



# NOW WHAT?

**A 5-Week Guide to Your First  
Steps After Becoming a Christian**

# Congratulations on your decision to follow Jesus as the leader of your life!

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This book will guide you through your first five weeks as a Christian and help you understand what to do next.

You won't have it "all figured out" in the next five weeks— this journey is not a sprint, but a lifelong adventure.

## **How to use this book**

Set aside 20 minutes a day to read. There are five directed readings each week. At the end of each week is a series of questions. These are meant for you to find a Christian you respect and ask if they will go through this booklet with you.

As you find a Christian a little further along in their faith than you are to go through this booklet with you, commit to meeting together 5 times to go over the discussion questions at the end of each week.

✓ I commit to going through this booklet and putting into practice the things I learn:

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Signature

✓ I commit to praying for my friend, meeting five times, and being available to answer any questions I can:

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Signature



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# Week 1

## The Bible

# Week 1, Day 1: Bible Basics

The best place to start is by learning a little about the Bible. It's the field manual to following Jesus. Everything you need to know about being a Christian can be found in the Bible.

## Here are some facts you might find helpful:

The Bible was written more than 1,500 years ago by around 40 different authors but still has one clear point: God's love for people!

It's made up of 66 books. The first 39 are called the "Old Testament" and explain the creation of earth and God's special relationship with one nation – Israel. The New Testament is made up of 27 books and begins with the birth of Jesus, includes the beginning of the church, and eventually foretells the end of the world as we know it.

## How to read the Bible:

The Bible is broken down into chapters and verses. You might hear someone say, "Turn to Mark 8:2." This refers to the book of "Mark", "chapter 8", and then "verse 2."

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### CHAPTER

### VERSE

#### Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

**8** During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, **2** "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. **3** If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."



Every day over the next few weeks, try to set aside 20 minutes to read this booklet and the Bible. It's not as important "when" you find time, as long as it's time when you feel you have the freedom to connect with God with minimal distractions.

Each day you'll read one chapter from the book of Mark. Mark is in the New Testament and it's one of 4 books dedicated to explaining the life of Jesus.

### **Background: the book of Mark**

**Author:** Mark. He's referenced later in a book of the Bible called Acts. (Acts 12:12,25; 13:5,13; 15:37-40) He was a disciple of Peter (who was one of the 12 disciples with Jesus). Mark probably gathered most of his information for his book from Peter.

**Date:** It's believed to have been written in the 50s or 60s AD. For perspective, Jesus died in 33 AD. A detailed account of historical events like this, written so close to when they actually happened, is amazing!

**What's different about this telling of Jesus' life than Matthew, Luke, and John?** Mark is more action-oriented and is the shortest of the 4 gospels. It often includes words like "quickly," "at once," and "immediately."

**Intended Audience:** This book was written more with the Roman world in mind. A few Jewish customs are explained, which wouldn't need to be explained if written to a mostly Jewish audience.



**PRAYER:** Jesus, please help me to learn how to follow you as I begin my journey. Teach me more about you and help me to get to know you better. Amen.



**READ:** Mark Chapter 1. (You can find where the book of Mark is by looking in your Bible's index. It's in the New Testament after the book of Matthew.)

## **DISCUSSION**

*What stuck out to you the most from Chapter 1?*

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*What did you learn about Jesus from what you read?*

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*What can you learn about the mission of Jesus in Chapter 1?*

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# Week 1, Day 2: Bible Purpose

Check out the following verses, explaining what the Bible says about itself:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

**Isaiah 40:8** The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.

How amazing it is that we can read the very words of God for ourselves! As we read the Bible, it works like God's ignition key to begin His work in our life. As we read it and ask for God's help to do what it says, we'll begin to see God working.



**PRAYER:** God, teach me from the Bible today. Help me to hear what you're trying to tell me and may your words begin to actively work in my life. Amen.



**READ:** Mark 2



**DID YOU KNOW?**

When reading the Bible, you will come across things you don't understand. That's ok and normal. Make a note of it and ask a Christian you respect about it later. There are some things we may not fully understand until we are with God in heaven. You may also come across names you're not sure how to pronounce. Don't worry, just make your best guess and move on.

## DISCUSSION

*What was it about Jesus that seemed to draw large crowds?*

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*In the Jewish culture, people with physical disabilities and especially tax collectors were looked down upon. **How would you describe how Jesus related to both?***

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*Look at verse 17. **Why did Jesus come? How is that important to your life?***

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## DID YOU KNOW?

