

A GUIDE TO STARTING LIFE WITH JESUS



FIRST STEPS



YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS NOW

DISCOVER THE ADVENTURE OF WALKING WITH GOD

FIRST STEPS • BOOKLET • GRACE CHURCH

WELCOME TO YOUR JOURNEY WITH JESUS!

You are embarking on a grand adventure; a journey with Jesus! You may have just started your relationship with Christ or are coming back to Him for the very first time in years.

Or maybe you're simply hungry for more of God. Whatever the reason, the fact that you're reading this eBook means that you are open to whatever God has to offer you.

In the upcoming pages, we want to offer some first steps you can take on your journey.

While this resource is meant to springboard you forward, your ultimate set of directions is the Bible. Here's the thing about the Bible - there has never been a more powerful book. The Bible will open you up to experience and encounter God. It will reveal Jesus to you, and He never leaves anyone the same. Read the Bible with your head and your heart open to the God who inspired it, the One who even now is inviting you to find your life in His story.

And this ebook? Well, just treat it as a starting companion to your journey. We'll cover some initial steps you can take with Jesus, as well as some common questions every Jesus-follower has or will ask at some point.

We can't wait to see what God will do in your life! From the bottom of our hearts, congratulations on the best decision you could ever make!



GRACE CHURCH

**IT ALL
BELONGS
TO GOD.**





WHAT'S NEXT?

BAPTISM

Baptism is a great next step for anyone who has become a follower of Jesus. Jesus told His followers, *"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."* (Matthew 28:19-20) You're one of the new "disciples" that Jesus was speaking about!

So what is baptism? Baptism is a symbolic act that tells the story of the moment God saved you. It expresses an inward reality: you're a new person because of the work of Jesus.

Your story of life-change is powerful and that's why Jesus wants you to take the first step of sharing it through baptism. Our church needs to hear it and be encouraged. People you love who are far from God need to hear it so they can be invited to experience the same life-change you've received.

To get started on this next step, text "BAPTISM" to 330-264-9459. We're excited to celebrate this next step with you!

READ

Your faith will only grow if you feed it. The Bible is your spiritual food and your primary source for learning about who God is and how He wants to work in your life.

Even though you typically start reading books at the beginning, we recommend starting in the New Testament with the life of Jesus. The Book of John is a great read! John was one of Christ's original followers and was inspired to write from his own experience. His book highlights the miracles, teachings and conversations of Jesus. It's a great place to grow in your understanding of God. Try reading one chapter a day.

The primary goal, though, isn't simply to finish the Bible. The goal is to let God's Word into your life to change you. This happens when you apply what you learn.

Just like getting healthy, you may know how to get in shape by eating right and going to the gym. However, if you never take action, you'll never see a change. The same is true with the Bible. If you only know what God says, but you don't apply it to your life, you won't see the results.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. – Matthew 7:24

If you're looking for more ideas in addition to reading the Book of John, text "BIBLE" to 330-264-9459. We'll connect you to devotions written by people at Grace that take you right to God's Word.

A photograph of two men in a casual setting, possibly a break room. The man on the left is wearing a teal t-shirt and khaki shorts, holding a white coffee cup and a folder. The man on the right is wearing a grey t-shirt and glasses. The background is a light-colored brick wall. The overall tone is warm and positive.

**LIFE IS
BETTER
TOGETHER**



GET CONNECTED

Doing life with others can be complicated - even frustrating! But in the end, life is better together. That's because God intended life to work this way. He created you to be part of His family.

The Apostle John said, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" [1 John 3:1]. Think of the implications of that verse. It means that we can relate to other Christ-followers like fellow family members. Family members can drive you nuts, but at the end of the day, they are the ones who defend you, support you and show up for you.

