

Time with God

that's how you grow

Step 1

Start Here

Welcome to the family!

Take 5-10 minutes for each to share your story – how did you decide to follow Christ?

Take a moment to thank God and ask him to bless your time together.

Discuss

Think of people you are in a close relationship with (family members, friends or colleagues):

- How did you get to know them?
- What can you do to get to know them even more?

We grow in relationship when we spend time with others: Talking, listening, working together, relaxing together, and many other ways.

Main Idea

A Christian grows closer to God and is strengthened in faith by spending time with him daily. There are three ways we can all do this: Reading the Bible, praying and connecting with the church.

Let's look at spending time with God in these three ways:

1. **We get to know God through reading the Bible.** The Bible is also called 'the Word of God'. That is because God speaks to us and reveals his love for us through the Bible. It shows us how we can know him and live in his love. As we read the Bible, our hearts and minds are changed by its truth. We get to know what God is like, and we understand his good plans and purposes for our lives.
2. **We also get to know God through prayer.** Prayer is simply talking with God. As we speak with him, he also speaks with us in different ways. He answers us, he encourages our hearts, he guides us and gives us strength.
3. **We get to know God through his church.** The church is the family of God, of which all believers are members. As we connect with the family of God and worship him together, we grow in faith and love.

Explore the Word

As you read the following verses from the Bible, notice the many blessings of reading the Word of God, praying and engaging with the church:

1. **Romans 15:4** Reading the Bible encourages us and gives us hope.
2. **Psalms 119:105** Reading the Bible gives us direction for our lives.
3. **Philippians 4:6–7** Prayer helps us give our anxieties to God and enjoy peace.
4. **Jeremiah 33:3** Prayer reveals the great things of God to us.
5. **Matthew 18:20** Fellowship with other believers helps us experience Jesus more.
6. **Hebrews 10:24-25** Fellowship with believers encourages us to love and faithfulness.

How many different benefits of reading the Bible, praying, and fellowshiping can you count in these verses alone?

The best thing you can do every day is to spend time with God. Let's see how you can start.

Practice Together Now

Here is a simple 3-step outline of how to begin spending time with God every day.

1. Start with prayer – Thank God for who he is and ask him to speak to you as you read.
2. Read a passage from the Bible.
3. Reflect on the passage that you read:
 - What does it tell me about God?
 - What does it mean for me today?

Practice this 3-step process together using Psalm 1.

Finally, discuss how and where you might be able to join with other believers for worship and fellowship.

Put it into Practice Daily

- One day this week, gather with other believers to worship God together.
- Decide to spend time with God every day through reading the Bible and prayer to help you grow closer in relationship with God.
- A good place to start is the Gospel of Luke and the Psalms. Read a chapter from each daily.
- Share any encouragements or questions with each other during the week.
- If possible, pray together daily for 5 minutes.



Step 1

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Child of God

you belong to his family

Step 2

Start Here

Take 5 minutes to share your experience of reading the Bible and praying in the past few days:

- What has been especially encouraging?
- What has been challenging?

Discuss

How long after a baby is born does it take for a father or mother to say, “my daughter” or “my son”? How long does it take to have the legal rights of a child?

Do you have experience of a child coming into your family? How did you feel the first time you held that child?

Main Idea

When a baby is born, it’s counted as part of the family from the very beginning.

There is nothing a new baby must do to be accepted as a child. The baby doesn’t have to behave in a certain way or pass a test. It just is a son or daughter. Its identity is a child. He or she immediately has a relationship with their father, mother and siblings. What is more, he or she is immediately recognized by law as a child of the parents.

The Bible is abundantly clear: When someone believes in Jesus, they immediately become a child of God and are accepted as a full member of his family.

Explore the Word

Read the following verses. What do they teach you about being a child of God?

1. John 1:12–13
2. Romans 8:15–16
3. Galatians 4:6-7
4. Romans 8:38-39

The point is this: We don’t have to perform religious duties in order to have a

relationship with God. We can enjoy relationship with God because of our identity as a child. We can freely go into his presence and ask him to meet our daily needs. How amazing that we can call God 'Abba', which means 'daddy' or 'father'.

As Heavenly Father, God never abandons his children. Nothing can separate us from his love.

Practice Together Now

- How does being a child of God affect you?
- How does it make you feel towards God, your heavenly Father?
- How does it give you confidence and hope today?

Ask the Lord to help you live in this world in your full identity as a child of God. You can use these words as a starting point.

- Thank you, God, that I am truly your child. From now on I have full access to you.
- Thank you, God, that I am not a stranger to you, but a member of your family. Thank you for my brothers and sisters, in Iran and around the world. May our family grow.
- Thank you, God, that you are my "Abba" father. Thank you that you care deeply for me and want to be close to me.

