

The Pilgrim's Progress

A Readable Modern-Day Version of
John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

Part 1

Book by John Bunyan
Unabridged Revision by Alan Vermilye



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Version 1

Contents

Introduction.....	7
The Bible Study Guide.....	9
Chapter One	11
Fleeing the City of Destruction.....	11
In Pursuit of Christian.....	14
A Conversation with Pliable	17
Battling the Swamp of Despair.....	19
The Advice of Worldly Wiseman.....	22
In Search of Morality.....	26
Chapter Two.....	32
Arrival at the Wicket Gate.....	32
The House of the Interpreter.....	37
1st Room – The Portrait of the Preacher.....	38
2nd Room – The Dusty Room.....	40
3rd Room – Passion and Patience.....	42
4th Room – The Roaring Fire.....	45
5 th Room – The Palace.....	46
6th Room – The Caged Man.....	48
7th Room – The Unprepared Dreamer.....	51
Chapter Three.....	54
Arrival at the Cross.....	54
Simple, Lazy, and Arrogance	56
An Encounter with Formalism and Hypocrisy	58
Climbing the Hill of Difficulty	61

The Fear of Nervousness and Mistrust	63
Chapter 4.....	67
Arrival at the Palace Beautiful.....	67
An Interview with Piety, Prudence, and Charity	70
Suiting Up for Battle	77
Chapter Five.....	82
The Battle with Apollyon	82
Entering the Valley of the Shadow of Death	89
Chapter Six	96
Temptation, Discontentment, and Shame	96
The Hypocrisy of Talkative.....	108
Evangelist Warns of the Coming Tribulation	121
Chapter Seven	124
On Trial at Vanity Fair	124
Chapter Eight	136
The Deceitfulness of Riches	136
The Snare of the Silver Mine.....	146
A Monumental Warning.....	149
Chapter Nine	152
Taking the Easy Path	152
Trapped in Doubting Castle.....	157
Chapter Ten.....	164
The Shepherds in the Mountains	164
An Encounter with Ignorance.....	170
The Assault on Little Faith	173
Chapter Eleven.....	182
The Ensnarement of Flatterer	182

The Laughter of Atheist.....	186
Crossing the Enchanted Ground.....	189
Ignorance Follows His Heart.....	200
The Backsliding of Temporary.....	208
Chapter Twelve.....	215
The Country of Beulah.....	215
The River of Death.....	218
A Heavenly Welcome.....	222
The Conclusion.....	228
Leave a Review.....	229
Other Studies from Brown Chair Books.....	230

Introduction

I always had good intentions to read *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. Sure, it's a classic and probably every Christian should read it, but each time I tried, I felt as though I needed a 16th century translator. So I would give up, only to try again later with the same results.

While trying to decide my next Bible study project, my wife challenged me to consider *The Pilgrim's Progress*. I agreed that it was a good idea, but if I was to create a study, it would only make sense that I would also need to create a more readable version of the book. Surely if I struggled reading it, others did to. And what would be the purpose of creating a study for a book that people could not understand?

With much enthusiasm, I charted out my work. Normally, I can complete one of my studies in about four months, so I figured a project of this magnitude should take no more than six or eight months max. A year and a half later, and who knows how many hours, I finally published what I consider my opus!

Why so long? For one, all my projects require a lot of research, but this one took considerably more both for the book and the study.

Secondly, I discovered that taking Bunyan's original text and interpreting it for the modern-day reader was more challenging than I had thought. My most important consideration was to convert this antiquated text into simple conversational English without being unfaithful to the original. In fact, if you compare my version with the original, you will find no key element missing.

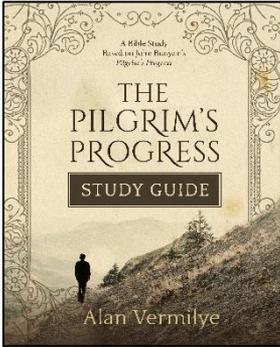
What you will find is sentence construction and certain interpretations of character reactions modified or enhanced to produce a more contemporary style of expression without sacrificing the intrinsic message.

Also, instead of using the archaic term "stages" to separate book sections, you will find chapter headings and subdivisions. I also retained the marginal scriptural references included by Bunyan.

Yes, it's true, every Christian should probably read *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Why? Because it's the spiritual journey of every believer, from our first conviction until the moment we enter heaven, told in the most brilliant of allegories.

I sincerely hope that my earnest rendering of this beloved classic will make this message as clear for you as it has been for me.

