

# Ready, Steady, Grow.



A foundational devotion  
for new believers





# About this Devotional

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**Congratulations on the best  
decision you will ever make!**

**You are a new creation and the old  
is no more! You are transformed,  
renewed and now have eternal life!**

**This devotional was written as a  
foundational guide for new  
believers in Christ but also for old  
timers to refresh on foundational  
truths.**

**We hope these words will help you  
start this incredible journey or keep  
you going.**

**How to use this devotional:**

- Spend a short time praying that God will speak to you before you start reading
  - Read the focus scripture at the beginning of the devotional
  - Read the accompanied reflection of the focus scripture
  - Spend time reflecting on what the devotional is saying and how it can be applied specifically to your own life
  - Come back to the further study scriptures later in the day to help you meditated on the message of the day. Feel free to split the scriptures across the day
  - Write down any impressions, actions and notes that come from your study
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# Discipleship.

In it for the long haul.

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Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.

Matthew 16:24 (NLT).

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Have you noticed that we all seem to be in a hurry? Hurrying to catch the next train, the next flight, the next meeting. Our world gravitates toward quick wins and shortcuts. We want to get to the next big thing, and we want to get there fast. In addition, the rapid growth and expansion of technology has led to shorter and shorter attention spans.

Let's face it, our environment doesn't condition us for long activities or journeys and so, the concept of the long journey of Christian faith seems foreign to many non-believers and believers. There is no microwave version of Christian faith. It is a get your hands dirty kind of journey which lasts our entire lives. It starts with repentance, a conscious decision to turn from our old ways and follow Jesus Christ, and continues throughout our journey on earth as we surrender ourselves to be transformed more and more into who God wants us to be. (Ephesians 4: 22-24).

For this transformation to be successful, we need to commit to go the whole way. We must see the outcome in our minds – a life of holiness lived through relationship with God – and we must make up our minds to achieve it no matter what.

Without a firm commitment, we will easily be distracted by the latest fad, the newest belief trend or simply get bogged down by the fact that we are not seeing quick results.

Sometimes, this journey of holiness hurts, as we find ourselves letting go of habits, lifestyles and sometimes desires which are not necessarily bad but do not align with God's plan for our lives. If we must go the long way, then we must commit to trusting God no matter what comes our way. (Habakkuk 3: 17-18).

We are not without help on this journey though. Jesus himself promised to be with us throughout our journey and we also have a helper in the Holy Spirit to guide us and teach us. (Mathew 28:20; John 14:26). God is not just sitting at the finish line waiting on us but He is with us all the way encouraging, teaching, strengthening and loving us in our successes and failures with a love that we can never truly understand.

And so wherever you are in your journey, a new believer, a returnee or an old timer in need of reminder, make the commitment today to go the long way, the whole way with God. Tap into His abundant grace and mercy and trust that He has your best interest at heart as He transforms you more and more into His image.

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Further reading: Luke 14:25-34, Hebrews 12:1-3, John 14:16, John 14:26, John 8:31-36, Habakkuk 3:17-19, Mathew 28:20



# Repentance.

No to the world, yes to God.

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**He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But whoever confesses and turns away from his sins will find compassion and mercy.**

**Proverbs 28:13 (AMP)**

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Repentance is the first step in the long journey of christian faith. It starts with the realisation that we are or have been wrong about allowing the world to dictate our values, desires and lifestyle. It is acknowledging that we cannot play god in our own lives and choosing to submit ourselves to our creator to work out His purpose in us. Look up the meaning of the word and you will find that it is both a feeling and an action. When we repent, we feel regret, contrite about our actions or thoughts, and in many cases this is accompanied by a public declaration to make it more meaningful. However, repentance needs to be active and continuous for us to progress in our faith.

A simple way to put it is, repentance is saying no to the world and saying yes to God. Emotion is not enough to sustain repentance, realising the depth of our sinful nature should make us remorseful but ultimately it should drive us to God who is able to forgive and rescue us from our sin. If we feel bad momentarily then turn back to our old ways, it is the same as looking at oneself in a mirror, realising how horrible we look and then walking away and completely forgetting what we saw. (James 1: 23–24 NLT).

Repentance is also not a one off affair. It needs to be continuous for us to succeed in our faith. How amazing would it be if at the initial point of repentance, we are immediately transported straight to heaven? Then we would not have to worry about our human nature and innate tendency to sin. Instead we continue to live here on earth encountering and fighting against some of the very things we have renounced. It is inevitable that we will stumble and all believers, no matter how long they have been on this journey have stumbled. (Romans 3:23) But we are not without help, God has given us His Spirit to empower us to overcome sin. He also has given us a fresh batch of steadfast love and mercy every morning. He invites us to come boldly to Him to receive the help we need to live a life free of sin. (Hebrews 4: 14–16).