Put it into Practice Daily

- During your daily time with God, continue reading Luke and the Psalms. As you read, ask yourself these questions:
 - What does this passage tell me about God?
 - What does this mean for me today as his child?
- Also spend a few minutes each day with one of the verses below about being a child of God.
 - 1 John 3:1-2
 - Galatians 4:6-7
 - Romans 8:38-39
- Share what you learn with each other.
- Ask how you can pray for each other during the week.

Step 2

God the Father

our heavenly daddy

Step 3

Start Here

You have read, prayed and reflected about your identity as a child of God in the last few days. How has this helped your relationship with him?

Discuss

In this step we'll look at God as our Father. Some may have good experiences with their earthly fathers, but for others the experience was bad. We will explore how our heavenly Father is always good and loving towards us.

Read this true story. What are some benefits children have when they have a good father?

A 6-year-old boy had a good relationship with his father who loved him greatly. They lived in a country experiencing war. One day when they were out together, they suddenly heard gunfire. A battle began in the streets around them. The father took his son's hand and started to walk home. He tried to be calm so his son would not be afraid.

As they walked, the sound of war grew louder and louder. The father thought his son would become very frightened. But when he glanced down, he saw his son was happy and smiling. When they finally got home, the father asked his son: "Were you not afraid while we were on the streets with the sound of the bombing?"

"No," the son replied.

The father was curious and asked, "My son, why were you not afraid?"

The son explained, "Daddy, I was not afraid because you were holding my hand."

As this story shows, when children have a good father, they experience peace, even in the midst of the storms of life.

Main Idea

Jesus shows us that God is a good Father who we can always trust.

In the Gospels, Jesus constantly referred (over 150 times!) to God as Father. And he made it clear that God is a good, perfect and loving Father that we can always trust.

Of course, our own experiences with our earthly fathers impact how we approach our Father in heaven. Some of us have had good fathers. Like the boy in the story, we are confident and comfortable in God's presence.

But others of us have had difficult, even abusive relationships with our earthly father. This can make it hard for us to even call God 'Father' or feel comfortable in his presence.

No matter what our experience with our earthly father, we can all grow in the joy and blessings of a close relationship with our perfect, heavenly Father.

Explore the Word

As we read the Bible, we discover more and more about what the Father is like.

Read the following passages. List the characteristics of God the Father and the ways that we can approach him.

1. Matthew 7:9-11
2. Luke 15:11-24

Practice Together Now

From what you have learned today about God as Father, which aspect is most helpful or relevant to your life today?

What situation are you walking through right now where you need to hold the Father's hand?

How can you put your hand in the Father's hand this week?

You can use this prayer:

Father, I rejoice and declare that you are a good Father to me. Thank you that you love me unconditionally and that you are always caring for me. Thank you that you want me to share my burdens with you, so I bring my situation to you now. I remind myself that you are present in the midst of my challenges. You will never leave me or forsake me. I ask you to guide me. I am so glad to be your child and I want to stay close to you.

Put it into Practice Daily

- As you continue to read through Luke and the Psalms, choose an additional verse daily from the list below:
 - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
 - Jeremiah 29:11
 - 1 John 1:9

- Isaiah 41:10
- As you read them, reflect on these questions.
 - What do these verses tell me about God the Father?
 - What do these verses tell me about how I can approach him?
 - How am I to live today based on this truth?
- Choose one verse, write it out, and place it where you will see it regularly. Every time you see it, read it aloud, and ask the Father to reveal himself more deeply.
- Each day spend a few moments committing whatever you are facing into the Father's hands. You can use the prayer above.

Step 3

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Jesus

our saviour

Step 4

Start Here

Read this true story together

Thirty-three miners in Chile were working deep in a copper mine. They suddenly heard a terrifying noise and felt the earth shake. The rock above them collapsed.

The sheer size of the rock meant there was no way out – they were trapped 2,300 feet underground. Unable to save themselves, the dark tunnels of the mine would soon become their grave – unless others rescued them.

Above ground, family and friends didn't know if they were even alive, but a rescue team went to work. They drilled a hole about 5 inches wide all the way down to where they thought the miners were trapped. They sent down food, water and a message, and waited for a response.

The miners, overjoyed that they had been found, sent a note back up saying all 33 were still alive.

So began the long and dangerous work to find a way to pull each one out of the dark pit.

Engineers finally managed to drill a hole large enough to send a capsule to pull them out one by one. Sixty-nine days after the rock had collapsed, all 33 miners were rescued.

