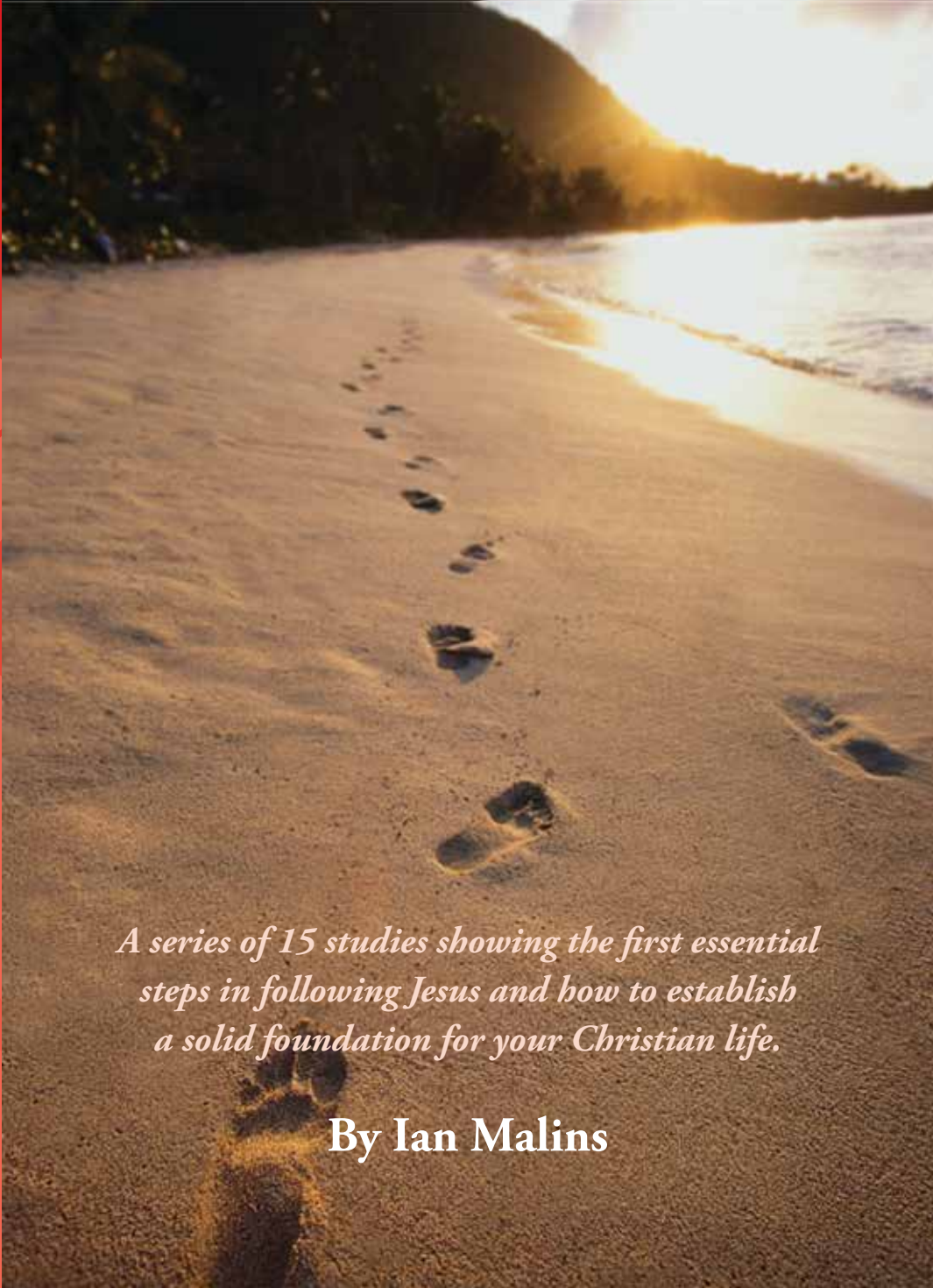


Omega Discipleship Series

2

My First Steps



A series of 15 studies showing the first essential steps in following Jesus and how to establish a solid foundation for your Christian life.

By Ian Malins

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CAN I BE SURE?

