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A GUIDEBOOK FOR NEW CHRISTIANS



ALL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES ARE FROM THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION,
THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION AND THE MESSAGE BIBLE.

BEYOND CHURCH 2019

NOW WHAT?

CHAPTER 1

IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE!

CHAPTER 2

YOU'RE IN THE FAMILY NOW!

CHAPTER 3

WHAT DO I DO NOW? – MAKING TIME FOR JESUS

CHAPTER 4

LISTENING TO JESUS BY READING THE BIBLE

CHAPTER 5

TALKING WITH YOUR FATHER BY LEARNING TO PRAY

CHAPTER 6

FOLLOWING JESUS –THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE

CHAPTER 7

CONNECTING WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST:
CHURCH & COMMUNITY

CHAPTER 1

IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE!

Congratulations! You have made a fabulous decision. In fact, you have made the most important decision you will ever make. You have chosen to follow Christ! We are excited about it and all of heaven is throwing a party right now!

Why all the excitement, you ask? Making a decision to follow Christ means you chose to open your life to the influence of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the best choice you could ever make! Living life under His Lordship is what you were designed to do. It is why you were created. Your heart longs for that relationship. That is why this choice feels so good on the inside of you.

We are not sure what you know or have heard about God, but we want you to know a couple of fundamental things: God loves you, He created you for relationship with Him, He has wanted you to know Him since before you were born, and He has an incredible plan for your life. Contrary to what some say about God, He is not mad at you and He holds nothing against you. He is on your side! He is for you! He has your back!

God has designed a life specifically for you. It is full of passion and satisfaction and abundance. Life lived by God's design is not boring or stagnant or pessimistic or defeated. It is adventurous, life-giving, strengthening, optimistic and influential. In one word, it is the most satisfying life you could ever imagine.

No matter where you are or what you have in life today, God has more in store for you! God has a plan for you that is more than who you are and what you are right now. God created your life to matter. What you have done and where you have been so far is not an issue with God. Where you are going and who you can be, through relationship with Jesus Christ, is what He is focused on.

If that seems a little hard to wrap your head around right now, that is okay. We just want you to get a glimpse of the bigger picture that God has for you.

This is a fresh start at life! You probably have a lot of questions about what just happened and what it means for you. We get that! We have written this booklet to answer some of those questions, and most importantly help you understand what you can do now to develop this relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

We don't know what your life has been like up until now. Perhaps life has not turned out the way you imagined it would. Maybe your life until now is a result of poor choices you have made or because others have made choices that have devastated you. Maybe you got here because you grew up going to church, but you lost interest along the way...and now want to re-connect with God. Maybe all of this God-stuff is totally new to you...and you wonder if it is real and where it will lead. Maybe you have lived a "good life;" morally, relationally, financially, or physically everything has gone well, but there is an emptiness inside that nothing can fill. Maybe you question why you are alive. Maybe circumstances outside your control have presented you with a seemingly impossible situation.

No matter where you have been and what brought you here,

today is a new day. Today is a fresh start with fresh life, fresh hope and a fresh vision. God has breathed new life into you because you chose Him and made Him the Lord of your life.

You are not going to understand all of this today or even in the next few weeks. But gradually, day-by-day, God will unfold what He has planned for you. You will see it start to dawn like the morning sun and it will grow brighter and clearer. This book will help you get started living out the plan God has for you. Consider it a quick start manual for your new, life-giving relationship with God.

Before we go any further, let's put a stake in the ground. This is an important time in your life and you don't want to forget when you made the decision to become a Christ-follower. In the space below, write in your name, the date, the time and where you were when you made the choice to follow Jesus. Maybe it was such a dramatic event that you think you may never forget. Maybe it was a quiet moment, with no feelings at the time. What you felt isn't the real issue. The fact that you made the decision to follow Jesus does matter and it is important to remember when you made that decision. Take a moment and jot down these details.



Your name: _____

Where you were: _____

When you made the decision to follow Christ [date/day]:

THE NEXT STEP //

Deciding to follow Christ is the biggest decision you will ever make. We encourage you to tell someone about it. Tell someone who will support you and encourage you in your decision. Maybe a friend, a relative, a co-worker, or a neighbor told you about Jesus. Maybe you know someone who has been praying for you or mentoring you. Tell them. If you don't know anyone personally, tell one of our pastors or a prayer team member at the front of the church after service is over. They will celebrate with you [and they won't embarrass you]!

