



# just starting out



SEVEN LETTERS TO  
A NEW CHRISTIAN

Al Stewart + Edward Vaughan

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A NEW CHRISTIAN

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SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

*Just Starting Out*

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ISBN 978 1 925424 40 9

Cover design and typesetting by Lankshear Design.

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**W**ELCOME—TO THIS BOOK and to the kingdom of God! Because if you're reading this book, we assume that you have recently decided to become a Christian. It's great to have you in the family.

This book aims to tell you the basic things that you need to know to get started as a Christian. We haven't covered everything—far from it—but we've tried to convey the essential things.

In the pages that follow, you'll eavesdrop on letters written to Dave, a young Christian, as he begins his life with God. We'll also give some practical tips along the way on things like praying and reading the Bible. This resource is designed to work in tandem with *Just for Starters*, a set of seven foundational Bible studies, also published by Matthias Media. If you're doing these studies with someone, you'll find that the book fits in well with what you're studying week by week. We'd recommend that you try to do these studies sometime soon, with someone who

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has been a Christian for a while. If that's not possible, you could perhaps do the studies by yourself, using this book to help you along. If that's not possible either, don't despair—the book stands quite well on its own.

We pray that as you read, God will teach you about himself and about how you can live as his son or daughter.

Now it's time to meet Dave and his friend, Michael.

*Ed and Al*

# Starting out

Dear Dave,

Your letter was one of the sneakiest that I have ever read. You told me about work, about the movie you had seen and the party that you had been to. And then right at the end you slipped in a little comment about our previous conversations. A faltering, hesitant, intriguing little comment: “I’ve been thinking seriously about what you’ve been telling me about Jesus and I decided to pray the prayer. What’s the next step?”

Dave, your decision to trust in Jesus is the absolute best news in the entire world! It should be shouted from the rooftops and shown on prime-time TV. Instead you hide it at the end of your letter!



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As you start out in the Christian life, I'd like to mention a few things so that you understand what you are doing. Before I was a Christian, I thought it was all about obeying a lot of rules that were carefully designed to make life miserable, or at least terminally boring. It wasn't until after God had dragged me into his kingdom that I realized that being a Christian is about knowing and loving a person. So let me tell you what kind of a person Jesus is.

Jesus says that he came so that people might have life and have it to the full. Life might not be easier or trouble free for you now, but I guarantee that if you get serious about following Jesus you will suck the marrow out of life.

What's so special about Jesus? Well, how long have you got? The Bible tells us that Jesus is fully and truly human and at the same time fully and truly God. The God who made this universe is so big that we find him hard to understand, but he became a human being so that we could know what he is like. We talk about it every Christmas, but we don't often stop to think that God became a baby, was born in a shed and slept in a feed-box. If we'd been born at the right time and the right place, we could have sat down, shared a meal with him and listened to him explain about his Father.

While Jesus lived among us he did things that only God can do. He healed the sick, raised the dead and fed crowds of thousands from one lunchbox. (You can find all these stories in the New Testament.) He also forgave the sins people had committed against God.

Jesus showed us God's power and compassion in action when his friend Lazarus died. Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus arrived at his tomb. And Jesus wept. Then, after he had prayed to his Father, Jesus called to Lazarus and the dead man walked out of the tomb, much to the crowd's amazement!

People were also amazed at the way Jesus spoke, because he had an authority that came from God. Even those who hated Jesus admitted that there was something special about the way he taught. The Jewish religious leaders once sent some guards to arrest Jesus. When they turned up, Jesus was teaching. They went back empty-handed and, when their bosses asked them to explain why, the guards answered: "No-one ever spoke the way this man does" (John 7:46). As I read today what Jesus taught, I am absolutely convinced they are the very words of God.

But the thing that really stands out is the purpose of Jesus' life. In Mark 10:45, Jesus says that he came not to be served by people, but to serve people and

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to give his life as a ransom for our sins. Jesus came for the express purpose of dying in our place—taking the punishment for our sinfulness. The Son of God—all-powerful and perfect—left his Father and came to live in our lowly world and to die so that we could be forgiven our sins.

This is real love—love that will change our lives when we understand it. On the night before he died Jesus said to his friends, “Greater love has no-one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). Jesus was a one-man rescue mission, to save us from hell and win for us the gift of eternal life.

Dave, what really hits me is that Jesus didn’t just die for the great sea of humanity; he died for me. And this is something that I never grow tired of thinking about. It will fill you with wonder for the rest of your Christian life. Jesus gave his life for us. And all we have to do is trust him. Amazing.

The Christian life is about knowing and trusting Jesus. The way you get to know him better is to read about him in the New Testament, and Mark’s Gospel is a good book to start with. There’s a million other things I want to tell you, but that will do for now. I’m so happy that you’ve started out in the Christian life. You’ll be hearing from me soon.

*Michael*

As you start out in the Christian life—or go back to the basics for a refresh—what do you need to know?

Listen in on these letters written to a new Christian, Dave, as he learns about some of the essentials of Christian living. Each letter covers a different aspect of what it means to be a Christian—from how we are saved by God, to why we read the Bible and go to church.

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