

B I B L E K E Y S

Growing in Christ

Lessons 6 to 10

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GROWING IN CHRIST

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Welcome to *Growing in Christ*

***Growing in Christ* is the second book in the BibleKeys series. More of God's love and power is waiting for you!**

In the first book, *The Gate to Life*, you learned the basics of the Christian life: how to know God, how to be filled with the Holy Spirit and how to live a Christian life. If you have not yet read *The Gate to Life*, we encourage you to do so, either by getting the book or by studying the lessons online at www.biblekeys.org.

What you learned in *The Gate to Life* is just the beginning! The next five lessons will take you much deeper into God's plan for you. The goal is to strengthen what you already have and to help you grow in Christ.

You will see how wonderful it is to know God more – and to help others as you grow yourself. So get ready for change! Receive the keys to a life of victory over sin and Satan!

The outline of this book is the same as Paul used when he wrote to the believers in Rome. He begins by teaching on sin and salvation in Romans chapters 1–3 and continues by explaining what faith is (Ch 4), what righteousness is (Ch 5), what it means to be declared righteous and how to walk in righteousness (Ch 6), and finally, how to live in the freedom of the Spirit (Ch 8). Throughout, Paul has a special theme: **our life in Christ**. This teaching has built up and blessed Christians for two thousand years. It will do the same for you!

Grow strong in the Spirit

All it takes is eating, drinking and exercising – but not physically. The Bible offers the only **food** for your spirit, and if you study diligently every day, your spirit will grow strong. The **drink** you need is the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). He is a river of living water (John 7:37–39), and when you spend time with

Growing in Christ • Introduction

him in prayer, you will build yourself up and his fruit will grow in your life. To **exercise** is to put what you have learned into practice and to do the works of Jesus. Tell others what he has done for you! They will be saved, and you will grow in your faith.

As you go through this course:

- Always find and mark the verses in your Bible.
- Have a notebook to write your observations, questions and answers.
- Learn some verses by heart, starting with those at the end of each lesson.
- Practice what you have learned. It is through hearing the Word and doing what it says that you will be blessed!

The sections and their symbols



Bible Teaching

This is the symbol for "Bible Teaching" – the section at the beginning of each lesson. It teaches the subject we are studying.



Bible Quest: Self-study

In this section there are things for you to do. These help you to know what the Bible says, so you can apply it to your life.



Action Time: Act on the Word!

Faith without action is dead. Therefore, we encourage you to always DO something after each lesson. When you act on what you have learned, God's blessings become real to you.



Memo Time: Memorise Bible verses

In each lesson, we have chosen one or two important Bible verses for you to memorise. The best way is to read them aloud until you know them by heart. Meditate on them regularly and let them become part of your life.



Praise Time

Here we encourage you to praise and worship God. Tell God how wonderful he is, or sing praises to his name!

Growing in Christ • Abbreviations

| Bible abbreviations | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Old Testament: | | <i>Isaiah</i> | <i>Isa</i> | <i>Acts</i> | <i>Acts</i> |
| <i>Genesis</i> | <i>Gen</i> | <i>Jeremiah</i> | <i>Jer</i> | <i>Romans</i> | <i>Rom</i> |
| <i>Exodus</i> | <i>Ex</i> | <i>Lamentations</i> | <i>Lam</i> | <i>1 Corinthians</i> | <i>1 Cor</i> |
| <i>Leviticus</i> | <i>Lev</i> | <i>Ezekiel</i> | <i>Ezek</i> | <i>2 Corinthians</i> | <i>2 Cor</i> |
| <i>Numbers</i> | <i>Num</i> | <i>Daniel</i> | <i>Dan</i> | <i>Galatians</i> | <i>Gal</i> |
| <i>Deuteronomy</i> | <i>Deut</i> | <i>Hosea</i> | <i>Hos</i> | <i>Ephesians</i> | <i>Eph</i> |
| <i>Joshua</i> | <i>Josh</i> | <i>Joel</i> | <i>Joel</i> | <i>Philippians</i> | <i>Phil</i> |
| <i>Judges</i> | <i>Judg</i> | <i>Amos</i> | <i>Amos</i> | <i>Colossians</i> | <i>Col</i> |
| <i>Ruth</i> | <i>Ruth</i> | <i>Obadiah</i> | <i>Obad</i> | <i>1 Thessalonians</i> | <i>1 Thess</i> |
| <i>1 Samuel</i> | <i>1 Sam</i> | <i>Jonah</i> | <i>Jon</i> | <i>2 Thessalonians</i> | <i>2 Thess</i> |
| <i>2 Samuel</i> | <i>2 Sam</i> | <i>Micah</i> | <i>Mic</i> | <i>1 Timothy</i> | <i>1 Tim</i> |
| <i>1 Kings</i> | <i>1 Kings</i> | <i>Nahum</i> | <i>Nah</i> | <i>2 Timothy</i> | <i>2 Tim</i> |
| <i>2 Kings</i> | <i>2 Kings</i> | <i>Habakkuk</i> | <i>Hab</i> | <i>Titus</i> | <i>Titus</i> |
| <i>1 Chronicles</i> | <i>1 Chron</i> | <i>Zephaniah</i> | <i>Zeph</i> | <i>Philemon</i> | <i>Phlm</i> |
| <i>2 Chronicles</i> | <i>2 Chron</i> | <i>Haggai</i> | <i>Hag</i> | <i>Hebrews</i> | <i>Heb</i> |
| <i>Ezra</i> | <i>Ezra</i> | <i>Zechariah</i> | <i>Zech</i> | <i>James</i> | <i>James</i> |
| <i>Nehemiah</i> | <i>Neh</i> | <i>Malachi</i> | <i>Mal</i> | <i>1 Peter</i> | <i>1 Pet</i> |
| <i>Esther</i> | <i>Esth</i> | | | <i>2 Peter</i> | <i>2 Pet</i> |
| <i>Job</i> | <i>Job</i> | New Testament: | | <i>1 John</i> | <i>1 John</i> |
| <i>Psalms</i> | <i>Ps</i> | <i>Matthew</i> | <i>Matt</i> | <i>2 John</i> | <i>2 John</i> |
| <i>Proverbs</i> | <i>Prov</i> | <i>Mark</i> | <i>Mark</i> | <i>3 John</i> | <i>3 John</i> |
| <i>Ecclesiastes</i> | <i>Eccl</i> | <i>Luke</i> | <i>Luke</i> | <i>Jude</i> | <i>Jude</i> |
| <i>Song of Songs</i> | <i>Songs</i> | <i>John</i> | <i>John</i> | <i>Revelation</i> | <i>Rev</i> |



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Growing in Faith

About this lesson:

Welcome to the first lesson in *Growing in Christ*. The key to growing in Christ is to grow in faith. In this lesson you will learn about:

- Faith: a new and different dimension
- How faith works
- How to grow in faith



1 Faith: a new and different dimension

In our natural world, we use our five senses and intellect, and we know that life in this world works according to certain laws. For example, if I put a stone in water, it sinks. If I drop a stone, it falls. These laws also work negatively: if I don't take care of my health, I might get sick, and so on.

But when you came to Christ, you entered a new dimension. You heard the promises: if you confess Jesus, you will be saved; if you receive the Holy Spirit, he will come and fill you! You acted on these promises by faith – by confessing and receiving. And then God did a miracle! You were born again and baptised in the Spirit, just by believing what God had promised and acting on it.

You entered into a life of faith, and this life is different from the old life. The Bible says that faith is **“the conviction of things not seen”**. It establishes a different kind of truth – one not built on what you see with your natural eyes but on what God says in the Bible. This doesn't mean we should deny what we see but rather believe that circumstances, whatever they may be, can change!

Heb 11:1

Growing in Christ

Here are some examples:

Normal thinking

Mark 9:23

1 Pet 2:24

Matt 6:33

This is absolutely impossible.

I am sick and will die.

I do not see any solution.

Faith thinking

All things are possible.

God promises to heal me.

God has a solution.

Faith sees more

There are things that are seen and things that are unseen. Can anyone see love? No, but it is very real, and love can make people do what seems almost impossible.

2 Cor 4:18

Even though you cannot see him, Jesus is very real! And the Holy Spirit is real, living in you and filling you with his power. The Bible tells us to “look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” Think about what this means! People who do not believe see only natural things, but **we who believe in Jesus can see supernatural things** with our eyes of faith.