The Bible Study Guide



The Pilgrim's Progress Study Guide is a 12-week Bible study that was created specifically for this book.

Perfect for small groups or individual study, each weekly study session applies a biblical framework to the concepts found in each chapter and subsection of the book. Although intriguing and entertaining, much of Bunyan's writings can be difficult to grasp.

The Pilgrim's Progress Study Guide will guide you through Bunyan's masterful use of metaphors to a better understanding of the key concepts of the book, the supporting Bible passages, and the relevance to our world today. Each study question is ideal for group discussion, and answers to each question are available online.

You will also find commentary, character and places summaries, discussion questions for each section, and complete answers to all questions available for free online.

You can find retailers in order to purchase this book at www.BrownChairBooks.com.

Chapter One

Fleeing the City of Destruction

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I came to a place where there was a clearing, and I laid down in it to sleep.

While I slept, I dreamed about a man in ragged clothes who stood, with his face turned away from his own house and with a book in his hand, carrying a great burden on his back. I saw him read from the pages of the book, weeping and shaking in fear until eventually he cried out loudly, “What should I do?”¹

He anxiously returned home and tried to remain calm so that his wife and children would not become worried. But he became so distressed that he could no longer be silent and decided it was time to tell his family exactly what was on his mind.

“I love you all dearly,” he said to his wife and children, “but I feel I must share with you this miserable and heavy burden that I’ve been carrying. You see, I’ve been reading this book and learned that our town will be destroyed—burned with fire from heaven—and unless we find some way to escape, all of us will die.”

His family and friends were all amazed with his story, not because they believed him but rather because they considered

¹ Isa. 64:6; Luke 14:33; Psalm 38:4; Acts 2:37, 16:30; Hab. 1:2–3

him sick or even losing his mind. As evening approached, they were confident that a good night's sleep was all he needed to settle down, so they quickly got him to bed.

When morning came, they asked how he was feeling, and he said, "It's worse than before." He wanted to share with them more about what he had learned in the book, but they would not listen. Sometimes they spoke harshly to him, and at other times they laughed. Eventually they just ignored him.

He was sad, so he withdrew to his room and prayed for them while nursing his own grief. For weeks, he would go out alone into the woods and fields to read his book and pray.

One day, as he was walking in the fields, he became so distressed that he cried out, "Who will save me?"²

He thought that perhaps he should run, but to where should he run? As he stood there in misery, not knowing what to do, a man named Evangelist walked up to him and asked calmly, "Why are you crying?"

"Sir, I've been reading this book," he replied, "and I now realize that I'm condemned to die and after that, God will judge me. I find that I'm not willing to do the first nor able to do the second. Now I fear dying."³

Evangelist responded, "Why do you fear dying since this life is full of evil?"

The man answered, "Because I fear this burden on my back is too heavy and will make me sink lower than the grave until I fall into Hell! If I'm not fit to die, then I'm sure that I'm not fit to go to judgment and from there to execution. When I think of these things, it makes me cry."⁴

"If this is your condition, why are you still standing here?"

² Acts 16:30–31

³ Heb. 9:27, Job 10:21–22, Ezek. 22:14

⁴ Isa. 30:33

asked Evangelist.

The man shrugged his shoulders and said, “Because I don’t know where to go!”

Evangelist handed him a scroll with these words on it: “Flee from the wrath to come!”⁵

The man read it and asked, “But where should I flee to?”

There was a wide field before them with a gate. “Do you see that wicket gate?” Evangelist asked.⁶

The man looked far into the distance and said, “No, I do not.”

Evangelist asked, “How about the light? Do you see the light?”⁷

The man looked closer and said excitedly, “Yes, I think I do!”

“Good! Keep that light in your eye, and go straight to it,” said Evangelist. “When you arrive at the gate, knock, and you will be told what you are to do.”

Then I saw in my dream that Christian—for that was the man’s name—set off running to the gate.

⁵ Matt. 3:7

⁶ Matt. 7:13–14

⁷ Psalm 119:105, 2 Pet. 1:19

In Pursuit of Christian

Now, Christian had not gone far from his own home when his wife and children came out running, pleading and begging him to come back home, but he put his hands to his ears and ran on, crying, “Life! Life! Eternal life!” He never looked behind him but ran toward the middle of the field.⁸

His neighbors also came out to see him run. As he ran, some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return. Two of the neighbors, Obstinate and Pliable, set off to bring him back, by force if necessary. By this time, Christian was a good distance ahead of them, but they were determined to catch him and eventually did.⁹

Christian turned to the men and asked, “Why have you come after me?”

