

So, What's Next? - Part I

Now I'm a Christian, what happens next?

A Bible Study for new Christians and for those wanting much greater insight into foundational Christian understanding.

Study notes for the radio and podcast series "So What's Next" – Part I?

A series of six messages - Download these six messages for free from: www.livingsuccess.org

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Acknowledgements

Over the last twenty years, the Lord has introduced many great and dedicated Bible teachers into my life and for this I am eternally grateful.

This handbook, "Now I'm a Christian, What Happens Next?", whilst it has been written and compiled by myself, does contain information from assorted and copious notes I have made over some thirty-five plus years of personal Bible study, live conference attendance and the playing of sermons from very accomplished men and women of God.

I thank God for all these men and women who have influenced and shaped my life and have indirectly contributed towards this particular document. I gratefully acknowledge their input into my life.

Joe Armstrong

Pastor.

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Welcome!

Congratulations and welcome to the Family of God. In accepting Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you are now correctly positioned to live a productive and powerful life here on earth and then rightfully

join your fellow family members in Heaven when you die. This was always God's intention for you:

5 For He foreordained us (destined us, planned in love for us) to be adopted (revealed) as His own children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the purpose of His will [\[\[a\]\]](#) because it pleased Him and was His kind intent] – (Ephesians Chapter 1, verse 5 - Amplified Bible).

As we go through this study together, get a Bible or look at one online, and search out each one of the Scripture verses that I list below. Please do read them for yourself – that's important.

Being Born Again - What Does That Mean?

When a person believes on Jesus Christ and confesses Him as one's Saviour (*Romans 10:9,10*), He is "Born Again". The Bible uses a variety of different terms for this new experience with God:

"Converted" (*Matthew 18:3*), "Being Saved" (*Luke 19:10*), "Becoming a New Creature" (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). Each one of these is simply a different way of explaining that something new and exciting has happened to you and your spirit within you. Embrace this – this also means that God (your real Father and Jesus Christ) no longer hold your past against you. Yes, there may be some things to work out in your life and past, but it's important to know that God and Jesus have forgiven you for all of the wrong things that you have done – your sins are forgiven!

Just as when we were born into our natural families and received a human nature from our parents, so too are we born into God's family when we receive His nature by 'partaking of His exceedingly great and precious promises' (*2 Peter 1:4*).

Everyone's personal experience is also different – with some people they immediately know they are different, with others it's a more gradual understanding and change process. Both are ok.

What Happens Next?

God has designed for your life to be a life of love, adventure, progress and faith, successfully overcoming problems and difficulties, as they arise, through the correct application of God's Word. There is a real purpose for your life in God's "forever plan" – this starts now. You will discover your purpose over time and refine that – it literally is the reason that God put you on the planet. He Himself wanted you as a part of His own future. Yes, He does think of you THAT highly and yes, you are THAT important. Please read again Ephesians 1:5 above.

We must "think like God thinks" and the way we learn to do this is through daily reading of the Bible and then the living and doing of what we have learned. As we "read and do" we start to change our own attitudes, focus and direction so that these things agree with God's position regarding life and the way He instructs we are to live it – purposefully, worthily and accurately (*Ephesians chapter 4, verse 1 – Amplified Bible*).

Being a Christian does not automatically mean that all your problems will vanish, however it does mean you are now in a position of power, authority and decision over your problems – much better

positioned to handle them. Over time, life will start to improve as the Lord gets more and more involved with you and your life.

Please read *John, chapter 16 verse 33* and *Psalms chapter 28, verse 7*.

What Bible Should I Use?

Most people ask, “What sort of Bible should I buy”? We suggest that a New King James version (NKJV), an English Standard Version (ESV) and an Amplified Bible provide three truly excellent, reputable, recognised and explanatory options for learning. These Bibles are very highly received and regarded throughout the Christian world. Many renowned Bible scholars use these Bibles themselves.

Where Do I Start?

Start with reading the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are four different summaries of Jesus and His life, when He walked the earth. Much of their information is expanded upon in the rest of the New Testament and a great place to start your reading is in the Gospel of John.

