

NOW WHAT?

12 Spiritual Next Steps for New and Growing Christians

A Personalized Spiritual Growth Plan

*Christianity is a journey.
There's a beginning, but every step of the way is important.
Use this short Personalized Spiritual Growth Plan to
help guide your journey of following Jesus.*



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What should I do now that I've decided to follow Jesus?

You've just made the most important commitment a person can make in life. If you have placed your faith in Jesus, and decided to follow him, you have experienced what the Bible calls a "new birth." And just like you have a physical birthday, you have a spiritual birthday - the day you became a Christian and began your walk with God.

One of your questions may be, "What do I do now?" Here's some information to help jump start your journey.

Now that you are a Christian, your life is different. You may not feel like a Christian every day, but following Jesus is not based on feelings. It's based on the fact that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and that you have a relationship with him.

- 1 John 5:11-13 says that God wants you to be sure of your salvation. Take a moment to look up that verse in your Bible and think about what it means.
- Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." God always keeps His promises and He never goes back on his word.
- A promise is only as good as the person who makes it, and you can trust God. 1 Corinthians 1:9 says, "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." God will do what He said He will do. He's reliable and trustworthy. He will not change his mind and kick you out of the family.
- When you became a Christian, God sent His Spirit to live in your heart. Ephesians 1:13-14 says that the Spirit is like a contractual seal. In Bible days, an official seal was placed on a contract between people to guarantee that it was legitimate. God puts the seal of His Spirit on your life as proof that He will Honor his part of the deal.

Once you truly become a Christian, you cannot lose your salvation, and God will not take it back. You are part of His family, and He will never disown you. Once saved... always saved. You might still sin, because you are not perfect. You may have questions, doubts and concerns, but rest assured that if you have truly committed your life to God, then you are a Christian.

If you have questions about your Next Step we are here to help.

The longer you are Christian, the more you realize that you may not have all the answers. There's a lot about the Bible that we may not understand. Christianity is a journey - it has a definite starting point, but every day is important. If we can help you on your journey in any way, just let us know by contacting one of our Pastors. We're here to help you through your spiritual next steps.

A Personalized Spiritual Growth Plan

1 Tell Someone

People love to tell good news. If you get a new job, have a new baby, or get married, that's probably news that you want to share. People don't keep good news to themselves.

In that same way, becoming a Christian is exciting news, and you should be excited to tell others right away. Your life has been changed by God. Think about how important that is, and think about how many people need to hear about it. God wants to use you to help others know about Him. In John 1:40-42, a man named Andrew met Jesus. His first reaction was to run and tell his brother. He didn't know a lot about Jesus...he didn't have all the facts or all of the answers, he just told others that his life had been changed.

Right now, you can tell others about Jesus. You don't have to be a pastor or a missionary. In fact, God wants all Christians to be active in sharing their faith. This is called evangelism or witnessing. A witness just tells the judge and jury what he heard or saw. A Christian is called to tell others what God has done in their life. You can do this by sharing your testimony. Your testimony is your unique story of how you became a Christian. The apostle Paul shared his testimony with others – you can read about that in Acts 22:3-21.

A testimony has three basic parts:

- Your life before becoming a Christian
- How you became a Christian
- What God has done or is doing in your life now

Take a moment and think through those three areas. You may even want to take out a sheet of paper or open up a blank document on the computer and write out your story.

2 Baptism

Christian baptism is, according to the Bible, an outward testimony of what has occurred inwardly in a believer's life. Christian baptism illustrates a believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The Bible declares in Romans 6:3-4, "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life". In Christian baptism, the action of being immersed in the water symbolizes dying and being buried with Christ. The action of coming out of the water pictures Christ's resurrection.

There are two requirements before a person is baptized: 1) the person being baptized must have trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior, and 2) the person must understand what baptism signifies.

If a person knows the Lord Jesus as Savior, understands that Christian baptism is a step of obedience in publicly proclaiming his faith in Christ, and desires to be baptized, then there is no reason to prevent the believer from being baptized. According to the Bible, Christian baptism is important because it is a step of obedience—publicly declaring faith in Christ and commitment to Him—an identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We'd be glad to share with you when our next baptism celebration is so that you can be baptized. Please contact the Senior Pastors office for more information.

3 *Consistently attend church*

Just like a football player needs a team, a Christian needs a church. In Matthew 16:17, Jesus said that he would build the church. The church was important to Jesus. The church was important to the first Christians who risked everything to meet together. Right now, in some places in the world, it is against the law to attend church...so Christians meet secretly, with the threat of punishment or death hanging over their heads. The church is important. You need to connect yourself to the body of Christ (a Biblical term for the church). The church is like the human body and each person serves an important part.

