

NEW LIFE

Devotional Series

Facilitator's Guide

Nine Sessions • Small Group • One-on-One Discipleship • Evangelism

*“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and reverence,
for it is God who works in you to will and to act in accordance with his good purpose.”*

— **Philippians 2:12–13**

How to Use This Facilitator's Guide

This guide accompanies the nine-session NEW LIFE Devotional Series—an introductory session, seven core devotionals (one per letter of NEW LIFE), and a concluding session. It is designed for small group leaders, one-on-one disciplers, evangelism conversations, and anyone walking someone else through the biblical path to new life in Christ.

NEW LIFE is not a new doctrine. It is a recovery of the conversion pattern the early church understood—presented in Luke–Acts and interpreted through the Epistles. God initiates. Faith responds. God completes. Each session in this guide gives you everything you need to lead that journey with clarity, pastoral warmth, and scriptural depth.

Session Structure

Every session follows the same five-movement structure. This consistency allows participants to internalize the rhythm and frees you to focus on content rather than logistics.

Movement	Time	Purpose
Opening Prayer & Scripture	5 min.	Ground the session in God's Word. Read the foundation Scripture aloud together before any discussion begins.
Teach: What the Text Reveals	15–20 min.	Walk through the core teaching content. Scripture is the foundation; all practical material supports it.
Discuss: Core Thesis & Questions	20–25 min.	Facilitate group discussion around the thesis and how this step connects to participants' lives.
Apply: Strategic Question	10–15 min.	Move from understanding to honest self-examination. Guide participants toward concrete next steps.
Close: Prayer & Commission	5–10 min.	Pray the session's closing prayer together. Commission participants for the week ahead.

Suggested total time: 60–75 minutes. For Sunday school (45–50 min.), compress the teaching section and hold one discussion question. For extended study (90 min.), add a second round of discussion and allow more silence after the strategic question.

Preparation Checklist (Every Session)

BEFORE EVERY SESSION

- Read the corresponding devotional completely—at least twice.
- Look up every Scripture reference in your own Bible. Let the text speak to you first.
- Identify the one core thesis statement. Everything else serves this.
- Prepare 2–3 additional discussion questions beyond those provided.
- Pray for each participant by name before the session begins.
- Arrive early. Set the room. Have Bibles and printed devotionals ready.

Facilitation Principles

Scripture First, Always

The devotionals are built on a specific architecture: Scripture is foundational truth; all historical, cultural, and practical material serves as supportive commentary. When discussion drifts toward opinions or cultural commentary, redirect to the text: “What does the Scripture actually say about that?”

LEADER TIP: *Keep your Bible open on the table throughout the session. When you reference a verse, read it aloud—do not paraphrase. Let participants hear God’s Word in God’s words.*

Facilitate, Don’t Lecture

Your role is guide, not expert. The devotionals contain the teaching content. Your job is to draw out what the Spirit is already saying to individuals through the text. Ask questions. Listen. Create space for the quiet person. Gently redirect the dominant talker.

LEADER TIP: *The 70/30 rule: participants should be talking 70% of the time. If you’re talking more than 30%, you’ve shifted from facilitating to lecturing.*

Guard Theological Precision

The steps of NEW LIFE touch core doctrines: sin, grace, repentance, baptism, regeneration, sanctification. Gentle correction is part of your role. If a participant states something theologically inaccurate, redirect with the text: “That’s an interesting perspective—let’s look at what this passage actually says.”

Create Safety for Vulnerability

Sessions 3 (Repentance) and 5 (Baptism) will often surface painful material: unrepented sin, previous church hurt, or genuine confusion about sacramental practice. Establish ground rules in Session 1: what is shared in the group stays in the group. No one is required to share more than they are ready to share.

CAUTION: *If a participant discloses abuse, addiction, or mental health crisis, do not attempt to counsel beyond your competence. Connect them with your pastor or a licensed Christian counselor. Your role is to care, not to cure.*

The Progressive Structure of NEW LIFE

Remind participants regularly that the seven steps of NEW LIFE are not random—they follow the biblical order of what actually happens when God moves in a human life. The first three (NEW) describe God's initiating work and the heart's internal response. The last four (LIFE) describe the outward expression and God's completing work. Each session builds on the previous one.

