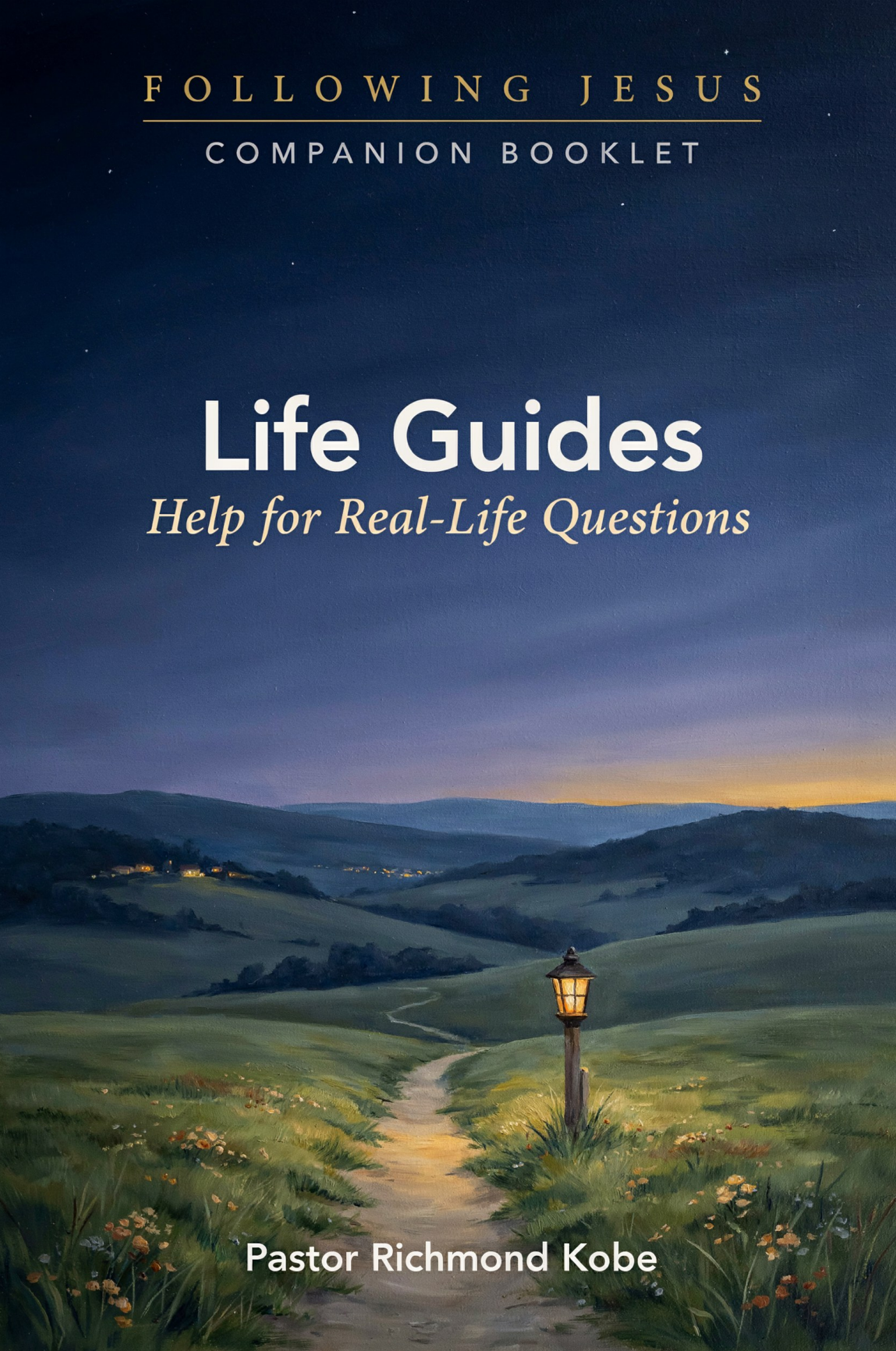
FOLLOWING JESUS

COMPANION BOOKLET

Life Guides

Help for Real-Life Questions



Pastor Richmond Kobe

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Twenty Life Guides

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Following Jesus, Life Guides — Help for Real-Life Questions
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The stories in this book are composites. Names and details have been changed, and they do not describe any one real person.