At Grace, there are so many groups where you can find your fit. They all look a little different and have their own personality, but the essence and purpose of all of them is the same. They are the primary place where rich, meaningful, and fulfilling relationships are developed. In a group of fellow believers, you'll serve together and support one another, which ultimately will grow your relationship with Jesus. Why not take your next step - and maybe for you, it's a brave next step - and participate in a Grace group? Text "GROUPS" to 330-264-9459 to get started and discover how life is better together.



PRAYER

Prayer is a conversation with God. Even in your toughest moments, He hears your prayers and promises to answer them. So where do you begin? In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus taught us how to pray. Here are some observations from that prayer that are great takeaways for your prayer life.

1. SIMPLY TELL GOD HOW MUCH YOU LOVE HIM AND APPRECIATE HIM

This will reframe your thinking from being self-centered to being God-centered. That matters a lot because God not only wants to hear what you have to say but He also has the power to change your life when He's in control.

2. CONFESS YOUR SIN

Even with your sins forgiven by Jesus, you will still fail from time to time. Confession restores your strained relationship with God by agreeing with God that you've sinned, embracing with gratitude that Christ's death paid for forgiveness, and returning to go God's way.

3. THANK GOD

In your prayers, remember to thank God for all that comes from His hand (Romans 11:36).

Thank God for your family, food, clothing; the little things and the big things that God provides in your life and in the lives of those you love.

4. CALL ON GOD FOR HELP

Jesus specifically reminds us to ask God for help when we're tempted. You need His help to make choices that honor Him. But you also need to be calling on God's help in other ways. It could be a need you have or a family member or friend going through a tough time. God wants to hear about everything you care about because He cares for you.



**LIFE CHANGE IS
AN INVITATION
AWAY.**



"I HAVE A QUESTION..."

Questions are good. Questions spark conversations. Conversations encourage understanding.

No matter how long you follow Jesus, you will always have questions for Him. The answers won't always be crystal clear, but if you have the motivation to ask questions and seek understanding, God will grow your faith every day.

On the next few pages, you'll see a number of questions that many believers ask themselves as they learn to follow Jesus. This isn't an exhaustive list of all the topics in the Bible, but a resource you can turn to as you continually strive to grow in your faith.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WORSHIP GOD?

Worshipping God is the intentional act of declaring your belief that God is good, loving, and faithful, no matter your current circumstances. Worship doesn't have to fluctuate with your feelings; it's anchored in what is true; that God is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do.

Psalms 29:1-2 David defines worship as giving God the glory He deserves.

John 4:23-26 Jesus speaks about true worship to a woman He meets in Samaria.

Colossians 3:17 Paul shows us that anything we do can be worship.

Hebrews 12:28-29 The writer of Hebrews tells us to worship God, who cannot change.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR GOD TO HAVE A PURPOSE FOR MY LIFE?

God doesn't just save you from eternal punishment; He calls you to live with an eternally significant purpose. When you profess your faith in Jesus, you are promised both eternity in heaven and an opportunity to live a full abundantly meaningful life on earth.

Jeremiah 1:5 God tells the prophet Jeremiah how He chooses us to bring glory to His name.

2 Timothy 1:8-14 Paul tells Timothy about the life God calls us to live.

John 15:16 Jesus talks about how He has chosen and called us.

John 10:10 Jesus tells us that He came so we could have a full abundant life.

HOW DO I BECOME A BETTER CHRISTIAN?

The grace of Jesus eliminates any need to strive for a better standing before God. Therefore, the Christian life isn't about rules or restrictions. It's about living in light of who Jesus is and trusting Him alone to change you over time.

Romans 12:1-2 Paul challenges us to renew our minds and allow Jesus to change us.

1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul explains how God's grace defines who we are.

Philippians 2:12-16 Paul speaks of how God wants to develop us.

Philippians 3:12-14 Paul explains how life isn't about our past, but our future.

WHY SHOULD I MAKE THANKING GOD A PRIORITY?

The blessings of God aren't always as obvious as you may prefer them to be. But in every moment, whether good or bad, thanking God for who He is and how He loves you will reframe your perspective and help you see His presence and power in your life.

