



FIRST STEPS

STUDIES TO BEGIN YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST
By Marlon Furtado

“What Else Is New About Me”

WHAT ELSE IS NEW ABOUT ME?

In lesson 1 you learned that when you opened your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, you were forgiven, adopted and granted eternal life. In this lesson, you will understand six more exciting changes that took place in your relation to God. You will read what the Bible says was true about your situation before you trusted Jesus and what it is now.

UNDERSTANDING SIX NEW THINGS ABOUT YOU

1. You are **FOUND**

Before we came to Christ, we were **LOST**. Jesus said in **Luke 19:10**, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was **lost**.”*

When you placed your trust in Christ, you were **FOUND**. Jesus told a story in **Luke 15:3-7**: *“Then Jesus told them this parable: ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have **found** my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”*

Jesus wants you to realize that before you came to Him you were like a boy or girl lost out in the forest. You didn’t know how to get back, so He went looking for you, found you, and has brought you home. Jesus has saved you.

2. You are **RIGHTEOUS & JUSTIFIED**

Before we came to Christ, we were **GUILTY** of breaking God’s standards. **James 2:10** reads, *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is **guilty** of breaking all of it.”* Should we stand before God’s judgment bench without Christ, He would have to declare, *“Guilty! The evidence is clear — you are guilty of breaking My laws.”* There would be no plea-bargaining, no appeal, no hope.

But, when you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you were immediately declared **NO LONGER GUILTY**. Let’s read **Romans 3:22-24**. *“This **righteousness** from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are **justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*

Being *justified* is the legal announcement of your acquittal. Because of Jesus’ death and your trust in Him, God is legally and morally able to declare you righteous. You have been set free from the charge of “sinner” and pronounced righteous instead. God, the Judge, has announced His verdict. Every person who has placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ stands acquitted *now* and declared fully *righteous*.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Being declared righteous doesn’t mean that we go around with our noses in the air, thinking we are better than everyone else. It means that, though we were guilty, because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, the penalty of our sins has been completely paid and we can be set free.

3. You are **HEADED FOR HEAVEN**

Before we came to Christ, we were **HEADED FOR HELL**. **Revelation 20:11-15** pictures the final judgment of people by God. Verse 15 states, *“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the **lake of fire**.”* Every person who does not accept Jesus Christ is on their way to an eternity in hell. That’s the terrible penalty for our sin. But God doesn’t want anyone to go there, and that is why He made it possible to avoid hell and go to heaven.

Jesus promised in **John 14:1-3** *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and **take you to be with me** that you also may be where I am.”* While this verse doesn’t use the word *heaven*, that is the place Jesus was referring to. Right this moment He is preparing the eternal home for each of His followers. He promises that after everything is ready He will come back to get us.

4. You are a **FRIEND OF GOD** and at **PEACE WITH HIM**

Before we came to Christ, we were **ENEMIES** of God. **Romans 5:10** states, *“For if, when we were **God’s enemies**, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”* **Colossians 1:21** says the same thing, *“Once you were alienated from God and were **enemies** in your minds because of your evil behavior.”* You probably didn’t realize that you were at war with God, but you were. It may have been a “cold war” in which you just kept God at arm’s length. For others it was a “heated conflict” in which there was open rebellion against God.

But this all changed the moment you asked Christ to be your Savior and Lord. **Romans 5:1** gives us the good news that the war is over. It says, *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* What happened? How did the war end so abruptly? It’s simple — you surrendered and acknowledged that God was the Winner.

Christians are much more than “good losers” in the war against God. When we surrender and become a follower of Jesus, He calls us His friends. Read the good news in **John 15:13-15**, *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his **friends**. You are my **friends** if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you **friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*

It’s one thing to have a casual relationship with someone important. It’s quite another thing to be his or her close friend. Jesus calls you His friend. He invites you to feel comfortable in His presence.

5. You are **ALIVE**

The Bible states that before we came to Christ, we were **DEAD**. Obviously we were not dead *physically*, but we were dead *spiritually*. Read **Ephesians 2:1, 4-5**. *“As for you, you were **dead** in your transgressions and sins. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us **alive** with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.”*

In **Luke 15:11-32** Jesus tells a story about a father whose younger son leaves home and wastes his money on wicked living. After the money runs out, so do his “friends” and his life goes downhill quickly. Unable to provide for himself, he humbly returns to his father and asks for a job and shelter. The father, a picture of God in this story, throws his arms around his son, lovingly welcomes him back home, and throws a huge party. In **verse 24** he gives the reason: *“For this son of mine was **dead** and is **alive** again; he was lost and is found.”*

Now, what do these passages mean when they say we were *dead*? Let's say you were working in a funeral home. People would think you were strange if you asked a dead person to lift his arm or turn his head to help you dress them for their viewing. Why? Because they are dead! They can't respond to your promptings. In a similar way, God tries to express His love to people, but without Christ they **aren't aware and can't respond**. Deep inside, that part of them is lifeless. They may be religious, but without Jesus, they are dead. When Jesus enters our lives, that part of us comes to life and we are finally able to know God's love. Like the rebellious son who left home, there was absolutely no ongoing relationship with the father. He was "dead" until he humbled himself and acknowledged that he didn't deserve anything good from his father.