You might notice there are different versions of the English Bible. The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek. We have different versions of our American Bible as scholars translate it differently. The translations don't change the meaning at all; they only say the same thing in a slightly different way. The scripture in this document comes from the New International Version, which is also known as NIV.

# Week 1, Day 3: Midweek Psalm & Proverbs

Each week, midweek, you'll read a portion from the book of Psalms and the book of Proverbs. Psalms is a collection of songs or prayers, mostly written by Israel's greatest king— King David. Proverbs is a book of wisdom written by David's son, Solomon. If you ever feel like you need to read the Bible, but aren't sure where to turn, open up and read a chapter from Psalms or Proverbs and you'll probably find something helpful.



**Psalm 119:103-105** How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore, I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light for my path.

**Proverbs 30:5** Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.



**PRAYER:** God, help me to understand the Bible and begin to love the truth and wisdom found there. Amen.

## **CHALLENGE:**

*If the Bible is like a light to show us the way, how can we use it more and more to help “light our path”?*

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**REMEMBER:** If you haven't already, set a time to talk with the person who is going through this booklet with you.

# Week 1, Day 4: Studying the Bible

## How to study the Bible

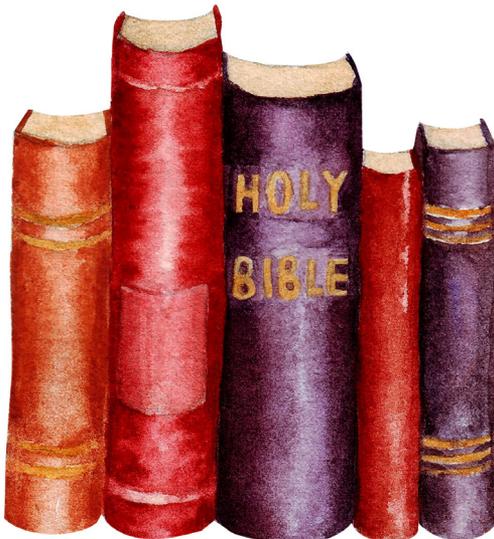
The best way to read the Bible is to choose a specific book you'd like to read, then read one chapter a day.

- As you open to the chapter you're about to read, stop and ask God to speak to you through the scripture.
- Read the chapter.
- Answer three questions:
  1. **What happened in the passage?**
  2. **So what? What did I learn? (about God, about people)**
  3. **How can I apply what I just read?**



**READ: Mark 3**

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**DISCUSSION**

*What happened in the passage?*

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*What did I learn (about God, about people)?*

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*How can I apply what I read to my life today?*

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**PRAYER**

**JESUS, THANK YOU FOR SPEAKING TO ME AS I READ TODAY.  
PLEASE CONTINUE TO SHOW ME MORE ABOUT YOU  
AND WHAT IT MEANS TO  
FOLLOW YOU WITH MY LIFE. AMEN.**

# Week 1, Day 5: Put it into Practice

## Put it into practice

The Bible's not supposed to be a storybook where we "like" and "respect" Jesus as a good man. We're supposed to allow the Bible to influence how we live our daily life. Listen to what Jesus said:

**Matthew 7:24** 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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But, everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

I'm sure we'd all like to be the kind of person who's prepared to face every storm of life. Jesus explained that if we allow Him to lead our life, that can happen.



**READ: Mark 4**

- What happened in the passage?
- So what? What did I learn?
- How can I apply what I just read to my life?

## PRAYER

**JESUS, HELP ME TO BE MORE LIKE THE MAN  
WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE ROCK.  
HELP ME TO HEAR THE WORDS YOU SPEAK  
AND PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE. AMEN.**





# Week 2

## Following Jesus

# Week 2, Day 1: God's Work in You

**God was working in your life long before you ever decided to follow Jesus.** Since the day you were born, God has been calling you and drawing you to Himself, looking forward to the day you would decide to follow Jesus. The good news is that He will never stop working in your life as long as there's work to be done.

**Philippians 1:6** He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

That means, from here on out, regardless of how you feel, you should know that God is actively working in your life and will **never** stop working! God will never give up on you.

**Isaiah 49:15** Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!



## DISCUSSION

*How have you seen that God was working in your life even before you were a Christian?* (Protecting, helping, drawing you)

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**PRAYER:** God, thank you for working in my life and helping me make the decision to follow you. Help me and show me ways to grow as a Christian. Amen.