Rev 21:4

When an unbeliever sees only the grave, we can see beyond the grave to eternal life in heaven. When chaos and despair surround us, we can see answers to prayer.





2 How faith works

Abraham: the father of faith

We learn in the Bible that Abraham is the father of faith. He is our great example of what it means to live by faith. You will find the story in Romans 4:16–21 and in Genesis chapters 17, 18 and 21. As you read, notice four things:

- God gave Abraham a **promise**.
- Abraham **acted in faith**.
- Abraham **saw** the promise fulfilled **by faith** and praised God for the answer before it even happened.
- God did an amazing **miracle** in response to Abraham's faith.

Abraham had a major problem. His wife Sarah could not have children. But God came to Abraham and promised him that he would not remain childless. Instead he would be a father of many nations. Years went by, and Sarah still could not conceive. As Abraham and Sarah grew older, it looked more and more impossible. One day, when Abraham was 99 and Sarah 90 years old, God spoke again and told them that within the year they would have a son.

Gen 17:4

Gen 18:10

Abraham trusted God

Abraham was faced with a choice: He could believe what he saw with his *natural* eyes – an elderly couple without any hope of children – or he could believe what he saw with his **eyes of faith** because of God's promise: "So shall your offspring be." Over the years, Abraham would have had countless opportunities to doubt and say that it wasn't working, that nothing was happening. Yet we are told he did not weaken in his faith when he considered their age and Sarah's barrenness. Instead Abraham chose to believe the promise, to trust God. He saw himself and Sarah with the baby! He praised God as if it had already happened, and he acted in faith. He was convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Rom 4:18

And the miracle happened! Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to Isaac. Isaac became the father of Jacob, who became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now you see what faith is: faith is to trust God and his promise, even when everything seems hopeless. When others think your situation is impossible, faith sees the miracle.

Peter walks on water

Jesus showed his disciples, especially Peter, what faith is. You can read an example of this in Matthew 14:22–33. The disciples were in a boat when suddenly a storm arose, and Jesus came to them, *walking on the water*. That's faith! Faith makes the impossible possible. But now Jesus wanted to teach Peter about faith – and Peter wanted to learn. Peter said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus said to him, "Come."

Peter stepped out in faith – and the impossible happened! It is important to understand that Peter was an ordinary person, just like you and me. But on hearing the word that Jesus spoke, he stepped out of the boat. In a sense, Peter "stepped" onto the **word** of Jesus. And as long as he focused on this word, "come", Peter was able to walk on the water, but as soon as he started looking at the waves and doubting the word, he began to sink.

Can you see how faith works?

- Peter heard the word that Jesus spoke to him.
- Peter acted on that word.
- As long as he fixed his eyes on the word and not on the circumstances, he could continue his miracle walk.

You, too, can see miraculous things happen by faith. Jesus is unlikely to tell you to walk on water. But he will lead you and you must learn to obey his voice. It's important to remember that God will never lead you in ways that don't line up with the Bible. He leads you to act on promises in the Bible; for example, he may lead you to lay your hands on someone who is sick.

Let's look at four practical steps that will help make faith work for you:

• Stand on a promise in the Bible

Abraham and Peter both received a word from God. They chose to believe and trust that word – one could say they "stood in faith" on that promise. Maybe you have



a need you want God to meet right now. Search the Bible for a promise concerning that need! If you need healing, find promises about healing, like 1 Peter 2:24: "By his wounds you have been healed." Receive the promise as your own and say, "By his wounds I have been healed." If you are praying for someone to be saved, find a promise about salvation, like 1 Timothy 2:4, which says that God "desires all people to be saved". This promise will be your shield whenever the circumstances around you tell you it's hopeless. And it will give you confidence as you pray to God.

Eph 6:16

• Act in faith and thank God for the answer

Abraham and Peter acted in faith. They both *did* something. After you have prayed, begin thanking God for the miracle, because it's already on the way. Take other steps of faith as the Lord leads you. Peter stepped out of the boat and walked; Abraham and Sarah continued to try for a child. Faith is to act as if you already see the answer, as if the answer is already here.

• Let the miracle take its time

Some miracles – like Peter's – occur at rocket speed. Other miracles – like Abraham's – come at a snail's pace, taking months or even years. From God's side, however, it's already done. When you pray according to his promises, God does not hesitate. Immediately your request is granted. Your answer is on the way, being "transported" through the heavenly places. It's just a matter of time. God did not promise *when*, only *that* "we have the requests that we have asked of him". So continue praising and thanking God until you see your miracle, just as Abraham did.

Dan 10:12,13

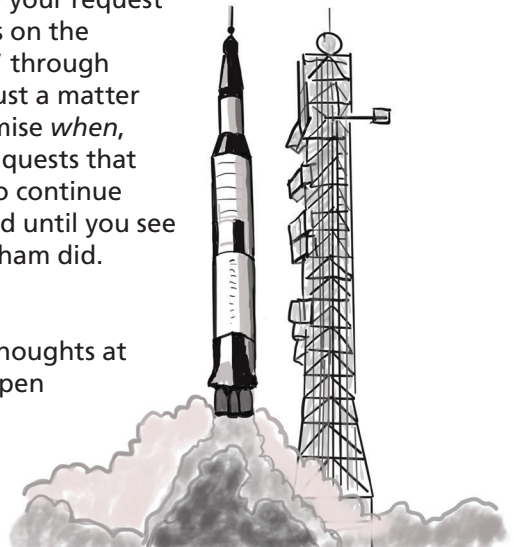
Eph 6:12

1 John 5:14,15

• Refuse to doubt

To doubt is to have two thoughts at the same time: it *will* happen and it *will not* happen. Abraham did not doubt God's promise but became strong by praising God. To

Mark 11:23



counteract doubt, begin praising God for the fulfilment of the promise. Say, "Thank you, God, that I am healed by the wounds of Jesus" or, "Thank you, Father, that you've heard my prayers for my family and friends who do not yet believe." Instead of filling your head with doubt, fill the room with praise. And suddenly, the answer will be right in front of you! Hallelujah!



Faith is not something mysterious for a select few. It is how we receive God's promises, and it is for *anyone*. You used faith when you received Jesus. You heard the promise, and you acted on it by confessing Jesus as your Saviour. You believed the promise, not your feelings. Faith works the same way for anything you ask.

1 John 5:14



Rom 12:3

3 How to grow in faith

Every believer has faith, and all of us can grow in faith over time. I have the same physical muscles as the strongest man on earth, but because he puts hours a day into developing his muscles, his muscles are stronger. What I cannot possibly lift, he lifts as though it were a feather. In the same way, exercising and growing your faith is a lifetime project, but you will soon begin to see miracles as your faith develops!

Faith comes from hearing

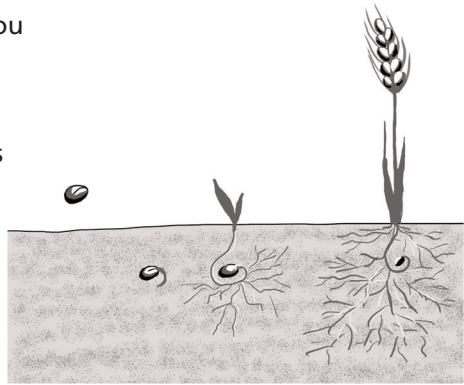
Rom 10:17

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Use every opportunity to hear the Word. Listen to preaching and Bible teaching. Read your Bible. Find good audio messages, videos and books with sound biblical teaching. The Word of God is living and active. When you apply it to your life, it begins to change you. Receive God's promises as your own, and let them fill your life until they've been fulfilled!

Heb 4:12

Faith grows as a seed

Faith means trust. As you open your life to God, this wonderful trust facilitates a flow of giving and receiving, as between two people who love each other. It is a channel through which you can receive the abundant blessings that God wants to give you.



This relationship of faith starts as a seed. The more you sow, the more you reap. If a farmer sows only a small field, he can expect only a small harvest. A small harvest is the result of small expectations and a lack of seed. A big harvest is the result of big expectations and much seed. *What* you sow is what you reap. If you fill your life with words about God's love, your expectations of this wonderful love will grow. If you do the same with his words of healing, your faith for healing will grow, both for your own healing and for the healing of others.

