



# New Living

## Welcome!

We are glad to have you with us today and want you to feel comfortable as we enter into worship.

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## Essentials to Spiritual Progress

**J**esus wants to change your life! God wants nothing but your success! God provides us with the tools to change our character. We have unlimited potential because of the spiritual blessings we received when we were adopted by God in obedience to the gospel. Everyone of us can become *imitators of God*, Ephesians 5:1. But yet, we are all aware of a sad truth: some never complete the process of discipleship. Some outwardly appear that they have obeyed, but they have not really been converted to Christ. This is why we must learn what is involved in turning to Christ. What is essential to our spiritual progress?

**We must make a "clean break" with the world.** So many new Christians *crash and burn* because of divided affections. Too many people try to serve God while holding onto their former lifestyle. *Progress always consists in taking one or another of two alternatives; abandoning the attempt to combine them.* (Albert Schweitzer) Christianity is an

either/or commitment! Why is this so important? Consider that non-Christians often hold to different value systems and have different goals and hopes in this life. Christians stand apart from this because they **realize what is truly important in life.** In speaking of the need to make a clean break with the world, Paul called on Christians to *come out and be separate* in 2 Corinthians 6:17. Yes this can be difficult, but eternity in heaven is worth every ounce of effort we can muster!

For example, there are lines that the Christian must not cross. Think of how our behavior should change once we begin growing up in Christ. Read the following passages and see if you can find identifying marks of proper Christian conduct: Titus 2:3, James 3:13, 1 Peter 2:12, 3:2. Clear and distinct lines have been drawn as far as who we associate with, 1 Corinthians 15:33. Christians need to evaluate the places they go (1 Peter 4:3-4), what they say, think, and how they deal with people. Our lives must be marked by sheer determination to avoid all sin and error! Why? There is no middle ground. Jesus said, *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other*, Matthew 6:24. There should be no room left in our heart, soul, or mind to love the world.

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**This involves courage.** Ask, *am I willing to take a real risk based on my trust in what God can do?* In Luke 14:26-33, Jesus taught us that there is a cost with Christianity that **MUST** be counted, and if we are to be successful, then we must be totally committed to Jesus Christ. And yes, there may be some major changes we have to make in serving God. It may involve the loss of *so-called* friends, rejection by co-workers, etc. And that is where brothers and sisters in Christ come in. Those who have been in Christ for a long time must not forget that new Christians are making major changes in their life and will need their support, encouragement, and most importantly, their friendship. We need to be here for each other! The courage to change comes out of character. *What kind of person am I? Do I have any “root” in myself? Do I have what it takes to deal with difficulty?* Courage that comes from character is a matter of choice on our part.

**We must become committed to the conversion process.**

Salvation requires more than a “whim” or a “passing moment.” Commitment involves a conscious decision to act! When we obeyed the gospel, we went on record, confessing our loyalty to Jesus Christ and our desire to live for Him. Have we made a promise to ourselves **to do** what we have **decided**? *You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one,* (James Anthony Froude). Just the possession of a desire to get to heaven is not enough. We must act on our desire. We must make a little progress each day in finishing what we have started. Paul wrote, *But now **finish doing it also**, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the **completion** of it by your ability,* 2 Corinthians 8:11. God calls us to move in faith, not with a wavering, wishy-washy spirit. This principle is seen in James 1:6-8: *But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.* God has no room for double-mindedness! *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded,* James 4:8. We cannot indefinitely “think about” what we are going to do—we must make a commitment to actually do it!

***We must make  
a “clean break”  
with the world.***

Are you willing to acknowledge your faith? Will you confess your faith, Romans 10:9-10? Will you confess the truth, Ephesians 4:15? If you will, you are an imitator of Jesus. The person who does not continually confess his faith is not likely to keep it. We must bear witness to the truth in every situation and verbalize our commitment to live for Christ. Are you maintaining your confession? *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful,* Hebrews 10:23. God calls on us to make a commitment to truth. Doing so will ensure spiritual progress. Are you making spiritual progress?

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