THE ARC OF NEW LIFE

- N — Conviction arrives from outside. God initiates.
- E — The crisis of decision. Will you turn?
- W — The direction changes. Repentance is the evidence.
- L — Faith becomes public. Confession speaks.
- I — Faith is enacted. Baptism identifies.
- F — God completes. The Spirit regenerates and indwells.
- E — The new life begins. Walking with and for others.

Materials Needed

Bibles (one per participant minimum), printed or digital NEW LIFE devotionals, pens and journals for the strategic question, and optional: a whiteboard or large notepad to map the NEW LIFE progression visually for participants.

Session 0 — Facilitator's Notes

What Does It Mean to Be New?

Introductory Session — Orienting the Journey

Session	Details
Foundation Text	2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:3–4; Philippians 2:12–13
Core Thesis	New life in Christ is not an event to recall but a reality to inhabit. It is initiated by God, enacted through faith, completed by the Spirit, and lived out in the power of the same God who began it.
Purpose	Orient participants to the structure and stakes of the series. Identify prior assumptions about conversion. Create expectancy.
Suggested Time	60–75 minutes

Leader Preparation

This is the foundation session. The quality of what follows depends significantly on what happens here. Do not use this session simply to introduce logistics and hand out materials. Use it to create genuine expectancy—a sense that what Scripture describes as new life may be more than what participants have previously understood.

Many participants will come with pre-formed assumptions about salvation that are more shaped by evangelical tradition than by Scripture itself. The introductory session creates space to hold those assumptions lightly and approach the series with fresh eyes. Your goal is not to immediately correct what they believe but to open them to what Scripture says.

Opening the Session

OPENING EXERCISE

Before reading anything from the devotional, ask participants: ‘In one sentence, how would you explain what it means to become a Christian?’ Write responses on a whiteboard or notepad without commenting on them. Return to this list at the end of the series.

After collecting responses, read 2 Corinthians 5:17 aloud. Ask: “How many of the explanations we just listed would produce what this verse describes?” Allow honest reflection without pressure.

Teaching Focus

The teaching content for this session introduces the two-part structure of NEW LIFE (God's initiating work in NEW; our response and God's completion in LIFE) and establishes the three theological foundations: Romans 6 (union with Christ in death and resurrection), Colossians 1:13 (kingdom transfer), and Philippians 2:12–13 (partnership with God).

Emphasize that NEW LIFE is not a new system or a formula—it is a description of what Scripture consistently presents as the pattern of genuine conversion. The goal is not to introduce people to an acronym but to let them see the biblical reality the acronym describes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What shaped your prior understanding of what it means to become a Christian—Scripture, tradition, personal experience, culture, or some combination?
2. When you read 2 Corinthians 5:17—'The old has gone, the new is here'—what would have to be true about someone's life for that statement to be accurate?
3. Why do you think Scripture presents salvation as a process (conviction, repentance, confession, baptism, regeneration, empowered walk) rather than a single moment?

LEADER TIP: *If someone pushes back with 'But isn't it just about believing?'—don't argue. Simply say: 'That's a great question we'll address specifically in later sessions. For now, let's agree to let Scripture define what believing actually means.'*

Closing the Session

Close by reading the strategic question from the devotional aloud and giving participants 2–3 minutes of silent reflection before closing prayer. Encourage them to journal their response during the week before the next session.

Session 1 — Facilitator's Notes

N — Need for Change

Of Heart and Life | God Initiates

Session	Details
Foundation Scripture	Ezekiel 36:26
Core Thesis	The need for change is not a conclusion we reach through moral effort. It is a recognition the Holy Spirit produces in us—the gift of seeing ourselves clearly enough to cry out to God.
Revival Connection	Urgency and Dependence: conviction is the first evidence of grace
Key Scriptures	Ezekiel 36:26; John 16:8; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; Acts 2:37; Psalm 51:10
Suggested Time	60–75 minutes

Leader Preparation

Exegetical Focus

The central move of this session is distinguishing between two different kinds of need-recognition: (1) moral dissatisfaction, which can be produced by comparison, guilt, or social pressure, and (2) Holy Spirit conviction, which comes from outside ourselves and produces the specific awareness that we cannot fix ourselves. Only the second kind leads to genuine conversion.

