 3-8; Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

- Only Christians have spiritual gifts. (1 Cor.2:14)
- Every Christian has at least one gift. (1 Cor.7:7)
- No one receives all the gifts. (1 Cor.12:27-30)
- No single gift is given to everyone. (1 Cor.12:29-30)
- I cannot pick a spiritual gift (Eph.4:7), but I can and should pray for empowerment.
- The Spirit decides what gift(s) to enable me with. (1 Cor.12:11; Eph.5:18)
- I am to use the gift(s) I receive. (1 Tim.4:14)
- I am to use my gift(s) to glorify God and benefit others. (John 15:8; 1 Pet.4:10,11; 1 Cor.12:7)

At least three ways God wants you to use your gift(s) (This is the best way to discover your giftedness)

- Through an on-going ministry
- Through short-term projects
- Spontaneous opportunities (meeting a need)

What's the difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents?

- A talent is the result of genetics and/or training, while a spiritual gift is the result of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- A talent can be possessed by anyone, Christian or non-Christian, while spiritual gifts are only possessed by Christians.
- While both talents and spiritual gifts should be used for God's glory and to minister to others, the purpose of spiritual gifts are specifically for these tasks, while talents can be used entirely for non-spiritual purposes.

Finally, what do you love to do? This is an indication of your heart or passion for service. Spiritual gifts indicate the way you can best contribute to the fulfillment of your passion. For example, if you had the gift of administration, you would know what to do---administrate. But where would you use your gift of administration? That depends on your passion. For example, if your passion is children, you should pursue coordinating and organizing a ministry that is committed to reaching children.

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