**READ:** Mark 5



## DID YOU KNOW?

It's ok to doubt sometimes. It doesn't mean you don't believe or aren't a good Christian. There will be times you "feel" closer to God and other times He "feels" farther away. But the truth is, God is always near you, regardless of how you feel.

## NOTES:

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# Week 2, Day 2: The Main Goal

Have you ever done anything that seemed pointless at the time? For example, raking leaves on a windy day, doing homework in school, doing laundry, or taking care of chores at home? Sometimes even work itself may feel futile. It's hard to stay motivated for any task, especially the hard ones, if we don't know what we're working toward.



**Ephesians 5:1-2** Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

God has one main goal for your life. He wants to mold you to be just like Jesus. And what set Jesus apart, more than anything else, was His complete trust, obedience, and connection to God. As you begin your journey, it's important to understand the goal of what God's trying to do in your life.

## DISCUSSION

**Let's start with you—what are you like? How would you describe yourself?**

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**READ: Mark 6**

Now, after having read Mark 1-6...

## How would you describe Jesus?

(Write your answers around this picture)



### CHALLENGE:

*What do you learn about Jesus from this passage? Is there one thing you can apply to your day to be more like Him?*



**PRAYER:** Jesus, help me to become more like you. Please show me specific ways I can be more like you. Amen.

### NOTES:

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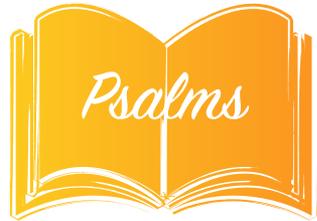
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## Week 2, Day 3: Midweek Psalm & Proverbs

What do you think of when you think of God? Maybe your mind wanders to an elderly gentleman with a white beard like Santa Claus. Or maybe you think of ancient paintings of Jesus, portraying him with long brown hair, staring off into the heavens. Our images of God can easily veer toward too harsh or too weak. Read the following passages from the book of Psalms.



**Psalm 18:28-36** You, O, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God, I can scale a wall. As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great, so that my ankles do not turn.

**Psalm 23:1-3** The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

**Psalm 10:14** But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.

**CHALLENGE:**

*How has what you've read about God impacted your view of Him?*

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**PRAYER:** Take a phrase or verse from what you just read in Psalms and thank God for who He is. Ask Him to help you in specific areas of your life.



**DID YOU KNOW?**



We often form a view of God from our parents or other significant relationships in our life. This can be very challenging for some people. We have to allow the God of the Bible to reveal Himself to us and separate Himself from our parents.

**NOTES:**

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## Week 2, Day 4: Follow the Leader



Did you ever play “follow the leader” growing up? You go wherever the leader goes and do whatever you see the leader doing. That’s exactly what it’s supposed to be like to be a follower of Jesus. It’s not just about “liking” Him or respecting Him, but allowing Jesus to lead our lives.

**John 14:23** (Jesus replied) If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.

**1 John 2:3-4** We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

What would it look like for you to trust Jesus to lead every single area of your life? Your marriage or dating relationships, friendships, work, health, finances, parenting, future, everything?

**What area of your life will be most difficult to allow Jesus to lead? Why?**

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**CHALLENGE:**

*Ask God to help you let Him lead your life. Share with Him what area is most challenging and why.*

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**READ: Mark 7**

**PRAYER**

GOD, HELP ME LET YOU LEAD MY LIFE  
**IN A VERY REAL WAY.**

# Week 2, Day 5: The Gardener

**John 15** (Jesus said) I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Jesus sets up this analogy where God is like a Gardener and He refers to us like branches that produce fruit in his garden. This is great news.

Imagine if your next door neighbor had a vegetable garden. In it he was growing tomatoes, lettuce and a few varieties of peppers. Almost every day you'd see him out there pulling weeds, watering it, and worrying about how to keep the deer and groundhogs out. Every good gardener will do everything and anything possible to ensure the healthy growth of his garden. And that's what God does in our life. Sometimes He sees something in our life that's hurting us— and He immediately wants to pull it out— like a weed. God doesn't pull weeds in our life to hurt us, He does so because they're choking out the good work He's doing in our life.