Make no mistake, it is a tough process. The continuous act of repentance tears us away from bad habits, friends, environments, ways of thinking. Sometimes it feels like we are losing everything we are comfortable with and everything we know. But we must keep our eye on the prize which is a life of holiness and a relationship with Jesus. As the saying goes, nothing good or worthwhile comes easy. Every step away from the world is a step towards a fruitful and rewarding life with God here on earth and in eternity. He is absolutely worth it!

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Further reading: John 8:1–11; Matthew 6:12; Romans 8:1–17;  
Lamentations 3: 22–24; 1 John 1:5–10

# Acceptance.

A gift to be unwrapped.

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**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)**

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How do you respond when someone gives you a gift? Think back to being a child and getting Christmas or birthday presents. You excitedly peel layers of wrapping paper off, eager to get to what's on the inside. Maybe it is the new toy or outfit you asked for, you cannot wait to see it and try it out for the first time. Can you imagine receiving a gift and never opening it? If you gave someone a gift and they didn't open it, you would probably think they were ungrateful or didn't care.

The bible describes salvation as a gift from God. As the anchor scripture says, it is not something we have to work for or earn but it is freely given to us by God. However, it is a living gift, one that we must fully accept and live out daily for it to be effective. It is a gift that comes with power, life change, fruits and gifts of the holy Spirit, but to enjoy these we must first unwrap the box and use what is inside.

In Mark 4: 1– 20, Jesus tells a story of a man who sows seeds on different types of soil, a pathway, stony ground, thorny bushes and good soil. In this story, the seed represents the good news of salvation and the soil, the state of our hearts. Mark 4: 7 says And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. Verse 19 explains that this represents people who hear the good news of God, but the cares of the world, desires for riches and other things enter in and choke the word out and it becomes unfruitful.

This doesn't mean that we cannot desire riches or good things, but if we place those things first in our lives and make them our priority, then there is little room left for salvation to grow and become fruitful.

If you are asking, how do I accept this gift of salvation? It is really simple. If you ever received a gift that you didn't know how to use, you would probably do one of two things; look for a manual, which these days means a quick search on google or youtube, or go to the one who gave the gift and ask them to show you how. Well the same can be done with the gift of salvation, the giver is God and the manual is His word – the bible. God gave us the gift of salvation so that we could be in relationship with Him and accepting this gift means accepting the invitation to intimacy with God. There is no one formula to a relationship with God, in fact God desires authentic intimacy with us. However, there are certain disciplines that can start us on our way including reading the bible, prayer and worship, individually and corporately. As we grow closer and closer to God and submit ourselves to His will, He does the work that leads to a life of fruitfulness.

Accept God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ today. It is a gift to be unwrapped and enjoyed every day of our lives.

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Further reading: John 3:16, John 1:12, Romans 6:17;23, Acts 2:38, Galatians 1:3–5

# Obedience.

Your way, not mine.

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**Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. 1 John 5:3 (NLT)**

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Look up the definition of obedience and you may be put off. You will likely find phrases like “carrying out orders” or “being submissive to authority” both of which are correct definitions. However, christian obedience doesn’t mean following orders like robots, or doing what you are told to do out of fear of retribution. It is an act of freedom and love meaning that we are set free from sin by the grace of God and then willingly submit ourselves to His will out of love and a recognition that His will is the absolute best for us.

Often, christians repent and accept salvation but we toy with the idea of obedience because it doesn’t fit with our desires and the plans we have for ourselves. We think of obedience as being restrictive, costly or rule-based, so we continue to live our christian lives on the edge, giving the bare minimum in the hopes that this is enough to secure our salvation. While we do not advocate a christian life that is heavily focused on following rules, we must emphasise that obedience is essential to living a fruitful christian life.

Walking in obedience to God is a bit like being obedient to our earthly parents. Every loving father wants his child to experience freedom and live a life full of creativity and fulfilment. Out of love, the father sets boundaries, rules, and offers advice and wisdom to protect his child from harm or mistakes.

The father also does his best to develop gifts or talents he sees in his child through instruction and teaching. Obviously there are cases where these approaches can be heavy handed, but always the heart of the father is love for his child.