The men had to stop and catch their breath from running so hard. “We have come to persuade you to return with us.”

But Christian stood his ground. “I can no longer live in the City of Destruction. I was born and raised there, but now I know what kind of city it is. My eyes have been opened, and I know the truth. Why don’t you both come with me? Otherwise you will die in this city and sink down below the grave into a place that burns with fire.”

“What?” Obstinate said, astonished. “And leave our

⁸ Luke 14:26, Gen. 19:17

⁹ Jer. 20:10

families and the comforts of life behind us?”

“Yes,” said Christian. “Everything that you leave behind will not even compare to the smallest portion of what I’m seeking to enjoy. If you come with me and persevere, you’ll find more than enough. I’m telling you the truth. Come with me and see!”¹⁰

Obstinate was curious and asked, “What are the things you are searching for that can’t be found in this world?”

“I’m searching for a joy that does not fade,” replied Christian, “a secure inheritance in Heaven that cannot be corrupted and will be given at the appointed time to those who earnestly search for it.” He held out the book in his hand. “Don’t take my word for it. Read it in my book.”¹¹

Obstinate threw up his hands and quickly dismissed Christian. “Nonsense! Put away your foolish book. Are you coming back with us or not?”

Christian shook his head. “No, I will not. I’ve put my hand to the plow and will not turn back.”¹²

Obstinate motioned to Pliable. “Let’s go home without him, Pliable. There’s no convincing a fool once they believe themselves wiser than all their family and friends.”

But Pliable did not move. Instead, he seemed to be considering Christian’s offer. “Let’s not be too quick to judge Christian,” said Pliable. “If he’s telling the truth, then what he’s searching for is far more valuable than anything we have here. I think I’m inclined to go with him.”

Obstinate was dumbfounded. “What? You can’t be serious. Don’t follow a fool like him. Come back with me.”

“Don’t listen to him,” Christian urged Pliable. “Come with

¹⁰ 2 Cor. 4:18, Luke 15:17

¹¹ 1 Peter 1:4, Heb. 11:16

¹² Luke 9:62

me, and you'll discover the things that I just spoke of and so much more too!" He extended the book to Pliable. "Read the truth for yourself in this book that has been fully confirmed with the blood of Him who wrote it."¹³

Pliable looked at his friend Obstinate and said, "I think that I will go along with Christian and share my fate with his." He then turned to Christian and said, "Do you know the way to this glorious place?"

"I've been told by a man named Evangelist to hurry to that little gate in front of us, where we will receive further instructions and will be told how to find the Way."

Pliable was enthusiastic. "What are we waiting for? Let's get going!"

While the two of them took off together as fast as they could for the gate, Obstinate stood in disbelief and yelled after them, "I'm going back home and refuse to be misled by you fools!"

¹³ Heb. 9:17-21

A Conversation with Pliable

In my dream, I saw Obstinate go back home while Christian and Pliable set off to cross the field, talking as they went.

“Pliable, I’m so happy that you decided to come with me,” said Christian. “If Obstinate could only understand the dangers and terrors that await him, he would not have turned his back on us so easily.”

“I’m sure that’s true. Now, Christian,” pressed an eager Pliable, “since it’s just the two of us, tell me more about all the things we will find in our search.”

Christian once again reached for his book. “I can understand it in my head, but for some reason, I find it difficult to talk about. However, I know I can find the answers to all your questions in this book.”

“And you’re confident the words in your book are true?” asked Pliable, pointing to Christian’s book.

“Absolutely!” said Christian without hesitation. “The book was made by Him who cannot lie.”¹⁴

“That’s good enough for me! So tell me more about these things in your book.”

Christian eagerly began, “The book tells us of a world with no boundaries and a life that never ends.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Titus 1:2

¹⁵ Isa. 65:17, John 10:27–29

“Amazing! What else does it say?”

“It says that we will receive a crown of glory and robes that will make us shine like the sun!”¹⁶

“That’s incredible! Does it say anything else?”

“Yes! That we’ll never grieve again and that the King of the place will wipe every tear from our eyes.”¹⁷

“Wonderful!” replied Pliable. Then he paused and grew concerned. “But who will we meet there, and what will they be like?”

“We will be met by angels and tens of thousands of all the saints in robes so bright that our eyes will dazzle just to look at them! There will be those that have gone before us in this world and have stood for the faith and suffered greatly, including being burned on the stake, thrown to wild beasts, and drowned in the seas—all because of their love for the Lord. They will not harm us but will greet us with love because they walk with God.”¹⁸

Although fascinating, it did not seem to alleviate Pliable’s concern. “That’s all very interesting, but what will be our share in all of this, and what will it cost?”