## DISCUSSION

*What work is God doing in your life right now? Is there something He's asking you to give up or stop because it's hurting you?*

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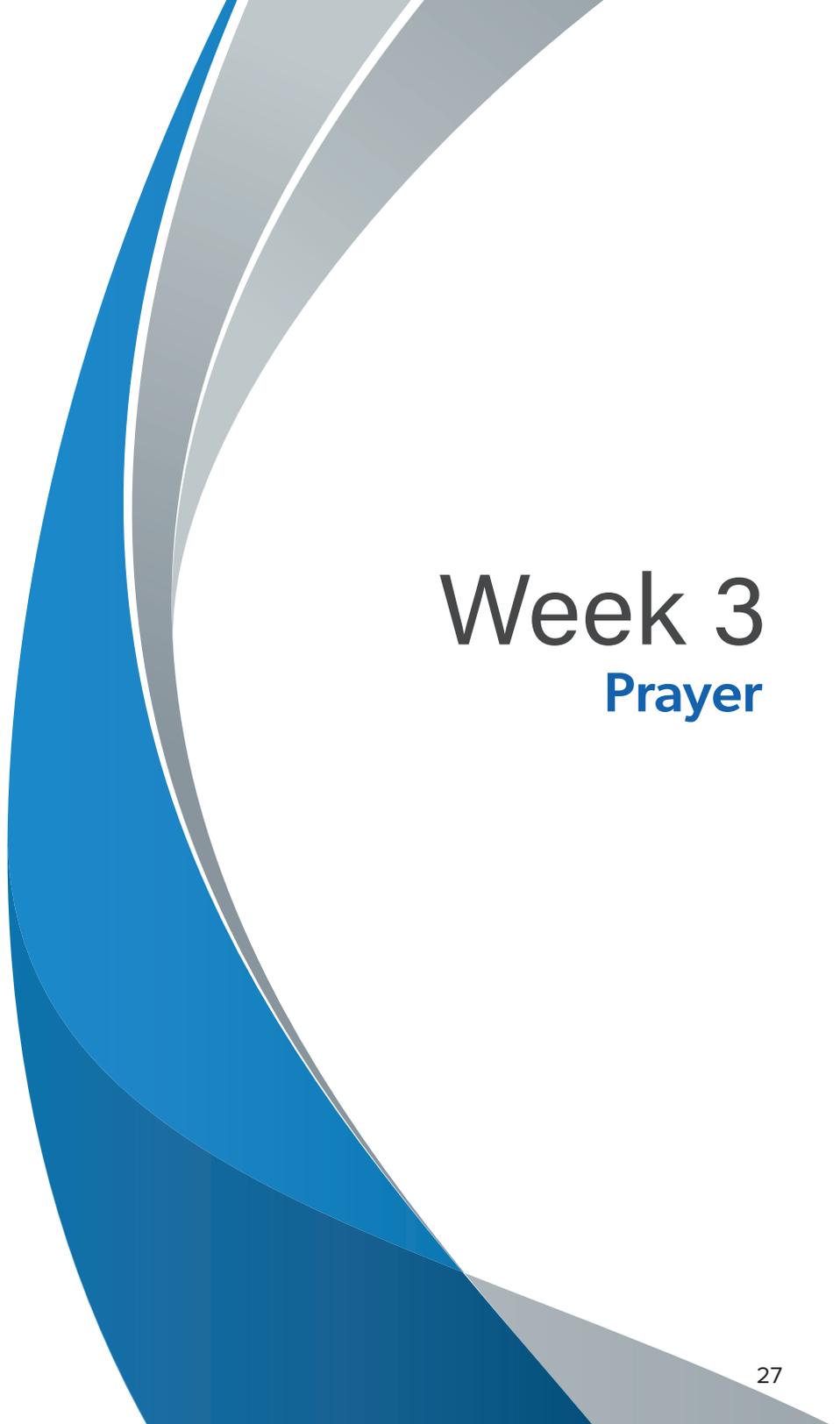


**PRAYER:** Jesus, if there's something in my life that's hurting me, please reveal it to me. And help me to make a plan to stop or give it up. Thank you that you will.



**READ:** Mark 8





# Week 3

## Prayer

# Week 3, Day 1: Prayer Introduction

Did you know you can talk with God directly? Anytime, anywhere. That's what prayer is— talking with God. You can talk out loud, or in your head. And when you chat with God it doesn't have to be some weird, flowery statement. You can talk in the same way you'd share with anyone.

**Hebrew 4:16** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

**Matthew 5:7** And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

There's many reasons to pray. The primary reason is simply to connect with God— the same reason you would spend time to talk with any friend.

When you pray, you can chat about anything; how your day's going, something you're frustrated or excited about, something you need help with, or a way you've messed up and need forgiveness.

## **How do you start:**

The good news is, there's no "right" way to start a prayer. I've heard people start prayers by saying, "Dear God," "Hey God," or just "God." Some people will talk with Jesus – which is also a fine option. God knows you're talking with Him, so you could also just start right into what you want to say without addressing Him by name.