One of the most important things you can do right away is get familiar with your Bible. Reading the Bible on a daily basis is incredibly important in following Christ. The Bible is God speaking to you. It is life-giving! Through it, you will grow to know Jesus, your Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. In a few chapters, we will explain why reading the Bible is so important for all of us. But right now, we want to share a few verses with you that we printed below. Please read them out loud, if possible, then write down what you think each verse is saying to you.

“Immense in mercy and with an incredible love, [God] embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on His own, with no help from us! Then He picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah. Now God has us where He wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all His idea and all His work. All we do is trust Him enough to let Him do it.” // Ephesians 2:4-8 [MSG]

What does Ephesians 2:4-8 say to you?

["God says], 'I have loved you with an everlasting love.'" // Jeremiah 31:3 // [NIV]

What does Jeremiah 31:3 say to you?

"Jesus, says, 'I've loved you the way my Father has loved Me. Make yourselves at home in my love.'" John 15:9 [MSG]

What does John 15:9 say to you?

Now, in the space below, write out a prayer to God. Make it as short or as long as you want. Don't worry about how it sounds. You can thank Him, or ask Him something, or tell Him what you are feeling [either good or bad]. But just write down the words that come to you. [Don't worry! You are the only one who will see this and God already knows what you are thinking, so it will not surprise Him!]

CHAPTER 2

YOU'RE IN THE FAMILY NOW!

You are always on God's mind because He loves you!

"Long before He laid down earth's foundations, He had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of His love, to be made whole and holy by His love. Long, long ago He decided to adopt us into His family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure He took in planning this!)" // Ephesians 1:4-5 (MSG)

God loves you. In fact, He is CRAZY in love with you. He loved you so much, the Bible says, He wanted to adopt you into His family. Because of your decision to follow Jesus, your adoption is final and you are now His son or daughter. His love for you never changes. It is absolutely impossible for Him to stop loving you.

As you learn to experience His love, it will change you. And the change in you will always be for the better! You will find yourself living differently, making decisions differently and handling your relationships with people differently. You will find yourself loving others, because you begin to realize how much you are loved. When you discover how much He loves you, it has a profound impact on your life.

Welcome to the family! Because you have chosen to follow Jesus, you have been adopted into God's family. God is now your Heavenly Father. That may be a new concept to you, so let us explain just a bit how that happened and why it is important.

The truth is we were all born estranged from God. The Bible talks about something called sin.

Maybe you have heard that word before; maybe you haven't. Sin is the innate desire in all of us to call our own shots, make our own decisions and live life our own way, even if it hurts others. Sin causes us to reject God, His love, His plans and go our own way. Sin is what caused us all to be estranged from God.

None of us has to be taught how to sin. Think about it: did anyone have to teach you how to be selfish, or self-centered, or to lie? It is just in us. When you look at the world around you, you see lots of evidence of sin. Everything hurtful, mean or destructive is the result of sin.

Maybe you have tried to be a better person, or overcome self-destructive behaviors. And like the rest of us, you have failed time and time again. Sin—that innate desire to live independently of God—is an enemy we cannot beat on our own.

The Bible talks about sin and how it affects each of us. Look at this passage from the Bible:

"I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up." // Romans 7:18-21 [MSG]

Does that sound familiar? Have you ever wanted to do right...and never were able to pull it off consistently? That is the power of sin at work in you and in all of us.

Because of sin, God had a problem. He wanted us to experience His love, but our sin—our tendency to reject Him and go our own way—rejected Him and His love for us. So what did He do? He came after us! He did not wait for us to turn to Him.

He came after us because He loved us. He became human, yet still remained God and came to earth in the form of Jesus Christ. God came to earth as Jesus because He loved us. Jesus revealed God in human form.

We needed Jesus. We were all stuck in sin. We all had the wrong impression of God. We all thought God was terribly mad at us and wanted nothing to do with us. But Jesus revealed who God really is and how much He loves us.

“You yourselves are a case study of what He does. At one time you all had your backs turned to God, thinking rebellious thoughts of Him, giving Him trouble every chance you got. But now, by giving Himself completely at the Cross, actually dying for you, Christ brought you over to God’s side and put your lives together, whole and holy in His presence. You don’t walk away from a gift like that! You stay grounded and steady in that bond of trust, constantly tuned in to the Message, careful not to be distracted or diverted.” // Colossians 1:21-23 [MSG]

In deciding to turn from your own way of life to follow Jesus, you accept His love for you and He changes your life. You experience new life, a re-start of incomparable proportions. God, through Jesus, changes our status with Him. Instead of being estranged, we are adopted. Instead of being lost, we are found. Instead of being guilty of sin, we are forgiven. Instead of being separated from God, we are reunited with Him.