Everyone needs to be involved for the church to function properly. The church is not made up of perfect people, or good people, or religious people...it's made up of people who have decided to follow Jesus – people like you. So, why be involved with church? Athletes need practice and coaching, and so do Christians. God has placed spiritual leaders in the church who will help you grow closer to God. You'll hear God's Word explained, and you'll have a chance to worship God alongside other Christians. You'll be part of that team, all working together. The church will provide you opportunities to learn more about Jesus and you'll grow in your faith. Sign up for the Journey to Membership class to learn more.

4 *Be a faithful part of a Small Group/Bible Study*

It's healthy to do things with other people – to have friends. In the Christian life, it is no different. You need to develop relationships with people who are going through the same things as you. The church can do that. You'll get to know others who will encourage you and not tear you down.

You'll share life experiences in a Small Group/Bible Study. In fact, Hebrews 10:26 teaches us that we should not miss out on meeting with other Christians. This is the reason that we have a Small Group ministry. We all need these relationships in our lives. A Small Group/Bible Study is a group of people that meet together during the week at the church or in somebody's home to fellowship, talk about God's Word and pray for each other. A church as a whole is pretty large, and it's not possible to know everyone, but if you get connected to a Small Group/Bible Study, you'll find some people that will become your spiritual family and make Christian friends that will help you grow spiritually. Opportunities to be a Small Group/Bible Study Leader/Host are also available. You may visit our web page for more information. www.firstsocialcircle.com

5 *Volunteer at church*

The church is not just a place where you come and sit...it's a place where you can come to serve. The church is a great place to serve God. You have gifts and abilities that can help the body. In 1 Peter 4:10, Peter tells us to use them "to serve others".

You can use your gifts and talents right here. Find a place where you can use your specific gifts, talents and abilities to make a difference. When we serve others, we realize that it's not all about us. Some specific area needs you. Every Sunday morning, teams of people come together to set up for church, work with children, help people feel welcome, direct traffic flow and work with students. These groups of people serve alongside each other, and in the process of leading people from where they are to where God wants them to be, they are getting to know each other better. Learn more about these opportunities in our Journey to Membership class.

6 *Invite someone to church*

One of the best ways to tell people about your new faith is to invite them to church. So much of what we do on Sunday morning is designed for guests. We want everyone in our area to know about the grace and forgiveness that comes from God. You can partner with us to reach people who are far from God by simply inviting them to church or choose to go with us and visit people through our GROW ministry. Our goal is to help them become passionate Christians who make a difference in the world.

7 *Read the Bible*

As a new Christian, probably one of the most important things you can do is to read and study the Bible. The Bible is the inspired, 100% accurate and true Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that God's Word is living and active. It's more than a collection of stories or words on a page...it is the very Word of God for our lives today. 2 Timothy 3:16 says that "All scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living."

- When you read the Bible, God will show you things about Himself.
- When you read the Bible, God will show you things in your life that need to change.
- When you read the Bible, God will teach you what it means to be a Christ follower.
- When you read the Bible you'll get a better understanding of your purpose in life.

We want to encourage you to spend time each day reading God's Word during some quiet time.

Don't get confused by all the different covers and translations out there – find a Bible that you can read and understand. At First Baptist Social Circle we use The New American Standard (NAS) quite a bit. You can find this at a bookstore or on the Internet. Biblegateway.com and eBible.com are two great sites where you can search and read God's Word. You may also follow along with our pastors sermon each week on the YouVersion app. But remember, the Bible cannot help you if it sits on a table or in the back seat of a car.

If you don't have a Bible, let someone at our church know and we'll get one for you. If you've never read the Bible before, start reading in the book of John. It's in the New Testament, and is the story of the life of Jesus. Another option is the 30-day reading plan that we've included at the end of this handout.

Psalm 1:1 encourages us to meditate on the Bible. In fact, that verse teaches that your life will be blessed if you meditate on God's Word. Don't let that word meditate confuse you. David Nasser says that meditating on the Bible is like marinating. Just like we let a steak or a chicken breast soak in a great marinade, we think on God's Word and let it soak into our lives.

As you read the Bible, underline words or phrases that stick out. Think about what it really means. Write questions down and seek answers. Memorize key verses, and think about God's Word as you go throughout the day. Most importantly, start reading. If you've got time to read this, you've got time to read God's Word.

8 *Talk to God*

Prayer is Talking

Talk to God about your needs.