“The Lord of that land has promised that if we are truly willing to receive our inheritance, He will give it to us freely,”¹⁹ explained Christian.

Pliable let out a sigh of relief. “This is very good news, Christian! Come on. Let’s pick up our pace and get there quicker.”

“I’m trying,” said Christian, moving as fast as he could, “but this load on my back slows me down.”

¹⁶ 2 Tim. 4:8, Rev. 22:5, Matt. 13:43

¹⁷ Isa. 25:8; Rev 7:16–17, 21:4

¹⁸ Isa. 6:2; 1 Thess. 4:16–17; Rev. 4:4, 5:11, 14:1–5; John 12:25; 2 Cor. 5:2

¹⁹ Isa. 55:12; John 6:37, 7:37; Rev. 21:6, 22:17

Battling the Swamp of Despair

As they were talking, Christian and Pliable drew near to a very muddy swamp, named Despair, in the middle of the field. Since neither were paying any attention to where they were going, they both fell in. They battled in the swamp for some time totally covered in mud, and the load that Christian carried on his back made him sink even more.

Looking around, Pliable asked, “Christian, where are we now?”

“Truthfully, I have no idea!” Christian said, struggling to find a way out.

Offended, Pliable angrily asked, “Is *this* the happiness that you’ve been telling me about all this time? If this is what happens at the beginning of our journey, I cannot imagine what we can expect to find at the end. If I get out of this mess with my life, I’m going home, and you can travel to your noble country without me!”

And with that, he gave a desperate struggle or two and climbed out of the mud on the side of the swamp nearest to his home, and Christian never saw him again.

So Christian was left to battle his way through the Swamp of Despair on his own, without any help. He formulated a plan and decided his best option was to reach the side of the swamp closest to the Wicket Gate, in the opposite direction from his home. He slowly inched his way across the muddy swamp

until he finally reached the edge but then found that he could not get out because of the heavy burden on his back.

Then I saw in my dream a man, whose name was Help, came to him and asked him, “What are you doing here?”

“A man called Evangelist gave me directions to the Wicket Gate so that I could escape the destruction that’s coming to my city. As I started heading to the gate, I fell in here.”

“But why didn’t you look for the steps to cross the swamp?” Help asked him.

“I’m afraid that I was in such a hurry that I did not see them and fell right in,” Christian admitted, feeling a little embarrassed.

Help reached out to Christian. “Give me your hand, and I will pull you out.” And with that, Help pulled Christian out of the swamp and set him on solid ground, wishing him well.²⁰

Then, in my dream, I approached Help and asked him, “Excuse me, sir. Since this place is on the way from the City of Destruction to the Wicket Gate, why has no one repaired this patch of ground to keep those who come by from falling into the swamp?”

And he said to me, “This swamp cannot be fixed. Since it’s a low-lying plot of land, all sorts of scum and filth associated with the conviction of sin drain into it. Therefore it’s called the Swamp of Despair. As a traveling sinner becomes aware of their own lost condition, doubts and fears arise in their mind, and then it all drains down and settles in this place. This is what makes the ground so bad.

“The King never intended that this place should remain in such bad condition,” he said. “For this very reason, His workers have been attempting to repair this ground in accordance to the direction of His Majesty’s surveyors for

²⁰ Psalm 40:2

over two thousand years. To the best of my knowledge, this swamp has swallowed up at least twenty thousand cart-loads, which equates to millions of wholesome instructions that have been brought from all regions of the King's dominions in all seasons. It has been said that these were the best materials possible to make solid ground, but even so, the Swamp of Despair remains after they did all they could.²¹

“The Lawgiver has provided a number of reliable and solid steps placed in the middle of the swamp, but it's hard to see them for all the filth. In cases where the weather changes, the steps are hardly visible. Even when men do notice the steps, they often miss them on account of guilt-induced dizziness. But the ground is good when they enter the gate.”²²

Now, in my dream, Pliable had gone back home. Some of his friends called him wise for coming back home, while others said he was a fool to have gone in the first place. Others just mocked him and called him a coward for giving up too easily when encountering a few difficulties.

Pliable did his best to stay away from them, and that was when he noticed that they had all turned their taunts and laughter to poor Christian. However, that's enough concerning Pliable.