Read Ezekiel 36:24–27 in full before the session (not just verse 26). The context is God's promise to restore Israel—not because they have earned it, but because He is acting for the sake of His holy name. The new heart is a gift of sovereign grace, not a reward for sufficient need-recognition.

LEADER TIP: *Acts 2:37 is the most powerful illustrative text for this session: 'They were cut to the heart.' The Greek is katanusso—to pierce or prick. The same word is used in the LXX for intense spiritual anguish. This was not mild discomfort. This was crisis-level awakening. Ask participants: what does it feel like to be 'cut to the heart'?*

Common Misunderstandings to Watch For

WATCH FOR THESE IN DISCUSSION

Confusing moral dissatisfaction with Spirit-produced conviction. People can dislike their circumstances without recognizing their need for God.

Assuming that the intensity of feeling determines the depth of conviction. Genuine conviction can be quiet and persistent rather than dramatic.

Suggesting that recognizing one's need is the hardest step. For many people, this step is relatively easy—the harder steps follow.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about a time you became aware that something deeper needed to change in you—not just a habit, but something at the core. What did that feel like?
2. What is the difference between feeling like you should be different and being genuinely convicted by the Holy Spirit?
3. What does it mean to you that God is the one who initiates the awareness of our need? How does that change the pressure you might otherwise put on yourself?

Transition to Next Session

BRIDGE TO SESSION 2

Recognizing our need is essential—but conviction alone leads nowhere. The real question is: what do we do with what we've recognized? The next session asks whether we are willing to turn toward God. This is the moment of decision.

Session 2 — Facilitator's Notes

E — Embrace Change

Choose to Turn to God | The Crisis of Decision

Session	Details
Foundation Scripture	Isaiah 55:6–7
Core Thesis	Embracing change is the moment conviction becomes commitment—the wholehearted, decisive turn from your way to God's way.
Key Scriptures	Isaiah 55:6–7; Acts 3:19; Luke 15:17–20; Luke 19:8; Matthew 11:28; James 4:7–8; Deuteronomy 30:19
Suggested Time	60–75 minutes

Leader Preparation

Exegetical Focus

The critical exegetical move in this session is the word “while” in Isaiah 55:6. “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.” This is not a threat—it is a pastoral urgency. The invitation is real and open, but it exists in time. God is patient (2 Peter 3:9), but Scripture never presents the presumption that the moment of openness will always be available.

The three biblical examples in the devotional (prodigal son, Zacchaeus, Philippian jailer) all share one structural feature: decision and action were inseparable. None of them deliberated for weeks. The moment of encounter was the moment of response. This is the rhythm the entire New Testament presents.

LEADER TIP: *Be sensitive to participants who may have delayed their response to God for years and feel shame about it. The point of urgency is not to condemn the delay—it is to intensify the invitation of the present moment. The prodigal son's story ends with the father running toward him, not lecturing him about how long he waited.*

Common Misunderstandings to Watch For

WATCH FOR THESE IN DISCUSSION

Treating 'embracing change' as a feeling rather than a decision. This step is volitional, not emotional.

Confusing partial commitment ('I'll try God') with genuine embrace ('I surrender entirely'). The biblical language is always wholehearted.

Suggesting that the sincerity of the decision is what makes it valid. The object of the decision (Jesus as Lord) is what makes it valid.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it actually mean to 'choose' God—not just feel drawn to Him, but make a real decision? What is the difference?
2. Look at the three examples from the devotional—the prodigal son, Zacchaeus, the Philippian jailer. What do they have in common? What can you learn from each?
3. What has held you back from making a full, decisive turn toward God? What would it cost you? What would it gain you?

Transition to Next Session

BRIDGE TO SESSION 3

Embracing change is the decision. But decisions must produce action. The next session asks what that action looks like—not as a work to earn God's favor, but as the honest, visible evidence that the heart's direction has genuinely changed.

