

A GUIDEBOOK FOR NEW CHRIST FOLLOWERS

RESCUED



BY DARREN PILCHER

A black and white photograph of a life preserver on a wooden dock. The life preserver is the central focus, resting on the wooden planks. It has several white horizontal stripes and a small rectangular label on its side. The surface of the life preserver and the dock is covered in water droplets, suggesting it has been recently in contact with water. The background shows the texture of the wooden planks and the dark water of the sea.

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introduction

RESCUED!

Have you ever needed to be rescued, literally?

He was swept away by the unpredictable ocean currents at Daytona Beach. One minute he was seen in the shallow salty waters and the next he seemed to have vanished. It was our first big trip with the students of our church as newly hired youth pastors in Colorado. We had taken more than fifty students on a choir tour to the southeastern part of the United States. It was a typical hot and intensely humid summer. So, we scheduled a recreational stop for some beach time in Florida. The middle and senior high school students were more than excited as they made their way on the sand-packed, roadway beach of Daytona. The cool waters of the Atlantic were overwhelmingly tempting to stay beachside under the canopy of scorching heat and the burning sand surface beneath.

The leaders of our group became unnerved as it proved difficult to keep their eyes on every young member. A little guy, a middle-schooler, who was shorter than most of his peers, headed out with the rest of the group. The panic ensued shortly thereafter. Without warning, the waves began to build, and we lost sight of him. I had taken a walk down the beach with a couple of the male chaperones when the yell came to us. The details are a bit sketchy now, but all I remember is running back to see a lifeless youth on the shore.

Let me jump to the end of the story to say that my little buddy's life was radically saved that day by rescue professionals who became heroes to family, friends, and an overly stressed youth pastor. If qualified individuals had not been available to work in that desperate situation, the story for that summer would have been sorely different.

If you are reading this dramatic story of rescue in the life of a middle-schooler, you too, have been RESCUED! Your story may or may not reflect the same drama or intensity as my young friend's rescue; nevertheless, your life has been saved and your experience is far more significant because of its eternal nature.

The pages ahead will answer questions that naturally come to a person who has experienced this spiritual RESCUE, along with practical help in what life for you is all about now. What you can learn about your experience is critical to your next steps. So, read on with the freshness that your new life now provides. You have been RESCUED!

“For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.”

Colossians 1:13-14



chapter one

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE RESCUED?

You and I, just like my young buddy, in over his head, were born with the inclination to push the limits and be swayed by the powerful pull of the world. The Bible calls this “sin.” Negative forces and wrong decisions made us victims of sin’s undercurrent. We couldn’t do anything but “go with it” and be swept away. Without getting too lost in the analogy, suffice it to say we needed to be saved...professionally.

Saved from what? We needed to be saved from that inclination to push the limits, what the currents of sin do to us and the consequences of going with the current. The Bible, God’s Word, tells us some essential truths regarding this idea of being “rescued.”

- *“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.”*
(Romans 3:23)

- *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23)

Our real situation was actually far worse than drowning in an ocean of overwhelming waves. The end for us was not just a death of the physical, but spiritual death. Sin, the wrong choices influenced by the ungodly currents within and around us, separates us from God and dooms us to certain judgment in a place the Bible calls “hell.”

Listen to what the Bible says about this: *“And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son”* (Romans 5:9-10).

We needed a rescue professional to save us. His name is Jesus Christ. Jesus came to *“seek and save those who are lost”* (Luke 19:10).

He saved us by dying on the cross for our sin. Christ took the death we were destined for due to the consequences of our own wrong choices. And, He not only saved us from certain death; He saved us for eternal life! The Good News of this Rescue Story is that we were saved to live forever.

The truth here is that when you said YES to Christ, you became a new person. You had to know you needed to be rescued and you had to want Him to save you. *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”* (Romans 10:13). That’s showing faith in God’s Son and responding to God’s love that leads to eternal life, as stated in the most popular verse in the Bible: *“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16).

YES, YOU HAVE BEEN RESCUED!

Review Questions

1. Why did it take a “Rescue Professional” to rescue you?
2. What is the judgment for sin?
3. What is the “Good News” of this Rescue Story?
4. How does your story of salvation reflect the answers to the above questions?

