



WHAT'S NEXT?

THE JOURNEY TO
KNOW GOD, FIND FREEDOM,
DISCOVER PURPOSE,
& MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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WHAT'S NEXT?

BAPTISM: The Wedding Band of Christianity



Day 1

Baptism: The Wedding Band of Christianity

When I married my wife, Tammy, and vowed to be hers until death do us part, I put a ring on my left hand that, to this day, serves as a symbol of my commitment to her. My wedding band is a sign to Tammy and to everyone else that I am fully devoted to our relationship. I'm all in. It's an outward expression of an inward devotion. Baptism is the very same thing—an outward symbol of the internal commitment we've made to God.

Jesus set the example for us by being baptized Himself. His baptism declared His commitment to His Heavenly Father and the life God had called Him to live on earth. We see throughout the New Testament that when people got saved, they followed the example of Jesus in baptism. It's the next step for those who have given their lives to God: first believe, then be baptized.

I've heard many people say over the years that they don't think they need to be baptized because their decision to follow Jesus is private, but there isn't a single Scripture to back up that line of thinking. Your faith is not meant to be a secret! God wants you to make your relationship with Him public. If He has changed your life, let the world know. He will use your story and your boldness to draw others to Him. Take the step. It's time to be baptized.

Verses:

- Matthew 3:16-17
- Mark 16:16
- Acts 8:12
- Matthew 10:32-33

WHAT'S NEXT?

PRAYER: Conversations with God



Day 2

Prayer: Conversations with God

We sometimes make prayer harder than it has to be. It's really just talking with God, but we can over-complicate it by thinking we need to say certain words, or pray a certain way, in order for it to be "right." We let our assumptions about the practice of prayer prevent us from conversing naturally and un-self-consciously with God. But prayer is not about recitation or fancy religious words. God isn't looking for a specific combination of phrases or even a particular amount of time—He just wants us to talk to Him.

All you need for a vibrant prayer life is a heart willing to talk to God and listen to Him.

Instead of making prayer an event or obligation, let it simply be an ongoing conversation with God each day. The apostle Paul emphasized this idea when he said to "pray continually." It's not a stop-start activity like physical exercise, but more of a consistent, progressive interaction—like a text thread with your best friend that goes on all day. Before your feet hit the floor, before you go into a meeting, before you have a specific conversation with your spouse or children—just take a moment and pray first. If you make prayer a lifestyle—constantly communing with God, asking Him for wisdom, and listening to His voice—you'll be amazed how strong your relationship with Him will become.

Verses:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:17
- John 15:4-5
- Matthew 6:5-8

WHAT'S NEXT?

THE BIBLE: Letting God's Word Speak to You



Day 3

The Bible: Letting God's Word Speak to You

There's no better way to take next steps in your walk with God than letting His Word guide you. The Bible is the foundation of our faith, full of relevant wisdom, direction, and truth that helps us stand on solid ground no matter what life brings. Many people tell me they don't read the Bible because it's overwhelming. They often don't know where to start, and even when they do read it, they don't always understand what they're reading. But as Christians, we cannot let our limited understanding of the Bible discourage us from continuing to press in to learn more about our God.

In the Message Paraphrase of Matthew 7:24, Jesus said, "These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock." If we truly want to live for God—to know Him, to find freedom, to discover our purpose, and to make a difference for His glory—then reading His Word is not an option. We must hear what God has to say and apply it to our lives daily.

If you've been intimidated by the Bible or found it difficult to understand, ask God to speak to you as you read it today. Read your selected passage slowly, go over it a few times, and listen to what God might be saying to you through the Scriptures. As you take time to study and meditate on God's Word, He will reveal Himself to you. Your understanding of the Word will increase, and He will show you how to apply it to your life.

Reading the Bible is not an obligation but a privileged way to access the heart of God. If you remember that reading the Bible is about knowing God and having a relationship with Him, rather than just knowing a lot of theology or "getting your Bible time in," it will be a source of great joy in your life. Listen to His words and allow Him to nourish your spirit, heal your wounds, comfort you, instruct you, and empower you.

Verses:

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Hebrews 4:12

WHAT'S NEXT?