Matthew 7:7 says that we should always ask God about our needs. John 15:7 and Philippians 4:6-7 talk about bringing your needs to God. If He can take care of the birds, He can take care of our needs.

Ask Him for forgiveness.

I John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins, God will forgive our sins. In your prayer time, ask God to forgive you where you messed up. Ask Him for strength. Even though you are a Christian, you will probably still sin. You need to confess sin to God.

Listen for His response.

Nobody likes a one-way conversation. In fact, one person talking is not a conversation. When you talk to God, give Him a chance to answer you. He may not speak with an audible voice or write letters on your wall, but He will answer you if you are listening and walking with Him.

Keep it going.

I Thessalonians 5:17 says to pray all the time. You don't have to be in church with your eyes closed to pray. You can pray in your heart to God wherever you are.

Invest some time in other people.

God is not Santa Claus! If all you ever do is give God a shopping list of your needs then you are being selfish in your prayers. Pray for others. Pray for your church. Pray for those who don't know God. Pray for your family.

Never quit being thankful.

Thanksgiving is expressing gratitude to God for specific things. When God answers prayer, thank Him. Thank Him for spiritual blessings, people, gifts, etc. You can thank God not only for what He has done, but for who He is. Get alone somewhere. Part of your daily time with God should be reading His Word and talking to Him. You probably can't do that with too many distractions, so get alone somewhere and begin spending time with God.

If you want to get to know someone, you could read about them. But you might also want to talk to them. God wants to have a relationship with you – one that is real and one that is personal. The Bible is full of invitations for you to talk to God. You don't have to pick up a phone, or send an e-mail...you can talk to the very creator of the universe right now where you are.

Prayer is simply talking to God. You don't have to use big words or flowery language. You don't have to know fancy terms. You can talk to God just like you would talk to any friend. In fact, as a Christian, God is your Father and your Friend!

In Mark 1:35, we read about Jesus himself praying to the Father. Imagine that! If Jesus needed to pray, how much more do we need to talk to God? So, how do you do it? Prayer is just talking to God. It's a two way, direct-connect, with no long distance charges. It's a child talking to a father, and the ultimate phone-a-friend. Read the sidebar section on prayer to guide you. We meet on Wednesdays at 6:30 for a time of prayer and we also have a prayer room available that you may find helpful.

9 *Live for Jesus*

Statistics tell us that there isn't any practical difference between Christians and non-Christians. Most Christians live lives that don't model the teachings, the life or the love that Jesus exhibited. Unfortunately, this has turned many people away from wanting to be a follower of Jesus. Most Christians live lives just like everybody else. So, here's the big question...

If you have given your life to Christ, and you are now a Christ-follower, is there something different about your life? Or are you really just like everyone else, with the minor exception of going to church every now and then. As a Christian, our lives ought to be radically different! We are not in charge of our lives – Jesus is. The Bible says that Jesus ought to be Savior and Lord. Nearly everyone wants a savior. If you're drowning – you certainly want someone to save you. Most people would be interested in getting all they can from Jesus. But there's a huge difference between making Him Savior and making Him Lord.

Philippians 2:12 says that one day "every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus means that you willingly make Him the boss of your life. He's not riding in the car with you...He's driving the car. He's not the co-pilot; He's the pilot. He is large and in charge.

In John 13:13, Jesus asked a very important question... "why do you call me teacher and Lord and NOT DO WHAT I SAY?" He created you... He saved you... He gives you all sorts of blessings... He has earned the right to be your Lord. How can we be considered faithful followers of Jesus, yet be disobedient in various areas of our lives? Does Jesus have control of your life, or are you playing Christian? Here is the best part. When Jesus is Lord, you'll have unexplainable peace from God. You'll rest in the fact that He is in charge. You won't worry as much. You won't be as restless because you know that the very creator of the universe is in the driver's seat...and He knows the way.

10 *Be a cheerful giver*

“Oh no, please don’t mention money”. Many of us have experienced this thought at some point in our spiritual journey but we would be Biblically wrong not to share what God’s word says about giving. Paul said in 2 Cor 9:7, “God loves a cheerful giver”. When we give generously and with a willing heart, God assures us He will watch over us and provide for us (Isaiah 58:9; Psalm 41:1-3; Proverbs 22:9; 2 Corinthians 9:8, 11). Luke reminds us of Jesus’ words in Acts 20:35 “It is more blessed to give than to receive”. The second letter to the Corinthians reveals a number of inspiring truths that should help us become cheerful givers. As Paul wisely taught in 2 Cor. 9:6, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously”. Solomon also stated this a thousand years earlier in Proverbs 3:9-10, “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing”. And Jesus Himself told us in Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap”.

