

Follow Me

Your New Relationship with Jesus Christ

Jesus invites us all to follow him.

Jesus has issued an open invitation. To those who will follow him, he is willing to give the gift of new life. He offers this gift without regard to our personal history or present circumstances.

When Jesus first issued this invitation, the people who followed him became his disciples.

They followed him with the hope of learning an entirely new way of living. Some were drawn to Jesus by the excellence of his teachings, others because they saw him perform miracles, still others were merely curious. Yet to each of these, Jesus extended his invitation saying,

“Follow Me!”

This booklet focuses on the call of Jesus.

We hope it will be the means by which you hear his call, become one of his disciples, and enter into the new life he has planned for you.

Come and See

Jesus welcomes all truth-seekers. Before Jesus began his work, God paved the way through the teaching of a great prophet called John the Baptist. John called people to repent of their sins and prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah, God's anointed King. One day Jesus appeared in order to be baptized by John. Although Jesus had never sinned, he did this as an example for us to follow. The moment Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God came upon him and empowered him to do God's work. The next day, two of John's disciples began following Jesus and asked to become his disciples. Here is the story.

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." (John 1:35-39)

The names of these two disciples were Andrew and John. They were truth seekers who had left their homes and businesses to hear John the Baptist preach. They had repented of their sins and were baptized by John in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. When John pointed him out, they left him to follow Jesus. Jesus welcomed them as his first disciples.

Jesus welcomes truth-seekers. He once declared, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37). Jesus understands truth seekers. He knows what they are looking for, and he alone is able to satisfy them. He offers the truth of God for which our souls yearn.

Perhaps you are yearning for truth. If so, Jesus is happy to offer it. If you follow him, he will welcome you as his own disciple, and train you in the truth that will satisfy your soul.

The Surprise Invitation

Sometimes Jesus offers a sudden and unexpected invitation.

One day, as Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. (Mark 1:16-18)

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him. (Matthew 9:9)

Most of Jesus’ disciples were people who had long ago abandoned any idea of progressing in religious matters. The fishermen Jesus met as he walked along the sea had resigned themselves to a life of catching fish. The tax-collector Jesus called was working for the Roman government and was hated as a traitor by his own people. None of them would have expected God to call them onto a new path. Yet Jesus surprised them all with his sudden invitation. He immediately set their lives on a new course.

In calling people to become his disciples, Jesus turned the Jewish custom of religious education upside-down. In the Jewish religion, students who wished to excel in religious matters would seek out a renowned teacher and become his disciple. The most respected teachers chose only the best of students. Jesus surprised the religious establishment by seeking out his own disciples, and shocked them by calling the most unlikely people to follow him! When the religious leaders complained about this, Jesus replied, “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:32). His statement has a touch of irony to it. In reality, every one of us is a sinner in need of repentance. Only when we recognize this truth are we open to hear his call.

Perhaps you are such a person. Perhaps long ago you abandoned any hope of progressing in religious matters and resigned yourself to a life without God. But now something has happened to you, and you feel yourself being drawn to God. If so, be encouraged! Jesus is still busy surprising people with his sudden invitation. He still takes great delight in calling the most unlikely people to follow him. He is not so concerned with where they have been or what they have done, but only with their willingness to hear his call and walk a new path.

Friends Bring Friends

Whenever we discover something wonderful, we want to share it.

One day Jesus called a man named Philip, who was so overjoyed at the invitation he could not contain himself. He immediately ran to get one of his friends and brought him to Jesus. Here is the complete story:

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." (John 1:43-50)

What is fascinating in this story is that Jesus was aware of Nathanael even before Philip arrived. When Nathanael learned of this, he was astonished at Jesus' power, but Jesus dismissed it as a minor thing, and invited Nathanael to follow him.

Sometimes God uses our friends to bring us to Jesus. Our friends are acting out of love for us, knowing that our lives can become complete only if we will hear and respond to Jesus' invitation. While we might be skeptical, as Nathanael was, Jesus is watching and waiting for us to respond.