Create harvest fields for your seed! For example, you can create one for the salvation of people in your world by studying what God has to say about his love for the world. You can create another for miracle faith in impossible situations. Follow Jesus through the Bible and observe how he heals the sick, feeds the hungry and delivers the oppressed. Let your home and your day be filled with God's Word. It will produce a harvest – thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold. The growth happens automatically, in the same way as the earth produces a crop all by itself. You just need to sow the seed, using the Word of God.

Mark 4:20

Mark 4:28

Hindrances to growing in faith

Luke 10:19

Mark 4:4

Matt 13:25

Although Jesus has given you authority over the enemy, Satan will still attempt to hinder your growth, so it is important to be aware of his methods. He may try to steal the seed as soon as it has been sown, or he may sow weeds – thoughts of doubt – in your newly planted field. But you can follow the example of Abraham and Peter by standing firm on God's

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promise and not giving in to doubt. As you praise God for the answer, the victory will be yours.

Bible Quest

This section will help you to receive what you have just read. As you put these truths into practice, you will develop habits that will benefit your whole life.



Exercise 1: Write down a need that you have right now, for example healing or the salvation of a loved one. Then give three Bible verses you'll use to build faith that God will meet your need.

1.

2.

3.



Exercise 2: Read about Abraham and Peter. Let God speak to your situation through these examples. Write your notes below.

Gen 12:1,2

Gen 15:1–6

Gen 17:1–8

Rom 4:17–21

Matt 14:22–33



James 2:17

Action Time

Faith expresses itself in action

If you just read, speak or think, and never act, your faith won't work!

Now you can practice what you have learned by applying it to one of your own needs. Fill in below, and make this a declaration of faith.

• Step 1: My prayer request

For example, "I need a new job" or "I need healing for my back."

• Step 2: Find a promise from God

Choose a promise in the Bible that applies to your need. If your back needs healing, you could choose 1 Peter 2:24.

Write down how this promise applies to your situation:

"According to this promise, I am healed by the wounds of Jesus."

• Step 3: Pray

On this day, I prayed this prayer. I believe God's answer is already on the way!

Write today's date:

Day _____ Month _____ Year _____

- **Step 4: Thank God**

This is my thanksgiving to God for answering my prayer, for example: "Thank you, Lord, for healing my back."

- **Step 5: Act in faith**

Because faith without action is dead, your faith must be reflected in your actions. Write down what you will do next – God will lead you. For instance, you can try to do something you could not do before. If you had back pain, try bending over.

- **Step 6: Hold on to God's promise and refuse to doubt**

Perhaps you tried bending over and found you couldn't. Then it's important to keep declaring the promise: "My faith rests on the promise and not on how I feel. I am healed by the wounds of Jesus, and I refuse to doubt. Thank you, Lord, for healing me!"



Memo Time

Memorise and Speak God's Word

Each lesson concludes with Bible verses to memorise. Write them down and read them many times each day – on the bus, during a break or together with the family at mealtimes.

**“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.”**

Heb 11:1

**“I have faith in God that it will be
exactly as I have been told.”**

Acts 27:25

Righteous by Faith

About this lesson:

Righteousness is the most important gift that you receive from God by faith, and it is a key to living victoriously in Christ. When you understand that God has made you righteous, you will become a strong believer and your prayers will be effective (James 5:16).

In this lesson you will learn:

- That you are made righteous
- What righteousness is
- What righteousness means for your everyday life

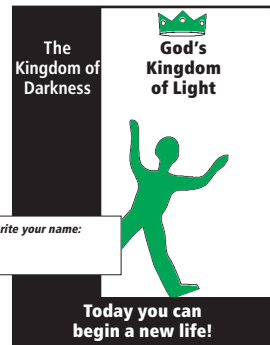


1 You are made righteous

Do you remember writing your name in the picture that illustrated moving from the kingdom of darkness to God's kingdom of light (*The Gate to Life*, lesson 2)? We are now going to look at what it means to *live* in this kingdom.

In the kingdom of darkness, people are in conflict with God because of their sin and unrighteousness. We know that all have sinned and have fallen short of God's glorious standard. But you, through faith in Jesus, have come out of that darkness! Paul writes in his letter to the Romans:

"Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."



Rom 3:23

Rom 5:1

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This is very clear: you have been justified – or made righteous – by faith. What a powerful truth! You **have moved into a place where you have peace with God**. This means that everything is alright between you and God.

You stand in God's grace

Paul continues:

Rom 5:2

"Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand."

Grace means that God accepts us, loves us and holds nothing against us. The original Greek text stresses that this is a permanent position. You are not going back and forth between condemnation and grace, darkness and light. No! You are permanently in his grace.



Gal 3:13

2 What righteousness is

The Bible is clear on this: either we are unrighteous and under the curse, or we are under God's grace. The key here is that **God is righteous**. In the first lesson of *The Gate to Life* you learned that God is good and great, and also holy and righteous. This means that everything he does is right and that he hates what is wrong and sinful. Righteousness can be described as the opposite of sin. Because mankind is sinful, we could never have come into the presence of a holy and righteous God as we were, or have had fellowship with him. In fact, our sin made us God's enemies. Our situation would have been utterly hopeless if not for God's great love.

Rom 5:10

God made you righteous

God, in his wonderful goodness, saw that we could not make things right on our own, so he sent his Son Jesus to change places with us. We deserved eternal punishment and separation from God because of our sin. But Jesus, the only one who ever lived a just and holy life on this earth – and therefore the only one who could do this – took our punishment for us:

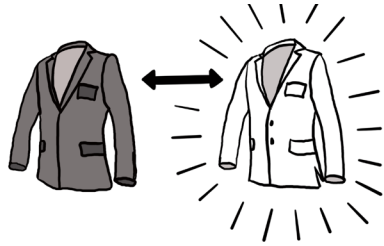
2 Cor 5:21

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus was righteous and never committed any unrighteous act. As he hung on the cross, he took the sin of all mankind

upon himself. This is what the Bible means when it says that Jesus was “made to be sin”. We, on the other hand, were totally unrighteous, yet we became the righteousness of God through him.

This is called **the glorious exchange**: Jesus changed his glorious position for our hopeless position. And we received his righteousness in exchange for our sin. This is the reason Paul says we are not only righteous *before* God, but that we *are* the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.



The Glorious Exchange

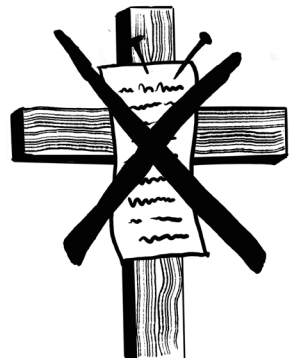
This was God’s own sovereign act and can only be explained by his immense love for us. It’s a gift we receive by faith!

You are declared righteous

When Paul talks about righteousness, he speaks in judicial terms. If someone stands accused in a court of law, the judge will declare that person either guilty or innocent. To be innocent is to be righteous.

God is the judge of heaven and earth. He has his own heavenly courtroom. Angels, demons and human beings are judged by him, and he decides who is righteous, according to his righteous law.

Satan is the accuser. The name Satan actually means “accuser”. He does all he can to send people to an eternal prison. You stand prosecuted, and the list of your unrighteous deeds is long. The accuser knows that list. He knows there is nothing you can say or do to justify yourself.



Jesus is your Advocate, as well as your Saviour! Because he is righteous and without sin, he alone was able to take the punishment of death in your place. He has already cancelled the record of charges against you with its legal demands. He has removed it, nailing it to the cross.

The penalty for your sins is paid in full.

Zech 3:1

Job 1:6

2 Pet 2:4, 9, 10

Col 2:14

Rev 20:12

1 John 2:1, 2

Col 2:14

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Just think: the one who would have had the right to judge you, personally took your punishment upon himself! When you repented and believed, you were declared righteous in God's heavenly court.

You are seen as righteous

Col 1:16

Now, let's use our eyes of faith to see beyond what we can see with our natural eyes. God's reality is both seen and unseen, and it is the unseen world that is eternal. Your position in the unseen world is therefore more important than your position in the seen world. In God's eyes, you are righteous. In the eyes of angels and even of Satan, you are righteous. Satan knows that God stands behind you – and that God, you and the holy angels stand against him.

