

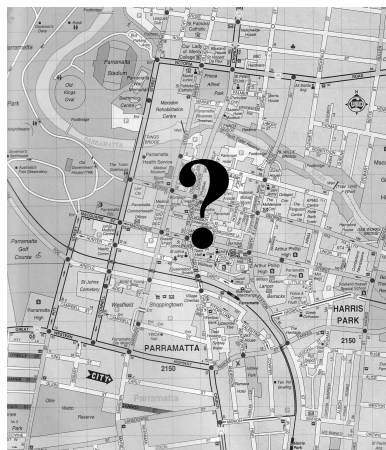
HOW TO KNOW GOD the first steps

Where am I?

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This guide is designed to help you take steps to know God in your life. We know of course that everyone is different. We all start at different places in our search for God.

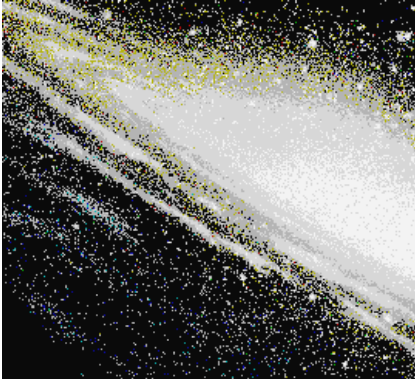
- ◆ Some people have never thought before of searching for God. Maybe you! You half believe the rumour that God is there, but he seems too far away to be interested in you.
- ◆ Maybe you have already accepted that God is there, but somehow have never done anything about it. You feel the need to get to know him, perhaps because some friends who are Christians have persuaded you to think seriously about it.



- ◆ Maybe you have known about God all your life. Church, Sunday school, youth group are familiar territory for you. But the whole thing has never seemed real for you.
- ◆ Maybe you have become quite convinced that you are ready to connect in a really deep way with God. Perhaps you feel he is beckoning you on. You are ready, but you need to know what to do next.
- ◆ Maybe you have already said some kind of 'Yes' to God, but now you are really not sure what happened, what you did or whether it 'worked'.

This guide is for you! It won't tell you everything in the universe, but we pray it will get you started with God.

This is God's world



This is God's world because he made it. We belong to God as we are part of his creation.

God made people so that we could enjoy his friendship forever. He wanted us to experience his loving care, to work the earth in accordance with his plans for it and to live harmoniously together.

God gave humans the highest place in his creation. He has given us authority over all other living things, and over all the earth's natural resources.

But we are not free agents who are independent of God. We live under his authority and are responsible to God for our lives, and for all that we do with them.

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What are we like?



We are a strange mixture. Some of us stranger than others! However in many respects we are very similar.

We are very **creative**. We have the capacity to think, build, enjoy beautiful things, invent, study and venture into unknown worlds.

We generally think of ourselves as basically good. And it's true that **God's image** is built into us. Sadly though, there's another side.

We are basically **rebellious**. We have rejected or ignored God's authority over us in this world.

People are **self-centred** We are mainly concerned with our own comfort and security, putting our own

People are often **unconcerned**. We usually don't worry about our broken relationship with God. But we were made to have a living relationship with him.

People are still **accountable**. Because he is concerned for justice, God can't let us go unpunished. The penalty for ignoring Him is permanent separation from God (Romans 6:23). This is a death sentence which rests on all people.

People are **deceived**. Having rejected God's authority and friendship, we look for substitutes. Instead of putting God at the top of our priorities, we fill our lives with getting things or getting on, concern for security or power, maybe even drugs or the occult.

Such substitutes don't finally satisfy. They can't replace knowing God and serving him.

People are **proud**. Some of us think so highly of our own achievements that we decide that God doesn't matter. Others think that living a good life will make them acceptable to God. But we must face the fact that rebels are rebels, no matter how decent they seem! To receive God's forgiveness we must change our whole attitude to him and recognise his right to rule us.

What has God done?

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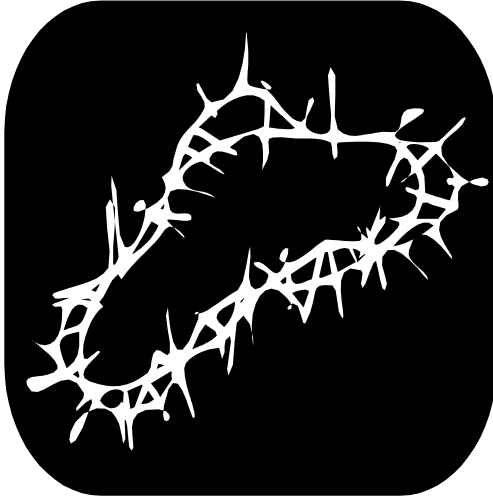
God longs to know us; he took action. He broke into history by sending his Son to live among us. Jesus Christ came into the world:

- (a) to show us what God is really like - loving and just
- (b) to reveal his authority as Ruler of the world
- (c) to rescue us from the terrible penalty for our failure to obey God.

(John 1:18) No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.



What has Jesus done?



As rebels against God, we cannot meet his standards for good living. However, Jesus did in fact meet God's standards so he was able to take our place: he died on our behalf. Jesus is God's answer to our problem.

- (a) Jesus was innocent, but God sent him to take our punishment (2 Corinthians 5:21). In sending his Son to die, God took his own medicine. Amazing generosity!
- (b) Because he loves us Jesus died for us while we were still rebellious (Romans 5:8).
- (c) His death restored our broken relationship with God; now we can be his friends (Romans 5:9-10).

