



UNITED

NEW BELIEVERS BIBLE READING PLAN LIGHT FOR THE JOURNEY

The Christian life is a life-long expedition into God's Kingdom, and the Bible is a light that illuminates the pathway ahead. This Bible reading plan is a 7-day, wide-angle view of what it means to follow Jesus and what God has for you as you begin this new life in Christ. Each day, we'll discuss a big idea—a true statement from the Bible of what God has to say about you and about Himself. Along the way, you will find helpful tips for reading the Bible, practical applications for daily life, and how to use God's truth in your prayers. At the beginning of each day, we'll read a short section of Scripture, and at the end of each day, there's an opportunity to go deeper by reading 1 full chapter from the Bible. God has made the all riches of Heaven available to His children, and this plan is just the beginning of a lifelong journey into His immeasurable goodness.

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Day 1- Brand New

2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

Welcome to the new you! The very moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ and surrendered your life to Him, God sent His Spirit to live inside of you and transform everything about you. You have been given a fresh start, a clean slate, and brand new life. You might already be able to tell that something significant has changed, or maybe you're still waiting and asking yourself, "Is this it?" That's okay! God promises to do a deep work in you, and He never fails!

On the day I got married, I remember standing in a small room behind the sanctuary alone with my pastor just before the ceremony started. For the first time throughout the whole proceedings, I started to feel nervous. In an attempt to cut the silence, I asked him, "Do you have any last minute advice?"

"Yes," he nodded and paused contemplatively. "You have no idea what you're doing!" I was stunned! That was not the answer I was expecting, but he proceeded. "You are about to become a new person. A marriage covenant takes two people and joins their souls together in a way that is supernatural. You won't even begin to understand what that means until 5, 7, 10 years down the road. But don't worry: God will make it happen!" Nearly 10 years later, I can tell you with certainty that he was exactly right. I am not the same person that I once was.

Our journey with Jesus is just like that. The Bible teaches that we have been made one spirit with Jesus. How is that possible? Through Jesus, God came to earth as a human being. Jesus lived a perfect life without a single sin, and then He sacrificed Himself on the cross to bear the punishment for every sin humans will ever commit. After three days in a tomb, Jesus was raised from the dead, and now He extends everything He earned through His perfection to you, asking only for you to put your faith in Him. This is the true essence of the word "grace." Grace is the supernatural favor of God, earned by Jesus, and extended to you as a free gift to empower you to live a life that is powerful, blameless, and fully connected to God.

Practically, this means that you are free, right now, to live life completely differently than you did before. You don't have to "level up" or earn your way as a disciple. God has already given you everything you need to be fully alive, completely transformed, and beautifully free.

GO DEEPER: Read Colossians 3

As you read the Bible, it's a good idea to underline or highlight individual words and phrases that stand out to you as you read. Afterwards, take a moment to ponder them and think about what the implications are for you. (If you run across something that doesn't make sense to you, don't worry. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you, and remember that you're always free to ask a leader at Church to explain things you don't understand.) Today, as you read Colossians 3, notice the words and phrases that describe who you are and who you are not. The Apostle Paul writes here very clearly: the old you is dead, along with all the old ways! It's time to put on the new you! The new you is chosen, glorious, beloved, and completely hidden from sin in Christ Jesus.

Day 2 - Pure Light

1 John 1:5 NLT "This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all."

John was one of Jesus' closest friends, and in this verse, he sums up the message Jesus taught during His 3-year ministry on earth: God is good, and there is not one bad thing about Him. The great theologian A.W. Tozer wrote, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." In other words, how we perceive the character God impacts everything.

Jesus told His disciples on numerous occasions that one of His primary objectives was to reveal what God is really like. He said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." Some people view God as aloof, vindictive, harsh, or simply too busy to notice them. However, Jesus' life dispels all of those notions. He revealed a God who is kind, compassionate, attentive, forgiving, and joyful. God is completely willing to enter into human pain and powerful enough to overcome it. Jesus revealed that God is always our helper and never our problem.

If you rewind our story all the way back to the beginning, you'll find that God has always been good. He has never changed. Everything He created was good. He made a perfect world with no mistakes in it. Because He is so good, God values authentic relationship, and He gave mankind a free choice: the option to not choose Him. He does not force us to love Him, nor does He force us to be good. God has never been interested in mindless robots—what He wants is love, and there can be no love without choice.

Satan had this choice, and he chose to glorify himself through evil instead of remaining in God's goodness. When he tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Satan caused them to question God's goodness. Despite having only known good, Adam and Eve also chose to glorify themselves and gain the knowledge of evil. In doing so, they separated themselves from God, squandered their authority to rule the earth, and doomed mankind to death.