Rest for Your Soul

Jesus understands how hard life can be. He knows how the troubles of life can sometimes rob us of all joy. He knows how damaged we can become, sometimes by our own foolishness, other times by the cruelty of others. He also knows how religion can often get twisted into something fearful and burdensome. Jesus deeply wants to refresh us, and restore us to the joy of knowing the God of love and grace.

In the ancient world, when a farmer purchased a young ox to plow his field, he would yoke the young ox to an older, more experienced bull. The older bull would train the younger one how to plow the field in a steady and easy pace. Without this training, the young ox would exhaust itself before the day was over, and collapse before the field was finished. With this imagery in mind, Jesus invited his followers to yoke themselves with him.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus will not lay a heavy burden on you. Instead, he will train you how to pace yourself so that your spiritual progress will be substantial and meaningful, and you will find rest for your soul.

The Open Invitation!

Jesus has extended an open invitation to the entire world. Perhaps you've seen this sign before.

John 3:16

The people who carry it are hoping that someone will be curious and open the Bible to see what it says. This one verse encapsulates the good news about Jesus and his open invitation:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life.

Here is the open invitation stated simply: everyone who believes in Jesus can have eternal life. But it is important to understand that believing in Jesus is something much more than a mere intellectual belief. Believing in him is deeply personal and relational. It involves trust, reliance and confidence. When we believe in Jesus, we enter into a relationship with him as our Savior. We trust that his promises regarding our salvation are true. We rely upon him to lead us into new life. We have confidence that our future is in his good keeping. This is why Christianity is more than a religion; it is a faith. We are not merely to believe in a series of doctrines regarding Jesus; we are putting our personal faith in him.

Spiritual Awakening

Christianity is a spiritual awakening. When we respond to Jesus' call, our spirit becomes open to God and we begin to see the world in a new way. The change is so profound that it begins to have an effect on everything about us. Jesus compared this spiritual awakening to being born a second time.

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:1-8)

The statement, "No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit," needs a little explanation. The water refers to water of the womb, signifying our natural birth. The Spirit refers to the Spirit of God who enlightens our minds. Without this second birth of the Spirit, we can't see the world from God's perspective or understand what God is doing. When the Spirit opens our minds, we begin to see everything clearly.

God Behind the Scenes

Before we respond to God, God is working behind the scenes. When a play is being performed on stage, the audience can only see the final product of the performance. Behind the scenes, there is a tremendous amount of activity. Stage hands are running here and there, pulling ropes and monitoring lights. Music is played by an orchestra sunk in a pit in front of the stage. The director is close at hand, carefully watching each move of the actors.

The Bible tells us that behind the scenes of the physical world there is a spiritual world of great activity. Most of the time, what happens in this spiritual realm goes unseen and unnoticed. Yet when the Spirit of God opens our minds, we can begin to see God's activity behind the scenes, making it possible for us to hear Jesus' call. Jesus spoke of this activity when he said,

*"No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me."
(John 6:44)*

After we respond to Jesus' call, the Holy Spirit begins to show us how much God was at work drawing us into a relationship with Jesus. We begin to see that even before we responded to Jesus' call, God was at work arranging the circumstances of our lives so that we could receive his invitation. Knowing this, we begin to realize that our lives are not dependent on our own efforts, but on God's provision for us.

As we realize how much God has been working behind the scenes, we are able to rest assured that God will certainly finish the good work he started in us.

Time to Reflect

Take time to reflect upon your personal calling. Sometimes, God uses more than one way to issue his invitation. Look over the following list, and check the ones that apply to you. If God is using some other way, write it into the blank.