When we obey our parents, we are recognising their authority over our lives, we give them honour, acknowledging their wisdom and instruction and accepting that their actions are out of love and in our best interest. It is the same in our relationship with God. In John 14:15–16, Jesus says If you love me, obey my commandments. He then goes on to promise the holy Spirit as a helper who will never leave us and will lead us into truth. There will always be times when obeying God is hard however, there is a grace to obey and the Holy Spirit is with us always to help us. Unlike our earthly parents who may sometimes fail in their own wisdom, God is perfect and we always come out on top if we submit to His will.

Obedience can also be hard when we do not understand the why, or do not know who is in authority. It would certainly be hard to obey and follow someone you do not know. This is why it is important to spend time getting to know God, through praying, reading the bible and meeting with other believers. Many times, God doesn’t tell us the why, how or when but when we understand His nature and the fact that everything He allows is for our good, it becomes easier to obey. (Romans 8:28).

Be encouraged today and lean into a life of obedience to God’s Word. God loves you and wants to transform you into the best version of yourself. All you need to do is obey!

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Further reading: Luke 6:43–49, John 14:30–31, Romans 12:1–2, 1 John 2:3–6, Matthew 22: 36–40, Jeremiah 29:11–13

# Perseverance.

Starting *and* finishing well.

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**Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.**

**James 1:12 (ESV)**

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The Cambridge dictionary defines perseverance as a continued effort to do or achieve something, even when this is difficult or takes a long time. Of all the themes discussed in this devotional, perseverance most describes the Christian journey of faith. This journey is not promised to be easy, in fact as long as we are alive we are guaranteed to go through hard times. In John 16:33 Jesus warns his disciples of hard times to come – ...Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world. Christians are not immune to sickness, grief, economic hardship or the gradual ageing of our human body but our faith in God acts as an anchor for us, keeping us grounded in the hard times of life (Hebrews 6:19). God by His power is able to miraculously heal sicknesses, set people free from addiction and even raise the dead but even to the point of the miracle, Christians still go through the same struggles as everyone else.

Jesus Christ experienced rejection, temptation, grief, disappointment and the most painful death even though he was without sin. This makes him a perfect example for perseverance and also reminds us that He is not out of touch with our reality (Hebrews 4:15 MSG).

When Jesus calls us, he is not asking us to aspire to anything that he has not been through and his own experience of struggle means he identifies with us and is gracious to us when we feel weak or overwhelmed. Thinking about all this may be daunting but let's put it this way, we will go through the struggles regardless, so would you rather do it alone or with the companionship of a saviour who has promised to never leave you in your hardest and deepest struggles?

Perseverance is also about becoming more like Jesus. We cannot persevere without patience, steadfastness, commitment, faithfulness and these all describe Jesus. Hebrews 12: 1-2 says he endured the cross, disregarding its shame and is now seated in the place of honour beside God's throne. This is a good time to mention that there is a reward for perseverance. In addition to becoming more and more like Jesus which is a reward in itself, our anchor scripture tells us that God has promised a crown of life to all who love Him and are steadfast in the face of trial.

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Further reading: Galatians 6:9, James 1:2-4, Philippians 1:6, Mathew 10:22



# Perseverance, Cont.

Starting *and* finishing well.

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Think of a long distance marathon where everyone who finishes is awarded with medals. There are usually the top 3 winners who get a medal and perhaps a cash prize, but everyone who finishes the race gets a medal, a token to say you made it to the end. Runners who do not finish, do not get a medal regardless of if they dropped out in the first 5 minutes or in the last 5 minutes. In the same way we as Christians are rewarded for our own race, the bible tells us that God will say to us "Well done, good and faithful servant". Here on earth the rewards are endless- joy, peace beyond our understanding even material rewards and when our physical lives come to an end we get eternal life in the presence of God.

So how is this achieved? We cannot go all the way or even a long way without knowing God and holding onto Him. We must go one step further than just believing in God, to knowing His character and being convinced in our hearts that He is faithful. This is done through spending time with God in prayer, worship, studying the bible and fellowship with other believers. Additionally, as we grow in our Christian journey, we start to accumulate memories of events or times in our lives when God came through for us.

Combined with the testimonies of other believers and the heroes of faith we read of in the bible, we start to build our own impression of who God is and know deep in our hearts that because He has been trustworthy in the past, He can be trusted now. This knowledge enables us to believe His promises for the future and wait patiently for them to happen even when we face hard times.

Ask yourself, what is one thing I need to do today in order to persevere? Then take it one step further and do it. Start a daily bible devotional, join a prayer group, attend and serve in church, spend time alone in prayer with God. Invite Him on the journey and let your faith be completely transformed.