This book is not a substitute for emergency, medical, legal or professional help. If you or someone else is in danger, see "Safety and Support: Start Here" at the back of this book.

Contents

About this booklet 6

1. When Your Family Opposes Your Faith 7

2. Standing Firm in Spiritual Conflict 15

3. Addiction and Controlling Habits 22

4. Fasting: A Practical Guide 30

5. Responding to Sexual Pressure or Abuse 35

6. Freedom From Pornography 43

7. Singleness With Purpose 49

8. Marriage and Family Life 54

9. Traditional Religious Practices and Ancestors 61

10. Debt, Budgeting and Contentment 67

11. Social Media, Screens and Attention 74

12. Following Jesus With Disability or Long-Term Illness 79

13. Understanding End-Times Views 85

14. Dating and Choosing a Spouse 91

15. Preparing for Marriage 97

16. Grace and Next Steps After Sexual Sin 104

17. Following Jesus as a Citizen: Civic Life and Political Disagreement 112

18. Caring for God's Creation 118

19. Following Jesus Across Cultures and After Migration 123

20. Parenting and Helping Children Follow Jesus 130

Support Pages 138

Safety and Support: Start Here 138

I am in danger or being abused 142

I am being controlled through prophecy, spiritual language, money or church authority 150

I am not sure I am a Christian 158
How to Find a Trustworthy Local Church 163
I may harm myself or someone else, or I cannot stay safe 168

About this booklet

These twenty Life Guides go deeper into particular situations that the four Following Jesus books touch on only briefly. They are optional. Read the one that fits your situation, when you need it, on your own, with a mentor or with a trusted church leader.

Each guide points you back to Scripture and to the chapters where the subject first appears. If you or someone else is in danger, or you may harm yourself or someone else, go first to "Safety and Support: Start Here" at the back of this booklet and of every Following Jesus book.

LIFE GUIDE 1

When Your Family Opposes Your Faith

If you are being threatened, hurt, locked in, forced to marry, or have had your documents taken, see "I am in danger or being abused" now. Do not tell your family that you are seeking help until you have advice.

1. The real-life question

"My parents say I have betrayed them. My husband is angry when I go to church. My brother says I am not welcome at home any more. How can I follow Jesus and still honour my family?"

For many people, following Jesus brings tension at home. For some it means gentle teasing or disappointment. For others it means anger, rejection, loss of support, or real danger. You are not the first to face this, and you are not alone.

2. Which situation is closest to yours?

If...	Start with
Your family is puzzled, disappointed or mocking, but you are safe	Sections 3 and 4
Your spouse opposes your faith	Sections 3, 4 and 5
Your family pressures you to take part in religious ceremonies	Section 4 and the Life Guide "Traditional Religious Practices and Ancestors"
You have been cut off, or told to leave home	Sections 4 and 6, and look for a trustworthy church (see "How to Find a Trustworthy Local Church")

If...	Start with
You face threats, violence, forced marriage, loss of documents or legal danger	Section 6 first, and "I am in danger or being abused"
You are under 18	Section 7

3. Key biblical teaching

Jesus warned that following him could divide families. "A person's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:36). He asked for first loyalty: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). When Jesus spoke of "hating" family (Luke 14:26), he was using the language of comparison to demand first loyalty, not commanding contempt or abandonment (Book 1, Chapter 4).

Jesus understands. His own family once thought he was "out of his mind" (Mark 3:21), and his brothers did not believe in him (John 7:5). Later, his brother James believed and became a leader in the Jerusalem church (1 Corinthians 15:7; Acts 1:14; 15:13). Opposition is not always the end of the story.