A Relationship with the Rescuer

Dubbed the “unsinkable” ship, the Titanic was the crowning achievement of human technology. Nevertheless, hitting an iceberg in the middle of the north Atlantic Ocean sent her broken up to the bottom of the ocean in just two hours. Many people perished because they trusted in themselves. I’ve heard it said that self is the only prison of the soul. Depending only on our own ingenuity and expertise ends in utter disappointment and fails, at best, in getting us through the ebbs and flows of life. In other words, we need the Savior daily. A growing relationship with this Rescue Professional, Jesus Christ, is our hope for the here and now and life after death. Continuing to trust His nearness and help will keep us from going with our inner inclination to wander. Let’s look at how this most essential relationship can be developed by answering a few more questions.



chapter two

HOW DOES PRAYER WORK?

As a newly-rescued follower of Christ, our communication with Father God is critical to a growing relationship with our Rescuer, Jesus Christ. This communication is called PRAYER. Praying is not just some religious activity or duty of the devoutly religious. Prayer is simply talking to and with God. And, He invites us to talk with Him anytime and as often as possible.

When Christ taught His first followers how to pray, He said, *“Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one”* (Matthew 6:9-13).

Christ gave this prayer to us as an outline and help in knowing how to

personally make prayer work on a daily basis. The elements in this prayer are lifelines to keep our communication with God alive and healthy.

Let's call it the **FIVE LIFELINES OF PRAYER:**

1. Praising God as Father

“Our Father in heaven, may Your name be kept holy.”

Effective praying begins by understanding to whom our prayers are directed. We are not communicating to someone who is aloof or lives too high to be reached. He wants us to talk to Him and He wants to talk to us. At the same time, we must never forget that He is the Highest and the Holiest. There is no one like our God. Therefore, we do as the book of Psalms tells us: *“Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise”* (Psalm 100:4).

Also, notice that Christ, God's Son, instructs us to call God, our “Father.” This is a most endearing relationship, offered to us through the rescue efforts of Jesus. Once we have received those efforts and, most importantly, the One who has rescued us, we are brought into the family of God. We become His children and He becomes our Father.

2. Knowing and praying what the Father desires

“May Your kingdom come soon. May Your will be done here on earth, as it is in heaven.”

This answers our mission as we pray. Knowing what God wants for our lives and those around us is a huge part of our growing relationship with Christ. So, when we pray God's will, that's precisely what He wants to do within any particular situation. The book of Romans tells us the way to know the will of God: *“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice, the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect”* (Romans 12:1-2).

Also, as we yield ourselves to God's purposes, His Word becomes the primary place to find His will on a daily basis. We will talk more about this in the next chapter.

3. Freely asking the Father for what we need

“Give us today the food we need.”

Father God wants to supply our needs. Asking Him for those basic essentials and even those dream-elements He puts in our heart should come easy for us as we learn to pray and trust Him. First of all, He already knows what we need. Listen to the words of Jesus: *“So don't worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need”* (Matthew 6:31-33). The book of Psalms lets us in on the Father-heart of God. *“Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires”* (Psalm 37:4).

Therefore, as we reflect a life surrendered to His will, we should never feel a need to worry, but rather just to have a talk with the Father. The book of Philippians encourages this kind of praying: *“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done”* (Philippians 4:6).

4. Living in forgiveness

“Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.”

Living in forgiveness enables us to move forward in our new life. Forgiving others and ourselves is like unplugging from the past. We can do that in three specific ways: (1) confessing wrongs to God when we commit them; (2) forgiving ourselves as the Father forgives us; (3) forgiving others as we have been forgiven. We move forward in direct proportion to our life of forgiveness.

And, our prayer life is effective as we live in forgiveness daily. Christ taught, *“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will*

forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, Your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14- 15).

5. Praying the victory of Christ in our lives everyday

“And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.”

As we learn to grow in appreciation for what the Father has done in our lives through the rescuing efforts of His Son, Jesus Christ, we will also learn how deep and dangerous those waters actually were. The evil one who wants us to drown in sin is using tactics of temptation to get us back in those treacherous waters from which we were saved. Praying daily against the activity of the evil one strengthens our stand as a Christ-follower and keeps us spiritually alert regarding any agenda the evil one has towards us. As you pray for protection over your life and the people you love, keep in mind that you are victorious everyday through Christ.