Take a moment and read the Scriptures below. Then in the space beneath, write down what they say to you.

“Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” // John 1:12 [NIV]

What does this say to to you?

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.” // John 3:16-17 [NIV]

What does this say to you?

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.” // 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 [NIV]

What does this say to you?

Lots to learn...and a lifetime to do it! This amazing new relationship with God through Jesus Christ puts each of us on a new learning curve. You have never been a member of the family of God before. This new life in relationship with God through Jesus Christ is so amazing, it will take a lifetime to learn how to live it out. The good news is that God Himself is with you and will teach you how to follow Him.

The rest of this book helps you understand what you can do to grow day-by-day in this amazing new relationship with God, your Heavenly Father.

We, at Beyond Church, want you to know we are so happy you now belong to the family of God. And we are here to help you continue growing in your relationship with Him!

THE NEXT STEP //

Based on the verses on the previous pages, write out a prayer to God. Again, just tell Him your thoughts and your feelings. Thank Him for saving you and for revealing Himself to you! Thank Him for helping you and making Himself more and more real to you. Thank Him for His love and care and for providing your every need. He loves it when you come to Him completely dependent upon Him for everything in your life. Thank Him for all He has already done for you and then thank Him for things you haven't even seen yet but are depending on Him for. This is called faith, and the Bible says that faith is what pleases Him.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

So, how do I follow Christ in my everyday life?

This is an exciting time in your life – you’ve decided to make Jesus your Lord and become a Christ-follower. But what does that mean exactly? What are you supposed to do to learn how to follow Him?

One of the most important things to understand about following Christ is that it’s a process. When you decided to put your faith in Jesus and become a Christian, you began a new life spiritually. Just like a newborn baby grows and develops, we need to grow and develop as children of God. It is a day-by-day, step-by-step process that we all go through as we learn how to live as a child of God.

You might think developing a relationship with God—with someone you cannot see—is a strange thought. But the reality is that it is very similar to developing a relationship with a person that you can see. [In fact, many spiritual truths have natural analogies that help us understand them. That is why Jesus taught His disciples using very practical examples from everyday life. We call those teachings in the Bible “parables”.]

If we wanted to develop a relationship with someone we just met, there are certain things we would start doing. The same things apply to developing an authentic, life-changing relationship with God. Those things include:

- Making time for Him // If we don't spend time with a person we want to get to know, we will never get to know them better.
- Listening to Him // We have to listen to the other person. As we do, we will come to understand who they are and what is important to them.
- Talking with Him // We have to share with them about what matters to us...and what is going on in our lives.
- Responding to Him [or obeying Him] // If we don't acknowledge and respond to their needs, the relationship becomes very one sided and eventually dies.

We will cover the first one—making time for Jesus—in this chapter and the others in later chapters.

MAKING TIME FOR THE LORD //

Great relationships happen because two people make time to get to know one another. Jesus is committed to spending time with you. He loves you with an everlasting love [Jeremiah 31:3]. He is not distant – He is near and He desires to reveal Himself to you as you spend time with Him. [John 14:21]

There is no specific amount of time, or a specific time of day, that you have to spend with Him, but it is important to spend time with Him consistently and on a daily basis. When and where is not as important as being consistent. Spending time with The Lord every day is key to developing your relationship with Him. You can even ask Him when and where He would like to meet with you. He will tell you. It is vitally important that you make Him priority and not just when your schedule allows.

We encourage you to adjust your schedule so you can spend time with Him every day. It may seem like a big thing to ask because your schedule is so full, but it is the most important thing you can do. (We talk more about how exactly to do this in the next few pages.) Start with at least ten or fifteen minutes each day. Over time, you will most likely find that your desire to spend more time with Him each day will grow.

THE NEXT STEP //

So, how will you know if you're growing in your relationship with Jesus? Have you ever noticed that the more time you spend with someone, the more you find yourself doing or saying things that they do and say? [Galatians 5:22-23](#) lists something called the Fruit of the Spirit – these are characteristics that will begin to grow in you as you choose to follow the Spirit of God inside of you. In the space below, write out the Fruit of the Spirit you find listed in [Galatians 5:22-23](#). [Hint: there are nine of them!]

