



FRESH START

**A GUIDE TO HELPING YOU START
YOUR JOURNEY WITH CHRIST**

We want to congratulate you on the decision you made today that has placed you on a road leading to a more fulfilling future that is greater than anything you've ever dreamed. If you will simply stay on this path, you are headed toward the best years of your entire life.

Several years ago, a popular song in rotation was called "Jesus Take the Wheel." Accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior is similar to that song title because it means allowing Christ to control the direction of your life from now on. This book is a navigation tool that reveals several simple God-Planned Steps that will lead you to the future God has for you. If you will put your whole heart into following these steps, we promise you that you will not be disappointed.

- **Read just one chapter of this book every day for the next 7 days.**
- **Attend an Impact Church or another church service again in the next 7 days.**
- **Attend our "Growth Track" class in the next 30 days.**

We are praying for you according to Ephesians 1:17 that God may give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you continuously grow in your knowledge of God.

*All scriptures are in the New King James Version (NKJV) unless notated otherwise.

DAY 1

Trust Your Instruments

Today is an exciting day! You took a big step, and you should feel good about it. But, it's important that you don't put too much emphasis on how you feel. When flying an airplane in certain conditions, it can be deadly for a pilot to rely on his sight and senses, which is why every airplane is equipped with certain instruments that help the pilot fly and land safely. When it comes to your relationship with God, you can't afford to rely on your senses either. God has given us the Bible as an instrument that can be trusted in every situation to guide us safely through life.

Salvation is a free gift from God, based totally on what He has done for us and not what we do for Him. Ephesians 2:8-9:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

There is nothing we could have done to deserve God's gift of salvation.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
John 3:16 (KJV)

Romans 5:8 says that "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Think about that for a moment. God loves us so much that even while we were doing wrong, He sent His only Son to die on a cross so that we could be forgiven and free. His love is unconditional!

God rescued us from our sins and mistakes by sending His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for sin with His own life. All we have to do is accept God's gift.

The way you accept salvation is by confessing with your mouth that Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life, and by believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. The moment you did that and meant it from your heart, you became a brand new person.

"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Romans 10:9 (NLT)

"For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives."

Romans 6:4 (NLT)

When you received salvation, your transformation occurred on the inside. However, as an outward display of the salvation you received inwardly, God has instructed you to be baptized in water.

Baptism is an important step of obedience that shows others we have personally trusted Jesus for our salvation. Jesus was baptized when He was on the earth, and we do this to follow His example.

When Christians are baptized, we are submerged under water to identify with the death and burial of Jesus, and raised out of the water to identify with His resurrection. We believe that water baptism is a public declaration of three important things: you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are beginning a changed life in Christ, and you are part of a new family.

If you're ready to make a public declaration of your faith by being water baptized, learn more by going to our website at weareimpact.com/baptism

Day 2: **Personal I.D.**

Our personal I.D. card is pretty important to most of us because it gives us access to things we might be denied without it. The I.D. card confirms who we really are. We can't drive a vehicle, board a plane, vote in an election, or cash a check without displaying the proper identification. Your spiritual identification is even more important.

Many of us have some confusion about our spiritual identity. We are not slaves to God, but rather, sons and daughters.

Romans 8:16-17 says,

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

So, not only are we God's children, but we are heirs of His kingdom. The invitation to be adopted into God's family is open and available to everyone through Jesus Christ. Your identity as a child of God gives you access to the authority and privileges of the Kingdom of God.

In other words, you have the same rights and privileges as the Son of God, Jesus the Christ. God's Word (the Bible) is your I.D., so let's look at who His Word says you are.

2 Corinthians 5:17 & 21 says,

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

You received a brand new identity when you accepted Jesus as your Lord. The mistakes of your past have been erased, and you have been given the same credentials as Jesus. Jesus never sinned even once, and yet God made Him to be sin for us. Even if you had never done a single thing right your entire life, the moment you received Jesus, you were made righteous (innocent and worthy)!

The New Living Translation of Hebrews 4:14-16 says

"So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."

Take God at His Word. You are who the Bible says you are. You can do what the Bible says you can do. You can have what the Bible says you can have. So flash your new I.D. and access the abundant life that is exclusively available to the children of God.

Day 3: U-Turn

Welcome to Day 3. Even though you're a brand new person on the inside, your mind and body may still want to do the same things you did before you decided to become a Christian. As a child of God, you have the power to think and live like a Christian.