READ: *John 10:27-30, 1 John 2:1-6*

“How can I be sure that I am a Christian? I have asked God to forgive my past sins. I have invited Jesus to come into my life. But I am not sure whether that has happened or not. Perhaps I wasn’t sincere enough when I prayed. Maybe He didn’t come in at all! Can I be sure God has really forgiven and accepted me? Am I really a part of His family? And if I am, is it possible to be welcomed in, then later kicked out for doing the wrong thing?”

1. Expect doubts

The first thing to realize is that doubts will come. This is normal. Nearly all new Christians (and even older Christians too) have doubts at different times. So don’t be surprised when doubts come to you. But you must be ready. You must know how to deal with these doubts.

You must realize that you now have an enemy. Before you became a Christian, you belonged to

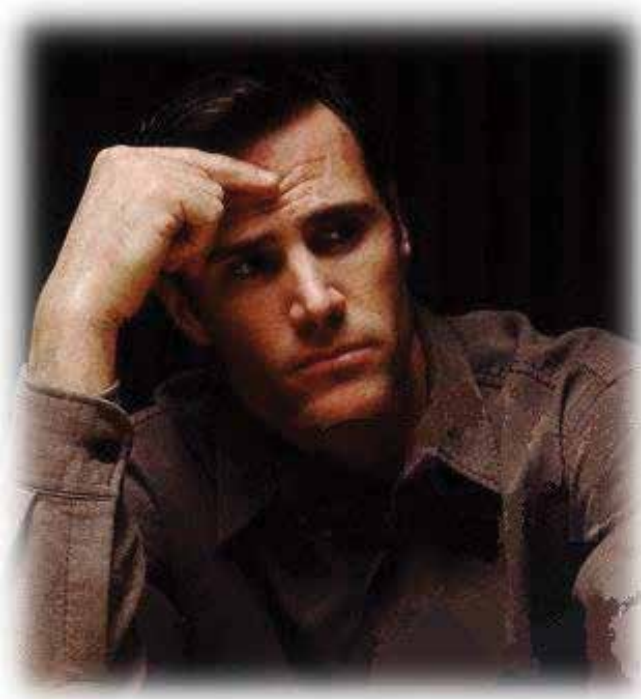
Satan’s kingdom. But now that God has rescued you from Satan’s control and brought you into the Kingdom of light, Satan is against you. His first way of attack is to shoot arrows of doubt into your mind. He will try to make you doubt the work God has done in your heart. He will put thoughts in your mind: “You don’t really think your sins are forgiven just by believing and receiving Christ, do you? Surely that is not enough! And look! You still make mistakes and do wrong things! You are really no different to before. You only think you have changed. But nothing really has happened!”

What will your answer be to these kinds of doubts? The only way to overcome such attacks is to know clearly what God says in the Bible about this matter. You can be sure you belong to Christ. You do not need to live with uncertainty and doubt.

2. Believe God, not your feelings

What God says doesn’t change. God’s promises are true. The Bible says: *“For those who receive Him and believe in His name, to them He gave the right to become God’s children”* (John 1:12).

Have you believed in Christ and asked Him into your life? Then, God’s promise is that you are accepted into His family. You are His child. This is true whether you feel like it or not. It is true because God says so. So you must rest your faith on God’s Word, the Bible, and not depend on your feelings alone. Your feelings can change. Today you may feel happy, and believe that you are a Christian. But tomorrow you may not feel so good. If your faith depends on how you feel, you may even doubt that you are a Christian. But does that make any difference to what has really happened to you? Not at all!



3. You are accepted because of Jesus

Many Christians make the mistake of thinking God accepts them because of something good in them. When they fail, or sin, or make a mistake, they think God will change His mind about them and throw them out. But God's promises don't change. Jesus said, "He who comes to Me, I will never throw out." (John 6:37). When you commit your life to Christ, your life is put in God's hands. And no one can take you from that place of safety (John 10:27-28).

You are accepted by God because of what Jesus has done for you, not because you are good enough in yourself. And because what Jesus has done for you doesn't change, so your place in His family doesn't change either. All God requires of you is to 'repent and believe' in Jesus. God then does the rest. If you have done your part by believing, receiving and following Him, you can be sure He will do His part in forgiving, accepting and keeping you. His Holy Spirit within you will keep reminding you that this is true (Romans 8:15-17).