Over the next few weeks and months, keep coming back to this list and thanking God that He is transforming you into His image and the fruit of the Spirit is developing stronger and stronger in your life. Rest assured – He will help you. He will show you how AND empower you to live differently in very practical ways—all of which will cause others to see a difference in you and cause a deep sense of satisfaction in your heart.

CHAPTER 4

LISTENING TO JESUS BY READING YOUR BIBLE

So you've set aside time to spend with Jesus - now what do you do during that time? Very good question!

Start by reading your Bible. God talks to us through His Word - the Bible! The Bible is not just a self help book or a book of do's and don'ts. The Bible is God's Word and it is ALIVE! In fact, God and His Word (The Bible) are one and the same. You cannot separate God and His Word. Read John 1. The Bible reveals Who God is, what He has done for you through Jesus and what He wants to do in and through you today. As you read the Bible [God's Word], you begin to see how God thinks about you and all other things. You will also learn who you are now that you are a brand new creation in Christ Jesus. You are such a brand new person in Christ that you need God, through His Word, to introduce you to your new self! Let God and no one or nothing else tell you who you are.

Some people think the Bible is too hard to read or understand, but it really isn't. It was written for you and to you! As soon as possible, you should find a version of the Bible that you enjoy reading because when you enjoy reading the Bible, you are more likely to continue reading it.

You might be wondering, aren't all Bibles the same? Well, the Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek - all of our copies in English have been translated from those original languages - so a "version" of the Bible is a translation that has a particular style. Some versions, like the King James Version, sound very formal or 'old-

other versions use a more modern style. The New International Version is a popular version that uses clear language. We also suggest that you check out the New Living Translation, the Message Bible, or the English Standard Version. You can find all of these free online [www.youversion.com], along with many other translations. Once you find a version that you enjoy, you can also buy a copy of it – technology is great, but sometimes [and for some people] reading from a printed book is an easier format on which to focus and learn.

WHAT PART OF THE BIBLE DO I READ?

Unlike most books, the Bible wasn't intended to be read from front to back – it's ok to read it that way, but it doesn't exactly go in order. The Bible is actually a collection of 66 smaller books that were written by different people at different times. Some books of the Bible are like history books – telling us the stories of how God relates to His people. Other parts of the Bible are poetry, letters or songs. One thing they all have in common, however, is that each book helps us understand the truth about who God is and how He wants us to live.

As you start to read the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit (He is our Teacher) to give you light and understanding on what you're reading and pay special attention to anything that stands out to you. Think about what those verses mean and how you can apply them to your life right now. It's a good idea to develop a system for this to help you remember what you've learned. A system that is easy to remember is called SOAP.

SOAP is an acronym that will help you read the Bible on a daily basis and help you apply it to your daily life.

As a result, it helps you grow in your relationship with God. The letters in SOAP stand for Scripture [another name used to refer to the Bible], Observation, Application and Prayer.

Here's how you can SOAP: First, you will need something to write [or type] with. It could be a notebook, a journal or a computer – whatever you are comfortable with – but choose something in which you can write over a long period of time [at least a year]. Keeping your SOAP notes all in one place will give you the opportunity to reflect on how much God teaches you over time.

Then use the acronym for SOAP to develop a meaningful time with God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit.

“S” IS FOR SCRIPTURE //

SOAP is a devotional plan based on reading specific chapters of the Bible each day. We encourage you to start with the chapters recommended on page [21]. If you miss a day, just pick up where you left off. The key is to simply keep reading each day. Since the books of the Bible aren't in alphabetical order, you can use the table of contents in the front of your Bible to find the name of the book you want to read from and go to that page.

Take your time reading the chapter. Don't skim it like you are reading an article online, but take your time reading it. Ask God to speak to you through the words. [You can even read it out loud. It's good for your ears to hear your tongue saying God's Word.] As you read, one or two verses in the chapter may capture your attention or seem to apply directly to a situation in your life. Using your journal, write that verse [or verses] down.

“O” IS FOR OBSERVATION //

Once you have written down the verse [or verses] that stood out to you, ask yourself what you think God was saying to you

through those verses. What caught your attention? What question does it raise in your mind? God may be asking you a question, telling you something He wants you to do, or giving you a message of encouragement. You may want to paraphrase and write this verse down in your own words in your journal.

"A" IS FOR APPLICATION //

Personalize what the verse is saying to you by writing down how it specifically applies to your life right now. Perhaps you need to change your attitude about a situation, apologize to someone, stop doing something that isn't Christ-like or even do something to help someone else. You will be excited to find how quickly the Bible starts to give you specific direction for your life and how you can follow Jesus. Be as specific as possible in your application. Remember, this is between you and God; no one else has to read your journal or see what you write. This is a record of your relationship with God and what He is speaking to you.

