

# Introduction

## *Before You Begin*

You probably have more questions than you're letting on.

That's not a criticism. It's just an observation about what it's like to be a new Christian, as opposed to what it looks like from the outside, or what you feel pressure to perform. Most people who have recently become Christians are carrying a mix of genuine relief and genuine confusion, real conviction and real uncertainty, and somewhere underneath it all, a quiet fear that they're not doing this right.

This workbook was written for that person. The one who made a real decision and isn't sure what to do with it yet. The one who feels different and also feels like themselves, sometimes in the same hour. The one who has questions they're afraid to ask out loud because good Christians are supposed to have this figured out by now.

Here's what you need to know before you open Lesson 1: you don't have to have it figured out. Not yet. Probably not for a while. And the gap between where you are and where you think you should be isn't a sign that something went wrong. It's exactly where this workbook begins.

## *What This Workbook Is*

The question running through all thirteen lessons is the one you're probably already asking: *What just happened to me?*

Not in a theological sense, though theology is here, and it matters. But, in the honest, practical sense. What changed when I became a Christian? Who am I now? How does any of this actually work? Why do I still feel like myself? What am I supposed to do with the parts of my old life that didn't disappear?

Those are real questions. This workbook takes them seriously.

The thirteen lessons are divided into three sections. The first four lessons establish the ground — who you are in Christ and how you now relate to God. The middle four address the inner mechanics of change — how grace, the Spirit, and honest reckoning with sin actually produce a different kind of person over time. The final five turn outward — toward obedience, community, the world, and the long haul.

You don't have to work through these lessons in thirteen consecutive weeks, though that's how they're designed. Some groups move faster. Some slower. Some people work through this alone. All of those are fine. What matters is that you engage. Write in the margins, sit with the journaling prompts, and bring your honest questions into the discussion rather than the answers you think you're supposed to give.

## *How Each Lesson Works*

Every lesson is built around a narrative essay, a sustained piece of writing that teaches one concept in depth. As you read, you'll find five discussion questions woven into the essay itself, placed at the natural turning points of the argument. These aren't comprehension questions. They're invitations to stop and

think about what the lesson means for you specifically. Some are easier. The last one in each lesson is usually the hardest.

That's the manuscript. It's designed to stand on its own.

A separate student worksheet is available for download. It goes deeper into the lesson material and includes Key Concepts to fill in, a full set of tiered discussion questions for group use, journaling prompts with writing space, and the weekly practice assignment. If you're working through this in a class or small group, your teacher or group leader will likely have you working from the worksheet alongside the manuscript. If you're studying on your own, the worksheet is worth downloading, the journaling prompts especially are where the lesson tends to get personal.

A teaching video accompanies each lesson. You'll find a QR code at the beginning of each lesson if you want to watch before you read, and another at the end if you prefer to watch after. Either order works.

### ***One More Thing***

This workbook will ask you to be honest about where you are. That's the only thing it will ask of you that costs something.

You don't have to be further along than you are. You don't have to resolve your doubts before you show up. You don't have to perform a version of faith that's more settled or certain or put-together than what you have right now.

Just be honest. That's the starting place. Everything else gets built from there.

---

*"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." — Ephesians 4:15*

PART ONE

# A New Beginning

*Who you are and how you relate to God*

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. —  
2 Corinthians 5:17*

## LESSON 1

# What Just Happened?

*On the strange, disorienting, wonderful reality of conversion*

---

You have been brought from death to life – and that changes everything about who you are and how you live.

---



WATCH BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Scan to watch the Lesson 1 teaching video – a 10-minute companion to this lesson.

---

### CORE SCRIPTURES

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

— 2 Corinthians 5:17

*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

— Colossians 1:13-14

---

## The Wrong Frame

NOBODY WARNS YOU ABOUT THE CONFUSION THAT FOLLOWS CONVERSION.

People talk about the moment itself: the relief, the tears, the feeling of everything finally clicking into place. And that's real. But what happens afterward? The morning you wake up and realize you're supposed to be someone completely different now, and you're not sure how to do that? Nobody mentions that in the church bulletin.

That confusion isn't a sign that something went wrong. It's exactly where you'd expect to find someone who has just experienced something huge... someone who hasn't completely processed what happened yet. That's why this lesson exists. Before we discuss what to do next, we need to sit with what just happened.

Most of us, before we became Christians, and honestly sometimes afterwards, view spiritual growth like self-improvement. Identify your weaknesses. Work on them. Improve over time. Same house, better version.

That's understandable. It's how most of life works. But it's not accurate for what really happened to you.

Paul doesn't say "therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is improving." He says: new creation. The old has passed away. The new has come. Those are not the words of renovation. That's the language of *replacement*, something genuinely, categorically, objectively new.

The difference is more significant than it might seem at first. If conversion is about self-improvement, then your spiritual life is mainly about you: your effort, your discipline, your progress. The pressure never lets up. But if conversion is about being a new creation, then what God has done comes before everything you do. You don't work toward a new identity. You work from one.