I strongly suggest you memorise *Proverbs chapters 3 and 4*. These two chapters are particularly rich in information and offer immediate things for you to start to build into your life. If you DO what these two chapters instruct, you will build for yourself a powerful foundation that will lead and direct your life properly.

Mark chapter 4 is another very important chapter. In this chapter Jesus discusses (amongst other things) the “process of growth and development”. *Mark 4:26-29* in particular are verses that start to reveal the power of incremental progress - “a little bit of growth, every day, every day, every day”. Always read that entire chapter of *Mark 4* every week.

Reading some chapters from *Proverbs* every morning and some chapters from *Psalms* every night is always a great way to start and finish your day. However, you really do need to learn what is in the New Testament in particular. I suggest you carefully complete this following study that has been written specifically to give you understanding in several important areas. As you attend Church and listen to quality Christian Ministers, The Lord will help direct your studies from there.

Please remember that you are never alone... *2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 16* and *Hebrews chapter 13, verses 5 and 6* are all very important scriptures and I strongly suggest you memorise these also.

Prayer

Prayer is simply talking to God, but as with any relationship and communication, listening is important also. You get to know God's voice through spending time with Him in prayer, the same as I would recognise your voice if we spent time getting to know each other. That is why you need to spend time in prayer every day. Make prayer a real activity not a religious activity. Talk to the Lord like you would to your closest friend – see *Proverbs chapter 18, verse 24*.

God will guide you through His Word and to His peace - communicating with you deep on the inside, generally through “a quiet and still knowing”, accompanied by a peace.

“Praying or speaking in other tongues” is simply God’s language in the spirit realm. Whilst it may seem a strange practise, it literally speaks volumes in the spirit and to the spirit world. It is important to be “baptised in the Holy Spirit” with evidence of speaking in tongues. This will greatly empower your life and develop within you an extra degree of boldness and ultimately confidence. “People praying in tongues” is nothing to be alarmed about – I like to think of it this way – the Italians have their language, the Spanish have their language, the Germans have their language and God and His world have their heavenly language. Pretty simple really...

The Holy Spirit

After you have accepted Jesus as your Lord, you are a completely new creation. Please read and memorise

2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 17-21. You are now in a position where God actually comes to live in you in the form or presence of the Holy Spirit. Please read 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 19 and also 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 16-18.

The Holy Spirit acts as your Guide, Comforter and Helper. His assignment is to help, guide, comfort and teach You. As you spend time in prayer and the study of God’s Word you will quickly learn to draw from the Holy Spirit’s strength, especially after being baptised in the Holy Spirit and praying in tongues. This can be explained as simply a much deeper level of “connection” with Him, designed to strengthen your life even further. Always thank Him for His presence in your life, asking Him for guidance, often (daily, perhaps hourly). Asking the Holy Spirit for assistance, guidance and support is not ‘flaky’ or weak – quite the opposite, it’s a demonstration of faith and trust in your Lord Jesus! There is nothing wrong in asking advice from a more experienced and significantly more intelligent person – who just happened to have created the Universe, by the way...!

The Inner Sense or Witness of The Spirit

When someone becomes a Christian, God’s Holy Spirit comes to dwell in them (*Romans 8:9 and 2 Corinthians 6:16-18*). The Holy Spirit transforms us from within and it’s extremely wise to obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit, as you sense it. His main focus will be based around bringing your character, words and actions into agreement with *Galatians 5:22-23*. For example, you will “sense” or “feel on the inside” to stop saying bad or disparaging things about people or, for example, you will not want to join in on the gossip at ‘the office’ because you “feel inside” that you shouldn’t.

He will also prompt you to seriously consider some of the relationships that you have with others – to evaluate them carefully over time. Relationships are complex and to effectively manage them we need God’s wisdom in on our thoughts and speech. Please keep an open mind about this, especially in line with Psalm 119:63. However, the Lord will progressively reveal to you any relationships that may not be very good for you and your future.