"P" IS FOR PRAYER //


Write out a prayer asking God to help you live out what He showed you in the verse. Pray the prayer out loud also. We are going to talk more about prayer in the next chapter. So if you are not sure how to pray, read on! Anything that God asks you to do, He will give you help to do it. You do not have to change on your own. God, through the power of His Holy Spirit living in you, will help you do what He asks you to do.

Don't worry about getting this process "right" or "wrong." As you consistently read and ask God questions, He will teach you. Remember, you are reading the Bible to know Jesus—in the same way you would listen to someone you want to get to know, which takes time. As you continue to read and apply His Word, you will get to know Him better and better.

What happens if you miss a day? Just read the next chapter the next day. Your devotional life is not all about "perfect attendance". It's about making it a priority, being as consistent as possible and applying what you learn to your life. So don't let one missed appointment get you down! As you develop this discipline in your life, you'll find that your desire for time with The Lord will increase and it will become a natural part of your life.


If you have any questions about what you read and what it means, don't be afraid to ask someone! Find a pastor at Beyond, a prayer team member at the front of church after a service, or someone you know who has been following Jesus for a while and talk with them about your questions. There are no wrong questions. Any leader at Beyond Church will be more than willing to talk with you about your questions.

Even though the entire Bible is important, some parts will seem more practical to you than others as you first start reading. For that reason, we've included a list of some good chapters to start with on the next page. We have picked out 21 chapters we suggest every new follower of Christ should read. These 21 chapters give you an introduction to Jesus, His life, His teachings and His plan for your life. Make a plan to read one chapter each day for the next 21 days.



DAY 1: John 1
DAY 2: John 3
DAY 3: Matthew 2
DAY 4: Matthew 5
DAY 5: Matthew 6
DAY 6: Matthew 7
DAY 7: John 14
DAY 8: Matthew 24
DAY 9: Mark 15
DAY 10: Matthew 28
DAY 11: Romans 8

DAY 12: 2 Corinthians 5
DAY 13: Galatians 5
DAY 14: Ephesians 1&2
DAY 15: Ephesians 5
DAY 16: Ephesians 6
DAY 17: James 1
DAY 18: Colossians 1
DAY 19: Hebrews 11
DAY 20: Proverbs 1
DAY 21: Psalms 91



When you finish these 21 days, you can find a devotional in any Bible app or online that will help you in your daily time with the Lord. There are 31 chapters in Proverbs. Reading a chapter a day in Proverbs is also great as it contains wisdom for our everyday living.

THE NEXT STEP //

Look up each of the verses on page 22 at www.youversion.com in several different translations and see which one speaks to you most specifically. Write out what each one says about God's Word. If you find one translation that works best for you, start your devotional time by reading that translation.

Hebrews 4:12 //

John 14:21 & 24 //

2 Timothy 3:16-17 //

Isaiah 55:7-11 //

CHAPTER 5

Talking With Your Father By Learning To Pray

You have probably prayed at some point during your lifetime. Perhaps when money was short, or a loved one faced a debilitating disease or was in an accident, or when life just wasn't working the way you had expected it. In moments of tragedy, pain, loss or fear, many people find prayer is a natural thing to do – even before they choose to follow Jesus.

You were designed by God to pray. He placed that desire in your heart so He could have relationship with you. Prayer is simply talking with Him. If you want to develop your relationship with God, you will want to engage in prayer throughout your day.

A human analogy works well to explain this point. A good father wants to talk to and have relationship with his children—he wants to know them and he wants them to know him! In fact, it brings him great joy to listen to and talk with his children. God, your Heavenly Father, has that same kind of desire to know you and talk with you. He loves you and He loves to hear your voice!

Prayer is a conversation with God. You have a standing invitation to talk with your Heavenly Father. He is always with you and through the Presence of the Holy Spirit, He lives inside of you. It doesn't get any closer than that! [See [John 14:12-31](#).] Prayer is sharing your desires, fears, hopes and dreams [for yourself and for others] and asking God to help and guide you and others through every aspect of life.

As you go about your day, you can ask God to lead and guide you, to show you His perspective and to share His wisdom so you make good choices. Remember that God speaks to us through His Word - the Bible. The more we read His Word, the more we recognize His voice on the inside of us. Prayer is also thanking Him for all of the good things that happen and for His Presence in the middle of the difficult moments in life. Finally, prayer is also an expression of your adoration and love for God. In the Bible this is called "worship." It is the response of your heart when you know you are fully and completely loved and forgiven.