Romans 12:2 says,

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

This doesn't happen automatically, though. This transformation is a process that happens as you reprogram your mind with the Word of God. That's what you're doing with this 7-day book, so you're well on your way.

You need to know, however, that sometimes you are going to make mistakes. Many times when people make a mistake, they run away from God. They stay home from church. They stop praying and stop reading the Bible. This is the worst thing you can do. Why? Because there's nothing we can do that will ever stop God from loving us! If you are driving in your car and realize that you made a wrong turn, what should you do? Turn around! It doesn't make sense to continue going in the wrong direction once you know you have made a mistake. The Bible refers to this type of change in direction as repentance. To repent means to turn away from sin or

a mistake and to have a change of mind and heart towards what's right.

"For godly grief and the pain God is permitted to direct, produce a repentance that leads and contributes to salvation and deliverance from evil, and it never brings regret; but worldly grief (the hopeless sorrow that is characteristic of the pagan world) is deadly [breeding and ending in death]."

2 Corinthians 7:10 (AMP)

When we are genuinely sorry for our mistakes, have a change of mind on the matter, and truly decide to go in the right direction, the Bible says that's real repentance. God is not a "big bad judge" waiting for you to mess up so He can walk away from you. He is your loving Heavenly Father! When Jesus sacrificed His life and took our place on the cross, God forgave our sins – past, present, and future. So if you sin or make a mistake, don't run from God; run to Him and repent of your wrongdoings. Satan, who is your enemy, knows that the result of sin is spiritual and/or physical death. He wants you to isolate yourself so he can deceive you and cause you to doubt God's Word. Don't let him!

If you know that you have messed up, stop right where you are and decide to go the right way with God. Make a "U-turn" by reminding yourself that you've been forgiven. Decide to forgive yourself and make the necessary personal changes so that you'll never end up in that position again, and you'll see that your Heavenly Father will treat you as though it never even happened. Thank God for His love and patience with us!

Day 4: **Strength of Signal**

Communication is an essential part of the human experience, and nothing has transformed communication quite like the cell phone. The introduction of the "smartphone" has opened up a world of mobile possibilities far beyond simple conversation. However, the extent to which a person is able to use the cell phone is often limited by the signal strength of the cellular network.

Thankfully, God's network has unlimited signal strength, and there are never any "dead zones," dropped calls, or connection failures. And, the best part of all is it's totally free! His communication network is called prayer. Just as communication is an essential part of the human experience, prayer is an essential part of the Christian experience. God is a personal God. He's interested in every detail of your life. He wants you as His child, to get to know Him in a personal way. Through prayer, you have unlimited access to the only One in the universe who actually knows everything about everything! There is no question you'll ever have or no problem you will ever face to which God does not have the answer.

If you will commit to pray every day, before long you will begin to discover God's will for your life. You'll also begin to experience the comfort and peace His presence provides you. As you continue to spend time with your Father God, Christianity stops being just a religion to you and becomes what God meant it to be – a personal relationship with the One who created you.

In order to pray accurately, you're going to have to learn what God's Word says about the situations you face. Reading the Bible daily is a valuable part of your unlimited data plan because through it you have direct access to God's thoughts. How different could your life be if you received a text message from God every day? In essence, that's exactly what the Bible is. It's God speaking to you...through text.

"Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do." Joshua 1:8 (NLT)

Hopefully, today's chapter has motivated you to commit to spending time with God, praying, and reading the Bible every day. If you're new to reading the Bible, we encourage you to start in the book of John, a biography of Jesus' life authored by an actual eyewitness. Also, here is a simple plan to follow in your prayer time:

- Start by thanking God for some things for which you're grateful.
- Then, praise God for something you admire about Him.
- Next, worship God by acknowledging who He is to you.
- Then, pray to Father God in the name of Jesus about whatever is on your heart.
- Thank God by faith, believing that God has answered your prayer.

Day 5: **Who's in Your Circle**

When you decided to become a Christian, a follower of Christ, you became a part of God's circle as a disciple. You're now on the road to a future that is brighter and more fulfilling than anything you can imagine. However, being a part of God's circle may make some of the people in your old circles uncomfortable. Your friends have probably already noticed that you are different, and some may even find it offensive when you talk about Jesus. This can really challenge your decision to follow God, which is why it's important to surround yourself with people who are also following God. Proverbs 27:17 (BBE) says, "Iron makes iron sharp; so a man makes sharp his friend." Just like one piece of iron is used to sharpen another, God uses other Christians to strengthen us and develop us as believers.