RELATIONSHIPS: Show Me Your Friends



Day 4

Relationships: Show Me Your Friends

You'll struggle in living out your faith if it's just you and God. It's easy to think that all you need to grow in your relationship with Him is regular church attendance and personal disciplines like prayer and studying His Word. But He made us in his own image as relational beings, and that design makes relationships with others key to experiencing change in our lives.

Community is an important part of our walk with God, not only because we learn and grow together, but because we also discover God's grace together. God's Word tells us that He is faithful to forgive us when we confess our sins to Him, but it also encourages us to confess our sins to one another to receive healing. Only God can forgive our sins, but that forgiveness doesn't guarantee that we won't mess up again. Left to our own devices, most of us will fail time after time. But when we confess our sins to each other, we receive spiritual support as we pray for one another and hold each other accountable. This is God's system for healing. This is the process He designed for us to be able to walk in freedom from sin.

Surrounding ourselves with the right people is one of the most important steps in our spiritual journeys. When we develop relationships, get involved in each other's trials and triumphs, and basically do life together, we help each other grow and develop more spiritual muscle. Find a Small Group of people in your church community who will pray for you, encourage you, challenge you, and help you live in the freedom Christ came to give you.

Verses:

- 1 John 1:9
- James 5:16
- Proverbs 27:19
- Hebrews 10:25

WHAT'S NEXT?

TRANSPARENCY: Honesty Is The Best Policy



Day 5

Transparency: Honesty Is The Best Policy

Just like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we all tend to create our own fig leaves in an attempt to cover our mistakes and indiscretions. We don't want to face the truth about what we've done and the impact our selfishness has had on others. We don't want to face the consequences of our actions. It's so much easier to hide—from ourselves, from others, from God—and refuse to engage with the truth.

If we want to live in the fullness of God's freedom, however, we must commit to living in truth. Jesus said the truth will set us free. Embracing truth is the only way to grow closer to God and mature in our faith. At our church, we like to say you're only as sick as your secrets—whatever you're hiding, running from, denying. It could be an addiction, a mistake from your past, an ongoing battle with a destructive habit. If you feel ashamed, trapped, and unsure of how to get unstuck, be encouraged today, because the answer is actually very simple: Face the truth. Tell the truth. Accept God's truth.

Instead of hiding your mistakes and secret hang-ups, start practicing brutal honesty by sharing your authentic self with others. Find friends you can trust, and be willing to go below the surface and share what might seem too scary to let anyone else know. This kind of authenticity results in both a deeper personal relationship with God, as we grow increasingly aware of His grace, and deeper relationships with others, as they get to see the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. It's OK if this kind of honesty doesn't feel natural at first. Full transparency and healthy intimacy take practice, but the freedom they bring is worth it.

Verses:

- Psalm 51:5-6
- John 8:31-32

WHAT'S NEXT?

THE HOLY SPIRIT: A Breath Of Fresh Air



Day 6

The Holy Spirit: A Breath Of Fresh Air

When I first became a Christian, I was wary of the Holy Spirit. I can remember praying, much to my embarrassment now, for the Holy Spirit to keep a low profile in my life. I didn't want to be one of those out-of-control people shouting and singing and speaking in tongues, the kind of people we had looked down on in my hometown church. Despite my defensive fears, I eventually decided I wanted to know the truth about God's Spirit. I became determined to fully surrender and let the Spirit do anything He wanted to do in my life.

After I opened my heart to the Holy Spirit, my life changed in a dramatic way. I couldn't get enough of God's Word, and instead of being uncomfortable discussing my faith with my friends, I suddenly started having conversations that led directly to Christ. My fear and timidity were transformed by the power and boldness of the Spirit. The best part is, I wasn't having to "fake it" when it came to my Christianity. I could be myself and let the Holy Spirit penetrate my heart and my mind as I began to experience the exciting adventure of living out my faith.

We miss out on a powerful part of the Christian life if we don't go deeper by being baptized in the Holy Spirit. With the Spirit dwelling in us, we have supernatural power. We become bold in our witness to others and can perform signs and wonders to demonstrate God's power. We experience freedom from the power of sin over our lives as well as freedom to worship with our whole being. He gives us everything we need to fulfill His purpose for our lives and share the good news of the gospel with the world. Invite the Holy Spirit to do a work inside of you and watch your life change in a lasting, powerful way.