Session 3 — Facilitator's Notes

W — Willing to Repent

Turn from Sin | The Evidence of a Changed Direction

Session	Details
Foundation Scripture	Luke 13:3
Core Thesis	Repentance is not the payment you make to earn forgiveness. It is the direction change that proves the heart change is real.
Key Scriptures	Luke 13:3; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Matthew 3:8; Acts 3:19; 2 Peter 3:9; Mark 1:15
Suggested Time	60–75 minutes

Leader Preparation

Exegetical Focus

The critical exegetical move here is Paul's distinction in 2 Corinthians 7:10 between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Many participants will have experienced worldly sorrow—regret about consequences, wounded pride, or the discomfort of getting caught—and may have confused it with repentance. Helping participants see the difference is the pastoral core of this session.

Godly sorrow grieves sin itself, because sin offends a God who is holy and whom we love. It is not primarily self-focused (I feel terrible about what I did) but God-focused (I have acted against the character of the One I love). This distinction matters because worldly sorrow—however intense—does not produce repentance. Only godly sorrow does.

LEADER TIP: *This session often surfaces genuine conviction in participants. Do not rush past it. If the room goes quiet after a question, let the silence stand. The Holy Spirit may be doing His most significant work in those quiet moments. Do not fill silence with more words.*

CAUTION: *Some participants may disclose specific sins during this session. Do not probe, do not express surprise, and do not turn their disclosure into a group processing moment. Acknowledge, affirm the courage it took to name it, and redirect to the text: 'Scripture says that whoever confesses and renounces their sin finds mercy. That's the promise you are standing on right now.'*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What's the difference between feeling sorry about something and genuinely repenting of it? Have you experienced that distinction?
2. Paul distinguishes 'godly sorrow' from 'worldly sorrow.' Which kind have you experienced most often? What was the difference in what followed?
3. Is there anything you have been holding onto that you know needs to be surrendered? What has made it difficult to let go?

 **LEADER TIP:** *The third discussion question is the most pastoral question in the entire series. Sit with it. Don't rush to fill the space. Genuine repentance is the soil everything else grows in. If this session produces genuine turning, the sessions that follow will have foundation to stand on.*

Transition to Next Session

BRIDGE TO SESSION 4

NEW captures God's initiating work and our inward response. Now we move to LIFE—the outward expression of what has happened within. The first step of LIFE is perhaps the most countercultural in our individualistic age: making a public declaration.

Session 4 — Facilitator's Notes

L — Lord Jesus Confessed

Public Declaration of Faith | Faith Speaks

Session	Details
Foundation Scripture	Romans 10:9–10
Core Thesis	Confession is not the cause of faith—it is faith speaking. Public confession is the natural and necessary expression of a transformed allegiance.
Key Scriptures	Romans 10:9–10; Matthew 10:32–33; Philippians 2:9–11; 1 John 4:15; Romans 10:13
Suggested Time	60–75 minutes

Leader Preparation

Exegetical Focus

The critical exegetical move is the way Romans 10:9–10 joins two things that contemporary Christianity often separates: heart belief and mouth confession. Note the chiasmic structure: confession leads to salvation (v. 9a), heart belief leads to justification (v. 10a), mouth confession leads to salvation (v. 10b). Paul is not giving a two-step formula—he is emphasizing the organic unity of inner and outer dimensions of faith.

The content of the confession matters: “Jesus is Lord” (kyrios). In the Roman empire, this was a politically loaded declaration. Caesar was kyrios. To confess Jesus as kyrios was to subordinate every human authority to His. Help participants understand that the early Christians were not performing a religious ritual—they were making an allegiance declaration with real consequences.

LEADER TIP: Watch for participants who distinguish between ‘accepting Jesus as Savior’ and ‘making Him Lord’—as though these could be done at different times. Scripture presents no such division. You cannot accept forgiveness while refusing lordship. The confession is ‘Jesus is Lord’—not ‘Jesus is a helpful resource I have decided to utilize.’

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Scripture connects salvation so closely to public confession—not just private belief? What does it mean that faith has to be spoken?
2. Have you ever confessed Jesus as Lord publicly, in a way that was intentional and before people who understood what you were declaring? What was that like—or what holds you back?
3. What is the difference between saying ‘I believe in Jesus’ and confessing ‘Jesus is Lord’? Why does the specific content of the confession matter?

Transition to Next Session

BRIDGE TO SESSION 5

Confession is faith declaring its allegiance. The next step is faith demonstrating that allegiance—in the most visible and scripturally significant act of the conversion process: baptism. This is where identification becomes physical, public, and permanent.

