A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

Starting Out with Christ

Starting Out with Christ · Book 9



First steps into a new life with God

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Introduction

Sooner or later most people ask why they are here and whether life has any real purpose. Some have an answer early. Others search for years. I want to start with that question, because the Bible answers it, and the answer leads straight to Jesus Christ.

I came to Christ as a boy, but I drifted from God more than once through my own bad choices. I wish I had understood early that following Christ is a daily walk built on grace, not on looking like I had it together. I wrote this book for anyone taking first steps with Jesus, or coming back after wandering off. Getting the basics right keeps you grounded when life hits hard.

This book is for someone who is just beginning, or who has been close to the door for a long time without walking through it. I want to keep it simple and honest. God made us, sin separated us from Him, Christ made a way back, and He invites us to come and follow Him.

1 Why I am here

> *everyone who is called by My name, and whom I created for My glory; I formed him; indeed, I made him.*
> **Isaiah 43:7 (SLB)**

Isaiah 43:7 (SLB) says God created His people for His glory. That means my life is not an accident. I was made by Someone, and I was made for Someone. Life

on this earth is far too detailed and well ordered to be the product of chance.

God made me so that He could love me. First John 4:19 (SLB) says, "We love Him because He first loved us." God also made me so that I could love Him in return. When Jesus was asked for the greatest commandment, He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:36-38, SLB).

Jesus also said, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10, SLB). That is not a promise of an easy life or a rich one. It is a promise of a full life, one lived with God instead of apart from Him. Real happiness starts when I find the purpose I was made for.

At 16 I aced the Air Force tests and passed my high school exam early so I could get a computer job. When they would not give me that job, I walked away and had to rethink my direction. I spent decades building a career after that. Hard seasons taught me that my real purpose was never a job title. We are here to know God and walk with Him.

2 The problem of sin

If God made us for Himself, why does He feel so far away? The Bible's answer is sin. Sin is anything that goes against who God is and what He has said. It can be as small as a white lie or as large as taking a life, but it always puts me at the center instead of God.

Romans 3:23 (SLB) says, "all sinned and fall short of the glory of God." That includes me, and it includes you. Adam and Eve sinned first, and every person since has followed the same pattern. Sin has broken the relationship between God and people.

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

Romans 6:23 (SLB) is honest about where sin leads. The payment is death, which includes being separated from God forever. I cannot fix that by trying harder or doing enough good things to balance the scale. That is the bad news, and it is important to hear it plainly, because it makes the good news make sense.

For years I was a fully functioning alcoholic with a successful career. I told myself that because I still went to work and provided for my family, I was not hurting anyone. That illusion broke on May 29, 2020, when my wife caught me. I had lied to myself to protect a habit that was destroying my life. Sin always promises it is under control until it brings you to a dead end.

3 What God has done

The same verse that tells me the wages of sin also tells me about a gift. God did not wait for me to clean up my life. Romans 5:8 (SLB) says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Jesus Christ is God's eternal Son. He became a man, lived without sin, and died on the cross in my place. Paul says "that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, SLB). He took what I had coming so that I could be brought back to God.

> *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this **is** not from yourselves; the gift **is** of God, not from works, so that no one may boast.*
>
> **Ephesians 2:8-9 (SLB)**

Grace is God's undeserved kindness. It is His favor reaching toward people who could never earn it. Ephesians 2:8-9 (SLB) makes it clear that salvation is a gift received by faith. No church, no good deed, and no amount of effort can buy it. God does the saving.

I have led Bible studies, served as a lay pastor and preached. Many people think they have to clean up their lives before God will accept them. Romans 5:8 says Christ died for us while we were still sinners. I learned that in my own life when I stopped trying to fix myself. God does not wait for us to get right before He rescues us.

4 Saying yes to Christ

So what do I do with this? First, I admit that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself. Second, I believe that Jesus died for my sins and that God raised Him from the dead. Third, I turn from my sin and receive Him as my Savior and Lord. Receiving Him as Savior means trusting that He paid for my

sins. Receiving Him as Lord means letting Him direct my life.

> *that if you confess with your mouth Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him out of **the** dead, you will be saved.*
> **Romans 10:9 (SLB)**

It helps to tell God plainly what is in your heart. A simple prayer might sound like this: Lord, I know I have sinned, and I am sorry. I believe Jesus died for me and rose again. I receive Him now as my Savior and my Lord. Thank You for forgiving me and making me Your child.

If you have prayed that and meant it, you can take God at His word. John 1:12 (SLB) says, "as many as received Him, to them He gave authority to become children of God."

When I was a boy in Victorville, I mowed the lawn for Pastor Jimmy Carter, who lived down our street. He took time with me and brought me to church, and that is where I heard the gospel and said yes to Christ. Years later, on October 19, 1995, I was baptized to make that faith public, and I baptized my wife the same day. Saying yes to Jesus often starts with one person taking time to show you the door.

5 The first steps after

Second Corinthians 5:17 (SLB) says, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." That does not mean every habit disappears overnight. It means a new life has started, and it needs to be fed.

A few things help that new life grow. Talk to God every day in prayer. Read the Bible every day and let it shape what you believe. Find a Bible-believing church where you can learn and worship with other believers. Be baptized as a public way of saying that you belong to Jesus. And tell someone what Christ has done for you.

New believers also need people who will walk with them. Accountability means giving an honest account of my life to a mature believer I trust. Proverbs 27:17 (SLB) says, "Iron grows sharp by iron, and a man sharpens the face of his neighbor."

You do not have to turn your back on old friends. They may be the very people who need to see what Jesus can do in a life. Jesus said that "everyone who does sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34, SLB), and He also said, "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36, SLB). God is not trying to take the joy out of life. He is setting you free to find it.

When I entered a 12-step program in 2020, I had to learn to walk out my faith one day at a time instead of relying on willpower. That showed me how much new believers need simple, Scripture-based habits right after they decide to follow Christ. It is part of why I wrote a Christ-centered 12-step course. Small, steady steps in God's Word keep a new faith from stalling.

Starting Out with Christ

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Why am I here, and does my life have a purpose? This book answers that question from the Bible. It looks at what sin has done, what God has done about it through Jesus Christ, how to say yes to Him, and the first steps to take after you do.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 (SLB)

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