One final, but important truth to remember. During the last days Christ was on the earth, He taught His followers that after He ascended into heaven, they were to pray in His name. His words are recorded in the gospel of John: *“At that time you won’t need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. You haven’t done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy” (John 16:23-24).* In other words, our prayers are validated to the Father by praying in Jesus’ name because of the relationship Christ has made possible for us with the Father through the cross. So, we pray to the Father in Jesus’ name and our prayers become a forceful agent in our life and in the lives of those for whom we are praying.

Prayer is meant to be a stress-reliever and a discipline that involves a trusting relationship with Father God. Studying His Word gives us the knowledge of His heart for us, as we will discover in chapter three. So, remember this: God is not necessarily interested in the length of your prayers as He is the strength of your prayers.

Practically Speaking

1. Set aside some time in a place where it is quiet to talk to your Father.
Distractions will always hinder time in prayer.
2. Attempt to reserve a time of prayer at the beginning of the day.
Typically, the day takes off and essential time in prayer is forgotten.
3. Consider a prayer journal, a place to write down your thoughts and prayer requests. *It's always good to have a record of what God is doing in your life and the life of others you pray for.*

Review Questions

1. Why is prayer important?
2. What family relationship does God have with us as followers of Christ and how does that affect our prayer life?
3. What part does forgiveness play in a lifestyle of prayer?
4. How does praying help in stressful and uncertain times?



chapter three

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL WITH THE BIBLE?

Some years back, I received a priceless gift – my grandfather's Bible. It was given to me by one of his sons. When I received this gift from my uncle, he asked me to use it, cherish it and pass it down to my son. Presently, I have it displayed on a stand in my office. Indeed, I have used it, continue to cherish it and, just as was requested, I will pass it down to the next generation.

More importantly, as much as I cherish my grandfather's Bible, I will never truly honor it unless I know why the Bible is such a big deal and why I should trust it. We will never know what to do with the Bible until we know why it is so important. So, here goes: what is the big deal with the Bible?

The Bible is God's Word

The Bible is inspired and authored by God. Even though humans were used to write it, it was not their wisdom or brain power that made it come

to be. Someone once said, “If the Book had not been the Book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and Popes, Kings and Priests, Princes and Rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the Book still lives” (John W. Lea).

The process by which God gave the words to the writers of His Word is supernatural and it cannot be really explained. In the book of 2 Peter, it lays it out this way: *“Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God”* (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Bible is God’s Work

As we read and study it, Father God uses His Word to trim, carve, and shape His purposes in us, molding us into the likeness of His Son.

The book of Hebrews explains it this way: *“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires”* (Hebrews 4:12).

This is how it works: the Bible gives us something sure and stable to hold onto when everything around us is crashing down. We call this doctrine. God’s Word convicts or convinces a man of his error and uncovers those attitudes and actions that are displeasing to the Father. The work of God’s Word gnaws at those sinful issues in our lives and makes us uncomfortable with them. The Bible also brings restoration to us and encouragement in living a victorious life through Christ as we obey God’s Word daily.

The book of 2 Timothy shares this process with us: *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Bible is God's Will

The Bible is a big deal because Father God's purpose is formed in our lives when we do what it says. When we respect and obey God's Word, we are in the very center of His Will. And when we are obedient to His Word, we are blessed. The book of Psalms explains:

*“Oh, the joys of those who do not
follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners,
or join in with mockers.
But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.
They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.
Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do” (Psalm 1).*

So, living in obedience to God's Word by reading, studying, and dwelling on it daily leads to a blessed life. Being blessed simply means that Father God's hand of favor is on your life. What a way to live! God's Word leads to stability and favor even when the world struggles around us. The Bible really is a big deal!