Philippians 4:4-7 Paul challenges us to give thanks in every situation.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul tells us that gratitude is God's will for us.

Psalms 100 Gratitude is the key that unlocks God's presence in our lives.

Psalms 118:24 God's redemptive work is cause for thanksgiving everyday!

HOW DO I HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE CLOSE TO ME, BUT FAR FROM GOD?

One of the best ways to help people come to know Jesus is to simply relate to them and love them for who they are. You don't have to carry the weight of saving people. That's God's job. Love Jesus and love people by sharing about the hope you have in Him. Be authentic without any ulterior motives. God will ultimately change their hearts.

1 John 3:16-18 John explains how Jesus set the standard for how we should love others.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 Paul instructs us to pray for everyone, without exception, to be saved by God.

Luke 12:11-12 Jesus assures us that the Holy Spirit will give us the right words to say.

Mark 12:28-31 Jesus says that loving God and loving others are the most important priorities.

Romans 10:13-15 Paul urges us to extend an invitation to others about the love of Jesus.

HOW DID THE UNIVERSE GET STARTED?

An infinitely powerful and loving God carefully crafted everything in our universe. The same God who created life out of nothing can also create something great out of your life.

Genesis 1:1-31 Genesis tells how God created the world and people.

Genesis 2-3 God creates Adam and Eve and sin first enters the world.

Genesis 17:1-7 God promises to establish His people through Abraham.

John 1:1-5 Jesus, who being God Himself, has been working from the beginning and now has fulfilled God's promises to us by His work on the cross.

WHY DO I NEED OTHER JESUS-FOLLOWERS IN MY LIFE?

A relationship with God is deeply personal, but it is never private. You were never meant to discern God's will in isolation but always in community. As you allow Jesus to change your heart, invite those who love Him to help you see Him more clearly in every situation.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Paul says we are designed to work together as the body of Christ.

Acts 2:42-47 The early church sets the tone for uniting with other believers.

Hebrews 10:24-25 The author of Hebrews encourages us to prioritize meeting together.

John 15:12-13 Jesus talks about how important it is to love each other.

I WANT TO TRUST GOD. WHY CAN'T I STOP WORRYING ABOUT THINGS?

While God never changes, your feelings can fluctuate with your circumstances. Whenever your present realities contradict the eternal promises of God, you may grow weary or burdened. In those moments, remember that Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Philippians 4:4-7 Paul tells Christ-followers how to experience God's peace.

Matthew 6:25-34 Jesus teaches that God will always provide for us.

Isaiah 43:1-4 God's care for the Israelites shows how great His love is for all of His followers.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Solomon instructs us to trust God instead of worrying.

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

It's not what; it's who. The Holy Spirit is God and one of the three persons of God's Triune nature. Confused yet? What matters is that the Bible says He is God and He relates to us in love by being our Comforter and Counselor. He fills us with His power to obey and overcome sin. Anyone who professes their faith in Jesus also gains access to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7-15 Jesus introduces the disciples to the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 3:14-19 Paul tells Christ-followers where we get our strength.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 Paul says the Spirit transforms us to be more like Jesus as we obey.

Revelation 22:17 The final book of the Bible shows that the Holy Spirit will always be with us.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS IS TRUE?

Sometimes we may wrestle with doubt about scripture, but the good news is the Bible is one of the most credible documents ever to have existed. It has held up to scrutiny for centuries and Jesus spoke of its truthfulness, reliability and authority. We're invited to not only trust the words of scripture, but ultimately, its Author. We can be confident that the Bible tells the truth.

Matthew 5:17 Jesus affirms the credibility and authority of scripture.

John 14:6 Jesus reveals to the disciples that He is the truth.

John 16:13 Jesus explains that the Holy Spirit will guide us into truth.

Psalms 119:160 The Psalmist declares that all of God's words are true.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul says scripture is given by God and designed to grow our faith.