God commands us to keep honouring our parents. "Honour your father and mother" (Ephesians 6:2). Jesus condemned people who used religion as an excuse to neglect their parents (Mark 7:9–13). Following Jesus should make us more loving, respectful and helpful at home, not less.

God is a family to those who lose family. "For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in" (Psalm 27:10). Jesus promised that those who leave home or family for his sake will receive "houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions" in his new family (Mark 10:29–30).

Live at peace as far as it depends on you. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18). Speak "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15–16).

How to read 1 Corinthians 7:12–16. Paul encourages a believer married to an unbelieving spouse to stay in the marriage if the spouse is willing, and says that the believer's presence brings blessing to the family. He also says that if the unbelieving partner leaves, "the brother or sister is not enslaved" (7:15). This passage does not require anyone to remain in a marriage where they are being abused or endangered (see section 6 and Book 3, Chapter 23).

4. Practical distinctions

This	Is not the same as this
Honouring your family: respect, kindness, care and help	**Obeying in everything:** you may respectfully decline to worship or pray to anyone other than the true God
Wise timing and discretion: waiting, seeking advice, or sharing gradually	**Denying Christ or failing in faith.** Protecting your safety is not spiritual failure
Respecting your family's beliefs	**Agreeing with them.** You can listen and be kind without giving up your faith
Gentle explanation when asked	**Arguing, preaching or pressuring** family members to believe
Joining family occasions that do not involve worshipping other gods	**Taking part in worship or rituals directed to other gods or spirits.** See "Traditional Religious Practices and Ancestors"

This	Is not the same as this
Opposition (disagreement, sadness, anger expressed without intimidation)	**Abuse**: violence, threats, forced marriage, confinement, monitoring communications or movements, controlling money or documents, immigration threats, or using fear to control religious choices. Abuse is never acceptable, whatever a family or culture expects

5. A realistic next-step plan

If you are safe, but facing tension

- **Keep loving in practical ways.** Help at home, keep promises, show respect, and remember birthdays and family events.
- **Explain gently when asked,** in words your family can understand: what Jesus means to you, and what has not changed in your love for them. Avoid criticising their beliefs or traditions.
- **Do not rush.** Ask a trustworthy Christian to help you think about when and how to share your faith, and whether and when to be baptised. Do not let anyone pressure you to take a public step before you are ready.
- **Find support,** such as a mentor, a small group or a trustworthy church, so you are not facing this alone.
- **Pray for your family,** and be patient. Many families change slowly over years.

If your spouse opposes your faith

- **Be faithful and kind in your marriage.** Peter encouraged Christian wives with unbelieving husbands to let respectful conduct accompany their faith rather than constant argument (1 Peter 3:1–2). All believers are called to respond without retaliation and to seek peace where possible (1 Peter 3:8–9; Romans 12:18).
- **Talk together about practical arrangements,** such as when you attend church and how you raise your children, with respect for both of you (see "Marriage and Family Life"). Seek locally informed

legal or safeguarding advice before arranging a child's baptism without the other parent's knowledge, changing school or travel plans, or taking another step that could create custody or safety risks.

- **If opposition becomes control, threats or violence,** this is abuse. See "I am in danger or being abused," and make a safety plan with a specialist before taking any step that might alert your spouse.

If you have been cut off or told to leave

- **Look after your basic needs first:** a safe place to stay, food, documents, money and health care.
- **Ask a trustworthy church or Christian organisation for practical help.** Do not surrender identity documents, passwords, money or control over your movements in exchange for housing or help. Help must never depend on unpaid labour, obedience to a leader, secrecy, baptism or taking part in ministry. If a leader offers housing, it should go through the church's safeguarding procedure, not a private arrangement.
- **Keep the door open where it is safe.** A short, kind message on special occasions can show love without demanding a response.