But God is so good that He refused to leave things this way. He set about immediately in a redemptive work in which Jesus would make right every sin man ever committed, and He would do it all without removing your ability to choose Him. This choice remains the primary commandment that He gives us today: "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself." Better yet, God has given us the Holy Spirit to empower us to choose His goodness every day. Because Jesus dealt with all the punishment on the cross, we no longer have to fear making mistakes. We have a continuous pathway to restoration through repentance and God's grace, and we can enjoy the journey of growing ever nearer to God, becoming more like Him every day.

GO DEEPER: *Read 1 John 2*

Before you read, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you about God's goodness and its implications for your life. As you read, take note of any verse that says what is available to you as a follower of Jesus. For example, in verse 1, John says, "I am writing you these things so that you may not sin." He's not trying to convince you not to sin: he's letting you know that you no longer have to! The secret to living fully inside God's goodness is found in these pages! Part of that secret is in verse 14: "You are strong, God's word remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one!" Hide this good news in your heart and drink in God's goodness today!

Day 3 - You Are Victorious

Colossians 2:13-15 NLT "You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross."

Jesus is completely victorious. Many people believe that the world is locked in a cosmic struggle between light and darkness and that these are two equally-balanced forces, but this is simply not true. When you switch on a light bulb, darkness in the room does not resist or struggle to hold its position over the light. No, when darkness comes into contact with light, the light wins every time. Satan is not God's equal, not even close, and when Jesus defeated him on the cross, the victory was decisive and final.

The atomic bomb brought a swift end to WWII. However, even though the war ended in 1945, throughout the South Pacific, there were pockets of resistance that refused to surrender for many years. The last soldier of the Axis powers held out for nearly thirty years until 1974, but make no mistake: the war was already over. It is the same in the Kingdom of God. Satan, although he still resists, has already suffered an utterly humiliating loss to Christ Jesus and will never regain what little power he had. Jesus is King forever and ever!

Those who follow Jesus inherit God's victory and authority over Satan and all his evil works. Any debt we accrued through sin has been completely eradicated, and we are now empowered to shine God's glorious light onto any situation where darkness remains. The only real battlefield remaining is in your mind where Satan's strategy is the same as it has always been: trying to convince you that God is not good and that you are powerless. Satan uses theft and deception to try to lure us away from experiencing God's conquest, but he is no match for a believer who knows his or her true position in Christ Jesus. Nothing can separate you from God's love and God's power. Nothing!

This means that your actions and words are powerful! When you speak, your words either embrace God's victory or give credence to Satan that he has no right to. When you pray with recognition that God has already won, your prayers are devastating weapons against spiritual darkness. Even when you don't know what to pray, God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit to intercede on our behalf in total agreement with God's triumph. In Christ, you have been set up to win, and He has a brilliant strategy for you to thrive in every area of life.

GO DEEPER: Read Romans 8

One of the most powerful tools in your spiritual tool belt is praying God's Word. God's Word is more powerful than any earthly weapon. When we learn to pray in agreement with the Word, our prayers become explosive munitions against Satan's strategies. Today as you read, look for passages that you can turn into prayer. For example, you can take verse 32 and pray, "God, you didn't even withhold your Son from me. How much more can I trust you to give me everything I need. Today, I need _____. I thank You that You've already paid for total victory in my situation, and I never need to worry about not having enough." When you pair the Word with what comes out of your mouth, miracles will begin to happen!

Day 4 - Your Helper

Acts 1:8 NLT "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere--in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Forty days after rising from the dead, Jesus ascended to Heaven, promising His disciples that He would prepare a place for them in Heaven and return when the time is right. He commissioned them to go throughout the entire world and make more disciples, but before leaving, they were to wait... And so they waited...

Jesus' followers gathered together in continuous prayer, waiting on a promise that the Spirit of God would come and rest on them and give them power. On the morning of the 10th day, as the Jewish feast of Pentecost began, the Holy Spirit descended on where they were with a sound like a hurricane and light like a blazing fire. Jesus' followers began to speak in tongues, and those visiting Jerusalem from other parts of the world all understood the disciples in their own native languages. It must have been a wild scene because those who observed it ridiculed the disciples as drunks! As they scoffed, Peter stood up and began to preach. This is the same Peter who less than 8 weeks earlier had denied even knowing Jesus, yet with the power of the Holy Spirit in him and upon him, Peter boldly told the crowd that they should repent of their sins, trust in Jesus, and be baptized. Around 5,000 responded to Peter's message and became disciples. This is how the Church was born!

The Holy Spirit is as active and powerful today as He was on that Pentecost morning. He still gives Jesus' disciples power, including you. This power enables you to live like Jesus lived and do as Jesus did. The Bible says that the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of you. In other words, you literally have dead-raising power living inside of you!