HOW DO I DEAL WITH THE PEOPLE WHO HURT ME?

A wound left unattended will only spread and worsen with time. Refusing to forgive the people who wronged you paralyzes you in a world of bitterness and resentment, the opposite of the grace Christ offers. Forgiveness, however, will set you free to fully experience the love of Jesus.

Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus tells Peter to always be ready to forgive.

Luke 6:36-38 Jesus explains how forgiveness precedes God's blessings.

Matthew 6:12 Jesus challenges us to forgive as we have been forgiven.

Romans 12:17-21 Paul explains how forgiveness is the ultimate weapon against our enemies.

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? WHY DOESN'T HE JUST TAKE IT AWAY?

You may never understand why some things happen. God might not give you all of the answers either. But you can be confident of God's love and His ability to work in and through the pain to achieve a greater purpose. Jesus promises to comfort, heal, and restore those whose hope clings to Him.

Romans 8:28 God works in everything to bring about His purpose.

Matthew 5:4 Our suffering is an opportunity to be blessed with God's comfort.

John 11:33-44 Jesus sees our pain, mourns with us, and is able to heal us.

Philippians 4:10-13 Our joy isn't determined by circumstances, but by what Jesus is doing in us and through us.

WHAT IS BAPTISM? SHOULD I GET BAPTIZED?

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision to follow Jesus. Getting baptized doesn't save you from your sins. You're saved when you place your faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. When you do that, you receive forgiveness for your sin and a brand new life in Him begins. Baptism is a symbol and tells the story of when that event happened to you.

Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus describes baptism as identifying with the Triune God.

Mark 1:10 Jesus' baptism models how baptism immerses a person fully under water.

Acts 8:36-38 Baptism is a public act of obedience.

Acts 10:47-48 Peter says that baptism is for anyone who believes in Jesus.

WHAT IS PRAYER? HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO PRAY?

Prayer is a way of being in the world with God; a way of arranging your life around an ongoing, interactive conversation with Him. Talk to God every day, all the time, about anything and everything.

Matthew 6:5-13 Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray.

1 John 5:14-15 John tells us how to find confidence in our prayers.

Matthew 7:7-8 Jesus tells us we can ask God for everything that is on our heart and mind.

Romans 8:26 Paul encourages Jesus-followers that the Holy Spirit prays for us when we don't know what to say.



YOUR FIRST READING PLAN

Congratulations on taking your first steps in your new faith journey!

The words of the Apostle Paul are an apt description of your new life in Jesus Christ:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:

The old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

I have had the privilege of walking alongside many people who have begun their new life in Jesus Christ. The topics in this reading plan will serve as a "quick start" guide for your faith. The confidence, comfort, encouragement, and clarity you are looking for in your faith journey will be found in the Word of God.

Jesus said the wise person is the one who hears His words and puts them into practice (Matthew 7:24). Start hearing from Jesus and doing what He says, today, as you pursue the full life God has for you.

I'm pulling for you.



David Lawson

Lead Pastor of Outreach

DAY ONE:

SECURITY (1 John 5:13)

How do I know for sure? As a pastor, if I've heard that question once, I've heard it a hundred times. It's paralyzing. Not being confident in your relationship with Jesus and, ultimately, in your eternal destiny can be unsettling. And it hinders progress in your faith journey. The good news is that Jesus wants you to be confident and to know for sure where you stand. The Apostle John, one of Jesus' closest companions, said this, *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."* - 1 John 5:13

For the record, that word know means know for sure!

With that in mind, let's make a couple observations from what John is saying so you can know for sure that your relationship with Jesus is secure.

1. Your security depends on Jesus and what He's done, not on you and what you do. Jesus has secured your forgiveness. You haven't. There's nothing you can do to earn or merit your forgiveness and salvation. It's simply by the grace of God.