## DID YOU KNOW?

It's ok to decide to spend time with God and not say anything at all. You could decide to just sit, ask God to speak, and listen. Maybe a Bible verse will come to your mind. If a person comes to mind – bring them to God and pray for them.

### What do I pray about:

Use the word **T.A.G.** to give you an idea of what to pray for.

**T**

### Thanks.

Think about things you can be thankful for and thank God.

**A**

### Apologize.

Making mistakes clouds our ability to see God working in our life. Apologizing for things we do is the best way to clear it up.

**G**

### Guidance.

Ask God for help in all the areas you need it. He wants to help.



**How do you end:**

Most often people will end a prayer by saying, “Amen.” This word simply means, “Let it be so.” By saying “amen”, you’re confirming that you believe God will work in response to what you prayed.



**PRAYER:** God, help me to learn more about talking with you this week. Show me what to pray for and how to pray. Thanks for your help. Amen.



**READ:** Mark 9

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**CHALLENGE**

*Take a few minutes and talk with God today. Tell Him about your day, let Him know something you’re thankful for, a mistake you made, and something you need help with.*



# Week 3, Day 2: Thanks



## Thanks

Being thankful to God for our life is one of the best ways to break up negative thoughts and feelings. It helps give us perspective and reminds us of God's work in our life.

**Mark 6:41-43** Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. (Jesus gave thanks before eating to remind everyone that the food they were about to eat was a gift from God. This is the same reason people often pray before meals.)

**Philippians 4:6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

**Colossians 3:17** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



**PRAYER:** God, help me remember today all the things I have to be thankful for. Thank you that I have so much in my life I can be thankful for. Amen.



**READ:** Mark 10

**CHALLENGE**

*Make a list of 25 things you're thankful for in your life. As you write them, thank God for each one.*

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## Week 3, Day 3: Midweek Psalm & Proverbs

The book of Psalm can be great to use for prayer. Today, open up to Psalm 103. Read a verse or two and then stop and pray. Maybe thank God for what you're reading. Allow the verse to lead your conversation with God.

**Proverbs 28:13-14** He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.

In reading Psalm 103 I'm always struck by God's compassion and graciousness. I'm so thankful that He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve.

### PRAYER

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR WHAT I READ TODAY ABOUT YOU.  
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
HEALING, FORGIVENESS, AND HELP.  
AMEN.**

### CHALLENGE

*How is what you read about God in Psalm 103 different from what you thought about God before you were a Christian?*

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The idea of “fearing God” was mentioned a few times in the scriptures you read today. Because this idea is mentioned in other places in the Bible, it’s important to clarify its meaning..

Whenever the Bible talks about fearing God, it doesn’t mean “terror” like a man jumping out of your closet wearing a hockey mask. Instead, think of getting in a small cage with a tame lion.



Now, even though the lion is tame, you’ll still have a healthy level of fear out of respect for that lion’s power. As you spend more time with the lion, you might learn to trust that the lion won’t hurt you. But you should never forget you’re in a cage with a lion and respect his power. He may be fun and playful, but if you’re in his cage, it’s his rules and he’s in charge.

That’s how it is with God. God loves us so much, but it’s healthy for us to remember that He’s powerful and deserves our respect too.

As you pray this week, remember Psalm 103 and God’s power in this world.

# Week 3, Day 4: Apologize



## Apologize

As long as we live in this world, we're all going to struggle with making mistakes— probably everyday. Sin tends to cloud our relationship with God, making it hard to hear His voice or feel close to Him. God doesn't want us to live in a spiritual fog. So, He made it easy to deal with our sin by simply acknowledging it and asking for forgiveness.

**1 John 1:8-9** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

If I punched a person, said sorry, and proceeded to punch them again, you might question the sincerity of my regret. That's why the Bible says:

**2 Corinthians 7:10** Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.

Repentance means to make an actual change in your life. That means, once we ask for forgiveness from God for something, we should try to not do that again.

But, what about my ongoing struggles? The Bible says God is "rich" in mercy. This means He's like a multi-billionaire in mercy and every time we ask for forgiveness, it's like we're asking for one penny of his vast forgiving fortune. God freely forgives, and is glad to do so, but we also need to work towards stopping anything that hurts our friendship with Him.



# Week 3, Day 5: Guide



## Guide

Whatever you are going through in life God wants to help and can help. You only need to ask. Sometimes we have this idea that “God helps those who help themselves”, but that’s not in the Bible and it’s wrong. God helps those who ask for it. And He wants you to ask for help.