The Bible is clear—we cannot out-give our gracious Creator when we become cheerful givers. The only place in the Bible where God invites us to test Him is Malachi 3:10 where He is talking about our offerings made to Him: “Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” Quite simply our greatest motivation for cheerful and generous giving should be that it pleases the Lord and reflects His gift of salvation to us. Whether you choose to give during a worship service or on-line, cheerful giving should be a way of life for the Christian who understands the grace of God.

As a church, we also give at least 10% of what is given in the offering to the cooperative program - which supports missionaries around the world. You can learn more in our Journey to Membership class.

11 *Be on mission*

Acts 1:8 says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” In our community and to the edges of the world, the body of Christ is called to be a light for Jesus. It doesn’t take long to find people who are in need and who are hurting all around us. Jesus gave us many examples in Scripture of helping others and caring for the poor. Love is at the core of authentic Christianity so serving others as Christ did should be part of your life. Jesus said in Matt 20:28 “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...”

As you partner with us in reaching out to those in spiritual and physical need you will be strengthened and filled with a love for others. Join us on local mission projects and other missions opportunities.

12 *Mentor someone*

In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus taught us to go into all the world and make disciples. Disciples are people who decide to follow Jesus and then are taught by the Holy Spirit, the Bible and other Christians to live their lives doing what He did. Every follower of Jesus has the ability to mentor someone at some level; the new believer inviting a lost friend to church is pointing the way to Jesus. A stronger Christian who takes the time to help encourage a brother in Christ who needs help in overcoming an area of sin or how to read the Bible is pointing the way to a closer walk with Jesus. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another”.

Look around your life and determine who God would have you help become a follower or stronger follower of Jesus and you will be helping Jesus make disciples of the world. Go make a difference in someone’s life. Who is your ONE?

Thirty Days with Jesus Bible Reading Plan

Day Theme

- 1 Jesus Foretold
- 2 The Birth of Jesus
- 3 John the Baptist
- 4 Water to Wine & the Samaritan
- 5 Jesus Rejected in his Hometown
- 6 Jesus Calls his Disciples
- 7 Sermon on the Mount
- 8 Three Stories
- 9 Encounters With the Pharisees
- 10 Parable of the Sower and the Seed 11 Jesus Calms the Storm
- 12 Jesus Heals a Man, Woman and Girl 13 Feeding of the 5000
- 14 Peter Identifies the Christ
- 15 Healing by Faith
- 16 Teachings and Parables
- 17 Teachings and Parables
- 18 The Rich Young Ruler
- 19 Disciples Sent Out
- 20 The Good Samaritan
- 21 Jesus Teaches how to Pray
- 22 Jesus Revives Lazarus
- 23 Jesus Comes to Jerusalem
- 24 The Last Supper
- 25 Comfort for the Disciples
- 26 Jesus Arrested and Disowned
- 27 Jesus' Trial
- 28 Jesus Crucifixion and Death
- 29 Jesus' Resurrection and Appearances
- 30 The Great Commission and Ascension

Passage

- Isaiah 53
- Matthew 1:18–25
- Matthew 3:1—4:11
- John 2:1–11; John 4:1–26
- Luke 4:14–30
- Luke 5:1–11
- Luke 6:17–46
- Matthew 8:1–13
- Matthew 12:1–13; 22–45
- Matthew 13:1–43
- Mark 6:45–56
- Mark 5:1–43
- John 6:1–14
- Luke 9:18–27; Luke 17:1–8
- Mark 9:14–32
- Matthew 17:24—18:20
- Matthew 18:21—19:15
- Mark 10:17–31
- Luke 10:1–24
- Luke 10:25–37
- Luke 11:1–13
- John 11:1–44
- Matthew 21:1–27
- John 13:1–17
- John 14–15
- Matthew 26:36–75
- John 18:19—19:16
- John 19:17–42
- John 20–21
- Matthew 28:16–20

Web Tools

Online Bible with the ability to share thoughts in Web 2.0 style:
www.youversion.com

More Bible Reading Plans can be found at:
www.zondervan.com/Cultures/en-US/Product/Bible/Plans.htm

Online Bible Teaching, Devotionals and other resources can be found at:
www.oneplace.com

Daily Devotionals can be found at:
www.crosswalk.com/devotionals
www.rbc.org/odb

Online Bible in multiple translations, with search capabilities:
www.biblegateway.com