Session 5 — Facilitator's Notes

I — Identifying with Jesus

Obedience in Baptism | Faith Enacted

Session	Details
Foundation Scripture	Romans 6:3–4
Core Thesis	Baptism is not optional equipment. It is the first act of obedience after confession—faith enacted, covenant entered, old life buried, new life begun.
Key Scriptures	Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; Acts 22:16; Matthew 28:19
Suggested Time	60–75 minutes

Leader Preparation

Exegetical Focus

This is the session that will generate the most theological pushback in most groups, particularly from participants with Baptist, evangelical, or Reformed backgrounds where baptism is consistently described as “a symbol” or “an outward sign of an inward grace.” The goal is not to start a denominational argument but to demonstrate what Scripture actually says—and let participants sit with the tension between what their tradition taught them and what the text presents.

Focus on three things: (1) the immediacy of baptism in Acts (every account shows same-day or same-night baptism after belief), (2) the participatory language in Romans 6 (we are “baptized into his death,” “buried with him”), and (3) the identity language in Galatians 3:27 (clothed with Christ). None of this language is consistent with “a symbolic ceremony to plan when convenient.”

LEADER TIP: *The FAQ document addresses the ‘isn’t this baptismal regeneration?’ objection directly: baptism is faith enacted, not grace earned. Regeneration is explicitly attributed to the Holy Spirit alone (Titus 3:5), not the water. If this objection arises, use the leader FAQ for guidance.*

CAUTION: *Be sensitive to participants who were baptized as infants or who have prior baptisms they question. Do not make them feel their prior experience was worthless. Ask: ‘What were you understanding at the time? What did it mean to you?’ The goal is clarity about the biblical picture, not condemnation of their history.*

HANDLING THE 'ISN'T THIS BAPTISMAL REGENERATION?' QUESTION

Short answer: No. NEW LIFE rejects both baptismal regeneration (mechanical salvation via water) and reductionist symbolism (empty ceremony).

Scripture's language: Baptism is consistently participatory and covenantal (Romans 6; Galatians 3; 1 Corinthians 12)—not mechanical or meritorious.

Key text: Titus 3:5 explicitly grounds regeneration in the Holy Spirit, not in the act of baptism itself.

Teaching cue: 'We do not say baptism saves you. We say God saves, and baptism is how faith responds.'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What has your understanding of baptism been up to this point—essential, optional, or somewhere in between? What shaped that view?
2. When you look at Acts 2, 8, 16, and 19—where baptism follows faith the same day or the same night—what does the pattern tell us about how the early church understood baptism?
3. If you believe in Jesus and have not been baptized, what is actually preventing you from obeying now?

 **LEADER TIP:** *The third discussion question often surfaces the most significant pastoral conversation in the entire series. Listen carefully. Common real obstacles: fear of public attention, prior church hurt, uncertainty about denomination practice, or unresolved questions about what baptism actually does. Each of these has a pastoral response—but they require listening before responding.*

Transition to Next Session

BRIDGE TO SESSION 6

You have responded to God's call. You have confessed. You have identified with Christ in his death and resurrection. Now God moves—completing in you what you cannot do for yourself. The next step is not what you do. It is what God does.

Session 6 — Facilitator's Notes

F — Filled with the Spirit

God's Regenerating Work | Born Again

Session	Details
Foundation Scripture	Titus 3:5
Core Thesis	Regeneration is the work of God alone—accomplished by the Holy Spirit, not produced by human effort. The Spirit is not a reward for faithfulness. He is the agent and guarantee of everything promised.
Key Scriptures	Titus 3:5; John 3:5–6; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:13–14; Romans 8:9–11; Romans 5:5
Suggested Time	60–75 minutes

Leader Preparation

Exegetical Focus

The theological center of this session is the distinction between regeneration and the other steps of NEW LIFE. Every other step involves human action: recognizing, turning, repenting, confessing, obeying. This step is exclusively God's action. Titus 3:5 is structurally built around divine subject and passive human object: He saved us. He washed. He renewed. The human being is entirely on the receiving end.

This is also the session where the NEW LIFE framework addresses the concern about sacramentalism most directly. By placing 'Filled with the Spirit' (divine regeneration) after baptism, the framework does not imply that the water produces regeneration—it reflects the New Testament pattern where God's Spirit comes in response to the full pattern of obedient faith.