You can boldly say, according to Romans 5:1:

"I am righteous by faith. I have peace with God. I stand in God's grace!"

When you do this, Satan trembles, because you have a position that he does not have.



3 What righteousness means in your everyday life

Understanding righteousness will hugely impact your life, both in the seen and unseen world. This is why the Bible talks so much about it. In lesson 9 you will learn more about walking in righteousness, which has to do with lifestyle. For now, we will look at how righteousness affects these aspects:

- The way you relate to God
- The way you relate to yourself
- The way you relate to your problems
- The way you relate to others

The way you relate to God

Rom 5:1,2

You have peace with God and stand permanently in his grace. This is the first important truth in your relationship with God. You never ever have to doubt that you are saved.

Rom 5:9,10

"Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

Yes, you absolutely *know* you are saved. Hallelujah!

The second truth rests on the first: you can come *boldly* before God!

Heb 4:16

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

You can pray to God at any time. You can speak to him freely and open your heart to him. He is your Father and closest friend. Confidently draw near to the throne of grace!

The way you relate to yourself

There's a story about a prince who for some reason did not grow up in a royal household but in a very poor home. He barely had enough money for food and clothes. One day the truth came out: he was a prince! His family was ready to receive him, put a crown on his head and give him anything he wanted. It took some time for the prince to *understand* his position, but in fact he had always been a prince!

John 8:32

Jesus said, ***"You will know [or understand] the truth, and the truth will set you free."*** Nothing will give you greater assurance and security in life than knowing that you are accepted by God. If you're feeling low about yourself, or if people – maybe even your own family – reject you, God still says: "I love you! I accept you!"

You can choose to believe what God says about you, or live by your feelings. Often Christians live under self-condemnation: "I'm worthless, I'm just a sinner, I can never please God." Self-condemnation can have you totally preoccupied with yourself. It is like being chained to yourself. But the good news is that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. You are righteous, not condemned. In lesson 9 you will learn what you must do when you sin, but this does not change the fact that you are *accepted*, not rejected by God. Proclaim this until it becomes part of your thinking. Say right now:

Rom 8:1

"God has made me righteous. I am righteous. Hallelujah!"

Growing in Christ

It may take time to grasp this, but it's true. Let this truth sink into your heart.

The way you relate to your problems

Rom 5:17

God is above every problem in this world. His Word tells us that having received the gift of righteousness, you now reign as a king in life through Jesus Christ.

Consider how Jesus reigned during his life on earth. He knew who he was and what God expected of him. He used his power to destroy the works of the devil and to demonstrate God's love: healing the sick, feeding the hungry, delivering the oppressed. If you know you are righteous through Christ and that God is on your side, this is exactly how you can respond to needs and problems. Speak to the powers that stand against you:

see 1 John 4:4

***"He who is in me is greater than he who is in the world."
"I am **not** under you! I am righteous and I reign in life through Jesus!"***

The way you relate to others

Luke 18:14

Your righteousness from God does not give you the right to feel superior to other people. No, Jesus makes this clear: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

If you are righteous, you have the same spirit as Jesus: the spirit of humility and love. This will affect how you relate to people around you. Jesus saw the potential in you; now you can see the potential in others. The confidence and self-esteem that come from knowing who you are in Christ Jesus enable you to be God-centred instead of self-centred.

1 John 3:1

John 15:12

When you are assured of God's love for you, you can genuinely love others.

Bible Quest

John 8:31,32

The truths you have learned in this lesson will change your life! Take time to go over the whole lesson again, including the Bible verses. If you remain in the Word, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. And then you can help set others free!



Exercise 1: Look up the following Bible verses on righteousness and apply them to yourself. For example, for Romans 5:1, "we have been justified by faith", you can write, "I have been justified by faith."

Rom 1:16,17. Where is God's righteousness revealed, and what does this mean for me?

Rom 3:21,22. How does my righteousness come about?

James 5:16. How does my righteousness affect my prayers?

Matt 13:43. What is my future in eternity?



Exercise 2: Read Romans 5. Write down what Jesus has done to make you righteous.



Action Time

Faith expresses itself in Action

Let's now apply this teaching to our everyday life!

Change the way you see yourself

Josh 1:8

God said to Joshua, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall *meditate* on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

To meditate is to let the Word of God become part of you on a deeper level. As you meditate, you will start to change how you view yourself.

Here are four steps to help you meditate:

Rom 5:1

1. See the Word as you read your Bible, for example "we have been justified by faith".

2. Speak the Word.

3. Hear the Word as you speak it aloud.

4. Ponder the holy, powerful words you have read, using your mind to understand them. The Holy Spirit will give you pictures and insights as you meditate. It could look something like this:

"I have been justified by faith... I have been made righteous through Jesus... Jesus was righteous... I am to be like him. Now, what would Jesus do in this situation...? I can picture him with his loving eyes, looking at the woman who sinned, forgiving her when everyone else condemned her... God is so good! He pours out his love upon me in that same way... I am righteous by grace," and so on.

As you meditate, the Holy Spirit will work in your thoughts and imagination. Through this process, you will begin to speak the truth about yourself and act towards others as Jesus acts towards you.

Find Bible verses that seem to "come alive" as you read them. They will be the ones that "speak" into your life at this particular time. Meditate on them. Start today!

Change the way you see your problems

When you see yourself as God sees you, you will know that you can come boldly to him, even with your problems.

Heb 4:16

You have been invited into God's throne room, where you will receive mercy and grace in your time of need. You can confidently draw near to him.

Take the most challenging problem you have right now and write about it here:

James 5:16

Pour out your heart to the Lord, asking him to help you with your problem. God has said that the prayer of a righteous person is *effective*. Start praising him for this. Believe God for your miracle, and you will see it!

Mark 11:23,24

The Word of God says that by faith you can move mountains and even cast them into the sea. From God's perspective in heaven, mountains are small – and by faith, you can share his perspective. Begin to **talk differently** about your problem. Speak directly to it and say:

"In the name of Jesus, be removed!"

The "mountain" (your problem) will begin to shift, and you will see a change in your situation and in the way you view other problems too.



Memo Time

Memorise and Speak God's Word

**"Since we have been justified by faith,
we have peace with God
through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Rom 5:1

**"For our sake he made him
to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become
the righteousness of God."**

2 Cor 5:21

In Christ – Your New Identity

About this lesson:

Praise God! We now move into the third great truth of *Growing in Christ*.

Jesus Christ is the centre of the Christian faith. The Bible says that once you have received him by faith, you are in him. You have a brand new identity and position in Jesus.

Today you will learn about:

- Your new identity
- You are a child of God
- You are a citizen of God's kingdom
- Your path to victory in Christ



1 Your new identity

When you received Jesus Christ as your Lord, you were saved – from sin, eternal death and the power of the devil. Hallelujah!

But you were not only saved from a whole lot of negative things. You were made righteous in Christ and entered into a new life. God's Word paints an amazing picture of who you now are in Christ. This picture is different from how you may have seen yourself, or how your family, friends or even enemies have seen you. To see yourself as God sees you is a vital key to a life of victory and joy. Consider this amazing Bible verse:

2 Cor 5:17

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

You are a new creation in Christ

Naturally speaking you might describe yourself as a man or woman with this or that job or position in society, but that's not what this is about. When it comes to your position in Christ Jesus, it doesn't matter who you are in this world. Having confessed Jesus as your Lord, God did a miracle and you are a new creation right now.

Gen 1:2,3

There is power in the Word of God. We see this at the very beginning of the Bible, in the story of the creation of the world. The earth was empty and dark. When **God spoke** – “Let there be light!” – there was light. Now, whatever life you had before you received Christ, spiritually you were empty and dark. But God created an entirely new life in you when he spoke these powerful words: “You are a new creation in Christ!” You were born of his Spirit, and his light and life are now in your spirit.

God is a holy God, and you can never approach him on account of something you have done or accomplished. But now that you have received Christ, you are in Christ, and your identity is in him. When God looks at you, he does not see the “old you” with all your sins and mistakes. He sees you as a new creation, in his Son. In God's eyes, you are just like Jesus!