**Psalms 32:8** I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

**Isaiah 58:11** the Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

**Matthew 7:9-11** Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

I WILL INSTRUCT YOU AND TEACH YOU  
**IN THE WAY YOU SHOULD GO.**





**READ:** Mark 12

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## CHALLENGE

*Write down all the ways you could use help right now from God. As you do, ask God to help you with each one.*



**PRAYER:** Thank you God that you want to help us. I acknowledge that I need your help too... Amen.

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DID YOU  KNOW?

It's ok to decide to spend time with God and not say anything at all. You could decide to just sit, ask God to speak, and listen. Maybe a Bible verse will come to your mind. If a person comes to mind – bring them to God and pray for them.



# Discussion 3

Week 3, Day 5 Cont.

*As you meet together this week, go through the following questions.*

1. Share about prayer. What did you learn about prayer growing up?
2. How did the study this week affect your view of prayer?
3. How easy/difficult did you find prayer this week? Why?
4. Take out a piece of paper. If you were standing in front of God, draw the look He would have on His face when looking at you.
5. Now, read 1 John 4:8-19 (Try to find this without asking for help.)
6. How does this verse affect how easy/difficult it should be for us to go to God in prayer?

## NOTES:

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**IN JESUS' NAME**

**I PRAY**

**AMEN**



# Week 4

## Knowing and Growing with God

# Week 4, Day 1: Friendship with God

**It's all about knowing God and having a friendship with Him.** He wants to know you and He wants you to know and fully trust Him. Listen to how God talks about the nation of Israel.

**Hosea 13:4-6** I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me. I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat. When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.

Or, listen to what God's frustrated about in this verse.

**Isaiah 29:13** These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

If you were developing a friendship with someone, you'd tell them about yourself— your likes and dislikes. Eventually you'd share your dreams and fears and even everyday normal day happenings. God wants this kind of friendship with you – a real, genuine friendship. He doesn't want to be forgotten in your life.

If you were going to build a friendship with someone new, what would you do? Maybe you could do the same things with God.



**READ: Mark 13**

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## CHALLENGE

*Talk with God about your life. Share what's going on – even the boring stuff.*



**PRAYER: As you drive home from work, try sharing with God the “high” of your day and the “low” of your day.**

## Week 4, Day 2: Building Trust

**Building trust takes time.** Whether it's with God or other people, it doesn't happen automatically and a good friendship takes work.

Imagine if someone told their spouse, "We spent a lot of time together while we were dating, and I told you I loved you when we got married – so now I'm just going to do my own thing. If I change my mind I'll let you know." That's clearly not going to work too well. A healthy marriage takes continued energy and effort.

It's important to continue dating and spending time together, even after years of marriage. And it's the same with God. You can't just say, "I believe in you and if I change my mind I'll let you know." Believing in Him is just the beginning – now you get to develop your friendship, and it won't happen by accident. You're going to have to prioritize getting to know Him. You're going to have to create time in your schedule to get to know Him better.

**Psalms 5:3** In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.



**READ:** Mark 14

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### CHALLENGE

*Take a day to spend with God after this 5 weeks is over. When will it be? What will you read?*



**PRAYER:** Help me to remember you throughout my day. Help me to share what's going on in my life. Thanks. Amen.

———— IN THE MORNING, O LORD,  
**YOU HEAR MY VOICE**

# Week 4, Day 3: Midweek Psalm & Proverbs

**Psalm 62:5** Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

## CHALLENGE

*Allow God's words to influence you. Is there anything God has been saying to you through the scriptures you're reading?*

**A friend is someone you trust. Would you say you trust God with your life? Why or why not?**

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Did you know it's ok to write in your Bible? If you read a passage that's especially helpful to you, feel free to underline or highlight it.**

# Week 4, Day 4: Involving Others

Some people might think that their friendship with God is personal. They might say it's a private thing between them and God. **But, we were never meant to grow alone.** God knew that for our faith to flourish, we need other people.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10** Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work; if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

**Acts 2:42, 46-47 (As the church got started)** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

If you have ever tried to get fit or break a habit on your own, then you know how difficult it is to change by yourself. We need other people. It's the reason programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers are so successful. If you're serious about growing in your faith, then make sure to prioritize growing with others.