LEADER TIP: *Ephesians 1:13–14 is often overlooked but is one of the most assurance-producing texts in the New Testament. The seal of the Spirit as mark of ownership and the arrabon (deposit) as guarantee of inheritance—these are legal, commercial metaphors for absolute certainty. If participants are struggling with assurance, anchor them here, not in their feelings or performance.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** What does it mean to you that God himself—His Spirit—actually lives inside a believer? How does that change how you think about the Christian life?
- 2.** How do you distinguish between the Spirit's work in you and your own religious effort? When does it feel like the difference matters most?
- 3.** Have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit as something real and active in your life? What has that looked like—or what would you want it to look like?

Transition to Next Session

BRIDGE TO SESSION 7

God has regenerated you. His Spirit lives in you. But the new life is not a destination—it is a beginning. The final step of NEW LIFE is not a step you complete but a walk you begin: the empowered, daily, Spirit-led life of sanctification.

Session 7 — Facilitator's Notes

E — Empowered to Walk in Newness

Sanctification | The Life That Follows

Session	Details
Foundation Scripture	Philippians 2:12–13
Core Thesis	The empowered walk is not the result of trying harder. It is the natural outflow of the new nature God has given, animated by the Spirit, expressed in community. You are now a witness to new life, not just a recipient.
Key Scriptures	Philippians 2:12–13; Romans 6:4; Colossians 1:13–14; Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Acts 2:42
Suggested Time	60–75 minutes

Leader Preparation

Exegetical Focus

The central theological paradox of this session is Philippians 2:12–13: work out your salvation (genuine human effort) because God is working in you (divine empowerment). This is not a contradiction—it is the structure of the Christian life. God's working does not eliminate human effort; it is the ground and power of it. You work because God works. Your effort is real because His energy makes it possible.

The critical move for participants is from “trying harder” (moralism) to “yielding deeper” (Spirit-led sanctification). The difference is not the amount of effort but its source. 2 Corinthians 3:18 is key: “being transformed” is passive—the transformation happens to you as you fix your attention on Christ. Your role is to look. God's role is to transform.

LEADER TIP: *This session is also where you transition from the individual journey of salvation to the communal dimension. Acts 2:42–47 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5 introduce the presence-practice-perseverance framework of biblical evangelism. The new life is not a private achievement—it flows outward to others. Ask participants: who walked with you into this? Who are you walking with now?*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between 'trying harder' as a Christian and genuinely 'walking by the Spirit'? Have you experienced the difference?
2. What helps you stay connected to the Spirit's power in a normal week—and what tends to pull you away?
3. Who in your life needs to hear and see the NEW LIFE you've received? What would it look like to walk with them the way someone walked with you?

Closing Prayer Focus

Close this session with intentional commission: invite each participant to name one person in their Jerusalem who needs to see new life. Pray for those people by name. This moves the session from inward application to outward mission—which is where the empowered life always arrives.

Session 8 — Facilitator's Notes

Now Walk

Concluding Session — Living the New Life You've Received

Session	Details
Foundation Text	Romans 6:4; Romans 10:13; Philippians 2:12–13
Purpose	Review the full arc of NEW LIFE. Address remaining questions. Commission participants into the ongoing walk. Create intentional next steps.
Suggested Time	75–90 minutes (allow more time than usual)

Leader Preparation

This is not a summary lecture—it is a commissioning service. Your goal is not to cover content but to help participants identify where they are in the NEW LIFE journey and what their specific next step is. Come with the opening exercise responses from Session 0. Return to them now and invite reflection on what has changed.

Some participants will have moved significantly through the journey during this series. Others may be in exactly the same place. Both outcomes require pastoral response—celebration for the former, honest conversation for the latter.

Opening Exercise

RETURN TO SESSION 0 OPENING EXERCISE

Return to the responses participants gave at the first session when asked to describe what it means to become a Christian in one sentence. Read them back without attribution. Ask: 'How have your answers changed? What would you say now that you wouldn't have said then?'

Three Commissioning Questions

The concluding devotional presents three questions worth living with. Use these as the backbone of the final session's discussion:

QUESTION 1: HAVE YOU BEEN MADE NEW?