Just as a branch is part of a tree, you are part of Christ. John 15:5-8

1 John 4:15

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

The old has passed away

Because you are in Christ, the old rules, the old limitations, the old lifestyle, the old sinful thought patterns have passed away. Count those old things as gone! You are no longer the same person. Inside of you, God has created a powerful, new inner being. You have started living a new, wonderful life in him!

Eph 3:16

2 Cor 4:16

In Christ – Your New Identity

The new has come

You may still feel or look the same as you did before you were saved, but the Bible says **you are not the same!** Your mind, your feelings and your traditions may tell you that nothing has changed, but the truth is that you are a new creation, your old life has passed away, and all things concerning you have become new. You may *feel* that no one loves you, but the Bible declares over and over that God loves you!



The Bible tells the truth about you

The truth of who you are in Christ is in the Bible, and that never changes. The devil will try to feed you his lies. He is called the deceiver of the whole world and the father of lies. Especially when you are a new believer, he will try to tell you that nothing has happened, nothing has changed. Therefore, two things are very important:

Rev 12:9
John 8:44

John 8:31,32
Heb 10:22,23

1. **Know the truth, because the truth will set you free.**
2. **Hold on to your confession of who you are.**



Gal 3:26
Gal 4:7

Rom 8:15

Gal 4:6

2 You are a child of God

You belong to God's family

Through faith in Christ, you became a child of God. You are not a servant in the family; you are a son, with all the rights of a son. You can know, deep down in your heart, that God has accepted you: he is your Father and you are his child. This is your closest and deepest relationship. Just like Jesus, we can call God "Abba", which means "Daddy". Begin to thank him for that right now!

You are an heir

People often think it would be great to be the heir of a very rich or powerful person, but what about being an heir of God? That is what you are. The angels and the whole spiritual world know that you are close to God and that he has made

Gal 4:7
Rom 8:17

Growing in Christ

you an heir to all his blessings. Don't pray like a beggar. You can pray as a son or daughter who has a right to all God's promises. Begin to think of yourself as God's own beloved child! Say out loud:

"I am a child of God in Christ Jesus!"



3 You are a citizen of God's kingdom

Every country is different, with its own laws and customs. A citizen has the right to live in his or her country and to enjoy its privileges. When you were saved, you changed your spiritual citizenship. God transferred you from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God, where Jesus is King. This is not a visible kingdom – it is within you. It began when Jesus went around preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and it is eternal. It will stand when all other kingdoms fall.

Col 1:13

Luke 17:21

Matt 9:35

Liberated from the kingdom of darkness



Eph 2:2

You already know from *The Gate to Life*, lesson 2, that you have stepped out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. In the kingdom of darkness, you were in bondage to Satan. But King Jesus liberated you, and now it's time to *live* your new life! Satan will try to pull you back into old sinful ways and habits, but you've been delivered and released from

Satan's kingdom. There's no reason to go back there.

Jesus was your passport into God's kingdom. You are now a co-citizen together with all of God's people. Take a look at this verse:

Eph 2:19

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

In Christ – Your New Identity

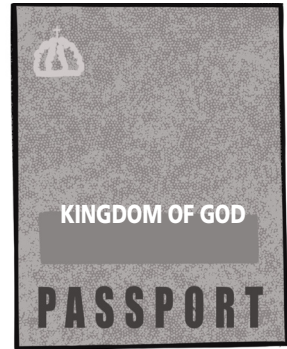
What does this mean for you?

- Satan's kingdom has no right to rule over you. When he comes to attack you, you can say:

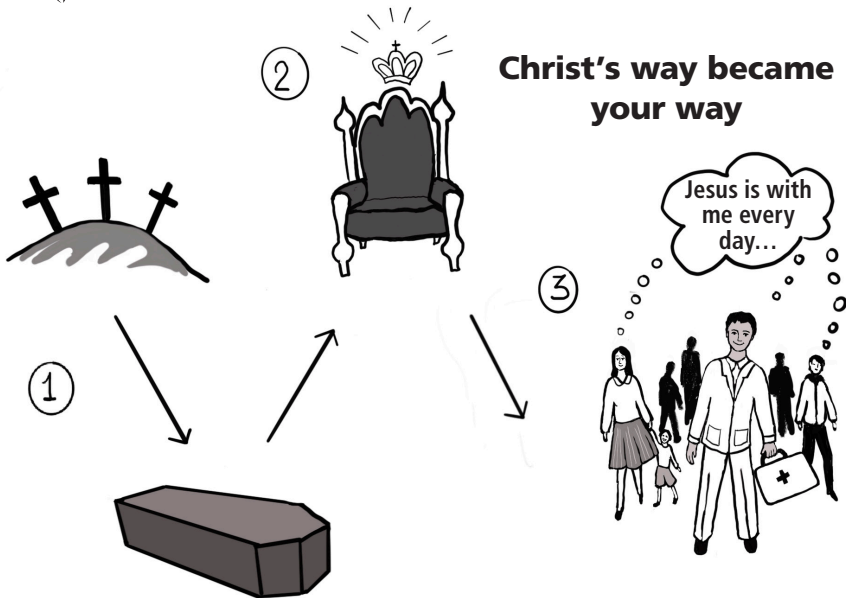
"I am no longer in your kingdom. Jesus fights for me, and he is far mightier than you!"

- Because you belong to the mightier one, you can effectively stop Satan from destroying your life and the lives of others. Say out loud:

"I am a citizen of the Kingdom of God!"



4 Your path to victory in Christ



You were in Christ when he took all the necessary steps to save you. His way to victory is your way to victory:

Growing in Christ

1. Crucified and buried with Christ

Gal 2:20

Rom 6:4-7

Like Paul, you are crucified with Christ and buried with Christ. Your old, sinful self was crucified, because you were in Christ when he died. Sin loses its power because of this. A dead person cannot sin. The old things, the sins and the selfishness have passed away. Instead, Christ now lives in you.

2. Resurrected and enthroned in the heavenly places with Christ

Eph 1:20,21

Eph 2:6

The resurrection of Christ was **the greatest victory ever!** Satan, sin, death, eternal punishment – all these were conquered. In Christ you have been resurrected to victory, and you are seated with him in the heavenly places, in a place of authority that is far above the power of the devil.

3. Living life in Christ

1 John 4:15

1 John 4:4

You are part of this unseen world even as you live your life in the seen world. You are in this world – working, interacting with and blessing other people – and you are also seated with Christ in the heavenly places. You are in Christ and he is in you. Wherever you go, Christ goes too. His love and power are always available to you. To live in Christ is to live in victory!

“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

In Christ – Your New Identity

Bible Quest



Exercise 1: Study the key verses in Ephesians 2:1–10. Write down all the amazing things they say about you: “God made me alive together with Christ, God raised me up with him...”



Exercise 2: You are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Study 2 Corinthians 5:17 and compare this verse to Genesis 1:26–28. What does “a new creation” mean?



Exercise 3: You are not a slave or servant. Instead, you have all the rights of a son, and you are a fellow heir with Christ. Study Galatians 3:26–29, Galatians 4:7, Romans 8:17 and James 2:5. What do these Bible verses say about you?

Growing in Christ



Action Time

Faith expresses itself in Action

Let's now apply this teaching to our everyday life!

See yourself as God sees you!

- ✓ **Get some paper** the size of your Bible or BibleKeys.
- ✓ **Write** at the top: **MY IDENTITY IN CHRIST JESUS.**
- ✓ **Find Bible verses** on who you are in Christ Jesus.
- ✓ Write them down, starting with the words **"I am"**, for example: "I am a new creation in Christ Jesus."
- ✓ **Look** at yourself in the mirror and **speak** these confessions out loud.
- ✓ **Use** these confessions every morning, and **see your life change!**



Memo Time

Memorise and Speak God's Word

**"[God] raised us up with him
and seated us with him
in the heavenly places
in Christ Jesus."**

Eph 2:6

The Fruit of the Spirit

About this lesson:

Sometimes people misunderstand what it means to be in God's grace. Paul had to confront believers who thought they could continue living in their sins (Rom 6:1). You are not the same person that you were before you received Christ. You are a new creation! And as you continue your walk with the Lord, your lifestyle will change, as the Holy Spirit produces his fruit of righteousness in your life.

