

I've Got Jesus...

NOW WHAT?

By Carrie Daws

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ISBN: 978-1-947539-00-6

eISBN: 978-1-947539-01-3

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Cover Design by Jarmal Wilcox

Book layout by Hailey Radabaugh

IMMEASURABLE WORKS

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A Note from the Author

WELCOME!

The moment you accepted Jesus as your Savior, you became a member of God's family. The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 1 that through our faith in Jesus, we were adopted as sons and daughters. That means you now have a huge family cheering you on, including me!

Perhaps that's a bit overwhelming. Maybe family hasn't been something good in your life, or you fear the expectations other Christians will place upon you.

Take a moment and breathe.

One of the key pieces of information God wants to give you is this: Only His opinion matters. Yes, God will use other people and circumstances to help you along the way, but they should never take precedence over what God says.

That is why hearing God clearly is critical, and that is why I wrote this book.

As you work your way through these pages, I want you to keep two things in mind.

1. First, this is not a race. Getting the information I share is vital, but it's more important that you understand God's heart. The Bible is not a list of rules and regulations. It is a letter from a Father who loves you immensely, who wants to give you wisdom and protect you from harm.
2. And second, Satan, God's enemy—and now yours as well—doesn't want you to get any of this. He doesn't want you to understand how much God loves you. He strives to distract you and will whisper lies to hinder you.

So join me in learning more about what it means to be part of God's

family. Don't worry. You don't have to do this perfectly or know the answer to every question. Just take a step forward and turn the page.

We'll get through these first steps together.

Carrie

What You Need to Know about This Book

1. Unless otherwise noted, the Scriptures in this book are from the 2011 edition of the New International Version Bible. You can find free digital copies of this Bible version on the Internet at BibleGateway.com or through the smart phone/tablet app YouVersion.
2. You should invest in a good Bible. What does that mean? Many great Bibles are available, but a *good* Bible is one that you will read and can understand. Check out different translations like the Contemporary English Version or the New Living Translation (also available at BibleGateway.com and on YouVersion).
3. When I list a Bible reference, it will look like this: Psalm 75:1. Psalm is the book of the Bible. The number before the colon (75 in this example) is the chapter of the book, and the number after the colon (1 in this example) is the verse number within that chapter. A couple of special cases:
 - a. If you see a number before the book name, it means that more than one book carries that title. For example, 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. If the verse you're reading doesn't make sense, you could be in the wrong book.
 - b. Five books of the Bible only have one chapter. This can be written two different ways: Philemon 1:4, or simply Philemon 4. It can be even more confusing when a verse from either the books of 2 John (Second John) or 3 John (Third John) are mentioned.

It will get easier with time, but use your Bible's table of contents to help you as long as you need to.

4. Choose a time and a place where you will most often read your Bible. You can read your Bible anywhere and at any time, but habits start by doing the same thing at the same time in the same place. Designating a room or a chair will encourage you to keep reading your Bible.
5. Finally, it's okay not to answer some questions within these pages. Each question was purposely put on the page to help you think through key concepts, but that doesn't mean you fail Christianity 101 if you skip writing down an answer or two.

With all of that in mind, are you ready to get started? Here we go!

Part One

YOUR BEGINNINGS

Chapter One: Salvation

A SUMMARY

Every Christian I've ever asked admits to questioning their salvation at some point in their lives. This is a normal—and good—struggle. Some of the greatest men in the Bible struggled with confusion and uncertainty. But it is perseverance in faith that God seeks.

CEMENTING OUR FAITH

God gives us assurances to help us cement our faith in Him.

Consider John 3:16.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Consider 1 John 5:11-12.

This is the testimony: 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.

BELIEVING GOD'S CHARACTER

We must also cement our faith in God's character. After all, why should we believe in the promises if we can't trust the promise-giver?

Consider 1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with His

Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The book of 1 Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul who also wrote this:

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. 2 Corinthians 11:23-25

All of that turmoil and tragedy, and still Paul was convinced that *God is faithful*.

Consider Isaiah 41:13

For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

GOD'S SEAL UPON YOU

Finally, you can trust your salvation because God gave you the Holy Spirit.

