

**THE BEST IS YET TO COME
YOUR GUIDE TO:**

LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE

BY PASTOR LARRY MACON JR.



**YOUR GUIDE FOR LIFE AND A NEW OR RENEWED
RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Taking the step of faith **to follow Jesus Christ is the greatest step** you will ever take. It's the one action that will allow you to experience new opportunities and gain a new perspective on life and what God has in store for you.

In the Bible Jesus said,

"...I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly."

—John 10:10

That abundant life began the moment you stepped over the line of faith. But that is just the beginning. **You've taken the first step; now what?**

This book will give you an idea of what's next. You will discover what your next step is. And you'll read what the Bible, God's Word, says about each move.

You may still have questions about your decision. You may even have doubts. That's ok. But don't let those questions or doubts stop you from moving forward. Use those things to fuel your walk. And **continue to experience the abundant life – one step at a time.**

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Larry L. Macon Sr.,
Pastor Larry L. Macon Jr.
Pastor Dan L. Macon



WITNESS NUMBER 1:

The Bible

Many people think that they can base their faith on their feelings. The problem is when their feelings plummet, their faith goes down with them!

The Christian faith is based on something much more solid than feelings. It is based on what Jesus accomplished for us through His life, **His death on the cross, and His resurrection.** The Bible witnesses to these historical events, and it is through the Bible that you can become certain of your newfound faith.

But what is the Bible? The Bible is not a record of what people have thought about God; it is a record of what God thinks about us!

It is God's inspired message to humankind. That is why Christians call it "the Word of God." The Bible is a book you can completely rely on to tell you the truth about God – and about yourself.

As Jesus said, **Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away** (Matthew 24:35).

Our feelings may come and go, but we can know that we are saved and accepted by God because the Bible says we are.

JESUS

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

When you become a Christian, the ownership of your life changes hands. In the past you were the boss, doing things in the way you saw best. For many people, this meant looking after themselves above everything else.

But now you have a **new boss**. You have given your life to Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be a Christian – Jesus is now in charge as the Lord of your life. The Apostle Paul said: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

What does this mean in practice? It means a **new way of life**. As we submit our lives to God and become His servants, we find an amazing new freedom. We are no longer the slaves of sin – instead, we are free to do good. As Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

**We find
an amazing new
freedom**

We start to live out the life that Jesus called “the kingdom of God.” In simple terms, this means accepting that God now rules us as our King. Jesus taught about this way of life in His famous “Sermon on the Mount,” which you can find in Matthew chapters from 5 to 7.



YOUR BIRTH CERTIFICATE

Jesus said that when someone enters God's kingdom, or becomes a Christian, they are born again. "Most assuredly, I [Jesus] say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

When you were born your parents received a birth certificate, which you still use to prove your identity. You are who you are, no matter how you feel about it. Even if you were to suffer a memory loss, your identity would remain the same. Your birth certificate states who you are – and that settles it.

The same applies to what the Bible says about you. If you have received Jesus Christ into your life, then you have been born into God's family. The Bible is your birth certificate. It declares your identity even when you do not feel like a Christian, or if you forget it! We can trust the Bible to declare our new birth the same way we trust our original birth certificate.

The disciple John put it boldly:

**BELOVED,
now we are children of God
(1 John 3:2).**

And we have already seen that Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

These are powerful words! They affirm that if you have repented and received Jesus, then you have eternal life and have crossed over from death to life. You can stake your life on it!

Duties in Personal Christian Living

1. To maintain family and secret devotions (I Thess. 5:17-18; Acts 17:11).
2. To religiously educate the children (2 Tim. 3:15; Deut 6:4-7)
3. To seek the salvation of the lost (Acts 1:8; Matt. 4:19; Psalms 126:5-6; Prov. 11:30).
4. To walk circumspectly in the world, and to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment (Eph. 5:15; Phil. 2:14-15; 1 Peter 2:11-12).
5. To avoid gossip and excessive anger (Eph. 4:31; 1 Peter 2:21; Col. 3:8; James 3:1-2).

To Live the Blessed Life

- 6.
7. To be zealous in our efforts for Christ (Titus 2:14).

Duties to Fellow Members

1. To watch over one another in love (I Peter 1:22).
2. To pray for one another (James 5:16).
3. To aid in sickness and distress (Gal. 6:2; James 2:14-17).
4. To cultivate sympathy and courtesy (I Peter 3:8).
5. To be slow to take offense, always ready for reconciliation (Eph 4:30-32).