# Blessing.

What goes in, must come out.

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**And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek him. Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)**

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There are rewards for our Christian journey of faith, the bible is clear on this. If we believe that God is good and He is, then we also know that He will reward our faithful obedience. The bible speaks of a place called heaven where there will be no pain, suffering and death, where we will worship God forever and His glory will give light to all. (Revelations 21:4, 22:1-5). Sounds amazing doesn't it? This is the destination for our journey, the final stop. The knowledge that when our lives on earth end we will continue to exist with our creator in heaven is a constant source of hope and encouragement for believers. But we do not have to wait for heaven to enjoy God's blessings, we are blessed even on the journey there. We know that life has its challenges but walking with God also comes with great rewards on earth.

The bible speaks of peace that passes all understanding, joy, healing, building of character, access to power through the holy Spirit, growth, material prosperity. However, the most important reward is God Himself. Jesus calls us to seek the things of God first and all other things come after (Mathew 6:33). This implies that knowing God is the most important aspect of our faith and the spiritual, emotional and material rewards come as a result of knowing Him. Christian faith is as much a journey as it is a relationship with God and like every relationship it requires commitment, time, effort and sacrifice.

When we put in the work, we get to know God and experience Him on a truly intimate level. Think of some of your closest friends, how spending time with them can leave you feeling refreshed and valued. Now imagine intimacy with the creator of the universe – it is truly life changing.

One of the great examples of faith in the bible is Abraham. In Genesis 12, God calls Abraham out of his family, home land and everything he is familiar with and promises to take him to a foreign land. Abraham had no idea where he was going but he chose to trust God and believe that God would keep His promises. On this journey, he went through challenges, he was separated once more from his family and tested to the point of almost sacrificing his son, but the bible says he believed God and God called him righteous because of his faith.

Abraham also received material blessings from God for his obedience. He was blessed with a son at an age where it is humanly impossible. He was wealthy and powerful enough to conquer an army, and thousands of years later we believe that we are descendants of Abraham through faith. Yet the most important reward Abraham ever received was his relationship with God. We know he was not perfect but what makes him stand out is his unwavering trust in God. In fact, Abraham remains the only man in the bible God refers to as a friend (Isaiah 41:8).

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is an invitation to intimacy and friendship with God. It is an invitation which is extended to all. Accept the invitation, come close to God and He will come close to you (James 4:8). He is a good God and when we put Him first, He takes care of everything we need.

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Further reading: Genesis 12:1-4, Genesis 15:1; 6, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:44-46, Hebrews 11:8-12, Jeremiah 29:13

# Next Steps.

If you would like to know more about these next steps, please contact us on any one of our contact details below.

## 1 Get baptised

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Water baptism is a public declaration of one's faith to the world. It is an opportunity to do as Jesus did, but also to tell your friends and family that you identify with the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't bring salvation which can only be gained by believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and saviour and truly repenting of our sins.

Water Baptism is a demonstration of:

- 1) free-will commitment
- 2) Act of Obedience (Matthew 28: 19-20)
- 3) Public declaration
- 4) burial of the old life (Romans 6:3-4)
- 5) resurrection in the new life (Colossians 2:12-14)

If you have made the commitment to follow Jesus and would like to get baptised, please get in touch. We run regular sessions where you can learn more and have a chance to be baptised. We would love for you to join us.

## 2 Connect

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Continuous fellowship is important to our growth as Christians. As iron sharpens iron, connecting with other believers is key to sharpening our faith. When we pray, worship and connect with each other we are encouraged and our faith is fed. Fellowship should also be continuous and not just once a week on Sundays or on religious holidays.

You would find it hard to thrive or grow if you only eat once a week. In the same way, our faith needs continuous and regular feeding in order to grow.

At Alive City church, we have a variety of opportunities for you to connect: corporate prayer, Living room prayer, Sister-hood, Mentality, family fun days, sports days among others.. You are welcome to join us!

## 3 Serve

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When we serve one another, we demonstrate Christ's sacrificial love for humanity and for His church. Jesus Christ did not come to be served as an earthly king would, but He became a servant and gave His life for us all (Mark 10:45). As Christians we are also equipped with gifts and abilities to serve one another, every gift is important and when we use them with the guidance of the holy Spirit, we edify each other and the church (1 Cor 12: 14-26).

You can find out more about spiritual gifts and how to serve others. You can join one of our various ministries reaching the church and communities around us. If you are interested to know more about serving, please reach out to us.



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