Once we realized that we didn't deserve God's favor, but needed His forgiveness, like the son we came to our Heavenly Father, acknowledging our sin and surrendering leadership of our life to Jesus. Now that Christ lives in you, you are much more aware of God. He seems so much more real than He ever did. That's because you are now **alive** to Him.

6. You are **BORN AGAIN**

One evening Jesus was talking with a man named Nicodemus, a highly respected religious leader in his community. He had witnessed some of Jesus' miracles and couldn't deny them, but he was still confused. He knew that Jesus was from God, but all the pieces of the puzzle didn't fit for him.

Their conversation is found in the third chapter of John. In **John 3:3** Jesus replied to Nicodemus, *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is **born again**."* He was still confused, knowing that physical birth was impossible to repeat. Jesus further explained in **verses 5 and 6**, *"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."*

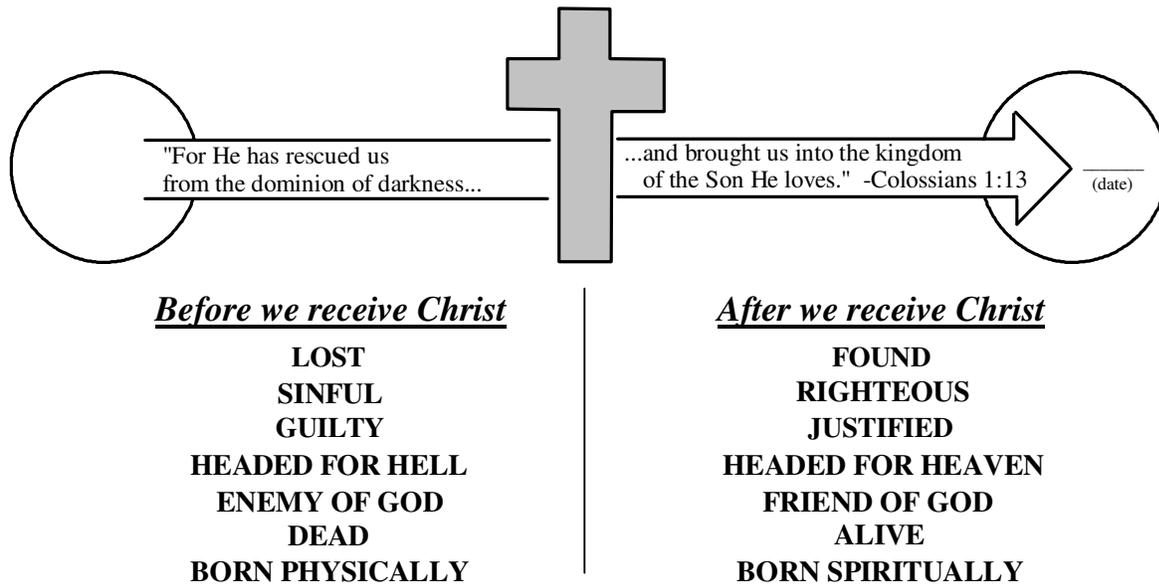
Jesus was telling Nicodemus that having a *physical* birthday did not insure he would go to heaven. Everyone needs a second birthday, a *spiritual* one. When that takes place, a person immediately becomes one of God's children, a permanent member of His family. **John 1:12-13** says, *"Yet to all who received him [meaning, Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but **born of God**."*

Another passage, **1 Peter 1:3-5**, states, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us **new birth** into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."*

From the author:

I received Christ on September 12, 1971. That is my *spiritual* birthday, and I take more joy in celebrating that day each year than I do my physical birthday. That's why I wanted you to write down in Lesson One the date when you opened your heart to Christ. That day is the most significant day of your life because at that moment, these six changes we've just investigated took place.

The diagram below shows all of these changes in your life. The dividing line is the moment you surrendered your heart to Jesus Christ and acknowledged that His death on the cross was for the penalty your sins deserved.



LET'S OPEN YOUR BIBLE

Below are some verses that more clearly define what transpired when you received Christ.

John 1:12

Since I received Jesus and believe in His name, I became a _____ of _____.

Revelation 3:20

I opened the door of my life to Jesus. He has responded to my invitation and now lives _____ me.

Colossians 1:14

In Jesus, I have been completely _____ of all my sins.

2 Corinthians 5:17

I am a _____; the old has gone and the new has come.

1Corinthians 2:12

I have received the _____ who is from God.

Romans 8:15

I have been adopted into God's family and now God is my _____.

Summary: You became a new creation the moment you placed your faith in the Lord Jesus. God's Spirit lives in you. He will help you to live this new life. You are not perfect, nor will you ever be in this life. But you are forgiven, and your past no longer needs to haunt you or direct you. You have a whole new life ahead of you now that God is your loving Heavenly Father.