

***LIVING
FOR
JESUS***

***A ROAD MAP TO
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE***

ALISTAIR CHALMERS

10 Publishing
a division of **10** of those.com



CONTENTS

Introduction: Jesus in the Everyday	1
Esther	7
1 Faith in a God Powerful to Save.....	11
Q. How do I know if I'm really a Christian?	15
2 Faith in a God Who's in Control	21
Q. God felt very real at camp, but where is he now?	26
David	31
3 Faith in Success	35
Q. My church is boring, what should I do?	39
4 Faith in the Sin	45
Q. If I'm really a Christian, why has my life not completely changed?	50

Mary & Martha	57
5 Faith in the Distractions.....	61
Q. I want to pray, but where do I start?	66
6 Faith in the Listening	73
Q. I want to read my Bible, but where do I start?	77
Job	83
7 Faith in the Sorrow	87
Q. If my friends ask why God allows suffering, what should I say?	92
8 Faith in the Doubts	97
Q. I can't tell my parents I'm doubting my faith, what should I do?	102
Peter	109
9 Faith in Weakness	113
Q. What should I do when my parents won't let me go to church?	119
10 Faith in Power	123
Q. How do I find Christian young people in my local area?	128

You	133
11 Faith that the Cross is Enough.....	137
Q. How can I tell my friends I'm a Christian, when they think Christians are weird?	141
12 Faith to Help You Live for Him	145
Q. How can I tell my friends about Jesus when I don't have all the answers myself?	150
Practical Tools for Spending Time with God Each Day	157
Conclusion: Jesus for Life.....	165
Resources Section	169



INTRODUCTION

JESUS IN THE EVERYDAY

Christian camps and conferences, youth group weekends away and even short-term missions, can all be amazing but also a little bit unsettling at the same time. Maybe you're invited by a friend or signed-up by your parents, and you start to get a little nervous as you're digging out your sleeping bag and packing your toothbrush. What will people expect me to do? How much is this Christianity thing going to impact my life? How much help is having a faith anyway? You arrive and see a crowd of strangers and your stomach is doing somersaults.

As time goes on you make a few friends, you meet people with similar interests, and it turns

out to be fun. The talks and Bible studies are also pretty good and the leaders have clearly thought about how to connect the Bible to your life and how to help you appreciate Jesus more. You might find yourself growing in your faith or even becoming a Christian. Great! But what happens when you go back to normal life?

I grew up in a Christian home, loved the buzz of Christian camps and conferences, but then remember going back home and feeling pretty flat. The friends I'd made on camp lived miles away and I couldn't see them much. The leaders who'd spurred me on weren't around either and I felt pretty isolated. I would ask myself "Did I imagine it all? How do I live out the Bible stuff I was taught at home? How do I live the Christian life when everything seems so ordinary?"

Maybe at home you don't know any other Christians your own age at school or your family aren't believers. Church services seem dull and witnessing to friends impossible. Prayer and Bible reading was great while you were away but now feels unnatural. It's tough returning home. I wrote this book to help you work out how to live for Jesus once you go back to your normal day-to-day life.

In this book we will explore the lives of some people in the Bible. We'll see how their faith in God helped them in both the good and the bad times. The Bible isn't full of perfect people who got everything right, it's a book about how God worked in many ordinary people with similar struggles to you and me. We'll see how these different Bible characters lived for God, which will help us to do the same.

Peppered throughout the book are answers to a series of common questions about living out the Christian life in this world. You might be tempted to skip straight to the practical questions, but first seeing how people in the Bible lived out their faith gives us the fuel for living for God ourselves – knowing his grace, love and mercy strengthens and guides us as we work through the practical questions we have. We can only really know how to live in a way that pleases God if we understand why that's so important.

But before getting stuck in to the book, why not take a few minutes to jot down anything about your time away that's been significant to you. It's all too easy to forget what you've learned in the fog of tiredness and dirty washing

once home. Recording it here will help you remember, and will be a great thing to look back on in the coming weeks.

***QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND
JOURNALLING SPACE***

Where I've been:

What's been great:

What's been challenging:

What I've learned:

What I want to remember:



ESTHER

Imagine you're standing in a busy marketplace in Ancient Persia and suddenly you hear someone call, "It's Queen Esther!" The crowd rushes to see her; everyone is pushing and shoving and standing on their tiptoes to get a glimpse of the queen as she moves by. After some questionable use of your elbows, you finally see the queen. She is clothed in beautiful royal robes, surrounded by servants to serve her every need and guards who won't let anyone get too near. You want to edge closer to have a better look, but the crowd is too big and everyone is eager to see the queen.