The topics covered in this lesson are:

- Can a Christian sin?
- The Spirit and the flesh
- The fruit of the Spirit
- Walking in righteousness



1 Can a Christian sin?

It is true that a believer is a new creation, a fellow heir with Christ, a citizen of the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. But sometimes Christians start taking all these gifts for granted and think it won't really matter if they still sin. In response to this, Paul asked a very direct question:

Rom 6:2

"How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

Eph 2:6

In lesson 8 you learned that you are seated with Christ in heaven – and you are! However, at the same time, you are here on earth in your body, and you will find that your thoughts, feelings, will and imagination are all inclined towards sin. Paul even talks of the "body of sin". This does not mean that the body or material things are bad. They are all created by God and are "very good". But when sin came

Rom 6:6

Gen 1:31

Growing in Christ

Rom 7:23; 8:2

Rom 6:7,8

Rom 6:4

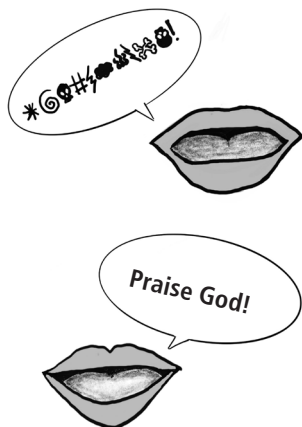
into the world, the law of sin started working *in* the body. The only way to be free from the law of sin is to die and then be raised again to a new life. This is what happened when you were saved and baptised. The next step is to train the body through the Word and with the help of the Holy Spirit, so that you can experience victory over sin in your daily life. It takes time to teach the body to live according to what God wants for us – but it is possible!

Even though you are now in the kingdom of light, old sinful habits can try to keep their hold on you. It is very important to break such habits as soon as possible. God will help you if you ask him. You can also ask a Christian friend to pray for you.

Taming the body

A body that has not been trained, or “tamed”, will cause problems in your life – just like a wild animal running loose through your house! Let’s look at three examples: the tongue, eyes and ears. And then let’s find out how to conquer sin in our lives.

James 3:2-10



• The tongue

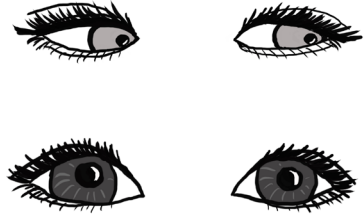
The tongue is a good and useful part of our body, but it also has the capacity to run wild. James writes that mankind can tame all kinds of animals, but no one can tame the tongue. With it we can bless God and other people, but we can also curse, gossip, spread rumours and speak destructive words about ourselves and others. And these seemingly small fires quickly grow into big, devastating ones!

The Fruit of the Spirit

• The eyes

Our eyes enable us to see in our day-to-day lives, and to enjoy beauty. Yet sin often begins with the eyes. The Bible talks about “the desires of the eyes”. We might start looking at something we should not be looking at, for

example online, on television or in a magazine. It is important to be aware of this trap. Jesus said that even *looking* lustfully at a person of the opposite sex – other than your spouse, of course – is to commit sin in your heart. Satan uses this kind of temptation to destroy many Christians, and if we allow our eyes to look at anything and everything, we will easily be led astray.



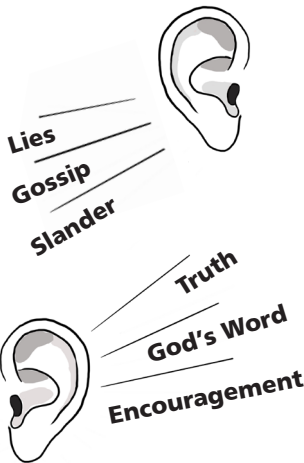
1 John 2:16

Matt 5:28

Rev 3:22

Rom 10:17

James 1:22-25



• The ears

Our ears are for listening to others and to God. Faith comes from hearing, and we can choose to hear God's Word and do what it says, leading to blessing. Or we can listen to the lies of the evil one, leading to deception.

These are just three examples, but the same holds true for other parts of the body. We can lend a helping hand, or we can make a fist of that same hand and punch someone! We have a choice to do good or evil.

Choose to start training your whole body to serve the Lord and the people around you.

Victory over sin

Paul says that through Christ's death, sin has lost its power in your life. You used to have no way of overcoming sin. But now you have been baptised in Christ, and your old life is buried

Rom 6:6

Growing in Christ

with him. If your tongue, eyes or ears try to lead you astray, you can tell your body:

“I am dead to sin and I refuse to obey you! I live for God now!”

Rom 6:12-18

You need to make the choice. If you continue to turn your body towards things that caused you to sin in the past, your body will enjoy it – the pull towards sin is strong! But the result will be that sin will continue to reign in your body. If, on the other hand, you begin to turn your body towards good things, you will be set free from sin and become a slave of righteousness instead – and that is infinitely better. As you give every part of yourself to God as an instrument of righteousness, sin will cease to be your master.

James is right in that no *human being* can tame the tongue – but in God’s strength, you can! Jesus died to break the power of sin in your life. And the Holy Spirit gives you both the **desire** and the **ability** to do what is pleasing to God.

Phil 2:13

Forgiveness

Even though you have committed to follow Jesus and leave your old life behind, there will still be times when you will sin. When this happens, don’t hide or try to cover it up. Instead, go straight to God:

1 John 1:8

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

God loves you and is ready to forgive you. He knows exactly where you’re coming from, and he will help you as you turn every part of yourself towards what is right and good.

The unforgivable sin

New Christians sometimes hear about “the unforgivable sin” and start worrying that they might have committed it. If that is your concern, you can be quite sure this does not apply to you. Your concern itself is evidence of a soft and sensitive heart. When you desire to love and please God – as you do! – you never need to worry that you have done something God cannot forgive.



2 The Spirit and the flesh

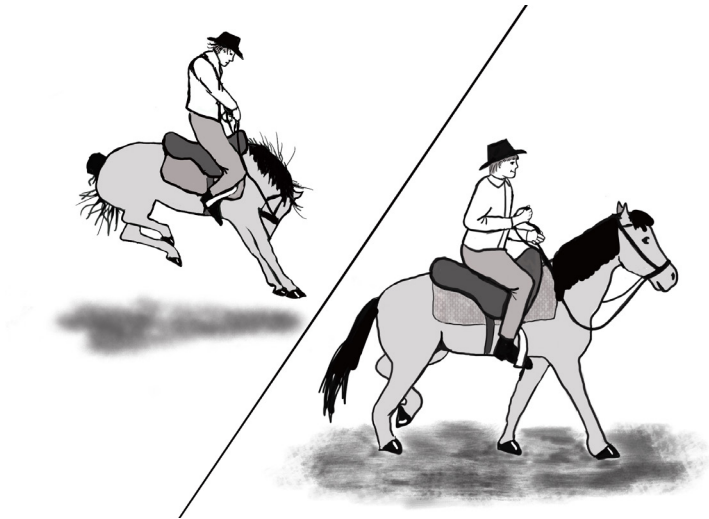
You may already have sensed the struggle within you, where part of you wants to do what is right and another part wants the complete opposite. This is the battle of Spirit versus Flesh – and it is a real fight!

Gal 5:17

“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

Rom 7:18

Here “flesh” means the fallen human nature, which still wants to do what is wrong. Have you ever seen a horse before and after it has been tamed? Your flesh is like that untamed horse. It jumps, wrestles and tries to break loose, and the horse trainer has his hands full just trying to bring it under control. But once the bridle is in place, the persistence and patience of the trainer pays off, and the horse becomes calm, cooperative and beautiful. James uses this picture of the horse when describing the tongue, but it is true for every part of the body. So the flesh is not the body itself, but the *force* that causes the untamed body to run wild.