Verses:

- John 20:21-22
- Acts 8:14-17
- 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
- Luke 11:13

WHAT'S NEXT?

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: You Were Made For This



Day 7

Spiritual Gifts: You Were Made For This

Just as David reflected in Psalm 139, you and I have been “wonderfully made” by our Creator, fashioned in His image to reflect His glory. God’s Word tells us, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). Notice that God creates and prepares us to do good works before we actually do them. He has a purpose in mind for each of us before we are born, and He designs us specifically for that purpose. Your divine design illuminates the destiny God has for you. If you discover the way you have been made, it will point to what God wants you to do with your life. Design reveals destiny.

There are many different personality and spiritual gifts assessments that you can take to discover more about your unique design. At our church, we start with the DISC assessment. Myers-Briggs and StrengthsFinder are other great tools, and I recommend using a variety so you can see the big picture. Begin the journey of learning more about who God made you to be so you can start living out the divine purpose He has always had in mind for you.

No matter what your personality design reveals itself to be, no matter what your divine purpose is, we are all called to reflect God’s character. This means you should be a minister as much as anyone on staff at your church is. There are no small players in God’s eyes. We’re all teammates and every role is important. Every task is vital to the work of furthering God’s Kingdom. Don’t buy into the enemy’s lies that you have nothing to contribute. God has given you something distinct and important to offer the Kingdom, and when you discover what that is and begin living it out, you’ll experience a fulfillment unlike any other. You will know, “I was made for this!” Let God reveal how He can accomplish great things through you.

Verses:

- Psalm 139:14
- Romans 12:6-8
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

WHAT'S NEXT?

THE BODY OF CHRIST: You Can't Be You Without Me



Day 8

The Body of Christ: You Can't Be You Without Me

God wants each of us to commit to a local church the same way a couple commits to one another in marriage. He wants us doing more than just dating and enjoying ourselves as we jump from church to church. He wants us to be committed and contributing, a member and not merely an attender. A commitment requires more from you, but it also gives you opportunities that wouldn't exist otherwise. It builds character, surrounds you with a family, and cultivates and nurtures your personal spiritual growth.

Being part of a church also gives you the opportunity to share your gifts with others. The church is the body of Christ, and just like the individual parts of your body can't serve their purpose without the rest of your body, none of us can be who we're meant to be without connecting to other believers. Your gifts are designed to be used to help meet the needs of others. You'll find that as you serve with the strengths God's given you, the church body itself will become stronger and you'll find fulfillment in being useful in God's Kingdom. The body is the sum of all its parts and is most effective when everyone is connected and serving together in community. Commit to your church, and be all you can be!

Verses:

- 1 Corinthians 12:25-27
- Hebrews 10:24-25

WHAT'S NEXT?

GROWTH: The Most Exciting Part of Christianity



Day 9

Growth: The Most Exciting Part of Christianity

God wants all of us to grow. Throughout the Bible, we're encouraged to deepen our knowledge of God and our relationship with Him, to strengthen the gifts He's given us, and to become mature in Christ. But we can only grow when we approach growth intentionally. If we assume our spiritual knowledge and experience is enough, then we miss out on all God has for us. We're called to so much more!

Keep in mind, spiritual growth requires a willingness to change. In order to change, you'll have to surrender the security and comfort of what you already know and do. You'll have to be open-minded to new ideas and willing to change daily habits. But as you learn to embrace change in your pursuit of growth, you'll find that this process naturally produces joy. Every time I start pursuing growth in a certain area of my life, I experience a ripple effect in all areas. I feel happier and am able to enjoy the journey that unfolds with each new day.

If you've been struggling to find joy in your life, focus on growth! Identify areas where you want to learn more or improve yourself, seek out resources and make a plan, start doing some things differently, and watch God bring great change to your life.

Verses:

- Ephesians 4:11-16
- 2 Peter 3:18
- Colossians 1:9-10
- 2 Peter 1:5-8

WHAT'S NEXT?