**You don't work toward a new identity. You work from one.**

*DISCUSSION: Before this lesson, would you have described your spiritual life as a project you were managing... or something that was happening to you? What's the difference between those two things in practice?*

## The Rescue You Didn't Fully See

The other passage supporting this lesson, Colossians 1:13-14, uses different words, but it conveys the same message from a different perspective. Paul writes that God "delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son."

Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say God helped us find our way out. He doesn't say God showed us a better path and we took it. The word translated "delivered" conveys the idea of rescue from danger. It's like being pulled out of something you couldn't escape on your own. And "transferred" describes *relocation*. You were in one place, and God moved you to another.

Most of us knew we needed something when we became Christians. But very few of us realized at the time how serious our situation was. "The domain of darkness" isn't a metaphor for having a tough life or making poor choices. It's the territory where sin holds sway, where death is the final chapter, and where the self sits on a throne it was never meant to occupy.

You were in that place, and then you were taken out, not because you found the exit, but because someone came in and carried you out. That's not a warm feeling to cultivate. That's a fact about what happened.

## A NOTE ON THE GREEK

The word Paul uses for “delivered” (*rhyomai*) is the same word used for rescue from physical danger: pulling someone from a burning building, pulling a drowning man from water. It’s not gentle guidance. It’s urgent extraction. That’s the picture behind your salvation.

*DISCUSSION: Most of us knew we needed something when we became Christians — but Paul says the situation was more serious than most of us realized. Does it change anything for you to think of salvation less as a decision you made and more as a rescue you received?*

## Identity Before Behavior

Here’s the common mistake most new Christians make, and what most church environments unintentionally reinforce:

We often believe: *if I behave better first, then I will become who I’m meant to be.* As if the new identity is the reward for good behavior.

But that’s not how it works. The new creation isn’t something you earn after your obedience; it was given to you at the very start. You’re already a new creation. The actions of discipleship, such as prayer, reading the Bible, community, and obedience, don’t earn you this new identity. They’re how you live out the identity you already have.

There’s an analogy that helps some people. When a child is adopted, the family doesn’t say, “Behave well for six months, and then we’ll give you our last name.” The name comes first. The belonging is established. And then, slowly, imperfectly, over years, the child grows into what the family always said they were. The name didn’t wait for the behavior. The behavior grows out of knowing whose name you carry.

That’s precisely what’s happening to you. You’ve been given a name you didn’t earn, and the rest of your life is about learning to live as someone who bears it.

*DISCUSSION: The adoption analogy suggests the name comes before the behavior — belonging is established first, then growth follows. Where in your own life are you most tempted to reverse that order — to feel like you have to earn your standing before you can really belong?*

## The Gap is Normal

Here's the truth. The new creation is real. The rescue has happened. The transfer has been made. Yet, you still feel the pull of old patterns. Your thoughts are still the same as before. You still desire what you once wanted. Some habits you aimed to leave behind resurfaced this week.

Is that a sign the conversion didn't take?

No. *It's a sign you're human.*

There's a gap between who you are objectively in Christ and what your daily experience shows, and that gap is exactly where discipleship takes place. It's not a sign that God's work was unfinished. It's the space where you learn, day by day, to live out what is already true.

Think of it this way. A soldier who has been honorably discharged is no longer under military authority the moment those papers are signed. The status changes instantly. But the habits of thought, the reflexes, the way he wakes up in the morning, those take time to catch up to the new reality. He has to learn over months and years how to live as a civilian. The discharge was real. The adjustment is real too. They're not contradictions.

Your transformation is real. The change is genuine. Both are true. The confusion you're experiencing isn't a crisis; it's a sign to keep moving forward.

**DISCUSSION:** *What's one pattern or habit from your life before conversion that you expected to be gone by now? How does the discharged soldier illustration reframe what's happening there?*

## What Questions Are Allowed?

One more thing before we close this lesson.

New Christians often hesitate to ask certain questions out loud. They worry that doubt or confusion might signal weak faith, believing that good Christians should feel settled, confident, and at peace with everything. As a result, they keep their questions to themselves and mask their uncertainties with confidence they don't genuinely feel.

You're allowed to have questions. Real ones. Hard ones.

What does it really mean to be forgiven? Does God still love me even when I sin like I did last Tuesday? Am I truly different, or is this just a phase? What if I can't keep this up?

Those questions don't disqualify you. They're questions from someone who is genuinely taking this seriously, someone who isn't just going along but truly wants to understand what happened to them. That's not weak faith. That's faith that's alive enough to ask questions.

The point of this lesson, and of this whole series, isn't to give you all the answers before you have all the questions. It's to walk with you as you figure both out. You don't have to be more certain than you are. You don't have to perform a version of yourself that's further along than you actually are.

Just be honest about where you are. That's the only starting place that works. Something changed when you became a Christian. Something genuine, significant, and lasting, whether it feels that way now or not. You were rescued. You were relocated. You were given a new name.

The rest of your life is about learning what that means. That's what we're doing here. Lesson by lesson, week by week, one honest question at a time.

**DISCUSSION:** *What's the question about your faith you've been most afraid to say out loud? You don't have to answer it here — just name it.*

---

#### DON'T FORGET



Scan to watch the Lesson 1 teaching video – a 10-minute companion to this lesson.

---