The flesh is strong, but we have the power of the Spirit! Let's look at what the flesh produces – the results of the flesh – and what the results of the Spirit are, which you can read about in Galatians 5:19–23:

Growing in Christ

| Results of the flesh (Gal 5:19–21) | Results of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23) |
|---|--|
| Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies | Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control |

Here we see three sins of sexual impurity, two that concern idols and witchcraft, *eight* involving our relationships with other people, and finally two relating to drinking, drugs and wild partying. This list is a warning to us, but the Bible also gives us a way to overcome our flesh:

Gal 5:16

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”



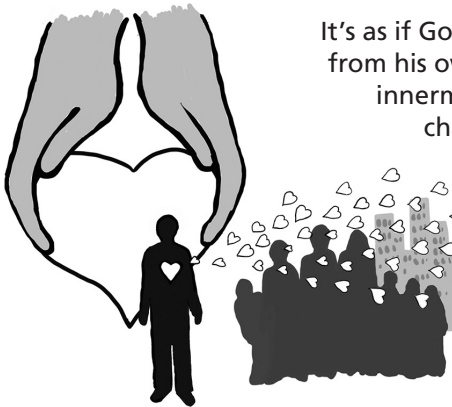
Rom 5:5

3 The fruit of the Spirit

You can walk by the Spirit and never ever have to do what your flesh wants. How does this work? The Bible says, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” When you received the Holy Spirit, you received a fountain of love into your own spirit. Jesus promised that this would happen:

John 7:37,38

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”



It’s as if God has installed a pipe from his own heart into your innermost being, ready to channel all these heavenly resources into you – and through you to other people. Imagine a water tower. There is a certain pressure there because of the tower’s great height, and as soon as you

The Fruit of the Spirit

turn on the tap, water starts gushing out. The same is true of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Let's consider how these gifts can work in practice:

Luke 6:35

Love: When someone is angry or unfriendly towards you, you can choose to forgive them and begin to love and bless them instead.

Ps 136:1

Joy: When sadness tries to overpower you, you can turn to Jesus, lift your hands and begin to praise him "for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever". Soon you will be filled with joy!

Phil 4:7

Peace: In the midst of life's turmoils, you can be surrounded by God's peace. Simply begin to thank him for his presence and peace, and you will find that his peace, which surpasses all understanding, will flood your whole being.

Heb 6:12

Patience: Patience and faith go hand in hand. Hebrews says that we inherit the promises through faith and patience. When you know that God has promised something in his Word, you can trust him to fulfil it, and praise him until you see the answer. Say: "I choose to trust God, his Word, and the way he decides to answer my prayer."

Eph 4:32

Kindness, goodness, gentleness: These three words say almost the same thing, which shows how important your attitude to other people is. Kind, good and gentle are words that describe God, and they also describe your new nature. If your flesh tells you to be angry with someone, choose kindness instead. As you do this, for example by speaking kind words, God's love will start to flow through you to that person.

John 14:10

Faithfulness: Our example, Jesus, had the attitude of a servant. He was always faithful to the Father and spoke only what the Father said. When you choose not to exalt yourself, your gifts or ambitions, but rather to exalt Jesus and serve him faithfully in the smaller things, he will put you in charge of bigger things.

Matt 25:21

Self-control: Earlier, we talked about the tongue, eyes and ears, and how they can get us in trouble if we don't learn to tame them. Our temper, anger and selfishness can

Growing in Christ

Rom 6:13

cause similar problems. This fruit of the Spirit helps you to control yourself, so that you can present every part of your body as an instrument of righteousness.

You can change

Gal 5:24

How can this fruit grow? First, it is important to know that you are in Christ, and Christ is in you! Your flesh has been crucified with Christ. You have been filled with the Spirit, and your spirit is full of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is an expert at taming the body, and he will bring about the change in you. Your family might suddenly remark, "Wow, you've changed!" Why? Because God is at work in you, "both to will and to work for his good pleasure".

Phil 2:13

How does this happen in practice? It happens first of all through daily fellowship with God, through seeking him in prayer and reading the Word of God. The more time you spend in God's presence, the faster the fruit of the Holy Spirit will grow in your life. Secondly, when you face temptation and you have a choice between good and evil, choose what is good – choose life! As you do this, the power of the Holy Spirit will come to your aid:

Gal 5:16

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not [ever!] gratify the desires of the flesh."



2 Pet 2:21

Rom 3:24; 5:1

Eph 2:8

Rom 12:9-18

Eph 5:1-21

4 Walking in righteousness

The Bible talks about a "way of righteousness". This is not about how to become righteous – you have already been made righteous by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus. Instead, the way of righteousness refers to the **lifestyle** of a person who has already been made righteous. This is a lifestyle that imitates Jesus. We walk in the light and in love, just as Jesus did.

There is a choice that has to be made: the old lifestyle with its selfishness, greed and lust, or the new lifestyle that reflects Jesus. Paul describes it as



The Fruit of the Spirit

Col 3:1-14

taking off the old self and putting on – or “clothing” yourself in – the new self.

Study the chart below for some concrete differences between sin and righteousness, flesh and Spirit:

| The way of the flesh | The way of righteousness |
|--|--|
| Sexual sin: sex outside of marriage between a man and woman | God’s view of sex: a mutual blessing within the love life of a married man and woman |
| Idolatry: to give God’s place to other things in life | True worship: to only worship the Father through Jesus Christ in the Spirit |
| Enmity: conflict, strife, division, speaking evil of others | Love and forgiveness: to love and forgive others |
| Selfishness, envy and greed: to live for oneself and be selfish with one’s possessions and time | Generosity and humility: to open one’s heart, home, bank account and time to those who need you |
| Stealing: to steal small or big things | Work: to work for a living and bless others |
| Anger: to be angry, bitter, unforgiving | Peace: to be peaceful, kind, patient, good, gentle |
| Lying: to deceive or not tell the truth | Truth: to speak the truth in love |

This might seem like a lot to take in, but the good news is that the Holy Spirit is always there to guide and help you.

Everything that God tells you to do, he gives you the power to do! He first shows you what to do and then enables you to do it.

A life of joy, love and peace

As you walk in the way of righteousness, your life will become like a lush garden, full of good fruit. Doesn’t Galatians 5:22,23 just sound like a lovely piece of music? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Who wouldn’t want to be part of such a family or fellowship? This is how the first believers lived – and people kept joining them. You can experience this too, as an individual and in community with other believers, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:42-47

Bible Quest



Exercise 1: Write down as many things as you can to describe ***the way of righteousness***, using Romans 12:9–18, Ephesians 5:1–21, Colossians 3:1–17 and Galatians 5:18–23.



Exercise 2: Write down as many things as you can to describe ***the way of the flesh***, using the same Bible references as in the exercise above.



Action Time

Faith expresses itself in Action

Let's now apply this teaching to our everyday life!

The Bible acts as a mirror in which you see yourself as you really are. As you have worked your way through this topic, you may already have sensed that there are areas in your life where you need to make a change. Start right now by taking the first steps towards making that change. Do as follows:

- ✓ Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you need to do. Some things can be done straight away; other things may take time. God will help you!
- ✓ Ask God's forgiveness for things you know are wrong in your life. He has promised to cleanse you completely. Begin to thank him for this.
- ✓ In the text box below, write what you have decided to change and how you will do it.

1 John 1:9

| To change: | To do: |
|------------|--------|
| | |

Phil 2:13

Remember: God himself works in you to accomplish his will.



Memo Time

Memorise and Speak God's Word

**"For it is God who works in you,
both to will and to work
for his good pleasure."**

Phil 2:13

**"We know that our old self
was crucified with him in order
that the body of sin
might be brought to nothing,
so that we would no longer
be enslaved to sin."**

Rom 6:6

Freedom in the Spirit

About this lesson:

To grow in Christ is to leave the old things behind, and step into the new. You are no longer a slave to sin – you can walk in righteousness! But there's even more to life in the Spirit. God's Spirit now works in you, changing you from within and opening up a whole new world of freedom and victory that you can live in every day.

These are the topics of this lesson:

- The outpouring of the Spirit
- No condemnation
- The law of the Spirit
- Your glorious freedom



Ezek 36:26,27

Jer 31:31-34

Joel 2:28,29

John 16:7

2 Cor 3:16-18

1 The outpouring of the Holy Spirit

The Old Testament prophets talked about it, Jesus foretold it, and Paul rejoiced in it. For 700 years, God had been promising that there would be an outpouring of his Spirit. The time had come at last! The Spirit of God would enter the hearts of God's sons and daughters, and they would know his constant presence. Preparation was required: people had to be made righteous before God could indwell them. Now all was ready. Jesus had died for the sins of the world, risen from the dead and was now seated on his throne with his Father in heaven. Do you remember what Jesus said would happen next?

