

WHAT TO EXPECT AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

Believers are not exempt from trial or trouble—but believers are promised a “Helper” (John 14:26), an Advocate (1 John 2:1), and that God will never “leave nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:5). Believers are also promised forgiveness, mercy, grace, God’s love, and the hope of eternal life in heaven. Whatever difficulties we face or sacrifices we make on earth will pale when compared to the glorious riches that await the faithful in heaven. However, and this is a big however, being a believer at this point in history (the last days) means that your life on earth will become more difficult—not more comfortable. Scripture notes that believers should expect the following:

- **Oppression:** Evil is on the rise. It will become increasingly difficult to be a witness for the Lord without consequence. Expect that your work and relationships will be impacted.
- **Satan will try to discourage and destroy you:** He hates all that God loves, blesses and uses for His glory. Stay prayerful, in the Word, and focused on the positive. Dwell on the promises of God rather than the difficulty or pain of the moment. Do not let a guard down. (1 Peter 5:8; 1 Corinthians 10:12)
- **God will test you:** Testing may appear to be negative, but by it, believers are made better, wiser, and stronger. James 1:2-4 notes: *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*
 - Read the book of Exodus for a case study in how God tests His people (and the importance of being ready to pass the test).

WHAT DO I DO NOW AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST?

What are the best next steps? Noted below are seven suggestions:

- 1. Join a study group:** Meeting with a small group of fellow believers Provides an opportunity to build relationships, share, learn, pray with and for others, and walk with others on your spiritual journey.
- 2. Develop your personal prayer life:** Many have busy schedules and hesitate to schedule something new—particularly a new time commitment every day. However, prayer is not only important; it is essential. Jesus prayed constantly and encouraged his disciples to pray. Paul noted that believers are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). A few suggestions to help you develop a meaningful daily prayer are listed below.
 - **Schedule it:** For many, if it’s not on the schedule, it doesn’t get done. Set a time each day to have a conversation with God.
 - **Seek out a prayer partner:** This needs to be a confidant who will pray for you and with you—someone who will encourage you and challenge you. Pray with and for this person about specific needs.

- Keep a prayer journal: Track your prayers. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know you have not forgotten their prayer requests. Let your prayer partners know how God is working in your life. Be positive, be encouraging, and be perseverant. Ask church leadership to pair you with a prayer partner if one is not apparent.
 - Be specific: Note when you begin praying for specific needs and how God moves. Review your prayer journal often and rejoice in seeing how God moves to answer specific requests.
3. **Plan to give:** Christian stewardship is the mark of Christian maturity. When believers give, believers receive. Give cheerfully, regularly, and generously. Give of your time, talent, resources, and finances. *“God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).*
 4. **Read and study the Word:** Acts 17:11 notes that the Bereans (a small group of believers living in Berea) were commended for their diligence in studying the Word. It honors God when His people strive to learn what His Word says, how to share it, and how to incorporate it, and how to live it out.
 5. **Prayerfully consider if God is calling you not just to be a believer, but also to be a *Watchman*:** The English term *Watchman* is found more than a dozen times in Scripture, perhaps most notably in Ezekiel 33:1-9. In that passage of Scripture we see that a *Watchman* is a bold and faithful believer who exercises a concern beyond self. The *Watchman* will know the Word, be attuned to the Lord’s working and expectations, and find ways to inform and warn others about what God has done, what He expects, and what He has promised to do. Being a *Watchman* is biblical and God-honoring work. The work of a *Watchman* is challenging, but I believe that when one lives to honor God, God will honor them.