SERVANT HEART: The Greatest Of All Time



Day 10

Servant Heart: The Greatest Of All Time

Jesus made it clear that if we want to be great in this life, we must embrace the lifestyle of a servant. Just as He came to serve and give His life to reconcile us to God, we are also to live in service to God and others. Servanthood is a hallmark of the Christian life: We are the first to act, to lend a hand, to do what no one else is willing to do. In this way, we emulate Jesus and honor what He has done for us. We identify the needs of those around us and provide for others what God has so generously provided for us.

We all have to fight against the gravitational pull of selfishness. It's human nature. We want what we want when we want it. To be effective and impactful servants, we have to intentionally focus on others, asking, "What do they need?" and "How can I help?" Serving isn't about getting credit or praise for good works. We don't serve to get noticed. We serve to care for the people God loves and share that love in practical ways so they can experience and know Him. It's really all about Jesus. We serve for His glory alone.

If you want to grow in your faith, make a commitment to serve, and begin to look for opportunities to meet the needs of others around you. If you're not sure where to start, ask around at your local church, schools, food bank, shelter, or senior citizens center. See what you can do to be the hands and feet of Jesus for the people in your community.

Verses:

- Mark 10:42-45
- Philippians 2:3-4
- Matthew 25:31-40

WHAT'S NEXT?

ETERNAL REWARD: Treasures In Heaven



Day 11

Eternal Reward: Treasures In Heaven

When we arrive at the gates of Heaven, in addition to asking if we knew His Son, Jesus, God will ask us what we did to make the most of our time on earth. He will review how we invested our time, our talents, and our treasure. Did we pour all we had into an eternal legacy to make a difference for God's Kingdom? Or did we squander our gifts and miss opportunities to bless others as we were blessed?

Jesus said He will reward each of us according to what we do with the gifts we've been given. He gives us so much—energy, time, skills, opportunities, ideas, talents, money, relationships, and on and on. While He loves to bless us and wants us to enjoy His gifts, God also expects a return on His investment. He wants to hear us say, "I used all you gave me to make a difference for eternity."

The best way to live your life is to invest in something that will outlast your time on earth. Be generous with your time and talents, serving your church and community. Reflect God's compassion for people by taking a moment to stop and listen to what they're going through, to give them a hug, and to pray with them. Give financial support to causes that build the Kingdom of God and care for those in need. Look for opportunities to share your faith.

Be motivated by God's love as you pursue the things that please Him! Someday, you will be elated to hear Him say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You are my beloved, and in you I am most pleased!"

Verses:

- Matthew 16:27
- 1 Corinthians 3:9-15
- 2 Corinthians 9:11

WHAT'S NEXT?

IMPACT: Change Your World



Day 12

Impact: Change Your World

God loves the whole world and wants to reach every person, and His plan for reaching each life relies on you and me. He's given us the privilege and responsibility of reaching our sphere of influence. He wants us to share our faith with others so that they, too, can know His love and accept the free gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

If this sounds overwhelming, keep in mind that you don't have to change the whole world—your calling is to change the world around you. If we all change *our* worlds, then together, we can change *the* world. And if we don't take our responsibility to influence the world seriously, we are in serious danger of being influenced by the world. We need to be the influencers, not the ones who are influenced!

The key to changing your world is recognizing where you can make a difference. Your sphere of influence may be bigger than you realize. Ask God to make you aware of the opportunities around you to impact the lives of others. Start with those with whom you have close relationships: family, friends, coworkers, neighbors. It may seem hard to start here, as these are the people whose opinions matter most to you. When fear starts to creep in, however, remind yourself what's at stake: You want those who are close to you to spend eternity with God!

In addition to reaching those in your immediate proximity, also consider how you can make a difference in the world beyond. Pursue the causes you feel most passionate about and address the world's problems you most want to solve. Ask God to show you the dreams He's placed inside your heart and give you vision for how you can use your resources to make a difference in the lives of others. Get close to Him and let Him stir those dreams inside of you. If they seem too big, remember that nothing is impossible for God! If you're willing to be used to impact the world around you for His glory, God will empower you to do it.

Verses:

- Jeremiah 15:19
- Acts 2:17
- James 2:17
- Jeremiah 33:3