You see, although Jesus is fully God, when He came to earth, He completely emptied Himself of the ability to do anything on His own. Everything He did was as a Son, perfectly connected to Father God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Doing so, Jesus modeled what it looks like for a person to live with an unbroken connected to God, and that life is miraculous! His gift to you is to share in the life of sonship, fully connected to the Father. The Holy Spirit takes what Jesus earned and declares it to you as your inheritance.

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as your helper. The Holy Spirit is the person of God who makes you spiritually alive. He is the voice of God in your heart. He guides you to Jesus, enables you to walk in power and purity, and teaches you to live in Father God's fullness. Jesus is your blueprint, and the Holy Spirit helps transform you into His likeness. This Spirit-led life is a journey of continuous growth, and it's freely available to anyone who asks.

GO DEEPER: Read John 14

The Bible teaches that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. A very powerful tool available to you is reading the Bible out loud. Just like turning what you read into prayer, you can also turn what you read into declarations of God's truth over your life. Today as you read, look for passages that jump out at you, and read those out loud. Then, try to personalize it. For example, verse 12 says that the one who believes in Jesus will do the same things as Him and even greater things. Declare that aloud over your life: "I believe in Jesus, and I will do the same things He did and even greater things!" This might seem like an unbelievable promise, but remember, you're not doing things in your own strength any more. You are living in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Day 5 - Family

Ephesians 2:20-21 NLT "Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord."

One of God's first observations about human beings was that it isn't good for us to be alone. God, in Himself, is community. He is one, but He is also three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is completely unified but simultaneously, miraculously family. He stands alone but is also perfect relationship in and of Himself. Because humanity is created in His image, God designed us for relationship. Here on earth, it is impossible to experience the fullness of God as a lone wolf. You were created for connection, for family, and through it, we catch glimpses of the goodness of God.

God designed the Church to grow together into His likeness and nature. Imagine with me thousands of shards of colored glass: individually, each piece may be beautiful, but they can't tell a story or form a meaningful image. Crafted by a skillful artist, however, they become a stained glass window, designed to refract light and display beauty, passion, and narrative. Alone, you might be incomplete with rough edges, but God knows how to perfectly position you next to others as an integral part of His image.

The Church is not just a building where people meet. We are a family who need each other. When we observe each others God-given gifts and talents, we catch glimpses of what the fullness of Christ looks like. We demonstrate the nature of God to each other so that each can grow into the blueprint that Jesus set. We are a company of soldiers who go into battle together and also break bread together. We mourn with those who mourn, and we rejoice with those who rejoice. We contend for one other when we are weak, and together with God, we are strong.

One of Satan's primary strategies is to isolate people because isolation makes us vulnerable. Knowing that he is completely impotent against a unified Church, he does everything in his power to sow dissension, discord, anger and bitterness. Practically, this means that we must learn to value others as more important than ourselves. We must learn to keep our love switched on, even when everything in us wants to lash out or push people away. We must forgive the people who hurt us because doing so opens us to fully experience the love and forgiveness of God. It's not always easy, but it's always worth it!

The Bible says that God puts the lonely in families. Each of us is like a body part, and it's impossible to fully function if one part is missing or broken. You are not alone. You are an integral part of the body of Christ, God's family.

GO DEEPER: Read Ephesians 4

One of the wonderful things about being a part of God's family is that we get to share in each other's growth. As you read the Bible and grow in the knowledge of Jesus, the people around you get to benefit from what God is teaching you. This good news is meant to be shared! Pay attention to the things that help you experience God's Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. Sharing those things with others will not only strengthen their faith, but it will strengthen yours as well. Don't be afraid of not having all the answers. If someone asks a question that you don't have the answer to, give an honest, "I don't know. I'm still learning." Always feel free to ask for help from your church leaders. We're all learning together as God's beautiful family! This is a lifetime journey that will continue into eternity.

Day 6 - You Are Powerful

John 15: 7-8 NLT "But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father."

Jesus said that the mark of a true disciple is to produce much fruit. As Christians, when we think of fruit, often what comes to mind is the Fruit of the Spirit, which is Godly character molded by the Holy Spirit. However, in John 15:8, Jesus refers to a different kind of fruit: the fruit of answered prayers. As we stay connected to the Vine (who is Jesus), His Word shapes us and transforms us, and the fruit that grows from our branches is answered prayers! God takes great joy in answering the prayers of His children.

The Bible says that in Christ, we can experience the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. God's resurrection power is victorious over all of Satan's works: sin, poverty, sickness... even death. What's required of us is simple faith and obedience. Every time we act on what God's Word says, He is glorified and made known to the world. This is one reason why it's so important to study the Bible: because without it, it's impossible to discover all the promises God has made available to you.