Consider 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Ephesians 1:13-14

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Salvation

MORE DETAIL

Every Christian I've ever asked admits to questioning their salvation at some point in their lives. Life gets messy, we fail to do what we know we should, and pretty soon we're wondering if we ever really believed God in the first place. This is a normal—and good—struggle.

One day, you may wonder how to reconcile the Bible with a scientific theory exorted in the news. Perhaps a dear friend in another religion presents questions you can't answer. Maybe tragedy hits a loved one or you see another massacre reported online, and you wonder how a good God can allow such pain. Or perhaps you grapple with a deep-seated sin that you can't seem to escape from.

Doubt creeps in. Questions arise. And frequently, in these moments of internal battle, God gets very quiet.

Doubt is okay. Some of the greatest men in the Bible struggled with disbelief, apprehension, confusion, suspicion, and uncertainty. Consider these verses from the Psalms:

I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes (Psalm 6:6–7).

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest (Psalm 22:1–2).

O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath! For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me (Psalm 38:1–4).

Perhaps one of the greatest stories about this fight with doubt is told in the book of Job. In the first two chapters, readers are given insight to the heavenly wager between God and Satan, yet all Job knows is that in one day he loses his oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, servants, and children. Shortly thereafter, he is struck *with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head* (Job 2:7). Now that's a bad week!

But as much as the rest of the book presents Job's cries for answers, it also reveals his faith. In his confusion, he turns to God. In his pain, he knows God holds the solution. No matter what life looked like around him, Job appealed to God, and it was that very perseverance in his faith that mattered. Ultimate steadfastness despite tragedy and uncertainty is what God seeks.

Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy (James 5:10–11).

CEMENTING OUR FAITH

So the key to doubt is relying on our faith. And God gives us several assurances to help us cement our faith in Him.

(Note: If you struggle with the validity of the Bible, check out

The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus by Lee Strobel.)

First, consider John 3:16.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

This is a conditional promise, or a promise of what God will do based on the choice we make. In John chapter 3, the apostle John tells the story of a Pharisee (a Jewish religious man) named Nicodemus who came to Jesus one night to ask Him questions. John 3:16 was part of Jesus's response to him.

In other words, Jesus, God's Son, said *if* we believe in Him, *then* we will have eternal life.

Consider 1 John 5:11–13.

This is the testimony: 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. 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.

The apostle John wrote these words to the Christians living in Ephesus (modern-day Turkey) somewhere between 60 and 90 A.D. So, John had walked with Jesus on this earth, witnessed His death and resurrection, and lived another thirty to sixty years before writing these words. He experienced persecution under Roman leaders like Herod Agrippa I and learned of the brutal deaths of many Christian friends, including the men closest to Jesus.

And still John wrote, *God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

Consider John 5:24

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

Again we have John recording what Jesus said. This time, some Jewish leaders were unhappy because Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath. *In His defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I too am working”* (John 5:17). This angered the leaders even more because Jesus *was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God* (John 5:18).

Over the next few verses in John 5, Jesus reveals more about His relationship with God, even delineating some of the responsibilities of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus says the words above, promising eternal life to those who believe God.

BELIEVING GOD'S CHARACTER

The Bible includes a few more instances of similar promises of eternal life, but we must also cement our faith in God's character. After all, why should we believe in the promises if we can't trust the Promise Giver?

Consider 1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The book of 1 Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul, a zealous Pharisee who actively fought against Christianity (Galatians 1:13–14). The story of how God gained his attention and turned his heart toward Jesus is told in Acts 9:1–30. Before you read those verses, you need to know that Paul also went by the name of Saul.

After spending three years in Arabia and Damascus (Galatians

1:17–18), Paul went to work spreading the gospel of Jesus throughout the Gentile (non-Jew) world. He undertook three major missionary journeys, starting several churches around the Aegean Sea and Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The city of Corinth, Greece, hosted one of these churches.

Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthian church about A.D. 55 during his third missionary journey. Second Corinthians was written somewhere between A.D. 55 and 57. In his second letter to Corinth, Paul writes:

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23–28).