The CHURCH & YOU

Because the church consists of God's people, it is where you encounter God in community with others. One Christian leader put it simply:

"A church is where the Holy Spirit is."

In the presence of God's people, we are brought face to face with God's love, power, and majesty. By new birth you have entered the family of God and belong to the household of faith.

A church is a place where you can **feel at home** and where you can put your roots down, like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

(Psalm 1:3)

BY BEING A PART OF THE CHURCH YOU CAN ...

Get to know other Christians and make new friends who will be able to encourage you in your newfound faith.

Hear teaching from the Bible, which will help you to understand your faith better, and enable you to grow.

Meet with Jesus in the company of others. As Jesus Himself said: Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20).



BAPTISM

Simply put, baptism is **an outward display and celebration** of your inward decision to trust Christ with your eternity. It's **an act of obedience, a step of acknowledgement** that is representative of the fact that Jesus died on the cross, was buried and walked out of the grave, alive, so each of us can have eternal life.

When you step into the water, you are letting the world know that you have walked into a new life of faith in Jesus Christ and that you are committing to follow him down a new path. If you've made the decision to follow Jesus, baptism is **the next step in your spiritual journey.**

You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

— Acts 22:15-16





SERVING

Most of us want to make a difference; **we want to leave our footprint on the world.** And God has gifted each of us with a particular set of skills to do just that—**through the local church.**

As a new Christ follower, one of the most powerful lessons you can put into action is serving in the church; it's stepping outside of your comfort level and stepping up to serve others.

Jesus himself said that he did not come to be served, but to serve others. When you volunteer your time and talent in the local church, you will **discover the key to unlocking a life of influence and change.** Read these words from the Bible. And take the next step of serving in the church.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

—1 Peter 4:10

★★★★





LIVING A LIFE OF WORSHIP

Worship is one of those words that many people think is just a “churchy” word. But the truth is that we all worship. Everyone has something they **focus on, respond to and celebrate.**

As a new believer, it is vital that you continue to worship. Just make sure you are directing it to the right place. As you step into your new life, remain focused on what Christ has done for you, respond to him with obedience and celebrate him daily with your words and actions.

But worship isn’t something that only happens once a week in a church building. **It’s a 24/7 deal.** It’s what happens when you are at work, at the store, in the gym or even at home. And from Bible study to praying; from weekend services at church to journaling at home, worship is something that will **deepen and strengthen your relationship with Jesus** as you continue your walk with him.

Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

—Psalm 96:9



PROMISES YOU CAN RELY ON

Here are some of God's promises from the Bible for those who turn to Him. If you have asked God to forgive your sins and give you new life, then you can be sure that these promises are made directly to you.

How can I know that God hears me?

Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:12-13).



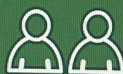
How can I be sure that God loves me?

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).



How can I know that God is with me?

Jesus said, the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out (John 6:37). God Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).



How can I be certain that I am forgiven?

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).





THE LOCAL CHURCH

When you stepped over the line of faith and chose to follow Jesus, you became part of a movement. But this movement, Christianity, is not a solo sport. That's why the local church exists.

Each week, when we gather together as a church, we come to **worship God, discover his plan** for our lives, and learn how to **live out his priorities**.

As you continue to walk with faith, make a commitment to the local church. Because, as we learn from those who first stepped out to follow Christ, the local church is crucial to our growth and experience of the abundant life Christ has in store for us.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

—Hebrews 10:25



UNDERSTANDING YOUR DECISION TO FOLLOW CHRIST

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God. —**John 1:12**

MAN



GOD



GOD LOVES YOU
and has a plan for your life.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." —**Jeremiah 29:11**