John said so when he said, *"you who believe in the name of the Son of God..."*

To believe means to put your trust in. *"To believe in the name of the Son of God"* is a reference to placing your trust in who Jesus is and what He has done - that He is God and that His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead are fully sufficient for the forgiveness of your sins and to secure your eternal life. The Apostle Paul said the same thing, just in a different way:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." - Ephesians 2:8-9

SECURITY (*continued*)

Your salvation is by grace. It's a gift. It's not by anything you can do. And God gets all the credit. So, your security doesn't depend on what you've done, it depends on Jesus and what He's done. Need more? OK. Even Jesus said it, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."* - John 10:27-28 Period. End of story. Drop the microphone.

2. Your security depends on what's true, not on how you feel.

Feelings are fickle... and are subject to change. Truth isn't. Feelings come and go. Truth remains steady. Assurance is based on feelings. Security is based on truth. If you are trusting the death and resurrection of Jesus alone for the forgiveness of sins and your eternal life, then it doesn't matter how you feel. It's true, regardless. You can wake up on that wrong side of the bed, and your salvation will still be secure. Good thing, because you'll need it! You can say or do the wrong thing, feel bad about it, but still be secure. Sure, you need forgiveness, but you're still secure. Just because there might be times when you don't feel saved (assurance) you still are saved (security). It's true, even when you're feeling blue. Why? Because your security doesn't depend on you. It depends on Jesus. It's not dependent on your feelings, but facts and truth.

But one more thing - one more important thing. Being forgiven doesn't mean you'll be perfect, but it does mean you'll make progress. The Apostle Peter said it this way, *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness"* - 1 Peter 2:24. Forgiveness gives us freedom - freedom to pursue the full life God has for us. Not to make us secure, but because we are secure. Jesus says you can know that, and that you can know it for certain.

DAY TWO:

WORSHIP (John 4:23-24)

Worship motivates your Christian life. In fact, we were designed to worship. Everyone worships someone or something. We worship whatever captures our attention and affection. It could be a relationship. It could be money. It could be a job... a hobby... recreation. It could be anything or anyone that captures our attention and affection. Allow me to make this personal. My mom was a worshiper of God. And now, being in heaven, she is still worshipping. What people loved about my mom was because she was a worshiper. Her devotion to God affected every part of her life. Her thoughts... her actions... her relationships. Everyone who knew my mom benefited because she was a worshiper of God. Her worship of God caused her life to reflect the love of God.

The Apostle John recorded a story of Jesus talking to a woman from a place in the Middle East called Samaria. They talked about the best time... the best place... and the best way to worship God. Ultimately, Jesus said that worship is an inside job. He said...

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” - John 4:23-24

Quite simply, worship is the expression of our love for God. So when you come to church for one of our worship services, that's what you are doing. You are expressing your love for God with others, AND you're learning how you can become more fully devoted to God.

And, during the week, when you go to work or to school or when you interact with your neighbors and family, your worship of God will be reflected in how you live.

My mom was a normal girl born to a normal family in the VERY normal, small, crossroads town of Cook Station, MO. But she was a worshiper. She worshiped Jesus. And her impact on people was far-reaching. My mom is evidence that worship is the fuel of your spiritual life.

I'll see you Sunday... and we'll worship together.

DAY THREE:

BIBLE (2 Timothy 3:16)

Spiritual growth requires spiritual food.

The Bible is your spiritual food. Knowing the truth God has revealed to us in the Bible is indispensable for your faith journey. One of the reasons many Christians don't make progress in their faith is because they don't know and apply God's truth to their lives.

You'll be amazed at how much progress you will make in your faith if you do just two things:

First, Read It.

Actually spend time reading the Bible. I know it sounds funny, but the sad fact is that many Christians spend more time on social media than reading their Bibles. The Apostle Paul talked about four important benefits of reading the Bible when he said this...

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

In other words, when we read the Bible, we learn

1. What's right. What the right path is for our lives.
2. What's wrong. Where we've gotten off the path.
3. How to get right. How to get back on the right path.
4. How to stay right. How to stay on the right path.