Not 'have you prayed a prayer' but 'is there a before and after in your story that corresponds to what Romans 6 describes?' Allow honest answers. Do not create pressure toward a particular response.

QUESTION 2: ARE YOU WALKING IN THE NEWNESS YOU'VE RECEIVED?

Are you walking by the Spirit, or have you settled for the label of Christian without the life of Christ? This is a self-examination question, not a performance review.

QUESTION 3: ARE YOU WALKING WITH OTHERS?

Who are you walking with? Who in your Jerusalem needs to see the new life you have received? What specific next step will you take this week?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Looking back over this series: which step of NEW LIFE has most challenged you, and why?
2. Which step do you feel you have most genuinely experienced? What did that experience look like?
3. What is the next concrete step you need to take—not conceptually, but actually? Name it out loud.

Closing Commission

Close by reading Romans 6:4 aloud together. Then ask each participant to complete this sentence aloud: "My next step is..." Allow silence after each response. Pray for each person's named next step by name. End with the closing prayer from the concluding devotional.

LEADER TIP: *If someone has gone through this series without yet responding to the gospel, do not let the final session end without a direct, gentle invitation. Use Acts 2:38 as your text. Ask: 'What is preventing you from responding now?' Listen. Respond pastorally. The door is still open.*

Appendix: Common Objections & Responses

When leading NEW LIFE discussions, you will encounter recurring theological objections. The following equips you to respond with clarity, biblical fidelity, and confidence—without becoming defensive or reactionary. For a more complete treatment, see the NEW LIFE Leader FAQ & Objection Map (v1).

1. “Isn’t this baptismal regeneration?”

RESPONSE

NEW LIFE rejects both baptismal regeneration (mechanical salvation) and reductionist symbolism (empty ceremony).

Regeneration is explicitly attributed to the Holy Spirit alone: ‘He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit’ (Titus 3:5)—not through the water itself.

Baptism is faith enacted, not grace earned. The water does not save you. God saves you, and baptism is how faith responds.

Teaching cue: ‘We don’t say baptism saves you. We say God saves, and baptism is how faith responds.’

2. “Doesn’t Romans say we’re saved by faith alone?”

RESPONSE

Scripture says we are justified by faith—not by works that earn. The distinction Paul draws in Romans 4 is between faith and works of law that produce boasting.

NEW LIFE defines faith the way Scripture does: as trusting allegiance that expresses itself through repentance, confession, and obedience.

Paul excludes earning, not obedience. Repentance, confession, and baptism are not attempts to earn salvation—they are the visible form faith takes when it encounters the gospel.

Teaching cue: ‘Paul excludes earning, not obedience.’

3. “What about Acts 10? The Spirit came before baptism.”

RESPONSE

Acts 10 (Cornelius) is exceptional, not normative. The Spirit’s prior outpouring served as a divine sign validating Gentile inclusion.

Peter still commanded baptism afterward—Acts 10 confirms the pattern even as it departs from it.

Norms are established by repetition (Acts 2, 8, 16, 19). Exceptions serve redemptive-historical purposes.

Teaching cue: ‘The exception confirms the rule—it doesn’t replace it.’

4. “Are you saying a sinner’s prayer doesn’t matter?”

RESPONSE

Prayer matters deeply. But Scripture never presents prayer as the completing act of salvation.

People cry out to God throughout Acts—but their crying out is followed by repentance, confession, and baptism.

The concern is not prayer itself, but the reduction of salvation to a transaction that begins and ends with a prayer, with nothing before and nothing after.

Teaching cue: ‘We affirm prayer as expression, not replacement.’

5. “Does this turn salvation into a process instead of a moment?”

RESPONSE

NEW LIFE affirms a decisive transition—but Scripture presents that transition as enacted, not as instantaneous abstraction.

Romans 6 (death and resurrection participation), Colossians 1:13 (transfer of kingdoms), and Acts 2 (covenant entry) all present salvation as a real, enacted event—not merely an invisible mental act.

A moment occurs within a biblically enacted process. The decisive nature of the moment is not diminished by being part of a sequence—it is clarified by it.

Teaching cue: ‘A moment occurs within a biblically enacted process.’

“NEW LIFE simply teaches people to respond to the gospel the same way the first Christians did.”