Practically Speaking

1. Schedule a time to read your Bible daily. *What you schedule, you normally end up doing.*
2. Start your reading in the Gospels—the first four books of the New Testament. *The life of Jesus is the best place to begin your new journey.*
3. Read your Bible 15-20 minutes a day. *Don't get overloaded, but get enough information to process for the day.*
4. Journal what you read and how it applies to you. *Putting it on paper can help in getting it out of your head and into your heart.*
5. Find a spiritual partner or small group to help explain Scriptures you may not understand, to hold you accountable, and to be an ongoing

encouragement to you. *It has been said that accountability can be one of the greatest antidotes to vulnerability.*

Review Questions

1. What is the primary aspect of the Bible that makes it such a big deal?
2. How does the Bible make us more like Christ?
3. What does it mean to be blessed?
4. Why are the four Gospels a good place to start reading in the Bible?



chapter four

WHY DO I NEED TO GO TO CHURCH?

Many people think of church as a place where the speaker wears a long robe, the songs are filled with big words and the seats are uncomfortable. (Well, it's not meant to be that intimidating and boring.) Actually, the church is not just about a place. The church is a building, a place to go, but it's much more than that. It is a body, a group of people.

Jesus said, *"I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it"* (Matthew 16:18). This means that Christ is the author of our rescue story and everyday He is saving more and more people just like you. That group of people is called the Church. The Scriptures encourage the Church to get together as often as possible. In other words, we go to church because we are the Church! So, why do followers of Christ make attending church a priority?

Connection

No matter how long it's been since our rescuing experience, connecting with other followers of Christ grows in importance as you move forward. The reality is that we need each other. Coming together to connect on at least a weekly basis strengthens our resolve to stand firm in our faith by influencing right decision-making and a victorious attitude.

The book of Acts tells the story of the very first church and how they lived. *"They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity"* (Acts 2:46).

One of the primary ways to begin connecting with the body of Christ is the experience of water baptism. As a matter of fact, it is our first act of obedience to the lordship of Christ as His follower (Matthew 28:19-20). The Scripture tells us that this is the symbolic way for sharing our rescue story. The book of Romans explains this experience of water baptism: *"Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives"* (Romans 6:3-4).

Protection

The Church is a place to find encouragement and accountability among other followers of Christ. Promises alone will never overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. The pull back into the deep and dangerous waters of sin will always be felt this side of heaven. One of the essential ways to live victorious over these temptations is the influence of those who are walking the same journey. The Church is made up of people who have just recently been rescued along with those who have walked this journey for many years. We can gain insight and help from both. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes, *"If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble"* (Ecclesiastes 4:10).

Building relationships with fellow followers of Christ, who gather together regularly, become our accountability partners. They get us back on our

feet when we fall, enable us to see potential danger areas and point us to victorious patterns for our lives.

Expression

Coming together as the body of Christ gives the energizing opportunity of expressing our love for God in a corporate setting. This, too, is a biblical practice: *“Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song. Sing his praises in the assembly of the faithful”* (Psalm 149:1). The Scriptures share with us many ways of expressing our love for God in a church gathering. Here are some other examples:

- *“Lift up holy hands in prayer, and praise the Lord.”* (Psalm 134:2)
- *“Come, everyone! Clap your hands! Shout to God with joyful praise!”* (Psalm 47:1)
- *“Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker.”* (Psalm 95:6)
- *“Shout to the Lord, all the earth; break out in praise and sing for joy! Sing your praise to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and melodious song, with trumpets and the sound of the ram’s horn. Make a joyful symphony before the Lord, the King!”* (Psalm 98:4-6)
- *“Give to the Lord the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his courts.”* (Psalm 96:8)

One of the distinct ways the Church expresses her love for God is through what is called Communion. It is also known as the Lord’s Supper or the Holy Sacraments. This corporate experience is practiced to remember Christ’s death on the cross. Communion is the gracious visual reminder of the realness of a specific happening that makes it possible for us to be right with God and each other.

Broken bread is shared one with another in remembering the torn flesh of Christ.

The Scriptures explain what it means to eat the bread: *“On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, ‘This is my body, which is given for*

you. Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

**Juice from the grapevine is shared
one with another in remembering
the blood that Christ shed for our sins.**

The Scriptures explain what it means to drink the juice: *“In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it’”* (1 Corinthians 11: 25).