All of that turmoil and tragedy, and still Paul confidently wrote *God is faithful*. Was he a fool? Or did he experience more than mere tragedy?

Paul wrote these words to the church in Rome:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will

be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38–39).

Paul was absolutely convinced that *God is faithful*.

Consider Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

We're not certain who wrote the book of Hebrews, but we do know that it was written to Jewish Christians, probably before the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. Jews didn't approve of the new movement toward Jesus because they didn't recognize Him for who He was. They thought He was a false prophet pulling otherwise devoted Jews away from God. Because of this, Christians faced intense persecution from their own countrymen. The writer of Hebrews encouraged them to remain strong.

Consider Isaiah 41:13

For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

The Bible is full of stories of ordinary people doing amazing things because they allowed God to step into their lives. Abraham, Moses, Ruth, David, Esther, Elijah, and more lived some of Christendom's favorite stories simply because they chose to believe and obey God. He honored their faith, even when they doubted, and incredible—sometimes unbelievable—things happened.

God's faithfulness means you will never walk through any circumstance alone. He will take your right hand and help you.

Consider the Book of Psalms

Psalms is a bit like a collection of personal journals from men like Moses and King David. Within its pages you'll find despair, anger, uncertainty, and joy because the authors recorded their feelings as they faced everyday life.

You will also find a lot of confidence in the Lord.

Psalm 3:3

But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

Psalm 20:7

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Psalm 37:23–24

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

Psalm 70:5

I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer.

GOD'S SEAL UPON YOU

Finally, you can rest assured of your salvation because God placed His seal upon you: the Holy Spirit.

Consider 2 Corinthians 1:21–22

He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Ephesians 1:13–14

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

The Holy Spirit works within each of us to change us, to help us quit bad habits and form new, good ones. He guides your decisions, encourages you as you read the Bible, and reminds you of the truth you're learning. He is a constant companion and a reminder that God will one day present us with our full inheritance.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Which of the verses in this chapter means the most to you? Why?
2. What changes have you already seen in your life?
3. How much do you wrestle with doubt? Does this worry you?

A great defense against doubt is to get active in a small group of other Christians. They will stand with you, helping you to learn more about God and His character, cementing your faith, and giving you a safe place to explore uncertainties. Contact your local church office for more information.

Appendix

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

*These resources are listed in alphabetical order by book title.
This list is not all-inclusive but includes items I found helpful.*

RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND WEBSITES

Any books by E.M. Bounds on prayer, to include *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds: Power Through Prayer; Prayer and Praying Men; The Essentials of Prayer; The Necessity of Prayer; The Possibilities of Prayer; Purpose in Prayer; The Weapon of Prayer*

The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God, The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus, and The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity by Lee Strobel. Also, www.leestrobel.com – Lee Strobel's website. Includes a newsletter, videos, and a schedule of where he's speaking.

Discerning the Voice of God: How to Recognize When He Speaks by Priscilla Shirer

Essential Truths of the Christian Faith by R.C. Sproul. Also, www.ligonier.org – R.C. Sproul's website. Includes broadcasts, devotions, books and links to free eBook downloads.

The Power of a Praying Husband by Michael and Stormie Omartian. Also, *The Power of a Praying Wife* by Stormie

Omartian

Praying God's Will for My Daughter and Praying God's Will for My Son by Lee Roberts

The Total Money Makeover: A Proven Plan for Financial Fitness by Dave Ramsey

Why I Believe by D. James Kennedy

ALSO BY CARRIE DAWS

Crossing Series



Book 1: *Crossing Values*: For years, Amber traipsed around the Northwest avoiding the skeletons in her closet. As winter plants itself firmly across the Rockies, she decides to take a chance on a job at a logging company with a family different from any she's ever known before. Could they truly be genuine? Could Faye understand the trauma from her past or Peter think of her as more than just the winter office help? Could this family really hold the key to what she's seeking?

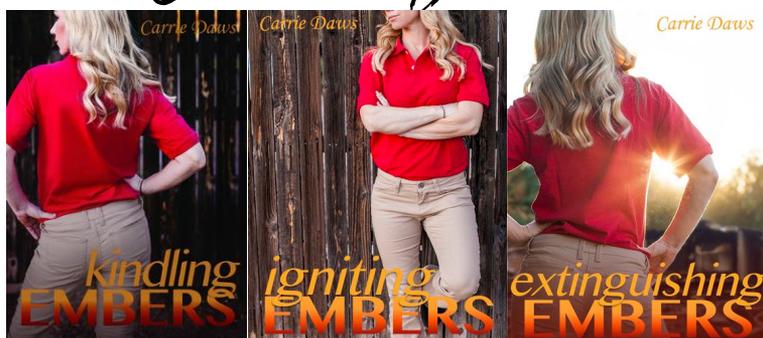
Book 2, *Ryan's Crossing*: After ten years, Ryan's parents found his runaway sister. As he meets her before her wedding, he must decide where she will fit into his life and what his future will look like. Seeing the town where his sister lives only brings more questions. Portland may be the better choice for him in his upcoming move, but small town life appeals to him. Is it the friendly people or the sister of the groom?

Book 3, *Romancing Melody*: A Crossing Journey: Newlywed Melody Podell gives up everything she has ever known to follow her husband, a soldier in the US Army, to Fort Bragg, NC. Soon after giving birth to their first child and dealing with her husband's deployment to a dangerous part of the world, tragedy strikes

forcing Melody to travel back to home. Walking back into the lives of her old friends in Crossing, Oregon, is the last thing Melody wants to do, but could she be missing something? Is God really in control?

Book 4, *Crossing's Redemption*: Many would describe Patricia Guire as an eclectic force to be reckoned with, but something is wrong. Amber Yager feels called to love on her, yet as she discovers Patricia's hidden past, she is drawn in to a group that brings disquiet to her own soul. Will the love she's found in Crossing be taken from her? Or could Amber and Patricia find peace as God shines light into the darkest places of their hearts?

Embers Series



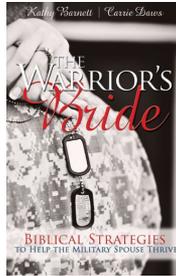
Book 1, *Kindling Embers*: Inspector Cassandra McCarthy never thought she'd be raising her two daughters alone, but her husband's unexpected death forced her to find a career. Now working beside a retired Special Operations soldier and veteran fireman, she serves her small North Carolina town, protecting them from hazards they don't understand. She loves what she does and trusts God to provide—until a series of unexplained fires hits too close to home.

Book 2, *Igniting Embers*: Deputy Fire Marshal Cassandra McCarthy thought her life would settle down once the teen-agers who had been starting nuisance fires were caught. But a hurricane heading to Silver Heights threatens to destroy both property and lives, and another unexplained fire evokes fears of a serial arsonist. Can she prepare the town for the looming emergency and protect them from the danger living in their midst?

Book 3, *Extinguishing Embers*: The hurricane left millions of dollars of destruction, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency has invaded to help the community clean up and move forward. Yet in the midst of recovery, a rash of unexplained fires grow more menacing. Deputy Fire Marshal Cassandra McCarthy works closely with the sheriff's office and the county fire

departments, following the small pieces of evidence left at each fire scene. But what will it cost her to capture the arsonist?

THE WARRIOR'S BRIDE: BIBLICAL STRATEGIES TO HELP THE MILITARY SPOUSE THRIVE



The call came down from Command, and your warrior husband is out the door, leaving you behind to handle whatever he has left undone. Whether it's the day-to-day monotony, the inevitable appliance that breaks, or the months without his presence beside you, being a military spouse brings challenges few appreciate. Yet God see you and longs for you to boldly step into His plan. He purposely chose you for this moment—for your man. He wants to give you abundantly more than what you have right now and desires you to thrive as your warrior's bride.

“Wow! This book is fantastic. It's a wonderful treasure of information for married women . . . military and civilian. Even though the authors promote this book as advice for military spouses, all of the principles and guidance found here are applicable for any married woman . . . If I could give this book six stars, I would. But I give it five stars, and firmly believe, it's worth every star!”

~Author Joanie Bruce, *Alana Candler, Marked for Murder*

For more information about

Carrie Daws

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