But we not only need to read it, we also have to apply it.

If I only read about the exercises I should do in the gym... but then I never went to the gym, I wouldn't benefit from what I know. I wouldn't get into shape and I wouldn't get healthier.

The same is true with your spiritual fitness. If you only know what God says, but you don't apply it to your life, you won't become spiritually fit. Jesus' half-brother James said we're fooling ourselves if we think we can grow if we don't put into practice what we learn from God's Word. He said,

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." - James 1:22.

BIBLE (*continued*)

And Jesus said we are living wisely if we apply truth to our lives. He said,

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." - Matthew 7:24.

So, if we want to become spiritually fit, we need to read God's Word and apply it... we need to do what it says. Here are some suggestions to help you get started on your spiritual growth journey.

1. Use a translation that's easy to understand.

Some English translations, though accurate, can be more difficult to read than others. One we've found helpful here at Grace is the New International version. And you don't have one, you don't necessarily have to run out and buy a new Bible. You can start by simply downloading a Bible App, like YouVersion. YouVersion has many different translations available on it, including the New International Version, which is one of the most widely used of English speakers today. So, choose a good translation that's easy to read.

2. Secondly, resist the temptation to start at the beginning.

Ok, that may sound counterintuitive that's what we do when we read a book, right? But you just entered into a relationship with Jesus, so I suggest that you start reading about Jesus himself and about his life. The New Testament Book of John is a great place to start. John was one of Christ's followers and he wrote from his own experience. He wrote about Jesus' miracles. He wrote about Jesus' teachings and conversations. It's a great place to start to grow in your understanding of Jesus. Let me recommend reading one chapter a day. That's about 15 minutes a day. And remember, don't just read it to finish it. The wise person both knows what God says and does what God says.

One chapter a day... 15 minutes a day... will transform your life.

DAY FOUR:

PRAYER (Matthew 6:9-13)

Prayer can be intimidating. Chances are, before choosing to follow Jesus, you probably didn't pray much. And now, even after becoming a follower of Jesus, you still might feel unsure.

You may have heard a pastor pray one time and thought, well, if that's what prayer is, I can't do THAT! And so you might think that prayer requires you to talk to God differently than you'd talk to anyone else, using words you wouldn't normally use. Well, let me put your mind at ease. That's not what prayer is.

It really is as simple as talking to God... just like you would anyone else. Of course, people have been trying to "get prayer right" for a millennia. Jesus' own disciples even asked Him to teach them how to pray. They wanted to get it right, too. So, Jesus gave his disciples a guideline about how to pray. You've probably heard it before. It's called the Lord's Prayer. And it's found in Matthew chapter 6, verses 9-13. This is what Jesus said.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Now, using Jesus's model for prayer, we're going to build out the acrostic "ACTS" to help us remember how to pray.

The "A" in ACTS stands for ADORATION

Simply tell God how much you love Him and appreciate Him. Recognize Him as the Creator of the universe... as the great and Almighty, all powerful, all knowing God.

Adoration reminds us that we are praying to a God who not only hears what we have to say, but is interested in us and has the power to accomplish His will in our lives and through our lives.

PRAYER (Matthew 6:9-13)

The "C" stands for CONFESSION.

Yes, Jesus has forgiven us of our sin, but we still will fail. We'll do or say or think something we shouldn't. We'll fail to do something we should.

Yes, when we are following God's leadership, we will sin less often, but we will never become sinless. That's where confession comes in. Confession is simply agreeing with God that we've sinned, that we need His forgiveness and that we are recommitting to living God's way.

The "T" stands for THANKSGIVING

Author John Maxwell Maxwell said, "Gratitude comes from how we choose to see God." I like that. It reminds me to thank God for my life... my family... food... clothing... the little things and the big things that God provides in my life and in the lives of those I love.