Christians differ

How openly, and how soon, should a new believer confess their faith? Following Jesus quietly, delaying an announcement, declining to answer an unsafe question or leaving danger is not the same as denying Christ. Some Christians emphasise that public confession and baptism should follow soon after faith, even at a cost (they often point to Matthew 10:32–33 and Acts 2:41). Others emphasise that, where there is danger, a believer may wisely follow Christ quietly for a time while growing in faith and seeking safety (they often point to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea in John 19:38–39, and to Paul's escape from danger in Acts 9:23–25). Across these views, Christians commonly affirm that no one

should deny Christ, that no one should be pressured into risky public steps by others, that safety and wise timing matter, and that the decision belongs to the believer with prayer and wise counsel.

6. Safety and referral

Some families and communities respond to a change of faith with threats, violence, forced marriage, imprisonment at home, taking documents, or reporting the person to authorities. If this is your situation:

- **Your safety matters to God.** Taking time to seek safety is not spiritual failure (Book 1, Chapter 4).
- **Do not tell your family you are seeking help,** and do not agree to family mediation, until you have specialist advice. Family members may be involved.
- **Contact a specialist service:** for example a domestic-abuse, forced-marriage, persecution-support or safeguarding service. In some places, contacting police or authorities may increase the danger, so seek advice from people with local experience first.
- **Protect your phone and accounts.** Family members may check messages, apps, browsing history, notification previews, shared cloud accounts or location sharing. Use a safer device where possible. The "quick exit" button cannot make your visit invisible.
- **Keep copies of important documents** somewhere safe, if you can do so without risk.
- **If you are in immediate danger,** contact emergency services where it is safe to do so, or, if that is not safe, move to a safer place and contact a hospital, crisis line or specialist service. See "I am in danger or being abused."

For church leaders and helpers: never contact the family, mediate, disclose the person's location or arrange meetings without the person's agreement and specialist advice. For an adult, follow their choices and safety plan unless there is immediate or serious danger, a child or

another person may be at risk, they cannot make or act on the relevant decision, or reporting is legally required. For a child, follow the safeguarding procedure promptly and obtain qualified outside advice; do not try to manage the situation privately. Never pressure a new believer to be baptised, tell their family or make their faith public.

7. If you are under 18

- **Talk with a safe adult,** such as a teacher, school counsellor, relative or church leader you trust.
- **No church leader should ask you to keep your faith, meetings, messages or baptism secret** from your parents or guardians. A church leader must not arrange a secret baptism, hidden meetings, private transport, accommodation or secret messaging with you.
- **If involving your parents or guardians could put you at risk,** a safe leader will follow the safeguarding procedure and seek qualified outside advice, rather than acting alone.
- **You can still pray and follow Jesus** while respecting your parents as far as you safely can. You do not need to keep hidden materials, attend secret meetings or communicate secretly with a church leader to belong to Christ.

8. Discussion or private reflection

In a group, use these as general questions. Never ask anyone to describe their own family situation.

1. What does it look like to honour parents without worshipping other gods?
2. Why might wise timing be faithful rather than fearful?
3. How did Jesus respond to his own family's misunderstanding?
4. How can a church become family to someone who has lost theirs?

For private reflection: What is one way I can show love to my family this week? Who could help me think about timing and safety?

A short prayer you may use: "Lord Jesus, you know my family and you love them. Help me to honour them, to stay faithful to you, and to be wise about what I say and when. Keep me safe, and draw my family to you in your time. Amen."

9. Links back to the chapters

- Book 1, Chapter 1: Jesus Christ and the Good News
- Book 1, Chapter 4: Following Jesus as Lord
- Book 3, Chapter 24: Loving Others in Family, Friendship and Church
- Book 3, Chapter 29: Suffering, Doubt, Lament and Perseverance
- Book 4, Chapter 34: Explaining the Gospel Clearly
- Book 4, Chapter 37: Walking With a New Believer
- Support Pages: "I am in danger or being abused"; "How to Find a Trustworthy Local Church"
- Life Guides: "Traditional Religious Practices and Ancestors"; "Marriage and Family Life"; "Following Jesus Across Cultures and After Migration"