**YOUR SIN CAUSES
A COSMIC CHASM**
between you and God.

MAN

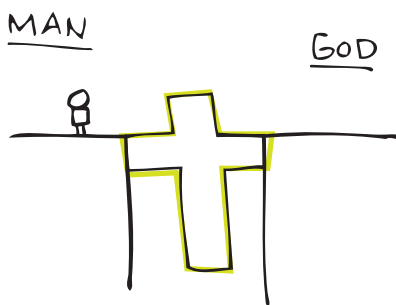


GOD

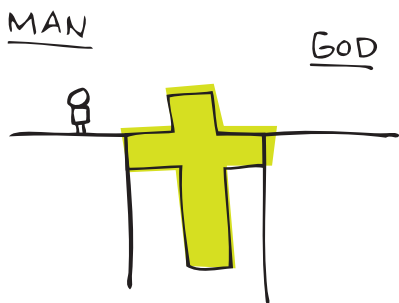


But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.
—**Isaiah 59:2**

**GOD SENT
JESUS CHRIST**
to die on the cross.



But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. —Romans 5:8



IT'S YOUR CHOICE
to receive the gift or not.

...if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. —Romans 10:9-10





SOWING SEEDS

There is no greater investment than contributing to the only thing Jesus ever built, the local church. With God's favor and the faithful support of so many people, this church is making an incredible impact by offering the hope and purpose found in Jesus Christ.

Together, we equip families and leaders, empower the next generation, and support those who are less fortunate. In short, when you give back to God financially through the local church, you are helping us extend the reach and build God's church. And by God's grace we will continue to expand the borders of His Church and reach one life at a time.

Malachi 3:10 NIV

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it (overflows).

Ten Most Asked Questions About Tithing

In an effort to encourage the saints of God to give the Bible Way, Tithes and Offerings, and in full recognition of the misunderstanding that often surrounds it, I am submitting this dialogue of questions and answers in which I attempt to clear up some of the confusion. Tithing is God's way and to fall short of that method is to come short of God's perfect purpose for His church and His saints.

QUESTION #1: WHAT IS TITHING?

Answer: Tithing is percentage or proportionate giving. Scriptural References: Genesis 14:18-20 – Abraham gave tithes to the Priest Melchizedek, a Tenth part of all he had. Genesis 28:20-22 – Jacob promised God a Tenth of all he had.

Example: For every dollar, a Tenth or a dime BELONGS to God.

\$ 10.00	We owe	\$ 1.00
\$ 50.00	We owe	\$ 5.00
\$ 100.00	We owe	\$ 10.00
\$ 1,000.00	We owe	\$ 100.00

QUESTION #2: WHY SHOULD I TITHE?

Answer: God's Word commands that we do so. Scriptural Reference: Malachi 3: 6-12

QUESTION #3: BUT THAT IS AN OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE, ISN'T TITHING A PART OF THE LAW? AREN'T WE NOW LIVING UNDER GRACE?

Answer: Of course we are under Grace, however, this does not exclude us from tithing. The first tithers lived and gave tithes before the Law was given. The standard for

giving, that is, God's method for giving, was established before Moses was given the Law.

QUESTION #4: IF THIS IS TRUE, WHY DOESN'T THE NEW TESTAMENT PLACE EMPHASIS ON IT?

Answer: The New Testament church and writers took for granted the practice of tithing as the declared way of supporting the house of God. Scriptural References: Luke 18:10-14: Jesus used a parable to illustrate the difference between a Pharisee and his pride, and a publican, who was blessed because of his humbleness. However, within the parable, Jesus has the Pharisee say, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." It was not the fasting or the giving of tithes that brought the criticism, but rather the pride that caused the Pharisee to boast.

What he did was accepted, why he did it, was not. I believe that this is tangible evidence that Jesus accepted tithing as the established way of giving. Hebrews 7:8, "And here men that die receive tithes, but there He receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that He liveth." I Corinthians 16:2 Paul is obviously speaking of proportionate giving, a giving that is based on the amount of income. Indeed, for those who insist that the New Testament does not teach tithing, here is a good New Testament standard, which of course exceeds 10%.



Ten Most Asked Questions About Tithing Cont....

QUESTION #5 TO WHOM DO I PAY MY TITHES AND WHAT IS MEANT BY OFFERING?

Answer: Malachi tells us to bring our tithes into the storehouse, “that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 3:10 Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him, as God hath prospered him.” I Corinthians 16:2

These two scriptures indicate that your tithes are to be given to the place of your feeding. The pasture into which you as sheep are being nourished and fed by a shepherd (Pastor).

Secondly, the purpose of tithes has always been designated for the upkeep of the temple and priests. Numbers 18:20-21 records, “And the Lord spake unto Aaron. Thou shalt not have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And, behold, I have given the children of Levi (priests) all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their services which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.”