Jesus' disciples noticed how important Jesus' prayer life was. It was a priority for Him. He consistently went off by Himself to pray. [Look at these Scriptures that tell us about Jesus' life of prayer: [Mark 6:46](#), [Mark 12:32-38](#), [Luke 5:16](#), [Luke 21:31-32](#), [John 17](#).] The disciples were so drawn to Jesus' prayer life that they asked Him to teach them to pray. Jesus answered their question by saying, "when you pray" not "if you pray" [[Matthew 6:5-7](#) and [Luke 11:1-2](#)]. He wants us to talk with Him and He expects us to talk to Him.

When He answered the disciples' question, He gave us a model for our prayer. It is written out in phrases below. You may have heard this prayer before, but take a few minutes and write out what you think each phrase means. It will help you understand how God wants you to pray. If you get stuck, ask the Holy Spirit to show you. He is the Great Teacher and His job is to bring light to our understanding!

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 have forgiven our debtors

And lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from the evil one

Prayer is not a specific way of talking, like using “thee” and “thou” or other fancy words that you don’t regularly use. It is a normal conversation. Talk normal to God as you would to a respected friend. It is the opportunity to invite God into every area of your life. Prayer is not designed to be a desperate cry to God to get you out of difficult situations. We should pray in those difficult times, but during those situations is not the primary purpose of prayer.

Prayer is one of the ways your heart is molded to His will and purposes [Psalm 130:23-24]. As you continue to develop your relationship with Jesus through prayer, your will becomes more and more aligned with His will. You will find yourself living and acting more like Christ. The Bible calls that process - transformation [Romans 12:1-2]. That means you will change as you think more and more like Jesus.

You can pray anywhere and at any time. Make prayer a part of your whole day, but also try to find some consistent time each day to sit quietly and talk with God. Prayer is not about getting God to do what you want Him to do. Prayer is about understanding how God wants you to live your life, all day every day. It is seeking His wisdom about your family, your relationships, your finances, your health, your job, your neighbors and your...everything.

THE NEXT STEP //

One great way to learn how to pray is to pray the prayers that are in the Bible. Look up the prayers in the following sections of the Bible. As you read them, make them a personal prayer. [Again, you can use www.youversion.com to find a translation of the passage you like.] Use the space below to write out a few of these prayers putting your name or the names of your loved ones into them. Then pray them for yourselves and your family or friends on a regular basis. Make these prayers personal and pray them: out loud!

Ephesians 1:17-21 //

Philippians 1:4-6 //

Philippians 1:9-11 //

Here are some other Scriptures that you can pray too.

Philippians 4:6-7 / Philippians 2:3-5 / Philippians 2:13-16
Colossians 1:9-14

CHAPTER 6

FOLLOWING JESUS - THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE AND HIS LORDSHIP

Many people think of worship only as that time during a church service where the music is playing and people are singing. Worship includes that, but is much more than that. Worship is anything we do that brings honor to God. As a follower of Christ, worshipping God becomes our way of life! We were created by God to be worshippers of Him, but we all choose what we worship. We worship what we are devoted to; what captures our attention, our heart and our imagination most frequently. We worship what fuels our passions, dreams and desires.

God is very clear that He is the only person or thing worthy of worship – being the first priority in our lives. He said, “You shall have no other gods before me,” [Exodus 20:3]. Jesus reiterated that command when He said, “Seek first [God’s] kingdom and His righteousness...” [Matthew 6:33]. God’s kingdom is where His will is done. When we worship things other than God, being obedient to Him will be challenging to us. We become hesitant to obey and follow His will.

As you read your Bible each day and as you pray, you are going to learn to recognize when God speaks to your heart. God does not generally speak to us in an audible voice that we can hear. Instead, we will sense an inclination or an urge or an impression. Any time God speaks to our heart, we will face the question of whether or not we will obey. Simply put, it is always better to obey God than not obey God.

When you read your Bible each day, ask God to speak to you from the text. A verse may stand out to you. It may apply to something that has happened or it may apply to something that is going to happen.

As you pray, ask God for His wisdom for your life. God will put the idea in your heart to do something. [For example, it could be that He wants you to forgive someone, to apologize to someone, to start something new, to get involved in something at church, to share with someone in your world about your relationship with Jesus, to begin to give, etc.] It may be something big, specific or general, but He will speak to your heart. Then you have a choice: you can either obey [follow Jesus] or you choose to disobey and become the lord of your own life.