Looking at her, it would be easy to think this queen has always known luxury, but that isn't true. Esther was an outsider one day – a Jew living in exile in the Persian Empire – and taken into the palace the next. After a year of preparation, and keeping her true identity quiet, she is presented to the king and he chooses her

to be his wife. Esther's story turns into a thrilling tale of an unlikely queen who saves the Jewish people through a succession of ups and downs, tension and suspense, immense danger and incredible victory. Ultimately though, Esther's story is more about God than it is about her. This queen was able to advocate for her people and save them because of her courage and heroism rooted in God.

Now, imagine you're back in the crowd again, but this time you know a little about her. My guess is that you're even more eager to see what she's like. Now you want to know more about her faith in God and how she could have so much courage in the face of danger.



CHAPTER 1

FAITH IN A GOD POWERFUL TO SAVE

READ: ESTHER 3 – 4

It's common to experience the “spiritual crash” when we return home from a Christian conference or weekend away. We can feel like a balloon that escaped before it was knotted: deflated and unsure. Sometimes this leads us to question our faith or question God. Is he really as good and powerful as he seemed on camp? Is he really going to save us and take us to heaven? Can he be trusted to look after us? Will he come through on his promises or will he let us down in the end?

Queen Esther probably felt on top of the world as she was crowned queen, but soon

everything seemed to go terribly wrong. Haman, the king's second-in-command and bad guy of the story, plots to have all the Jewish people killed. Esther's relative Mordecai tells her about the plan and asks her to go to the king and plead with him to intervene and save God's people. The problem is, not only has she kept her own Jewish nationality a secret, to go to the king without being invited was a potential death sentence, even though she was queen!

Esther explains, "for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold sceptre to them and spares their lives" (Esther 4:11). Mordecai responds to her concern confident that God will save his people, and warns Esther to trust in God rather than rely on her status as queen for safety. Mordecai ends by saying, "who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

No doubt Esther is afraid, uncertain of what will happen to her, to Mordecai and to all her people. But everything that happens next helps us be confident that God is faithful

to his promises and faithful to save those who trust in him.

After three days of fasting and prayer, Esther goes to the king, risking death ... but he holds out his sceptre. She is safe – for now. With immense relief, she approaches the king and begins her plan to save her people.

In a series of complicated twists and turns, Esther is able to reveal her true identity and finally the king puts a stop to Haman's wickedness. The Jews are saved just in time. Esther didn't make all this happen, instead we see God at work saving her and all his people.

There will be times in your life, maybe you're in one now, where the idea of God showing up and intervening seems impossible. Outside of the safety net of big Christian events that is completely understandable; we can feel isolated and alone. However, this episode in the life of Esther proves that God does in fact keep his promises and save his people. God hasn't changed. He defeats our worst enemies – sin and death – which means he looks after us now, and ultimately will take us to be with him forever.

We can be certain that everyone who repents of their sin and puts their trust in Jesus is saved

– forgiven of their sins and accepted into God’s family. Romans 10:9-10 says, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Being saved is not based on our actions, our feelings or dictated by our life’s circumstances. A Christian is forgiven and made right with God through Jesus. God promised from the beginning in Genesis 3:15 that he would send Jesus to put an end to our ultimate enemies of the devil, sin and death. God was faithful to his promise and Jesus came.

Just like Esther, Jesus stepped forward to represent his people. But unlike Esther, he knew this act would definitely cost him his life. Jesus lived the perfect life on earth, died a sinless death and then conquered death on our behalf. He took on all our enemies for us, and won! He now reigns in heaven, victorious. We trust in a God who is powerful to save.

Question:

HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M REALLY A CHRISTIAN?

One of the questions that many people ask, especially when returning from camp and other Christian events, is, “How do I know if I’m really a Christian?” It’s a good question for every person to consider because we want to be sure that we really are a follower of Jesus – that’s what it’s all about.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

First, let’s take a step back and ask this more general question: What is a Christian? A Christian is someone who recognises their sin and natural inability to meet God’s perfect standard (Romans 3:23). A Christian is someone who knows that they can only be saved from their sin through Jesus.