Although the New Testament church developed into a highly structural organization and the Protestant church (among which, as Baptist, we stand) no longer hold to the Catholic concept of “priesthood,” the principle of giving remains the same. The local church becomes our temple and the pastor-shepherd the spiritual leader (or priest).

WHAT ABOUT OFFERING? Tithes are that portion that we owe to God. Offerings are of that portion of giving that we give cheerfully and willingly, but beyond the responsibility of our tithes. The amount is voluntary and the motivation stems from a generosity.

QUESTION #6: DO I PAY TITHES FROM THE GROSS AMOUNT, THAT IS, THE AMOUNT THAT I RECEIVE BEFORE ANYTHING IS TAKEN OUT (E.G., SOCIAL SECURITY, INCOME TAX, ETC.) OR AM I ONLY OBLIGATED TO PAY THE 10% FROM THAT AMOUNT TAKEN HOME?

Answer: Admittedly, there seems to be some questions and honest difference of opinion between those who preach and teach tithing. Some believe that we are only commanded to pay from that which we actually receive. Others believe that we are obligated from the salary that we earn, regardless of what is taken from it. Proverb 3:9-10, commands that we, "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with a new wine."

The Word would seem to indicate that if we give God from the top (gross), He will so bless that we need never worry about meeting our financial obligations. Since there is an honest opinion on both sides of the issue. I would never become dogmatic in support of either. However, I personally lean toward giving God from the top.

QUESTION #7: SUPPOSE MY HUSBAND OR MY WIFE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN TITHING, OR IS NOT A CHRISTIAN, SHOULD I DO SO ANYWAY?

Answer: If you do not work, and the income for the household comes from your mate, you must not insist on tithing from that source. However, if you have a personal source of income or an allowance for your own use, it would be quite proper to give a percentage, regardless of how small. Remember, it is not the amount, but the heart's desire. Never-the-less, the Word is supporting of family harmony and God would never be pleased with any deliberate or known effort to disrupt that unity even in the name of the church.

QUESTION #8: SUPPOSE I DON'T PAY TITHES?

Answer: It will not affect your salvation, but it does place you in the position of being Disobedient to a command from God. Tithing or proportionate giving is God's will and to not make an attempt to seek that will renders us beyond the kind of blessing that comes with obedience.

Ten Most Asked Questions About Tithing Cont...

Malachi 3:6-12

QUESTION #9: WHY SHOULD I PAY TITHES?

Answer:

1. Because we are commanded to do so.
2. Because we honor the Lord by doing so.
3. Because we show our love and obedience by doing so.

QUESTION #10: WHAT WILL TITHING NOT DO?

Answer:

1. It will not save you.
2. It will not buy a special place in heaven for you.
3. It will not influence God for you.

However, it will trigger the very windows of heaven that blessings will overtake you. For there is a principal which works for the cheerful giver. Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete, withal, it shall be measured to you again. In other words, as you give, so are you given. II Corinthians 9:6-7, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity (forced); for God loveth a cheerful giver."

Tithing is God's way, and to fall short of that method, is to fall short of God's perfect purpose for His church and His saints.

Why I Love a Large Church

Why I Love a Large Church

Mt. Zion Church of Oakwood has become a large church. While we rejoice over the way the Lord has blessed this congregation, some who are not familiar with a large church are intimidated by it. There is a misconception that a big church is cold and formal or will neglect its people and compromise its principles.

There are dangers that are unique to a large congregation, just as there are to a small one, but there are also many advantages about a big church that make it special.

1. A large church is scriptural. The first church began with 3,000 members (Acts 2:41)! It grew every day until the number of men grew to about 5,000 (Acts 4:4). These people met in homes, but they also met together in the temple courts (Acts 2:46). We believe that when the Lord's hand is on His church, it will grow (Acts 11:21). Church growth will vary according to the size of the community and the receptivity of the people, but the church was meant to be an expanding body.

2. A large church can provide rich fellowship. The first church began with 3,000 members and they continued in the apostles' teaching and fellowship (Acts 2:42). They came to know and appreciate one another. In a large church, that fellowship is provided through many small group opportunities, such as adult Bible study, youth groups, children's ministry, and accountability groups.