4. The signs of the new life within

The first Epistle of John has been called 'a letter for doubters'. It is written to those who are not sure about their relationship with Christ. In this letter, John gives four tests or signs to show that you belong to the family of God.



• **The first sign - Obedience** (1 John 2:3-6)

Before you became a Christian, you lived the way you liked. You followed your natural desires. But the sign that you have now become God's child is that you want to obey God. Do you have a growing desire to please God and do what He wants you to do?

• **The second sign - A changed life** (1 John 3:4-10)

Before you became a Christian, you were a slave to sin. This means you were controlled by certain attitudes and habits. But what about now? Do you see changes taking place? You won't be perfect, but you don't like doing wrong things any more. You have a new desire to live the way God wants you to live. Is this true of you?

• **The third sign - Belief about Jesus**

(1 John 2:18-25; 4:1-3)

Before you became a Christian, Jesus meant nothing to you personally. But now, what do you think of Jesus? Do you believe Him to be the Son of God? Can you confess with your mouth and believe with your heart that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9)? Do you have a new respect and love for Jesus? Your attitude towards Jesus Christ is the third test of whether you belong to God's family or not.

• **The fourth sign - Love** (1 John 2:9-11; 3:14-18)

Do you have a new desire to be with other Christians? If God is your Father, this shows itself by the love you have for His children. For you now belong to His family. This does not mean you will never have problems living with other Christians. You almost certainly will! But it does mean you now prefer sharing with other Christians more than sharing with those outside the family of God. Love for other Christians is a clear sign that you are one of Jesus' followers (John 13:34-35).

If all that we have said above is starting to happen in your life, then you can be sure you are now a child of God. When doubts come, put your trust again in the promises of God's Word. Ask Jesus again to be the Lord and Master of your life. Stand against the devil's accusations. There is no reason to live in doubt. You can be sure you are a Christian. If God is for you, who can be against you?

"If you have done your part by believing, receiving and following Jesus, you can be sure He has done his and will accept and keep you."

EXPLORE FURTHER



1. Have you had any doubts since becoming a Christian?

- often; occasionally; rarely; never.

What kind of doubts have you had? _____

2. Look at the promise of God in John 1:12. What is God's promise for those who 'receive Jesus and believe in His name'?

3. What is God's promise in John 5:24 for those who hear Christ's words and believe in Him?

4. Is it possible to be welcomed into God's family and then later kicked out? What do the following references tell us? What has God promised?

John 6:37 _____

John 10:27-29 _____

Romans 8:3 1-39 _____

5. God's Promises: In questions 2-4 above, you have been looking at some of the promises of God. Does God ever break His promises, or change His mind about what He has said? (See James 1:17)

- perhaps; sometimes; never; not sure.

• **Our Feelings:** Do your feelings ever change? ____ What kind of things can make your feelings change?

• **Your Faith:** If you put your faith in your feelings, and your feelings change, what will happen to your faith?

• But if you put your faith in God's promises that don't change, what will your faith be like?

• What then does this mean for you personally? When you have doubts, what should you put your trust in - your feelings or God's promises?

- My feelings; God's promises.

6. In the first Epistle of John, we have four signs or tests to show us that we belong to God's family. What are the first two tests?

1 John 2:3-6 _____

1 John 3:4-10 _____

- Do these first two tests mean you will never disobey or sin once you become a Christian? What do they mean for you? (See 1 John 2:1-2; 3:5-8)

7. What are the third and fourth tests that John gives?

1 John 4:1-3 _____

1 John 4:7-8 _____

8. Now think about these four signs of the new life within you. Tick any changes you have noticed in the areas below. Then write down any changes you have noticed.

Desire to obey: _____

Changes in my life: _____

Attitude towards Jesus: _____

Relationship with Christians: _____

9. Are we meant to know for sure that we are God's children? (See 1 John 5:13)

yes; no; not sure.

- What is the testimony that God wants us to have in our hearts? (See 1 John 5:11-12)

10. Now on a separate sheet of paper write down your testimony why you know you are God's child. Start like this: 'I know I am God's child because (complete)

Now memorize the verse below. Tick when memorized.