You will also experience the following in varying degrees:

- New love for God (so strong that it is perhaps a little difficult for you to explain)
- Strong desire to read the Bible
- A sense of forgiveness – for yourself and even toward others
- Enjoyment of worship at church – even though it may “feel” strange at the time
- A different or new concern for others
- Desire to meet other Christians and be involved in Christian activities.

A Local Church

God has raised up excellent churches in virtually every town and community around the world. Choosing a church to attend is a decision you need to pray about and ask God to help you with. I strongly suggest you visit the church that you are considering attending EVERY week for the main service and perhaps a weekday service also if it is available. You need to do this without missing a week for six (or even better eight) weeks. That will then give you the time to assess the suitability of that church and time to listen to God’s voice regarding where He wants you to attend Church.

Remember not every church will suit every person - exactly the same way restaurants differ with choice and taste, so do churches differ. God will design a church to suit the needs of a particular group and if you do not fit into that group that church can seem quite strange to you. For example, a twenty-year-old person may find it hard going to a church that God raised up for the elderly and the widowed. Do not judge the church based on your own desires. That church will be completing a vision God gave them and will be travelling along a certain direction. Ask the Minister for a copy of their Vision documents to read and then pray about them, asking God to show you if and where you are to be involved.

Once you find a suitable church it is important to become active and involved in that church. God has designed for people to proactively help other people. Hebrews 10:25, Proverbs 11:25, Acts 20:35 and Ephesians 6:8.

Becoming involved in aspects of helping and serving others is always a powerful thing to do and helps build friendships, experience and community.

Once again, congratulations and welcome to the family. Father God, our Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit will bless you richly indeed as you seek understanding from His Word, by putting His Word first place in your life.

Enjoy the following Bible study – please do share with and give this entire study away to as many people as you can. Its purpose is to be a blessing, so “freely receive, freely give...” – Matthew 10:8.

Blessings to you always,

Joe Armstrong
Pastor.

Please do visit:

www.livingsuccess.org and www.pastorjoepodcast.com for more free resources.

These are available for you to use, and give away to others, to bless them as well.

Study Note I

Just Who is Jesus Christ?

Podcast Message, Part 1

There are four very important things I believe we need to know. Clearly understanding these four things, outlined in these questions below, will result in a strong and solid foundation being built in your Christian life. This will then provide the basis for great productivity, achievement and ultimately, reward from God. The four things are:

1. Who is Jesus?
2. Why was Jesus born in the earth?
3. Why did Jesus have to die?
4. What has Jesus done?

To effectively understand these questions, we need to lay aside ALL pre-conceived ideas - religious, traditional and otherwise - and look into God's Word for the answers. (Please note – Until you have at least completed this study in detail may I please suggest that you refrain from having “religious” discussions with arrogant and cynical people who have not even bothered to read the Bible through properly – do not be lured into a situation where you have to try to “defend” God. In considering this suggestion, please look at Acts chapter 19 and verses 8-10).

I – Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the Son of God – Psalm 2:7, Hebrews 1:1-5 Amplified Bible, Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 9:35, Colossians 1:9-14,

Podcast Message, Part 2

Other Evidence Jesus Existed:

Two widely recognised and studied historians that write of the historicity of Jesus are:

The Jewish source of Josephus, and the Roman source of Tacitus. There is also a variety of evidence outside the New Testament about Jesus, His life, dates and times. An internet search can provide many such historical proofs and if you internet search “Ancient Evidence for Jesus from Non-Christian Sources” you will find a number of documents available.

Jesus Was a Real Human Person

- He was born into the earth by a woman (Mary) – (Luke 1:26-35, Luke 2:4-16)
- Jesus had a human body that became tired (John 4:4-6) and hungry (Matthew 4:2)
- He displayed human emotions - anger (Mark 11:15-17), love (Mark 10:20-21), sadness (John 11:30-36), compassion (Matthew 14:14)

Podcast Message, Part 3

- He experienced normal human experiences - temptation (Mark 1:12-13) learning (Luke 2:41-52), family (Mark 3:31,32)
- Jesus was employed – He had a job working as a carpenter (Mark 6:1-3). Never let your vocation limit your learning experience.
- When He was injured he bled (Luke 22:20,44; John 19:32-34)

What Did Jesus Say About Himself?