- I am a truth-seeker, and have found my way to Jesus.
- Jesus' invitation has come as a surprise to me.
- A friend has been introducing me to Jesus.
- I am growing weary of life, and am seeking rest for my soul.
- I have realized that God's invitation is open to anyone willing to respond.
- I feel that God is awakening my spirit.
- I sense God working behind the scenes of my life.
- Other _____

Sometimes it helps to write a brief explanation of what is happening to you. Use the spaces below and offer your own personal statement of how you sense Jesus is calling you.

Following the New Way

Following Jesus requires a radical reorientation to a new way of living. It begins with the recognition that human society is broken. The patterns of our thinking and the habits of our living are contrary to God's design. We cannot help but be affected by our broken culture because we were created to be social creatures. Jesus Christ has come to set us free from the damaging influences of human culture, and show us a new way. The people who first followed Jesus understood his intention, and before anyone ever used the term "Christian," the people who followed Jesus were called, "Followers of The Way." Following in The Way begins with a radical decision called "repentance." When Jesus began to teach, first message was,

"Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!"

The kingdom of God is the main theme of all Jesus' teaching. It is the new social structure centered in the ways of God. Its principal characteristic is righteousness, which is the ability to see the world as God sees it, and act the way God would act. This righteousness comes through the influence of the Holy Spirit who indwells the followers of Jesus. The kingdom of God is therefore a spiritual kingdom that renovates us from the inside out. It was established by Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. The word "Christ" means "The Messiah" or "God's Anointed King." Jesus Christ has opened the kingdom to people of all races and nationalities. The good news of the kingdom is currently spreading throughout the globe, just as Jesus said it would.

Repentance is our decision to abandon the ways of this world and pursue the kingdom of God. Repentance is first an admission that our ways are not God's ways. It is a deep sorrow for the sin we have allowed to take root in our lives. Repentance is then a turning from our sinful ways to embrace the new ways of the kingdom. Repentance is difficult at first, and often comes with great sorrow and with many tears. As we learn the practice of repentance, it then becomes a daily refinement. Whenever we repent of our sin, we are making the necessary adjustments that enable us to walk in the new ways of God

Forgiveness

Jesus deeply desires to forgive us. The gift of forgiveness liberates us from the shame and bondage of our past, and sets us free to walk the new path. God wants us to receive the gift of forgiveness, and has entrusted the power to forgive to his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus demonstrated his authority to forgive in a single dramatic event.

One day, while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting near by (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, "Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home." Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today." (Luke 5:17-26)

Jesus Christ beautifully demonstrated how he would use the authority God gave him. He would offer it freely to all those who came before him in humility and faith. The paralyzed man came to Jesus believing that Jesus could heal him. Jesus saw past his physical infirmity to his true spiritual need, and gave him the gift of forgiveness as an act of pure grace. After the man's spiritual condition was healed, Jesus then healed him of his physical condition.

Jesus is merciful to all those who come to him. He knows our need, and is ready to offer forgiveness freely. The gift is his alone to give, because he alone was found worthy by God to administer it. And also, he alone paid the price for our sin.

The Cross

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way,
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

The Resurrection

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

The Mission

Before Jesus ascended, he came to his disciples and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

YOUR new relationship with Jesus

Jesus Christ invites us into a new and permanent relationship. He names us members of his own family, and introduces us to other followers as our sisters and brothers. These ties can become so deep and meaningful that they surpass all other relationships. Jesus spoke of this one day when his mother and brothers came to visit.

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:31-35)

Our new association with Jesus changes everything about us, even the character of our most intimate relationships. Some of our relationships may become strained, as the people we love do not understand our newfound faith. They may dismiss it as silliness or think it to be merely a phase. Other relationships may grow deeper, as our faith in Christ draws us closer to other people of faith. God may also surprise us with new relationships, as people we have never met before can suddenly seem closer than members of our own family. All this is part of our reorientation to God's ways and our introduction to the worldwide family of God.