Progression

Father God’s purpose for your life and mine is that we grow in Christ. Our heart for God and other people expands as we hear and understand what God’s Word says to us. This happens when we regularly attend worship gatherings, small groups and classes at a church where the Scriptures are taught. Spiritual growth does not automatically occur once Jesus rescues us from sin. It doesn’t even happen just because we hang out at church. We must desire to learn and regularly attend a church where the Word of God is explained in everyday, practical language. Spiritual growth is intentional; it requires the deliberate and ongoing surrender of our minds and hearts to God’s purposes. The book of Acts speaks of the Early Church’s practice: *“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer”* (Acts 2:42).

So, why go to church? We go to church because we are the Church! We go to **connect** with other followers of Christ, to be **protected** from the pitfalls of sin, to **express** our love for God and others, and to **progress** in our spiritual journey.

Practically Speaking

1. Choose a Gospel-centered church to belong to and attend regularly. *Your consistent involvement in church-life will encourage you and those who attend.*
2. Visit with a church leader about personally experiencing water baptism. *This is considered your first act of obedience after salvation and actually your first opportunity to share your testimony.*
3. Inquire about your church's small group ministry and how you might get involved. *This is an important start in getting to know individuals and families with whom you will share your new life.*
4. Ask church leaders about getting involved in a ministry of the church. *Serving in a church keeps you spiritually encouraged and fervent about your relationship with Christ.*

Review Questions

1. How is the church more than a building?
2. Why do I need to be baptized in water?
3. In what ways can a fellow follower of Christ protect me from unhealthy decision-making?
4. What makes a church setting an essential place for personal spiritual growth?



conclusion

YOUR PERSONAL RESCUE STORY

His reply was simple, straightforward, honest, and most profound: “I was blind, and now I can see!” He had a life-altering encounter with the Savior. This middle-aged, sightless man along the road Christ was traveling, had no way of helping himself. When you were unable to see, you were left to a life of poverty and the shame of begging. But Christ changed everything! With a most unique method, He put moist mud made from the dusty dirt-packed path mixed with His own spit onto the man’s eyes and told him to go and wash the mud off in a nearby pool of water. The story goes that the man went to wash the holy dirt off of his eyes and went home seeing...for the first time! When some critics of Christ found out about this outlandish event, they antagonistically questioned the man. That’s where we get his reply: “*I was blind, and now I can see*” (The full story is recorded in John 9).

In light of our theme in this book, your story could be just as profound:

“I was drowning, but I’ve been radically rescued!”

I remember hearing my young friend’s detailed but brief story as he recovered from his dramatic and fearful incident. It was his story and simple, straight to the point. It went something like this: *I was having a lot of fun riding the waves without realizing how deep I was going. Then, I couldn’t touch the bottom and the current was dragging me down. I was going under and taking in a lot of water while struggling to breathe. The next thing I know I’m staring into the faces of people with concerned expressions. I felt washed up but saved at the same time.*

Needless to say, his entire perspective was changed and the rest of the trip for him was framed with a maturity and gratitude. As a matter of fact, everyone in our group seemed to be impacted by his rescue story. It wasn’t a story he wanted, but one he needed. And, you have one, too. Only yours is far more significant in the big picture. Your story is meant to be told by you. It is only as effective as the person who experienced it. It belongs to you. Well, really it belongs to God and He wants to use it to bring many others into this life-saving experience. But people need to hear it from you! They need to know that this Jesus is the only One capable to get them out of the life-threatening waters of disappointment and sin. And, as you tell your story, you reveal that eternal truth! It’s as simple as the once-blind man’s testimony. To break it down, follow this simple outline by answering these three questions as you develop a summary of your personal rescue story:

1. What was your life like before Jesus Christ, the Savior, rescued you?
2. Why did you let Him rescue you?
3. How has your life changed since He rescued you?

When you answer these questions, you will have crafted your personal testimony. Sharing it with others is your witness of what Christ has done in your life. And, the Savior promises to be with you as you share it (Matthew 28:20). There’s nothing like a good rescue story:

**YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN SAVED,
YOU'VE BEEN RESCUED!**

TELL YOUR STORY!

*“... Jesus Christ rescued us from this evil world we're
in by offering himself as a sacrifice for our sins.
God's plan is that we all experience that rescue.”*

Galatians 1:4 (The Message)



RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT
RESCUEDBOOK.ORG