The Bible tells us that *"... everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory."* - Romans 11:36, NLT

So, in your prayer, remember to thank God for all that comes from his hand.

The "S" stands for SUPPLICATION

Now, talk about words that we don't use much. Of course, you probably won't use this word... just what it stands for. Supplication simply means to call on God for help.

One of the ways Jesus specifically reminds us to ask God for help is when we're tempted. We need to call on God to make choices that honor him.

But we also need to be calling on God's help in other ways. It could be for yourself, a family member, a friend. It's simply asking God for his help with something or for someone.

Why not try praying right now using the ACTS model: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

DAY FIVE:

FELLOWSHIP (1 John 3:1)

Life is better together.

There might be times when you doubt this when it comes to your own flesh-and-blood family, but when push comes to shove, life is better together.

And the reason is because that's how God made you. God create you to be part of His family.

The Apostle John said,

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"

- 1 John 3:1

Pastor Rick Warren famously said, "You were formed for God's family." I remember sitting in a local restaurant across the table from a friend of mine. During our conversation, he was talking about the hardship he grew up under. After a minute, he put down his fork, leaned over the table a bit, looked into my eyes and said, "Dave, this church is the only family I've got." And he didn't say that because he had no surviving family. He did. He said that because the relationships in his faith family were rich and meaningful and fulfilling. I've heard it said that all of us have at least three longings:

To love and be loved... to know and be known... and to celebrate and be celebrated.

That's community. To be loved, known and celebrated... and then to love, know and celebrate others is what Christian community is about.

That's why Grace Groups are so important. Grace Groups are a place to develop rich, meaningful, and fulfilling relationships.

In a group, you will grow in your relationship with Jesus... and you will get the opportunity to serve others and our community... together.

Why not take your next step in your spiritual journey and participate in a Grace Group? You can use the link in the description below or you can simply text "GROUP" to our church number.

Life is better together, because you were formed for God's family.

DAY SIX:

WITNESS (John 1)

Life change is an invitation away.

There's power in an invitation. We think nothing about inviting someone to a movie, a dinner, coffee... any number of things that we think they will enjoy and that we think they'll enjoy with us. That's why Jesus invites us to a full and abundant life (John 10:10). He wants us to experience life as He intended it. Once we've accepted Jesus' invitation to be forgiven and follow His leadership, it's natural for us to do the same... which puts us in a long line of honorable "inviters." Jesus, of course, invited. Thirteen times he's recorded as inviting people to follow Him (see John 1:43 as an example). And then there's Andrew. After being convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the first thing he did was hunt down his brother Peter and invited him (John 1:40-42). Of course, we can't overlook Philip. After accepting Jesus' invitation to follow Him, Philip invited Nathaniel.

If you were to continue reading in John, you'd come to one of the most famous stories in all the Bible. We affectionately call it the story of the woman at the well. You can read about her story in John 4:1-42. Her life was marked with discontentment... and she tried to satisfy it by looking for love in all the wrong places. She was desperately trying to fill the void in her life with human love, but it could only be filled with divine love. One day when she went to fill her jars with water at a well outside her city, Jesus encountered her, spoke to her, and then He extended to her an invitation. An invitation to accept "living water" that would satisfy the thirst of her soul and that could only be found in Him. She accepted His invitation. And then she ran into town and told everyone about her experience, inviting them to the full life she had received. Life change is an invitation away. So simple, yet so powerful.

You, too, can join this long list of inviters. Invite someone to coffee and simply share with them your faith journey. Tell them how you discovered the full life God has for you through the forgiveness Jesus offers. Invite someone to church. You may not know this, but 70-80% of people will accept an invitation to church. You know this because you've experienced it for yourself. When they come, they'll experience a friendly environment, a great worship service, and practical teaching of God's truth that will transform their lives.

So, invite! There's nothing to lose, but everything for your friend or family member to gain - full life!

To learn more about how to communicate the forgiveness and hope Jesus offers, scan our QR code.