MEMORY VERSE:

Assurance of salvation

John :24

"I am telling you the truth: whoever hears my words and believes in Him who sent me has eternal life. He will not be judged, but has already passed from death to life."

LIFE UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

READ: Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

As I walked into the food store, I noticed a big sign in the window “UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT”. Inside the shop, I noticed some big changes since my last visit. The shop now had a new owner. He was the new boss of this store and had already begun to organize things differently. The store had been painted and the shelves and furniture arranged in a much better way. The whole store seemed to be much brighter and nicer than before. The new manager seemed to have good plans to make this store into a much better business.

As an old man was walking down the street on a windy day, a sign from a nearby shop blew off and stuck to his back. The sign said “Under New Management”. Two young boys who saw this began laughing at the old man and took the sign off his back and showed it to him. The old man smiled at the boys. “Well”, he said, “Isn’t that interesting! What that sign says is true. Just two weeks ago I became a Christian. Even though I’m an old man, my life is now under new management. Jesus is now my new master and boss and He has already brought some very good changes into my life”.

1. Who’s in charge?

A person’s life is like a house made up of many rooms. Each room is filled with some special interest or activity. What is in each room will vary from person to person, but the following picture shows some of the main areas that may make up a person’s life.

Before you opened the door of your life to Christ, you were in charge of your life. Your ‘self’ life was at the centre organizing and controlling everything that you wanted to do. You may even have gone to church and lived by Christian standards but you were still in control. You were the boss. You

still held the keys to the main door and to each of the rooms. Jesus was on the outside and the front door was locked to the Saviour. He had never been allowed to come in. All the different parts of your life, like the rooms of a house, were under the control of your self-centred human nature.

You may have felt you had your life under control and well ordered. Perhaps you thought you were a good manager and lived a good life. Or maybe your life was in a mess and badly organized and you had many problems. Perhaps you realized you were not able to manage your life properly and needed some outside help. But whatever was true of you, ‘self’ was still at the centre and in control.

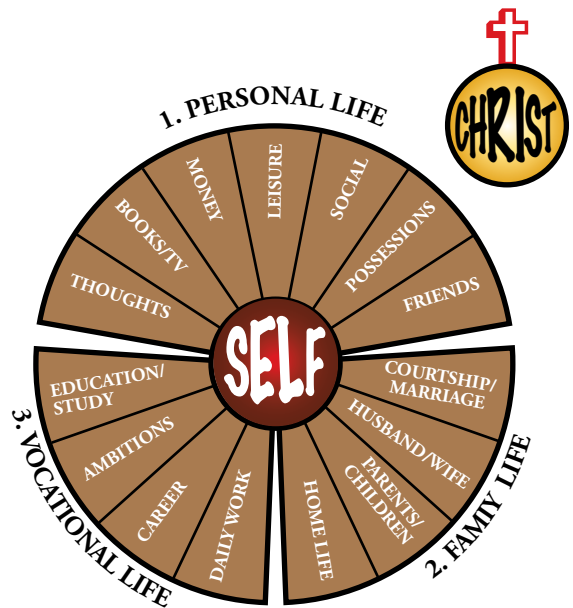


Figure 1. The Natural Self-controlled Person

2. A change of ownership

But when you become a Christian, a big change takes place. You heard Christ knocking on the door of your life. When you opened the front door to Jesus, He came in. He wants to have fellowship with you. He wants to become your best friend. But He doesn't want to be invited in as a visitor. He enters your life as the new and rightful owner. He comes in as Lord. He is the new manager, the new boss. He created you in the first place and has bought you back again at great personal cost. Now you belong to Him twice over. And as the new owner and boss, he is not content to live in the backroom of your life while you still take control. No! He wants to bring about some important changes. He may want to do some cleaning out and reorganizing of your life. Will you let Him?

3. Just a boarder?

Some new Christians do not understand that to surrender their lives to Jesus and invite Him into their lives means to submit to Him as Lord. They lock Him into a department of their lives (see diagram below).