Throughout every era of Church history, Christians have experienced God's limitless power. In the New Testament, we see Jesus' followers healing the sick, prophesying, casting out demons, and raising the dead. On one occasion, the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked and gathering wood for a fire. A viper sprang out of the wood pile and bit his hand, but Paul, unfazed, shook it off in the fire. The islanders waited for Paul to drop dead, but when no harm came to him, the entire island trusted Christ and were born again! For believers, miracles are a sign of God's faithfulness. For unbelievers, they are an invitation to salvation and eternal life.

God is delighted to be miraculous in your life. To be supernatural is His nature, and He enjoys being Himself around you! As you grow in Him, you will have countless opportunities to rely on His provision. It's important that where you aim your faith is not your experience (or lack thereof) but in God's Word. If at first you don't see the fruit of answered prayer, don't disconnect from the Vine! Jesus taught his disciples to keep asking, keep knocking, and keep seeking. God honors persistent, faithful prayer. The facts of your situation may be dire, but God's truth is bigger than any fact. If you put your faith in the Truth, the facts will change!

With the Holy Spirit's help, you are powerful. This life isn't just for a higher class of elite Christians, for special people, or leaders in the Church. King Jesus has sovereignly chosen to entrust you with the power and authority He earned through His perfection. You couldn't possibly earn it, but He already did. He promised that even with just a little bit of faith, anything will be possible for you. What challenge is bigger than Christ in you? Absolutely nothing.

GO DEEPER: Read Mark 16

Reading Scripture isn't about merely accumulating knowledge. Jesus described one who only hears the Word as a person who builds a house on a foundation of sand. On the other hand, one who hears *and acts* on the Word builds his house on a rock-solid foundation. In other words, don't just read the Bible, *do the Bible!* Each day as you read, look for opportunities to put into practice the things that you're taking in. Remember, Jesus lived as your example to follow and said that those who follow Him will do the things He did. Be bold as you step out in faith, trusting that as you faithfully obey, the Holy Spirit will back you up with power!

Day 7 - Think Differently

Romans 12:2 NLT "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

The moment you put your faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit transformed everything about who you truly are. He set you free from sin and made you alive. Spiritually speaking, God took your heart of stone and put in a living, beating heart. You are a brand new creation.

Mankind was created in the image of God, and like God, we are each three in one: body, soul, and spirit. Your body is the physical part of you. Your soul is made up of your mind, will, and emotions. Your spirit, the true and eternal part of you, is what was immediately and completely transformed. One day in Heaven, you will receive a brand new body. The last part of you, your soul, is the part that still requires refining and transformation. In the verse above, the Apostle Paul writes that in order to live as a completely new person, you must change the way you think. Most translations of the Bible word this, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." You see, God already took your spirit and changed everything about your true identity. However, your mind has catching up to do.

Much of the journey ahead in Christ is learning to think the way Jesus thinks. The old way of thinking is incompatible with the holy, wondrous life God has for you. The natural mind is selfish, careless, pessimistic, unforgiving, insecure, defensive, and fearful. However, the mind of Christ is generous, optimistic, intentional, forgiving, powerful, sacrificial, and fearless. Renewing your mind requires time, humility, and repentance.

You see, while you no longer have a sinful nature, you certainly still have old sin habits. These bad habits are rooted in the lies that dictate the old way of thinking. Repentance is more than just "I'm sorry" — it is to break agreement with these lies and begin thinking about life God's way. For example, here's a lie that takes root the natural mind: "Unless I look out for myself first, I will never have enough. After I've taken care of my own needs, I can share my leftovers with others." But that's not how God thinks at all! In God's world, generosity is a seed that precedes success and well-being. We are free to be generous at all times, knowing that God always has more than enough, and He is generous toward us.

The Holy Spirit, the Bible, and the Church are gifts to teach you to think differently, and you will need all of them along the way. When you mess up, Jesus will forgive you, dust you off, and help you stand tall again. He will never condemn you or ridicule you. As you learn to think His thoughts, nothing about your life will stay the same. You will move from strength to greater strength, from glory to greater glory. Never lose heart, even when things get tough. God has already begun a stunning transformation in your life, and He will faithfully finish what He started.

GO DEEPER: Read Romans 12

This week, you've been equipped with a few tools for understanding and applying the Bible. God's Word offers a lifetime of discovery. The goal of reading isn't to become an expert but to be completely transformed. Some passages in the Bible are easier to understand than others. So, as you continue your journey in the Word, keep these core values in mind: God is perfectly good. All sin is fatal without God's help. God is always your helper, never your problem. Jesus perfectly reveals the heart of God. He paid enough for everyone to experience God's fullness. And finally, Jesus is our perfect blueprint for how to live.