This may seem blunt, but the bottom line is that being obedient to Him is the essence of following Christ. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commands" [John 14:15]. It means we follow what He wants us to do in this life. [Just a side note here: This doesn't mean you have to lie in bed and ask God whether you should get up and go to work or what clothes you should wear today! God gives us the wisdom to make those decisions without a special intervention from Him.]

The Bible speaks about putting off our old self—the sinful one that likes to rebel against God—and putting on the new self [Ephesians 4:22-24]. That happens through our daily process of obedience.

None of us can be obedient in our strength—through our own will power. We need God to help us. He provides that help through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came to live in you when you made Jesus your Lord. He is your Guide, your Leader, Comforter and Teacher.

He wants to empower you by filling you. We call that experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We encourage you to pursue being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8

None of us are going to be perfect in our obedience. Each one of us will wrestle with being obedient to God and to His Word—that is part of being human. When we disobey, we ask God to forgive us and then we turn around and head in the direction He has asked us to go.

“If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”
// 1 John 1:8–9 [NLT]

Jesus said that if we love Him, we will obey Him [John 14:15]. Obedience expresses our love and worship to God. How we live our lives is evidence of whom or what we worship.

Obedience is an attitude of our heart that requires faith. Faith is the willingness to trust God. Faith is the element of our relationship with Jesus that causes us to yield ourselves to what the Bible says, to what He is saying rather than what we think, see or feel. Faith fuels our relationship with God.

Being a follower of Christ will require faith. We serve a living God, Whom we cannot see or touch, but our faith says He is there with us, to empower us to do all that He asks us to do. There will be times when you sense that God asks you to do something that seems impossible, something you cannot do or make happen on your own, but you just sense in your heart that God wants you to do it. In those situations, faith is the substance of that choice to obey God when it doesn't seem to add up or make sense to us, but is in line with God's Word [Hebrews 11:1]. Faith in God fills the gap between what is and what will be.

Like we've already pointed out, you aren't going to be perfect. The important thing is to grow in your faith and become a little bit more like Jesus every day. Like any journey, the most important thing is to continue making progress. Don't quit! There will be ups and downs, good days and bad days. Following Jesus doesn't mean you won't face any problems or difficult circumstances, but it does mean that you have a new Source of hope, peace and strength to face the challenges that do come your way. No matter what you go through, Jesus has promised that He will always be with you. If you don't quit, you win!

THE NEXT STEP //

Read [John 6:1-13](#). This is a story of faith and obedience. It is a miracle that the disciples who followed Jesus experienced. But it reveals how Jesus asked them to obey.

Each day for the next week, write down a few things that you believe Jesus asks you to do, what you did in response and what the outcome was.

DAY 1 //

Jesus asked me to:

I did:

The outcome was:

DAY 2 //

Jesus asked me to:

I did:

The outcome was:

DAY 3 //

Jesus asked me to:

I did:

The outcome was:

DAY 4 //

Jesus asked me to:

I did:

The outcome was:

DAY 5 //

Jesus asked me to:

I did:

The outcome was:

DAY 6 //

Jesus asked me to:

I did:

The outcome was:

DAY 7 //

Jesus asked me to:

I did:

The outcome was:

CHAPTER 7

CONNECTING WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST: CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Have you ever noticed that sometimes the word church is written with a “C” instead of a “c?” When you made the decision to follow Christ, you became a part of the Church [the capital “C” version]. The Church refers to all the people around the world who have made the commitment to follow Christ. By choosing to follow Christ, you became a part of His Church, also referred to as His Body.

When the word church uses a small “c” it means local groups of Christ-followers who meet together [often in buildings that are also called churches or in small groups that meet in homes]. The local church is probably what you think of when you hear the word church and now that you’re a part of Jesus’ Church. It’s important to get connected in a local church! Our prayer for you is for you to be planted in the local church God has called you to as that is the place you and your family will flourish!

Why is connecting to a church so important? Because following Christ was never intended to be something you try to do alone. God designed us to live life in community—in meaningful relationships with other members in the Body of Christ. Not only that, but by joining together we can accomplish more as Beyond Church than we ever could as individuals. Some disciplines, like reading the Bible are things you will do by yourself, but it’s important that you spend time together with other Christians.

So what does it mean, exactly, to become part of a church?

Well, healthy church involvement will include opportunities to grow in your faith by attending church regularly, building relationships and serving. Let's look at each of those a little bit closer.