**READ: Mark 15**

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**NOTES:**

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## CHALLENGE

*Commit to attending church every week (as you're able.) Beyond that, look for ways to connect with others within your church. Try joining a group to study the Bible while building new friendships.. Your church may also offer opportunities to connect with others while serving together. You can't do everything, but choose one thing to try out and jump in this week.*



**PRAYER:** God, please help me to involve others in my faith, by attending church. Also, help me to invite others into my life, even when it's scary. Amen.



## Week 4, Day 5: Keep Growing

**Never stop growing.** What happens in a garden if we stop taking care of it? Weeds. What happens to our body if we stop exercising? Extra Weight. It's the same with our spiritual life. If we stop connecting to God and growing, we begin to feel disconnected and dry on the inside.

Imagine a tree that looks healthy and strong on the outside, while the inside is filled with rot.

**This is exactly what happens to us when we stop connecting with Jesus.**



I wonder how many of us are just like this tree? On the outside we look healthy, but inside we're hollow. There's not much going on spiritually and we feel far from God.

I don't think any of us want to become like a rotted out tree. That's why Jesus said:

**John 15:5** I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

If a grapevine wants to produce grapes, it has to stay connected to the main vine. And if you want to see God working in your life, commit to staying connected to Him. Don't allow yourself to become a hollowed out tree trunk.

## ARE YOU BEARING MUCH FRUIT?



**READ:** Mark 16

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### CHALLENGE

*Prioritize spending time with Jesus everyday. When is a good time for you? Morning? Mid-day? Night?*

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**PRAYER:** God, am I connected to you right now? Help me to connect with you today and help me to hear your voice in my life. Amen.

# Discussion 4

Week 4, Day 5 Cont.

*The goal of these last few weeks has been to offer the basic tools necessary for spiritual growth. It's important to remember that everything mentioned has been a tool and not a new rule that must be followed to earn God's approval.*

## Recap: tools for spiritual growth

Set aside 20-30 minutes a day to connect with God. You can connect to God in different ways, but try to read the Bible and talk with Him. Prioritize attending church weekly to connect with other Christians and serve. Find ways to build closer friendships through joining a small group and developing deeper friendships.

As you meet together this week, go through the following questions.

- 1. What tool mentioned over the past few weeks has been most helpful to you?**
- 2. Of the tools mentioned above, which is most challenging? Why?**
- 3. What friend knows you best in life? How can you develop deeper friendships with people who can challenge you to grow in your faith?**

## NOTES:

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# Week 5

## Your Mission

# Week 5, Day 1: It's Not About You

It's not about you and it's not about me. God's number one goal in life is not to make us happy. It's not about being rich or famous; in fact it's not really about US at all. Instead, Jesus came to serve others, and that's what our life should be about too.

**Matthew 20:28** Just as the Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

**John 13:2-5** (at the Last Supper) (H)e got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

**Philippians 2:5-8** Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. And being found in the appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Understanding this concept will begin to change every area of our life. This means that your spouse and children don't exist to make you happy – you exist to serve your family and put their needs before your own. Going to church isn't about you. God never intended church to be a place for you to only get a spiritual fill-up. Instead, it should be a place where you serve others and allow others to serve you. Serving is an essential way to experience God in your life.

**Background:** the book of 1 John

**Author:** John. He was one of the 12 apostles. He also wrote the gospel of John and the book of Revelation.

**Date:** It was written between 85-95 AD.

**Purpose:** In order to combat false teachers, John explains what “true” Christianity is.

*Where in your life is it hardest to remember that “Life is not about you?” (Home, Work, Church, Other) Why?*

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## CHALLENGE

*Find a way to serve someone today without them knowing. Think of ways you can put the needs of those you’re around today ahead of your own.*



**READ:** 1 John 1 (This is a small book towards the end of the Bible.)

## PRAYER

GOD, HELP ME PUT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS  
AHEAD OF MY OWN TODAY.

**TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS**

AND HIS SERVING HEART. AMEN.

## Week 5, Day 2: On A Mission

**Growing up**, did you ever dream of what it would have been like to be called from the stands to play in the big game, or perform on the main stage, or whatever your dream was?

When it comes to what God wants to do in the world, he's not looking for fans or cheerleaders to watch Him work from the stands. He has a significant role for every one of His followers to play — a place on the field to get in the game and make a difference.

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are god's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

You and I have an assignment, a mission, tasks given to us by God to make a difference. In the Bible the church is compared to a body and everyone in it to a body part.

**1 Corinthians 12:12, 27** The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 27. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Your body needs the heart to do what it was made to do – pump blood. You won't function for too long without your lungs or liver doing what they were made to do. And the church will never have the impact God hopes it will have in your city, without you contributing your puzzle piece.