Jesus did not stay dead, however. He walked out of the tomb alive! By coming back to life he showed that:

- (a) He is God! Jesus was not just an exceptional man; he also had the same nature as God. Because Jesus was the Son of God it was impossible for death to hold him prisoner (Romans 1:4).
- (b) We don't have to fear death any more because Jesus has won. Death is not the end - it is a new beginning. The door to God is open (Romans 6:9).
- (c) We have a future! Those who believe in Jesus will also be raised - the resurrection of Jesus is our guarantee (1 Corinthians 15:20). We can look forward to life with God forever.





What must we do? Page 6

It is not enough just to agree with these truths. They must become real in our lives. To receive God's gift of forgiveness, we must:

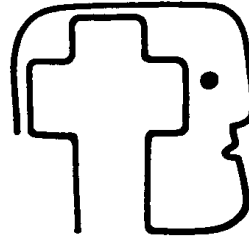
(a) **Turn away** from our past rebellion against God, and have a complete change of heart and mind toward him. Also we need to be genuinely sorry for all our wrong actions towards others, asking God to forgive us. This radical change of attitude is called repentance.

Repent



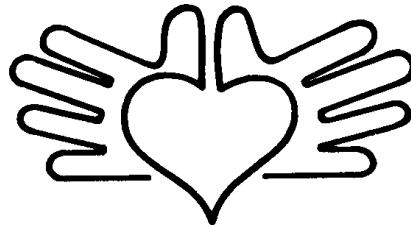
(b) **Trust** in Jesus Christ and in what he has done for us. We must make this real in our own lives by saying 'Jesus died for me; Jesus rose again from the dead to bring me new life.' This is what is meant by believing in Jesus (John 3:16).

Trust



(c) **Acknowledge** a new Ruler, Jesus Christ. Instead of being self-centred - letting our wills rule our lives - we must be Christ-centred, that is, let Christ rule our lives and be responsible to him.

Acknowledge



Are you ready to take these three steps? If you're not ready right now, keep thinking about these things. Here's a promise to encourage you: (*Jeremiah 29:13*) *And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

If you feel ready to come to God right now, pray a prayer like this:

If prayed this prayer tell Wayne-phone and e-mail details on the back page—we want to help you get started in the Christian life—but in the meantime, keep reading.

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'Dear God,

I know that I am not worthy to be called a child of God. I don't deserve your gift of eternal life. I am guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you. I need your forgiveness.

I want to turn from living my life my own way. I believe that Jesus died for me and rose again to give me new life. I now acknowledge Jesus as the ruler in my life.

Make me a member of Your family. Please help me to love You and serve You always.

Amen.'

What now?

1. WE CAN BE SURE

We are Christians because of what God has done. He helped us to trust in Jesus so that we would live with him for ever. We have this gift of eternal life not because we deserve it or have earned it, but because God is generous (Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. THIS IS JUST THE START

God wants us to grow as Christians, and to show this in our outward behaviour. We do not become Christians by doing good deeds. However, we are to do good once we are Christians to show that we belong to our new Ruler (Ephesians 2:10).

3. WE ARE NOT ALONE

Without the Holy Spirit in us, we wouldn't even be Christians (Romans 8:9). God gives us his Holy Spirit to show that we are now his. The Holy Spirit is God - just as much as God the Creator and Father, and Jesus the Son.





The Spirit, living within us, helps us to live lives which please God. (I Corinthians 6:19-20), growing 'fruit' making us more like Christ (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit guides us, helping us see what God wants (Romans 12:2) and showing us when we've disobeyed. He helps us to pray (Romans 8:26-27). He makes us bold and compassionate for our life and witness in the world. He gives us great joy, even in difficulty and distributes vibrant gifts for worship and service. (I Corinthians 12).

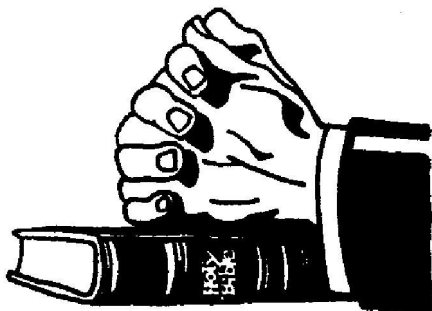
How do we grow?

1. WE GROW BY OBEYING

Reading the Bible regularly helps us understand how God wants us to live - and how we should obey him.



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2. WE GROW BY KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH GOD

Prayer is God's special way of inviting us to keep in touch with him. It is communication and conversation. Praising, confessing, asking, responding . . . Like all good communication, the more regular and honest the better!

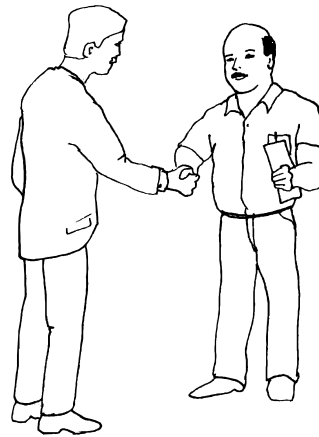


3. WE GROW BY BELONGING TO A FAMILY

All God's people need each other For solidarity, for learning, for encouragement and for growing. This is why we meet regularly with a fellowship of other Christians.

4. WE GROW BY BEING FAITHFUL AND ACTIVE FOR GOD

The more we grow to live in the way God intended, the more will other people find out what God is like. It is a privilege and a responsibility to point others to God.



Bible Verses used in this booklet.

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(Romans 6:23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(2 Corinthians 5:21) For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

(Romans 5:8-10) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. {9} Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. {10} For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

(Romans 1:4) and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

(Romans 6:9) knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

(Ephesians 2:8-10) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, {9} not of works, lest anyone should boast. {10} For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

(Romans 8:9) But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? {20} For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

(Galatians 5:22-23) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

(Romans 8:26-27) Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. {27} Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

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Meeting at Hazelbrook Public School Hall
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