²¹ Isa. 35:3–4

²² 1 Sam. 12:23

The Advice of Worldly Wiseman

A lone once again, Christian continued his journey, walking through the field until he spotted a man coming up to meet him. The man introduced himself as Mr. Worldly Wiseman from the large town of Carnal Policy, not too far from Christian's own home. He had become well acquainted with the rumors circulating of Christian's escape from the City of Destruction. As he approached Christian, he noticed him groaning and struggling and said, "Say there, friend, where are you going with that heavy burden on your back?"

"Yes, it *is* a heavy burden! Probably greater than anyone has had to carry," said Christian. "If you must know, I'm heading to that wicket gate over there because I've been told that's where I can get it removed."

"Do you have a wife and children?" Worldly Wiseman asked.

Sadly, Christian said, "Yes, I do, but since I've been carrying this heavy burden, I no longer find pleasure in them as I once did. In fact, sometimes I feel as though I have no family at all."²³

"I would like to give you some great advice if you will listen to me," prompted Worldly Wiseman, leaning into Christian.

"If it's good advice, I will listen because, quite honestly, I

²³ 1 Cor. 7:29

need some,” replied Christian.

“Then I would tell you to get rid of that burden on your back as quickly as possible! You will never be able to rest and experience the blessing that God has in store for you until you do.”

“That’s exactly what I’m trying to do!” said Christian. “But I cannot seem to get rid of it by myself, and I’ve found no one else who can help me with it either. That’s why I’m heading to that gate, as I told you before, so that I can get rid it.”

Worldly Wiseman’s eyebrows raised. “Who told you that going to that gate would get rid of your burden?”

“A very great and honorable man. If I recall, his name was Evangelist.”

Worldly Wiseman grimaced. “Oh, that man. He’s a terrible guide and has given you the most dangerous advice possible. It should be obvious to you. Just look at the mud from the Swamp of Despair on your clothes. Trust me, that swamp is just the beginning of your problems. I’m older and more experienced, and I guarantee that if you continue on this path, you’ll be met with pain, sadness, hunger, nakedness, lions, dragons, darkness, and, yes, the sword too. In a word—death! I’d advise you not to listen to this man Evangelist.”

“I appreciate your advice, but I don’t think you quite understand,” replied Christian. “This burden on my back is worse than all of the things you just mentioned. Right now, I really don’t care who or what I meet along the way as long as I can get rid of it.”

Pointing to Christian’s back, Worldly Wiseman asked, “Tell me, how did you get your burden in the first place?”

Christian lifted his book up. “I found it by reading this book.”

“I thought so,” said Worldly Wiseman, nodding. “I’ve seen this sort of thing before in other weak men. Just like you, they

begin to learn about teachings too difficult for them to understand, and in no time, they're confused. Eventually they begin to suffer and humiliate themselves by searching for desperate measures to cure themselves without a clue as to what will happen."

"That might be true for some," replied Christian, "but I know exactly what I'm looking for—relief from this burden."

"But why are you seeking relief like this when it's so dangerous? If you can be patient and listen, I will tell you exactly how to find what you're looking for—and risk free at that! In fact, my way is not only closer and less dangerous but you'll find safety, friendship, and happiness."

Christian was open to hearing more and begged, "Please, sir, tell me your secret!"

"Absolutely!" Pointing off in a different direction from the gate, he said, "Why, just a short distance away is the Village of Morality. When you get there, ask for a gentleman named Legality. Now, he has excellent judgement and a great reputation and is renowned for helping men remove their burdens.

"Not just that—he's also skilled in curing the anxieties that accompany burdens. If I were you, I would go to him right now. You'll find his house no less than a mile from here. If he's not home, ask for his son, Civility. He's also quite pleasant and will be able to help you, just like his father can. If you go, I assure you that your burden will be removed in no time."

Worldly Wiseman continued, "Afterward, if you still choose not to go home, you can send for your wife and children to come live with you in the village. You'll find many wonderful homes that are empty and available but reasonably priced. In fact, the overall standard of living is very inexpensive. It's the perfect environment to raise a family, find

honest neighbors, and create a financially secure and attractive future.”

Now Christian was not sure what to do, but after thinking it over for some time, he decided it was best to trust the advice of Worldly Wiseman. “So,” Christian said, eager to get started, “how do I get to this man’s house?”

“Do you see that hill?” asked Worldly Wiseman, pointing off in the distance.

“Yes, I do.”

“Go directly to that hill, and the first house you come to is his.”

So Christian left the path to the Wicket Gate and set out on a new path to find Mr. Legality and finally get his burden removed.