Attend church regularly: Beyond Church has services Sunday morning and Wednesday night. You can find out what time service starts by going to our website at www.beyondchurch.org. Usually our services will include singing songs that talk to or about God, giving tithes and offerings and a teaching from the Bible. We may also have a short video that helps illustrate the point of the teaching for the day. Gathering with others in church fuels your faith and strengthens you. It inspires you to continue following Jesus. It also helps you grow into a mature Christian that impacts every area of your life and causes you to be very useful in partnering with God in establishing His Kingdom here on earth. Making church attendance a weekly habit will fuel your relationship with The Lord and is actually a command He gives us. (Hebrews 10:25)

Building relationships: The church is not just a place where Christians go to worship God. It's a group of people who love and care for each other. The Bible says "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend," [Proverbs 27:17]. As we build relationships and learn to honestly share what's going on in our lives with other Christians whom we know and trust, we will learn from each other, support each other in prayer and encourage each other in a spirit of faith.

The best way to build these types of relationships is to join a Small Group. More information about Small Groups on page 39.

Serving: It's impossible to follow Christ's example without being willing to serve others. In fact, Jesus Himself said that whoever wants to be great by God's standards must become a servant [Mark 9:35]. We want you to start serving at Beyond Church right away. When you do, you are obeying God, building friendships and being a world-changer. You impact someone else's life in a positive way when you serve at church.

STARTING POINT is the place to start to learn more about Beyond Church and how to serve. More details about this are on the next page.

Another important part of growing in service is to join with other Believers (Christians) to serve people in need outside our church. The Bible says that we should help take care of those around us who are in need. One of the ways we can help others find Jesus is to love them the way Jesus showed us love. Some of the ways we can do this include meeting the practical needs of people less fortunate than us and by being involved in making the community where we live a better place – treating others as more important than ourselves.

Beyond Church offers opportunities to serve our community in this way. You can find them on our website.

THE NEXT STEPS //

There is no magic formula for how to grow in your relationship with Jesus. We have covered some fundamental things you can do in this booklet. We encourage you to spend time with Him each day in prayer and Bible reading, attend Beyond Church each week, get involved in a Small Group and start serving.

There are several things you can do to help you grow in specific areas. They are listed below, each with a brief description. You can get involved in these things in any order that works for you.

STARTING POINT: The place to start where you learn more about Beyond Church - what the vision is, what we believe and how to get involved and join the Serve Team, the ones who serve at BC. Please go to the Connection Center to find out when the next Starting Point class is and sign up for it. There IS a place for you to use your gifts and serve at BC if you believe this is the church body God has called you to be a part of, and it WILL be your place of flourishing and fulfillment.

GET WATER BAPTIZED: This is a powerful step in your relationship with Jesus. Baptism is an outward demonstration of the inward work of accepting Jesus as your Lord. We encourage you to get water baptized as an affirmation of your decision to follow Jesus. Sign up at the Information Center for our next baptism service.

ATTEND WEDNESDAY SERVICES: These are our mid week services focused on discipleship and spiritual growth.

ATTEND MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE SCHOOL: Bible School include topics such as Faith, Righteousness, Healing, In Christ Realities, How You Can Be Led by the Spirit of God, Biblical Finances, Divine Healing and the Authority of the Believer and more. You can get more information on our website or at the Connection Center in the lobby.

JOIN A SMALL GROUP: At Beyond Church, we believe our church must grow larger and smaller at the same time. We grow larger to reach as many people as possible with the life-giving message of Jesus. We gather in Small Groups to build community and to care for people. These are small groups of people who meet outside of our weekend church services. Small Groups meet at various times during each month at someone's home or a designated place such as a restaurant, park, ballgame or some other event based activity.

The purpose is to develop relationships that will "sharpen" us as we follow Christ. Small Groups are great ways to build friendships with others that we all so desperately need in life. God designed for us to do life together, never alone. Go to our website or the Connection Center in the lobby to get more information - see the groups and the monthly events of each group, and to sign up for a group that will work for you.

ASK QUESTIONS! We know it can be challenging to start a new journey following Jesus, but our staff and leaders are here to help you. When you attend service, go to the Connection Center and ask any question you have. If they do not know the answer, they will catch one of the leaders and connect them with you. We are here to help you, just let us know how we can!

**WE WANT YOU
TO DEVELOP AN
AUTHENTIC,
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If there is anything we can do to help you grow, please text us at 479-551-5111 or by emailing us at info@beyondchurch.org.

beyondchurch.org