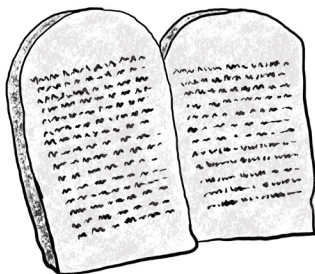
Growing in Christ

John 16:7

"I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

Jesus was talking about the era of the Holy Spirit that was about to start.

The old and the new



Exod 24

Jer 31:33

Ezek 36:27

The prophets had eagerly anticipated this new era, when God would make a new covenant with his people and relate to them in a whole new way. God had previously written his law on tablets of stone. Now it would be written on his people's hearts. His own Spirit would cause them

to walk according to his will. In the past, it had been impossible to please God without following hundreds of very specific rules. But with God's Spirit in our hearts, our longing to do what is right would come from within.



The GLORY of the new covenant

2 Cor 3:7-18

Paul writes about this glorious new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3. Listen to what he says:

- The Holy Spirit gives us a wonderful **freedom** to do God's will – it is not by force (v. 17).
- We can come **close** to God. The veil that used to be between us and God has been taken away (v. 16). This means that there are no walls between us and God. The way has opened up for us to personally know the living God!
- We are being **changed** from glory to glory (v. 18). Under the old covenant, people had to work day and night to fulfil all the commandments. In the new covenant, the Holy Spirit is continually at work within us, enabling and empowering us to do God's will. As we stay close to God, he touches us and changes us from within.



Rom 7:24,25

2 No condemnation

We know that the struggle against sin and the flesh is very real. Sometimes we might cry out as Paul did: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Paul immediately gives the answer: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

It is good and right to take sin seriously, but it is also crucial to remember that you cannot please God in your own strength. Trying to do so will only lead to a feeling of inadequacy and self-condemnation. God does not see us as we are; if he did, there would be no hope for us. Instead, he sees that you are in his Son, Jesus. **You are in Christ – and in Christ there is no condemnation.**

Rom 8:1

How can we recognise condemnation? Condemnation is vague, making you feel like a bad, hopeless Christian, often without further specifics of what you've done wrong. The devil uses this strategy to try to bind you. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, will tell you exactly what the sin is, and when and where it was committed. He urges you to ask God for forgiveness, and he points to Jesus, who has already paid the price:

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 3:21

Immediately, you are **forgiven, cleansed and free!** And the Bible says, "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God."

Rom 6:1-11

Praise God, you have already died with Christ! A dead person cannot be condemned, so when you died with Christ, condemnation ended. Proclaim this to yourself and to Satan:

"I am saved and in Christ Jesus. There is therefore now no condemnation for me!"



3 The law of the Spirit

This message of no condemnation has two parts:

1. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
2. The Spirit gives us hope that we can change. We can do the will of God thanks to the law of the Spirit that now works in us.

Growing in Christ

Rom 8:2

“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”

Rom 8:3

When Jesus became a sacrifice for our sin, the law of sin and death could no longer condemn us, and the law of the Spirit was activated. When you live by this new law, you know that **God’s power accomplishes what you cannot do in your own strength.** This works from the inside out. It begins in

Rom 8:11



your heart and then affects what you say and do. The Spirit is resurrection life in you, and a life in the Spirit is a life of resurrection power. Trying to live the Christian life under the old law – “I’ll try to please God the best I can” – is like walking through life with a sandbag on each shoulder. You can *never* please God through the deeds of your own flesh, however good those deeds may seem.

Fly or walk?

Airplanes are governed by the laws of aerodynamics. We may not understand exactly how, but once planes leave the ground, they fly! The law of the Spirit is like this in some ways. It makes things that seem hopelessly heavy and impossible, like those listed below, possible:

- Repenting and leaving your old life behind
- Changing your habits
- Loving instead of hating
- Seeing resurrection power in hopeless situations
- Doing God’s will (we’ll talk more about this later)

Let’s get practical! Imagine you are in a situation where it is difficult to forgive and love another person. What can you do?

1. You can choose to remain unforgiving and unloving. But your heart will become hard, and you will not be able to grow in God.
2. You can choose to forgive and love. Say out loud: “I forgive [person’s name]. Holy Spirit please fill me with love for him/her.” When you do this, you will see a

Rom 5:5

change, because the Holy Spirit's spring of love is within you. Paul says: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Phil 2:13

When you choose to let the law of the Spirit work in and through you, the **power** of the Holy Spirit will lift you into a whole new, amazing life! Instead of acting like a sinful human being, you can act like our righteous God. This is a life in which God is continually changing you. He is at work in your will and in your actions. As he does his work in you, you will soar with him above your own weaknesses and over mountains of impossibility. Hallelujah!



4. Your glorious freedom in the Holy Spirit

Rom 8:21,22

There is much more to living in the Holy Spirit than being able to make the right choice. The children of God have a glorious freedom, one which all creation longs for. We have been redeemed through Christ. We are no longer slaves, but sons and heirs. You are a son in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit!

Rom 8:14

Rom 8:15-17

This gives us an entirely different relationship to God. As children, we can call God "Abba, Father", which is the same as "Daddy". We are no longer afraid of him or far away from him. And the Holy Spirit affirms in our spirit that we are God's children. And if we are children, then we are also heirs, even *co-heirs* with Christ.

Acts 16:25

Is being in Christ always easy? No, it is not. Romans 8:17 continues: "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him". But the freedom of the Holy Spirit is greater than any suffering. Even in prison, Paul rejoiced. His body was in chains, but he was free on the inside!

What does freedom in the Holy Spirit mean for you?

- You are **free from condemnation**.
- You are **led by the Holy Spirit**.
- You are able to come to the Father and have a **close Father-child relationship** with him, the Maker of the Universe!
- You have a **solution** when everything is hopeless. The Holy Spirit in you is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.

2 Cor 3:18

This freedom in the Holy Spirit will only increase as you continue spending time in his presence. Then you will be transformed from glory to glory to glory!

Growing in Christ

Congratulations: You know how to grow in Christ!

These five lessons have given you some basic keys to living and growing in Christ. You have learned that:

- **Faith** is a new dimension that makes the impossible possible.
- You have been made **righteous by faith**.
- You are **in Christ**, which opens up a new, fantastic life in him.
- Through the Holy Spirit, righteousness and the **fruit of the Spirit** will continue to grow in your life.
- This new life is a life of **freedom in the Spirit**.

The Bible has so much to say about living in Christ, and you can continue to grow in these truths throughout your life. You hold the keys, so now use them! Work your way through these lessons several times. Make sure that you look up and study each Bible verse. And do not just read, but act upon the Word.

God is for you!

These verses in Romans 8:31–39 paint a picture of your victorious life in Christ:

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

No further words are needed – this is *your* life from now on!

Bible Quest



Exercise 1: Read Romans 8:2–17. What do these verses say about the Holy Spirit?



Exercise 2: Describe what it is like to be God's child. Use Romans 8:14–17; Galatians 4:4–7. Who are you? What rights and duties do you have? Start your answers with the word "I", for example "I am..."



Praise Time

In these five lessons, you have discovered a long list of wonderful truths about your life in Christ. Things you could not have dreamed of before you became a believer are now yours by grace. God deserves the praise for this. In fact, praising God is our first and foremost task as his children!

Follow these steps:

- ✓ **Go to Psalm 136.** It begins, “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever,” and then goes on to list God’s wondrous acts in the Old Testament. Use this as an example, and get ready to praise God!
- ✓ **Take a blank sheet of paper and write GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD at the top.** Then write your own thanksgiving psalm, for example:

*Give thanks to the Lord,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
to him who sent his Son Jesus
to die for my sins;
to Jesus with whom my sinful body
has been crucified;
to him who raised me
and seated me in the heavenlies
with Jesus, so that I could
reign with him;
to him who...*

Continue, listing everything you have learned in these five lessons concerning what God has done for you.

- ✓ **Use your personal psalm to praise the Lord with all your heart!**



Memo Time

Memorise and Speak God's Word

"If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Rom 8:31

**"There is therefore now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus."**

Rom 8:1

Notes

Use these pages to record what happens when you act on God's Word and put into practice what you have learned.

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For further information, please contact:

B I B L E K E Y S

Growing in Christ

Growing in Christ is the second book in the BibleKeys series of lessons.

What you learned in *The Gate to Life* is just the beginning! These next five lessons will take you deeper into God's wonderful plan for your life.