3. A large church provides an excellent opportunity for evangelism. It is much easier to invite others to come to church with you if the church is large. There are many special services and quality programs that provide opportunities for Christians to invite friends and family members. Also, the unchurched are often more likely to attend since they do not feel threatened in a large group. Soon they begin to feel comfortable and the truths of the gospel sink in.

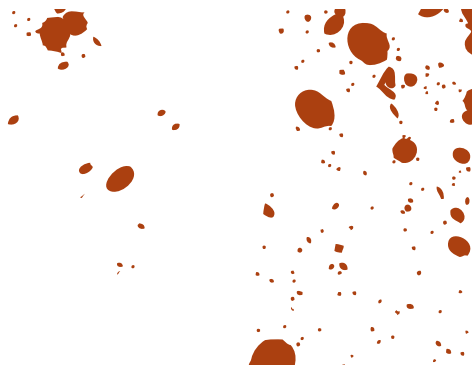
4. A large church provides many opportunities for service. Some people assume they are not needed in a larger body. That's far from the truth. The large church has more opportunities to serve than in a small church because there are more positions to fill.

5. A large church is inspirational. Most of us enjoy going to athletic contests when there is a "packed house." There's something about a large number of people that creates excitement and generates energy. Jesus said He wanted His house to be full (Luke 14:23). It's inspirational to sing and share with thousands of Christians. It's thrilling to hear a large choir or to enjoy an excellent drama.

6. A large church has a positive influence. There is strength in numbers. One church of several thousand has an opportunity to witness to and influence in missions and world outreach. Our size enables us to provide meaningful support ministries to those who need special attention.

7. A large church prepares us for heaven! In Revelation 7:9 (NIV), the Apostle John described his vision of heaven, "...I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne... wearing white robes..."

The large church has been used by God to evangelize the lost, edify the saved, minister to those in need and be a conscience in the community. We invite you to join us as we seek to glorify God's name in a big way.



31 DAY READING PLAN

on the life of JESUS

Day 01

Birth

Luke 2:1-21

Day 02

At the
Temple

Luke 2:41-52

Day 03

Baptism

Matt. 3:13-17

Day 04

Temptations

Luke 4:1-13

Day 08

Cost of
Discipleship

Matt. 16:24-28

Day 09

Vineyard
Laborers

Matt. 20:1-16

Day 10

Marriage
Feast

Matt. 22:1-14

Day 11

Christ's
Return

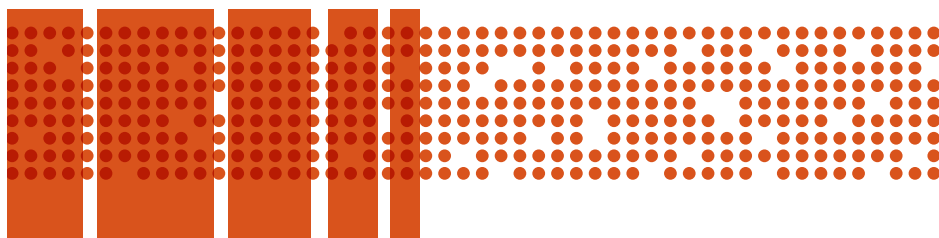
Matt. 24:1-25



Day 05	Day 06	Day 07
First Miracle	Sermon on the Mount	Instructions
John 2:1-12	Matt. 5-7	Matt. 12:16-42
Day 12	Day 13	Day 14
Sowing Parables	Good Samaritan	Prayer
Mark 4:1-34	Luke 10:25-37	Luke 11:1-13



Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18
Lost Parables	Stewardship	New Birth	Holy Spirit
Luke 15:1-32	Luke 16:1-18	John 3:1-21	John 14:16-31, 16:5-15
Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25
Triumphal Entry	Last Supper	Washing Feet	Prayers of Jesus
Mark 11:1-11	Matt. 26:17-35	John 13:5-29	John 17
Day 29	Day 30	Day 31	
Road to Emmaus	Great Commission	Ascension	
Luke 24:13-35	Matt. 28:16-20	Acts 1:1-11	



Day 19

Good Shepherd

John 10

Day 20

Vine and Branches

John 15

Day 21

Lazarus

John 11

Day 26

Trials

Luke 22:47-23:25

Day 27

Crucifixion

Luke 23:26-56

Day 28

Resurrection

Luke 24:1-12