Rather than trusting in themselves, a Christian trusts in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross to pay for their sin and they trust in Jesus’ victory over death by rising again. A Christian is someone who has accepted Jesus’ gift of forgiveness, which gives them access to God and eternal

life with him. A Christian is also someone who wants to live with Jesus as Number One in their life, even when that makes things hard.

It's like a big swap. We give Jesus our sin so he can sort it out. He shares his victory over death and his perfect relationship with God the Father with us. So, if you have turned from your own way and trusted in Jesus to forgive you and save you – you're a Christian!

But many of us still feel a bit unsure. How can we have assurance (know for certain) that we're saved and part of God's family?

BUT HOW CAN I KNOW FOR SURE?

One of Jesus' disciples, John, wrote a whole letter helping Christians have assurance of heaven: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). I would just like to highlight three things that help us know for certain we're a real Christian.

Do I believe in Jesus?

In his letter, John explains a Christian is someone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God and

became a real human. It's not enough to just believe in God to be a Christian. We need to be trusting in Jesus. You can ask yourself: Am I trusting that Jesus really became a man so that he could die on my behalf? Do I believe he rose again? If you can answer "Yes!" that helps you feel certain you're a Christian.

Believing in Jesus is vital because he brings us into God's family. John tells us "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11-12).

Do I live like a Christian?

My favourite ice-cream flavour is, without a doubt, mint chocolate chip. Definitely mint chocolate chip. Mint chocolate chip all the way. Except, if you ask my family, they'll tell you that every time we go out for ice-cream I choose whatever dairy-free option they have. My words and actions don't match up. We don't want to be that way about our faith.

When it comes to being a Christian, our actions should match up with what we believe. Of course, we will still sin, but a Christian is

someone who no longer *wants* to sin and wants to live for Christ instead. God puts his Holy Spirit in us so we can obey Jesus' words and do things his way.

We're a work in progress, but if the people we encounter can tell that we are Christians by observing the evidence in our lives, we can be confident we are Christians.

Do I love like a Christian?

Jesus loved us by dying for us, and when we turn to him, God the Father welcomes us into his family. By trusting in Jesus we can “know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love” (1 John 4:16). Wow! And now we're children of God, it makes sense that we love him and love other people. John tells us, “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” and “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:11, 19).

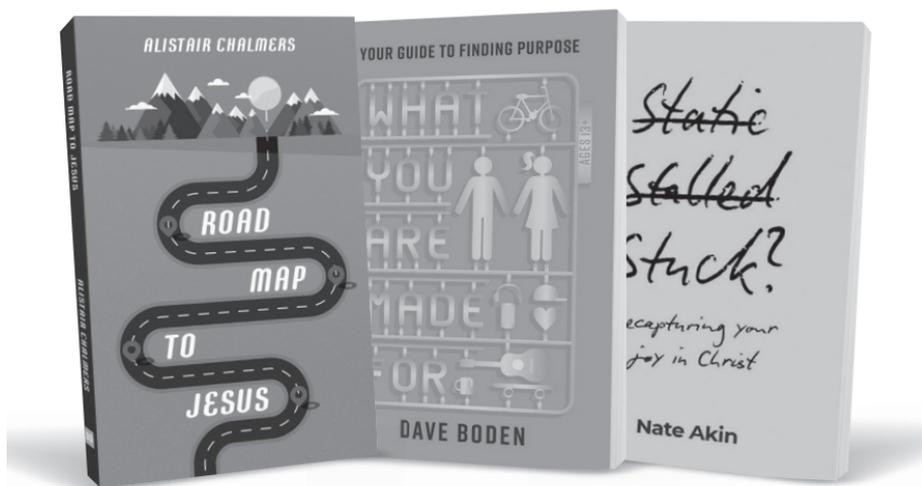
Loving God and others doesn't *make* you a Christian, but it helps you be certain you *are* a Christian.

Q. HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M REALLY A CHRISTIAN?

The good news is “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1)! If you’re still struggling to feel certain of your faith, it’s definitely a good idea to talk to an older Christian about it.

More books from 10Publishing

Resources that point to Jesus



To find out more visit:
10ofthose.com

10 Publishing
a division of **10**ofthose.com