Jesus Leads Us Gently

Jesus has chosen to lead us in a kind and gentle manner. He has chosen not overpower or manipulate us, nor will he rig the circumstances of our lives to impose a predetermined outcome. Instead, Jesus invites us into a loving relationship, and directs the course of our lives by speaking to us in a still, calm voice.

In the ancient world, shepherds led their flock by calling out to them. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd and followed his call. Jesus used this as an analogy for his relationship with his followers and named himself, “The Good Shepherd.”

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10, selected verses)

Jesus has chosen to lead us simply by speaking. In order to follow him, we will need to train our ears to hear his voice. The world in which we live is filled with many conflicting voices, all of which demand our attention. Hearing the voice of Christ above all these may seem confusing and awkward at first, yet if we are persistent, in time we can train our ears to hear his voice above the noise.

Hearing His Voice

Jesus is ready to speak to us, if we are willing to listen. But sometimes it is hard to hear his voice amidst life's many distractions. This is especially true in the modern world where our days are flooded with activity that leaves us emotionally and physically exhausted, where the modern media fill our minds with confusing and conflicting ideas, and where we are required to think at a frantic pace. In the midst of all the noise and rush, it is hard to hear the gentle, calm voice of our Savior. Jesus spoke about these many distractions in the parable of the sower.

“A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.”

The disciples, who did not understand the meaning of the parable, asked Jesus to interpret it.

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance. (Luke 8:5-15)

The meaning of the parable is simple: if we are going to hear the word of God and allow it to take root in our lives, we are going to have to be intentional and push back the influences of our world.

Some Practical Ideas

Clean out your mind

Our minds were created for beautiful things. Much of modern culture fills our minds with ugly things. In order to better hear the voice of Christ, we should empty ourselves of the mental trash we accumulate.

Make Room

Sometimes, our minds are much too cluttered. We fill ourselves with a multitude of thoughts and ideas that bring little peace. We can better hear the voice of Christ when we reduce the number of voices to which we listen and things on which our minds focus.

Slow Down

Generally speaking, we are moving way too fast. We run from one activity to another at a frantic pace and collapse in exhaustion at the end of the day. It is hard to slow down, but doing so will better help us hear. We should put margins between activities, take ten-minute breaks, and even schedule time to be quiet and reflect.

Start Listening

Hearing the voice of Christ requires our intention. Simply clearing our minds will not be enough; we must begin to actively pay attention. God can speak to us in worship, through the lyrics of a song, in reading the Bible, in prayer, and even in a peaceful walk in the park. Active listening is at times a difficult task, but in time, we can become more proficient and hear God's voice through many different avenues.

Continuing To Learn

Jesus Christ has something new to offer us every day. He has much to teach, and if we are receptive, we will find ourselves growing daily. It is important for us to develop this discipline. Students do not learn well when they simply cram information the night before the exam. Spiritual learning takes time to permeate our being, so we have to sit, listen and ponder. In order to learn in this manner, we will need to make a critical choice as to what is truly important.

One day, Jesus was visiting the home of two sisters. Both of them were honored to have Jesus in their home, but each of them responded very differently:

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

Jesus wants us to sit at his feet and learn spiritual truth. He is ready to teach us important things, but like Martha, we are often worried about many inconsequential things. The busyness of life can keep us perpetually distracted from the valuable lessons Jesus has to offer. We can't listen in from the kitchen while cooking a meal and expect to learn much of anything well. We have to spend the time sitting at his feet. Mary made the right choice to put worldly things aside so that she could learn something important and new. So must we.