### What do I have to contribute?

God takes all of who we are, our passions, the things we're good at, our personality, our past – everything – and uses those things to make a difference through us.

### CHALLENGE

*Is there some way you can serve within the church? Try something out. Maybe the first place you serve isn't a great fit – that's ok. But, serving in church is a great way to play a role that makes a difference.*

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**READ: 1 John 2**

### PRAYER

JESUS, THANK YOU THAT  
YOU WANT TO USE ME TO  
**MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**  
PLEASE SHOW ME HOW I CAN **SERVE**. AMEN.

# Week 5, Day 3: Midweek Psalm & Proverbs

Read and reflect on the following verses.

**Psalm 19:12-14** Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

**Proverbs 16:1-3** To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue. All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

**Proverbs 19:21** Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.



**PRAYER:** Help me to align my life with you God – your plans, your ways, your thoughts, your heart. Show me the areas I need to work on and thank you that you love to help me in this journey. Amen.

## CHALLENGE

*Are there any plans you're making right now that you have not talked with God about? Or are there any areas of your life you have not asked God opinion on? (Job situation, dating relationship, parenting, your future.) Today, talk with God about those areas of your life and share with Him what you'd like and ask Him to guide you.*

# Week 5, Day 4: Experience Matters

**Your life is filled with all kinds of experiences.**

Where you grew up, your childhood, good memories, painful experiences, educational experiences, travel, different types of work, etc. Whatever you have experienced in life – good, bad, or indifferent – God wants to use it for good.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

**Romans 8:28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him...

There are things you have been through in life that not everyone has been through. There's a very good chance there is someone out there wishing they had someone like you to help. God's in the business of taking all our past and making something awesome out of it.

You are a  
**masterpiece**  
of God.



Take a few minutes and reflect on your life. What has been your highest high and lowest low? How have you seen God working through it all?

### My Life Experiences

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### CHALLENGE

*How could you use those experiences to help others? (Maybe brainstorm with a small group leader or your pastor.)*

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**READ:** 1 John 3

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**PRAYER:** As I think through all the experiences in my life, I realize, God, there are some places I still need your healing and comfort. Thank you for how you have healed me thus far, but I invite you in to heal the hurts from my past, to let me help others. Amen.

# Week 5, Day 5: Passion Matters

What are you passionate about? What sort of things do you hear about on the news and get angry about? What do you love spending your time working on and thinking about?

Our passions often grow from our experiences. Even as you thought about your experiences yesterday, it probably brought up strong emotions in you. Our heart and our passions are a great gift. Passion gives us energy to make a difference and God wants to see you use your passions on purpose.

**Matthew 32:37** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to work on something, when you feel passionate about it? God wants you to discover what you're passionate about and use that to serve God. There might already be something going on in your church that you can join, or maybe there's something God wants you to start.

## CHALLENGE

*Take out a piece of paper and write down your passions. What bothers you about the world? What do you like doing? What sort of hobbies do you have? When you're done go back and circle a few you think you could use to serve God.*



**PRAYER:** Help me to serve you God with my whole heart. Help reveal my passions and show me a way to serve you with them. Thank you God for how you made me. Amen.



**READ:** 1 John 4 & 5

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# Discussion 5

*Week 5, Day 5 Cont.*

This is your final formal meeting together. Take some time to go through the following questions, but leave room to go over any other specific questions you might have.

- 1. Are there any ways you would like to try to serve based on what you read this week? (brainstorm together)**
- 2. Thinking over the last 5 weeks, are there any other questions you have about what it means to be a follower of Jesus and how to continue growing from here?**
- 3. What's your plan from here? How are you going to continue to grow after you finish meeting together? (Feel free to continue to meet every month for a while if you'd like.)**
- 4. What are you most thankful for about the last five weeks? What was most helpful to you?**
- 5. Is there someone else you could invite to go through this booklet with?**

## NOTES:

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## Where do I go from here?

Keep going and keep *growing*. Consider what book of the Bible you're going to read next:

### Old Testament:

**1 Samuel** (history of Israel's 2 greatest kings— Saul and David)

**Job** (you think you have it bad?)

**Jonah** (classic historical story)

### New Testament:

**Acts** (how the church started)

**James** (extremely practical book)

**Philippians** (encouraging letter to a church)

Other than choosing a book to read, continue to seek out followers of Jesus you respect and can learn from. Ask to read a book together or study the Bible together. We're never meant to grow alone.