Life change happens in a number of ways, which is why in addition to attending church services, we advise that you join a small group similar to those at Impact Church.

A small group is an excellent place to develop genuine friendships with other Christians. These groups meet in homes, dorms, and businesses in every city where there's an Impact Church. They usually consist of four to 12 people who share something in common. There are groups for men, women, single-parents, married couples, twenty somethings, seniors, and even groups that meet around common interests such as basketball or baking.

Connecting with a small group is more than just a good idea; it is a God-planned step to the future He has for you.

In Acts 12:12, there was a meeting in the home of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Apostle Paul sent correspondence through letters to the church home groups in Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, and Colossians 4:15. Meeting both in the "temple" and in a small group was clearly a way of life for Christians in the Bible, and it should be a way of life for Christians today.

Ultimately, small groups provide four things:

1. A place to CONNECT: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer." (Acts 2:42)
2. A place to PROTECT: "Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many." (Hebrews 12:15, NLT)
3. A place to GROW: "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." (Proverbs 27:17)
4. A place to FIND FREEDOM: Make this a common practice - talk about your struggles together and support one another with prayer.

God's plan is for us to "do life together," enjoying and sharpening each other. You will receive information on how to get involved in Small Groups when you attend a Growth Track class at Impact Church, which I encourage you to do as soon as possible. You can also get information about small groups online by visiting weareimpact.com/smallgroups.

Day 6: **Upgrade**

Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit immediately when they accept Jesus as their Savior, but there's a difference between receiving something and being completely filled with it and baptized in it. It's similar to the difference between a rowboat and a speedboat. What distinguishes one from the other is POWER!

In Luke 24:49, Jesus said, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

God's promise is that the Holy Spirit will come upon you and completely fill you; and when He does, you will receive a power upgrade that enables you to do everything God has called you to do. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will be empowered with the ability to speak in tongues just like Jesus promised in Mark 16:17 (KJV):

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues."

Notice, the phrase in Mark 16:17 "**them that believe.**" This promise is for every believer, not just a chosen few. Don't allow fear or doubt to stop you from receiving one of the most important gifts God has given to us as Christians. Speaking in tongues gives the believer the ability to pray in a language they've never learned and do not understand.

1 Corinthians 14:2 & 14 says,

"For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.... For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful."

Even though you don't understand exactly what you're saying, you can have confidence that you are praying directly to God and that His answer to this prayer will cause the things in your life to work out for your good (Romans 8:26-28).

The first account of people being baptized in the Holy Spirit is in Acts 2:4, where it says that they "were filled with the Holy Spirit, and (they) began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. **Utterance means style or manner of speaking.** In other words, the Holy Spirit gave them the words to speak, but it wasn't His voice speaking. THEY did the speaking. When you are filled and receive the ability to speak in tongues, the Holy Spirit will give you the words to speak, but you will have to open your mouth and speak them by faith.

When you come to *Growth Track*, you'll have the opportunity to join

us in a prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But, you don't have to wait until then. Jesus said in Luke 11:13 that if you ask, then the Holy Spirit would be given to you. Pray saying, "Father God, the Word says that if I ask, I shall receive, so I ask to be filled with your Holy Spirit." Once you're filled, begin praying in tongues every day, and you'll experience power and boldness that wasn't there before. You'll be living proof that God's Word is true because everything will be working together for your good!

Day 7: Connect

In the beginning of the book, we challenged you to attend an Impact Church or another church service again in 7 days. Well, today is that day! The foundation of Christian life is the church. You will grow spiritually as you hear the Word of God and connect with other believers who are strong in the faith. The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to help, encourage, and be accountable to one another. For example, Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT) says,

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near."

It's easier to stay motivated, encouraged, or accountable when you're connected to a church family.

There are many analogies for a Christian disconnected from a church: a football player without a team, a soldier without a platoon, a tuba player without an orchestra, a sheep without a flock, and a child without a family. God does not want his children growing up in isolation from each other. 1 Corinthians 12:25 (AMP) says,

"That there should be no division or discord or lack of adaptation [of the parts of the body to each other], but the members all alike should have a mutual interest in and care for one another."

The Christian life has a corporate nature. We are connected and joined together as parts of one body. We need each other.

Congratulations on making a Fresh Start.

We look forward to having the honor of meeting you, ministering to you,
and hopefully serving you in a greater capacity.



Anthony & Rhonda, Pastors



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