(NB. Please study these verses listed below in at least three different Bible translations – one being the Amplified Bible)

Jesus taught us many things about Himself and nowhere in the four Gospels is there found any contradictions. The things Jesus said about Himself form part of the foundation for our ongoing belief in Him and the purpose for why He was later raised from the dead.

Jesus said:

I am:

The Bread of Life (John 6:35)

The Light of the World (John 8:12)

The Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25-26)

The Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)

Jesus Outright claimed That He is:

- The Messiah (Mark 14:61-62)
- Son of God (Mark 14:61)
- God the Son (John 10:33)

He Also Indirectly Claimed:

- To forgive sins (Mark 2:5)
- To judge the world (Matthew 25:31-32)

2 – Why Was Jesus Born in the Earth?

Podcast Message part 4

Recap

Jesus claimed:

I am:

- The Bread of Life (*John 6:35*)
- The Light of the World (*John 8:12*)
- The Resurrection and the Life (*John 11:25-26*)
- The Way, the Truth and the Life (*John 14:6*)

Jesus Outright claimed That He is:

- The Messiah (*Mark 14:61-62*)
- Son of God (*Mark 14:61*)
- God the Son (*John 10:33*)

He Also Indirectly Claimed:

- To forgive sins (*Mark 2:5*)
- To judge the world (*Matthew 25:31-32*)

The following is an extremely brief, short summary as to the reasons why Jesus was born into the earth:

- Adam disobeyed God and sin entered the earth and into humankind. Prior to Adams disobedience, sin was not / had not been released into the earth and into people's hearts and minds.

Read Genesis, chapters 1, 2 & 3.

Key Point: - Sin is a pollutant to a pure environment. Now the problems REALLY start...!

Read Matthew 1:18-25.

Follow that reading in Matthew with this from *Romans 5:17-21*.

I John 3:4-8

Be gracious to yourself whilst you learn Kingdom principles and behaviour.

Verse 8 – Jesus came to earth to destroy and defeat the works of the devil. The works of the devil are worked out and given expression in and through people's lives.

3 – Why Did Jesus Have to Die - For You and I – for Everyone?

Podcast Message Part 5

It was always God's intention to be able to "save" His own family (that's us) from the ravages, tragedy and torment of sin – which ultimately ends in death, - *Romans 6:23*.

The reward / payment from sin is death.

1 John 3:4-8 - Verse 8 – Jesus came to earth to destroy and defeat the works of the devil. The works of the devil are worked out and given expression in and through people's lives.

Read *Ephesians 1:5-12* Amplified Bible.

His death on that cross and His subsequent resurrection from the dead, form the very centre of the Christian Faith. The Cross is the link between the old and new covenants - agreements and arrangements that God put into the earth (*Hebrews 8:6-9*), to guide and manage the events and lives of people living in a sin-filled environment.

The Apostle Paul lays out very clearly the impact and importance of Jesus being crucified.

- *1 Corinthians 1:22-24* and *1 Corinthians 2:2*
- *Romans 3:23*
- *Galatians 2:19-20*
- *Romans 8:1,2*

Podcast Message 6

The destructive Nature of Sin.

Sin is evil and it is important to know what sin does produce:

- Sin defiles - makes unclean and pollutes (*Mark 7:21-23*)
- The rewards of sin (*Romans 6:23*)
- Sin can be your master (*John 8:34*) (*Romans 6:6 & 16*)
- Death entered the world through sin (*Romans 5:12*)

4 - What Has Jesus Done? – or what did Jesus' death achieve for us?

- Righteousness from God (*Romans 3:22*)
- Power to live a life of faith (*Galatians 2:20*)
- Each believer being a new creature in Christ Jesus, with an ongoing powerful connection to God and with others – (*2 Corinthians 5:17-21*)
- Sin no longer having dominion over us – (*Romans 6:14*)
- *1 Corinthians 1:30* Amplified Bible.

Your place in Christ must take up its place in you!