They may say or think words like this:

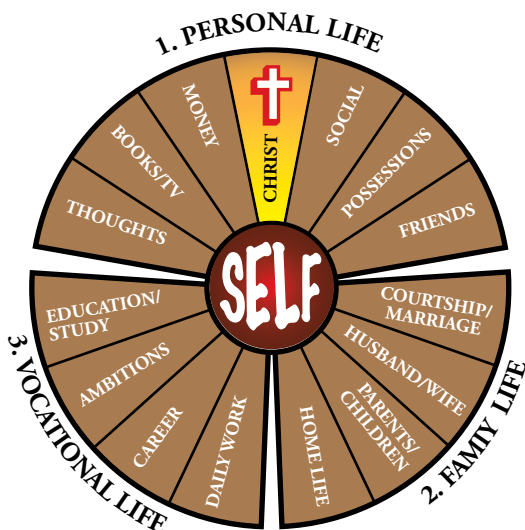


Figure 2. The Self-controlled Christian

“Come into my life, Lord. Here’s the room you can have - two hours on Sundays, grace before meals, and an hour at Bible class each Wednesday. But that’s all! The rest of my life is mine - my work, my sport, my friends, my thoughts, my money and my marriage. You can live in the backroom of my life, but keep out of all these other rooms.”

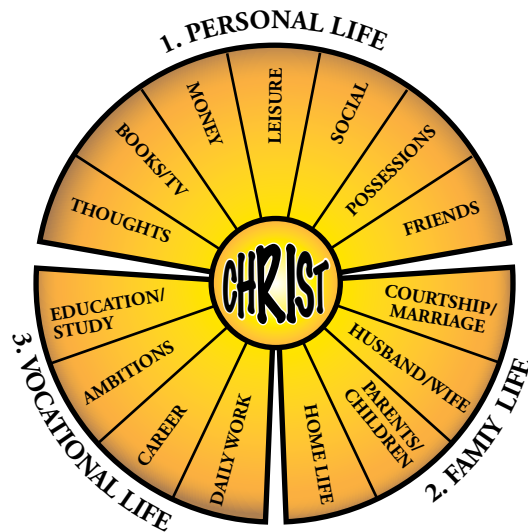
4. Give Him all the keys

To make Jesus Lord of your life means you must give Him the keys to every room. You must step off the control centre and let Him become the centre of everything you do. Can He really be Lord of your life if you lock Him into one hour on Sundays, or a few minutes each day? Can He make His home in your heart if you keep Him out of your thought life, your social activities or your daily work?

Your life is now under new management. Jesus is the boss over everything. To be a Christian means submitting to Him as Lord and learning to live the way He wants you to live.



As you open the rooms of your life to His presence, He comes in, cleanses, renews and fills them with light and life. His plan is that through discipleship you may be “filled with all the fullness of God”, so that His light and love may fill your whole life. Is that what you want? That’s what it means to be a Christian. Your life is now ‘under new management’.



“To make Jesus Lord of your life means you must step off the control centre and let Him become the centre of everything you do.”

Figure 2. The Christ-controlled Christian

STUDY 6

EXPLORE FURTHER

1. Each person’s life is like a house made up of many rooms. What are some of the main interests and activities that fill up the rooms of your life, or that fill up the hours of your week? List these.

2. Before you became a Christian, ‘self’ was on the control centre of your life. But when you invited Christ to come in, what change should take place? (See 1 Peter 3:15a)

3. What does Christ’s Lordship over your life mean according to the following references?

Luke 6:46 _____

John 13:13-15 _____

Romans 6:22 _____

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 _____

4. Look at the three circles in the study notes (Figures 1, 2 and 3). Which circle is the closest picture of your own life?

- Figure 1; Figure 2; Figure 3.

Why is this the closest picture of your life? _____

5. Christ wants to be 'at home' in your heart (Ephesians 3:17). What do you think this means for you personally? What do you need to do to make Jesus more 'at home'?

6. If Jesus is to be Lord of your life, what difference will it make to the way you make decisions and plan each day?

What difference should Christ's Lordship make in your attitudes to:

• your work? (See Colossians 3:23-24) _____

• money and material things? (See Matthew 6:24) _____

7. Are there any areas of your life that you feel are still closed to Christ's Lordship? As far as you know how, what must you do to let Christ come into that area of your life more completely?

Now memorize the verse below. Tick when memorized.

MEMORY VERSE:

Christ as Lord

1 Peter 3:15a

"In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord."