

*The book details the steps I took to renew my relationship with Christ. The 10 steps were developed in hind sight, meaning, as I looked back to how I got here, I actualized how it happened. I include stories of my past exposing all... something I would have never done six years ago. I detail each step with conviction, knowing that God has my back.*

**My 10 Steps to Christ:  
MY JOURNEY FROM MERE CHRISTIANITY**  
by Douglas Miller

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# MY 10 STEPS TO CHRIST

My Journey from Mere Christianity



DOUGLAS MILLER

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## Preface

Make, then Keep, God First

Sounds simple, right? I used to think like that, but it wasn't simple. It was difficult. That's precisely what propelled me to write this book. Over the past six years I passed from difficult to simple. I'm not a minister nor am I ordained. There is nothing pretentious about me: nothing formal; jeans, a tee, and flip-flops... and I'm no philosopher. What I am is a master of me, my change. My hope is it will become apparent as I explain each step. Again, the only expertise I have... is me.

I'm Catholic. Some might wonder my denomination so I thought it prudent to get that out of the way. Even though I'm a proud and devout Catholic, **this isn't about the Catholic church and isn't Catholics only.** I do make a small amount of Catholic references, for any Catholics reading this. (I tend to pick on those Catholics that give the rest of the church a bad name. I would refer to them as Catholics; going through the motions.) No worries. I'm not here to recruit anyone.

I can't stress enough... **this book applies to all Christians from all denominations.** Even if there are non-believers reading this, they might find it curious how a bull-headed radical like me, basically an ass, could change his life. It contains the steps I took to convert from being a believer and doubter to being one with Christ. Jesus rose from the dead but I, in retrospect, didn't appreciate what that meant.

So, a guy like me had the gumption to convert? At my age? I'm a young 65, meaning I still feel as though I'm still in my thirties; just much more mature. I'd never considered it possible that my Christianity would ever get to this point in my life. I had always hoped it would, but I would just quit trying.

Some may anticipate that these steps won't work for them. Hey, I'm surprised myself. If I had suspected my efforts weren't going anywhere, I'd get frustrated and furious, much to the detriment of my family. When I worked, I was a pain in the butt. Like the day, in a technical service management position, we were in a staff meeting. The president of the company commented; I didn't like it and became enraged. I left the conference room, slammed the conference room door and nearly took that door off the hinges. I was not a good person.

When our family moved to Charlotte, I explored going to college and learn something useful. I'd ordered my high school transcripts and found that I "earned" straight D's my senior year. I had too much fun to study, but also didn't do myself any favors by antagonizing teachers and skipping school. Study hall was nap time. No way I would make it into college with those grades. Even if I attended college, I'm sure I would have flunked out the first semester. No discipline. So, I enlisted in the Navy, riding submarines for nine years. As I gained more experience, including many butt chewing's and one Captain's mast (not quite a court martial) for forgery, I matured and experienced more discipline, but not enough.

If a person elects not to accept any of these steps, then they're not giving themselves an opportunity for spiritual growth. These steps have given me the means to be as close to heaven as I've ever been. Some may enjoy earth too much to be compliant to God's plan. I once was, but no longer care about possessions. What is God's plan? I will cover that later.

I can't stress this enough. I'm not writing with any authority. I'm only an expert of my spiritual journey, but that doesn't mean that these steps won't work for you. My motivation, for this book, is to help you by sharing my



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spiritual growth, so you can understand how you too can have an intimate relationship with God. If I didn't share my story, shame on me; I am accountable to God. Besides, I love sharing good news.

I didn't plan these steps ahead of my transformation. I did not plan them before my epiphany... I'm not that smart. However, I figured that if I wanted to share my story, I would have to provide essential details, that I would have never contemplated doing. If my answer to the often-asked question, "How did you do it?" is ambiguous (without detail), then it helps no one. Again, the practical way to share is to be specific regarding the steps I took. I prayed for over twenty years for this to happen. I'm sure that God might have answered my prayers, over that time, but I wasn't listening. (In fact, I didn't listen to anyone in authority.) One prayer I said daily was, "Please God, don't let me destroy myself." Another prayer was asking for a sign, to help me understand how to improve my Christian life. The guidelines were there (scripture) but I didn't see it. Where would I begin? I needed God's help.

I write a blog, [mylordandme.com](http://mylordandme.com), beginning Holy Week, 2017. When I began, it needed a lot of work. I suspected there was too much preaching on my part and that's not what I wanted its purpose to be. Yet, I wanted to share with

anyone who would read it what my experience meant and the path I took and what I learned from it. I used myself as an example so I could better translate how my process affected me and my relationship with God and, therefore, help others. The subscribers received it well as evidenced by the increase in subscriptions from 130 to over 500, in one year. (I am humbled by that number.)

Two years prior to writing the blog, I had been reflecting on what I once was and what I am now. After much discernment, I discovered that there are two types of Christians. I didn't invent these two categories. I did not realize these categories existed anywhere else until I read 2 or 3 Christian books. (Or did I? Perhaps my obstinate self just wasn't paying attention.) At first, I was nervous of sounding too authoritative and arrogant. In fact, I figured the two categories would be too tough for others to understand, upset a few. When I became aware of these categories defined by the authors of some of those books I read, for once, I was on the mark. Once I reached a level of confidence, I distinguished the two in public forums and conversations. In the back of my mind, I suspected I would get hammered as I was being critiqued. To my surprise, it has only provoked ambition, and I have received little blowback.

I, and others before me (i.e. C.S. Lewis), have defined two sets of Christians: **mere Christians** and **followers of Christ**. I derive my definitions from my experience as a mere Christian, evolving to be a follower of Christ.

### mere Christians ~ What I once was

“For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity will disregard teachings and divert to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NABRE)”

The first category is “merely” Christians. They are believers, and doubters.

Per Paul’s letter to Timothy, mere Christians make up the rules as they go along; despite sound doctrine. I did that. I must have perceived, without realizing it, I was outthinking God. Mere Christians think that parts of a commandment or even a whole commandment don’t apply to them. Their actions show it. I let my ‘intelligence’, or at least my indifference, get in the way.

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. Wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For

where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice. (James 3:14-16 NABRE)”

They believe in God but doubt God’s plan... His intentions. I was a mere Christian for over 40 years. I can speak to this category with certainty; not with authority but with wisdom. I didn’t comprehend how Christ’s resurrection applied to my way of life. Like many, I picked parts of His plan to suit me. Many times, I rationalized to where many things I did; I didn’t consider them sins. “It must not be a sin if it feels good”, right? I was a doubter. I was wrong. Or, I was guilty of stating, “At least I’m not as bad as that guy.” But, in God’s eyes, that doesn’t work. I was very much a sinner.

I was using the phrase, “yeah but.” The “yeah, buts” are those who have knowledge of the 10 commandments, but say “yeah, but” God didn’t mean that, did he? They want God to catch up with the times. It will never happen. **God’s word is absolute!** You either understand and obey the complete gist of His intentions or you don’t. Since my journey began, I haven’t even considered saying “yeah, but” once in the past six years. This is not good news. Many, Christians, including Catholics, express that the church is not current with the times. Saying that indicates that God isn’t current with the times either. Do they really think God

will change His intention so they will feel better? I'm betting, not. **God is not a progressive.**

Our world is morally decaying. There was once an album, in the seventies, released by the rock band, The Doobie Brothers. The title of the album, "What Were Once Vices, Are Now Habits." How prophetic that title was. And the world just keeps getting worse. Mere Christians have allowed evil to take effect. "How?" you ask. They have let it fester and have done no work, indifference, to solve it. We're indifferent. I was indifferent. Is there a correlation between the declining presence at church vs. the growing immoral decay? It seems that way. Christians must take a leadership role in following God's plan. For many reasons, they fail to do that, as I did.

Recall what I said earlier, mere Christians want God to get current with the times. As immoral behavior worsens each day, they want God to make it ok to do things that makes them feel good, just like I did. Which means they don't want to work at following in the footsteps of Jesus. This phony belief does not jibe with God's plan. If that's the case, again bad news. God will never 'adjust' His plan! Non-believers and mere Christians bet that God will consider the good things they do, like charity work or treating people kindly, without following His commandments. For example, I

was a good person, compassionate; assuming it was ok if I messed things up (what I now realize as sin) now and then. Guilty! We live in a feel-good society. Yet, we become greedy and push for more.

“Do you not realize that everything that enters the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled into the latrine? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy. (Matthew 15:17-20 NABRE)”

In that passage, I determine that Jesus is leading his disciples away from the teaching authority of the Pharisees. Mere Christians could liken to modern day Pharisees. Just as the Old Testament Pharisees, a few clergy and ordained speculate they are all-knowing, they let their intelligence, hard hearts and arrogance get in the way and blind them. In the Catholic Church, we know the horror of molestation and the energy to sweep it under the rug. (I can, with conviction, say if a priest had molested me, as an altar server, my parents would have never accepted it as true. Their conclusion might be that priests are too holy to do something that terrible.) So, I get it.

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The utterance of Jesus, challenges all believers to be authentic disciples and commit themselves, through self-renunciation and acceptance of the cross of suffering, even the sacrifice of life itself. Life is self-centered earthly existence denial of Christ and ends in destruction. But when we are obedient to Christ, despite earthly death, we arrive at fullness of life.

“He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it. “What profit is there for one to gain the entire world and give up his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father’s glory (Mark 8:34-38 NABRE)”

Paul touches on it in this letter.

“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people, not at all referring to the immoral of this world or the greedy and robbers or idolaters; for you would then have to leave the world. But I now write to you not to associate with anyone named a brother, if he is immoral, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a robber, not even to eat with such a person. why

should I be judging outsiders? Is it not your business to judge those within? (1 Corinthians 5:9-12)”

What Paul is saying, we already know who the non-believers are, it's the mere Christians that we need to watch out for.

Ouch!

If someone calls me brother and tells me they are a Christian, then I raise the caution flag. Their actions should expose their Christianity. I should never have to tell someone I'm a Christian. One time, I received the ultimate compliment. A fellow worker asked me if I was Christian. My response was that I try to be Christ-like. I wasn't, however, getting the job done. I wasn't obedient.

“all good giving and every perfect is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom **there is no alteration** (my emphasis) or shadow caused by change. (James 1:17 NABRE)”

followers of Christ - What I am now

The second type Christian is a follower of Christ. A follower walks in the footsteps of Jesus. To be a follower is to have learned, comprehend and practice God's plan, daily.



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Jesus was compassionate and established His love with His apostles, His followers and His enemies. It took me two years, after my epiphany, to figure it out. Once I did, it's as if all the fog in my head washed away... it opened my eyes.

A follower of Christ demonstrates, through faith and works, the same compassion that Jesus had on earth. A follower of Christ hopes that people see the Jesus in them, not be Jesus... but see the Jesus in them. I once, many years ago, heard someone say I might be the only Jesus someone might ever meet. That was an eye opener. I commit to preach the gospel and, when necessary, use words. Actions!

In addition, followers of Christ are no longer concerned about life on earth. While on earth, followers continue their Christianity per God's plan and His commandments. But the real reward is heaven.

"Graduating" from how I once led my life to a follower of Christ changed my life to where I'm as happy as I've ever been. The rough times might still be there, but knowing God has my back, it's so much easier to battle the everyday obstacles. I know God's love for me, and I love Him back...

"and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:38 NABRE)"

Followers take up His cross. As the prophets wrote throughout the Old Testament, He will be our God, we will be His people. He loves us so much that He gave us the rules, not guidelines, but rules, on how we will, not should, live our lives. There will be tough concepts, in each step, that might upset you and be considered arrogant. Hey, I'm just the messenger. But once you understand it, your transformation into a follower, will be the best thing that has ever happened to you: just as it did me. If you are a follower, then you will understand the good news I present. I'm convinced, if you are a follower yet doubt yourself, don't. You may be closer to such a conversion than you realize, turning your life over to Jesus. Again, it was uncomfortable for me to accept His tough love, but the most important part of that to remember is, His love. It's His tough love that will get us to heaven.

I hope you read this with an open mind. I hope you make it through the entire book without giving up, closing it and never coming back. God, with His love for us, doesn't care if it offends us. I'm sorry, but that's just the way it is. As a follower of Christ, I should be uncomfortable as I discover new things and meanings. Scripture's purpose, for example, is to help me learn and to challenge.

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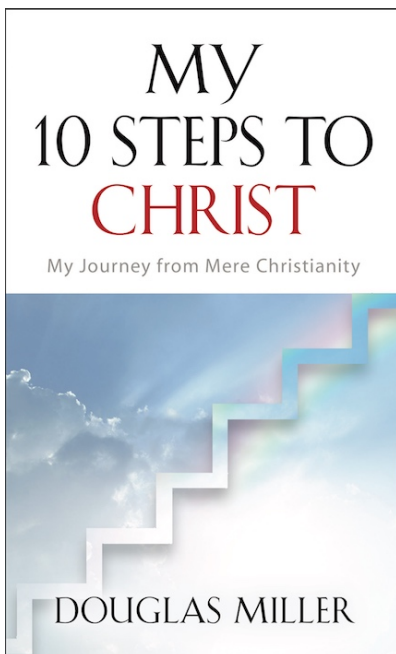
“All scripture inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for **refutation, for correction, and for training** (my emphasis) in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)”

One more comment, before I end this. I was asked one time why I write the blog and, when someone reaches out to me with questions, if I counsel like I was an authority. I asked them why the reservation. The statement they made was, “Because you’re not a priest.” First, as I’ve mentioned, I don’t speak with authority. I simply, as a follower, share my faith, as a follower... our Lord.

I never look for pats on the back or any glory. I’m a humble servant of the lord. He is the potter; I am the clay! And, I’m only the messenger.

The scripture readings in this book refer to the New American Bible, revised edition (NABRE) translation, unless otherwise noted. I will include a multitude of passages that support the details of my steps. These are readings I not only relied on then, but continue to this day. Every verse I share, every example I give illustrates where I once was (a sinner who sinned grave sins). After you finish reading this book, decide where, in your spiritual life, you are now: merely a Christian or a follower of Christ.

Now, on to the 10 steps I took to Jesus Christ



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