Jesus is the Source

Jesus is the source of spiritual life. He promises that if we stay in relationship with him, we will have everything we need to grow. This is because our relationship with him has a unique character. When we welcome Jesus into our lives, we are no longer separate from him; he lives within us and shares life with us. More than this, his life will flow into ours. To explain this beautiful and mysterious relationship, Jesus pointed to the way life-energy flows within a plant, from the root through the stalk to the branch. He also spoke of how God works as a gardener to cultivate our fruitfulness.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. (John 15:1-9)

With Jesus in our lives, we no longer need to live by our own limited resources, nor will we ever be alone again. His life will flow within us, bringing our lives to a natural, beautiful fruitfulness.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Jesus resides with us through the presence of his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the person of God who took up residence in Jesus. Whatever Jesus did was a perfect reflection of God's purpose and will. Whenever he spoke, he did so with the full authority of God. Unlike Jesus, we have allowed other things to fill our lives, things that are not part of God's will and purpose. Yet this does not mean that we cannot share in the Holy Spirit. As we open ourselves more and more to God, the Holy Spirit will continue to renovate and restore us until we become the people God intended; people whose character is a reflection of God's character. St. Paul listed these beautiful characteristics of God as the fruit of the Spirit:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

These are the blessings that God wants to bring to fullness in everyone. As we abide in Christ daily, the Holy Spirit will cause each of these fruits to grow. The more we abide in Christ, the more these fruits will grow. The Holy Spirit will continue to do his work until this spiritual fruit ripens, and we respond to the world with the fullness of God's character. This fruit will bring beauty to our lives and we, in turn, will bring beauty into the lives of others.

I am with you always

Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus began to speak plainly to his disciples about his upcoming death and resurrection. The disciples began to worry, so Jesus gave them a gentle reminder:

Remember, you did not choose me, but I chose you. (John 15:16)

This thought gave them peace. Because Jesus had chosen them, they could trust that everything would work out in the end. After his resurrection, as he was about to enter heaven, Jesus gave them this promise:

Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

These words give us hope and peace. We do not walk our journey alone. We belong to Jesus, who first calls us to follow him, and then watches over us all the way. Regardless of where the path leads us, our greatest joy is knowing that Jesus Christ is with us.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Share the Journey

Jesus doesn't want us to walk alone. He will provide us with new relationships that will enrich our lives and help us grow toward spiritual maturity. Open yourself to this idea, and begin looking for others with whom you can share your spiritual journey. The church is a community of followers of Jesus Christ, all of whom are growing spiritually. We meet together, worship together, learn together, and serve together. We were designed to be in community and it pleases God when we care for one another and look for ways to reach out to others.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper, which is also referred to as Holy Communion, symbolizes the death of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. The bread represents his body and the cup represents his blood shed for us on the cross. Whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are agreeing with God's plan to save us through Jesus Christ and identifying ourselves as those whom he purchased with his blood. This remembrance keeps us centered in Christ and grounded in his grace. The Lord's Supper is open to anyone who has faith in the authority of Jesus Christ to forgive sin and offer new life.

Baptism

Baptism is the sign of a new beginning. The church offers baptism both to children and adults as a symbol of new life in Jesus Christ. The water of baptism symbolizes the water of the womb in which our physical bodies took form. When the time for our birth came, the water broke and we were born into the world. This is an analogy for our spiritual awakening. Baptism symbolizes our entrance into a new, spiritual life. In whatever form baptism is administered, whether by sprinkling or immersion, it can be a powerful marking point in our journey.

Public Profession

Jesus is honored whenever we express our faith openly. Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus pressed his disciples to state publicly who they believed him to be. The disciples already believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but by making their profession public, they were solidifying their allegiance to him. The church offers numerous opportunities to make a profession of faith, whether as part of our regular worship services, or as part of a service of baptism or church membership. While professing our faith in a worship context is important, our profession also needs to be part of our witness to the world. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, we should be ready to offer our personal testimony of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Membership

One of the ways people join the community is through church membership. The church is a gathering of people committed to serving God as a faith community. As members of the church, we work together to strengthen its ministry and mission. Membership identifies us in a more permanent relationship with each other and provides us with a sense of ownership and responsibility. Membership in the church is open to anyone who makes profession of faith in Jesus Christ and is willing to share in the work of God's kingdom.