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# foreword

Several years ago, I sat in a church library with a small number of young adults who were exploring church membership. I had been in pastoral ministry for more than twenty years and thought that I knew what to expect. Shortly into the first conversation, I discovered that for a couple of those in the group, common church phrases were failing to communicate. They had no idea about the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan and that in the Bible the big numbers referred to chapters and the little numbers were called verses. These young adults, deeply interested in the church and in faith, had grown up completely unexposed to the life of the church and to hear stories. That population of “unchurched” adults is not shrinking in our society, and if we are to share the life of faith with them, we must do so without first relying on the assumptions that everybody knows the biblical stories and that everybody understands the basics of faith in Christ.

This is the contribution that *The New Life* makes to the church in this generation. It describes the basic beliefs of Christian faith and the distinctive features of the Baptist family without assuming that the reader will know the old stories and the long established vocabulary of the church. Instead, in this small volume, the language of common conversation is used to describe the ancient faith of all who have declared that Jesus is Lord.

If this were a coach's manual, we could call it "The Basics of Discipleship." If it were a syllabus, the course would be "Introduction to Christian Faith: Core Beliefs and Practices." It is for those who are just beginning the way of Jesus and those who teach them. It's also a quick review for those who have been disciples for a while but who want to return to the basics for a quick reminder.

First published in 1947, in its first two editions *The New Life* has already sold 750,000 copies in more than 10 languages. This third edition brings the book's content up to date while sustaining its primary characteristic as a manual for people who are just beginning the Christian walk.

To me, this practical resource has the feel of something that grew directly out of ministry in the congregation and community. The late Allan R. Knight and Gordon H. Schroeder discovered that they had to find a way to tell the story to people who had never heard. They had to minimize assumptions about the new Christian's knowledge and speak as if the student of faith knew next to nothing. They had to begin at the beginning. So they did in 1947 and so this third edition continues in their spirit.

I did not have this little manual in hand when I met with that group in the church library. I wish that I had. It would have been a better conversation, a more effective introduction to Jesus and his church.

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