Do you remember a time you needed rescuing? Or when you rescued someone else?

Main Idea

One of the most beautiful verses in the Bible is John 3:16. It teaches us that God loved the world so much that he sent his Son to rescue us from darkness and bring us into his kingdom.

Sin separated humanity from God. Like the Chilean miners, we were trapped in our own dark pit, headed toward death.

But, as we saw in the last step, God is a good father. He knew that we could not get out of our desperate situation and find our way back to him in our own strength.

But he did not abandon us to death. The whole Bible is the story of God's plan to

save us through Jesus. John 3:16 is a beautiful summary of how he has rescued us. In this verse we understand the heart of the Gospel.

Explore the Word

Take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to help you understand John 3:16 as you read and reflect on it.

Take turns reading the verse aloud at least 7 times slowly. Each time emphasize a different word in the verse. For example:

- “For **God** so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.”
- “For God so **loved** the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.”
- “For God so loved the **world** that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.”
- And so on.

At the end, see if you can repeat the verse to each other by heart.

Discuss

Reflecting on John 3:16, answer the following questions:

- Who is Jesus?
- Why did he come?
- What does it mean for you and me?

Practice Together Now

Since you have become a Christian, how has Jesus worked in your life? What ways do you still feel the need to be rescued?

Spend the last few minutes together in prayer:

- Thank God once again for sending Jesus to rescue us so we can have eternal life.
- Ask Jesus to deliver you from the situations you have just shared with each other.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Keep repeating your memorization of John 3:16. Share it with one other person every day.
- Talk with others about John 3:16:

- Ask another believer what is meaningful about this verse to them. Be prepared to share your thoughts also.
- If an opportunity arises, share the verse with someone who is not yet a believer, and explain what it means for you.
- Reflect this week on the following verses. As you do, answer the three questions: Who is Jesus? Why did he come? What does it mean for us?
 - Col 1:13-14
 - 2 Timothy 4:18
 - Luke 4:18

Step 4

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The Cross

of first importance

Step 5

Start Here

In all areas of life, we face distractions from what is important.

- Why is it so easy for us to become distracted? (Think of examples of family life, work life, and spiritual life)
- What happens when we focus on the most important things?

Those who focus on the most important things in their field see greater progress. But those who are distracted do not reach their goals.

That is why it is often said, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

Explore the Word

What is the ‘main thing’ for our journey with the Lord?

Paul the Apostle wrote 1 Corinthians to a church that he knew had experienced the grace of God. But he also knew that many distractions had come into their walk with God. So he passionately urged them to keep the main thing the main thing.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 together.

- In verses 3-4, how does Paul describe what he says about the cross and resurrection?
- What are the truths that Paul highlights as of first importance for us?

Main Idea

(Part 1)

The cross and resurrection is of first importance in our journey with Christ.

Each of the stages of the cross and resurrection that Jesus went through has deep significance for our lives today and for our journey with God. Let’s consider them one at a time:

Christ died for our sins and was buried (vs.3-4)

If we are honest, none of us can say we are without sin. Romans says, “All have

sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23) and that “The wages of sin is death” (6:23). Our sin causes us to be separated from God and leads to death.

But Christ, the sinless one, actually died and was buried, taking our sin and death on himself. Therefore, God no longer counts our sin against us. When we put our faith in Jesus and what he has done for us, we are reconciled to God – free from shame, free from eternal death, and no longer separated from him.

Why is this of first importance? How can living free from the fear of death impact our lives today?

Main Idea

(Part 2)

He was raised on the third day (v.4)

The wonderful thing is that death could not hold Jesus. God raised him from the dead. His resurrection is not just symbolic or figurative – it’s an historical fact. Death was defeated.

Jesus is alive. He sees us, he hears us, he strengthens, and gives us abundant life today (John 10:10). Not only that, he gives us eternal life so that we can enjoy his presence forever.

Why is this of first importance? How does knowing Jesus is alive give you hope for the future?

Main Idea

(Part 3)

He appeared to his disciples and others (vs.5-8)

The same day he was resurrected, Jesus appeared to his disciples. In the New Testament there are multiple records of Jesus presenting himself alive to his followers. As he did so, he told them to tell others he is alive and to also teach them to be his disciples.

They became the first witnesses of the most important story of history. Through them, more people became Jesus' followers. We too are part of the on-going story and can be his witnesses to others.

Why is this of first importance? What motivated the disciples to be witnesses of his resurrection? How are you also called to be a part of his story?

Main Idea

(Part 4)

According to the Scriptures

In the passage we studied, Paul twice says 'according to the Scripture' (in verses 3 and 4).

This is an important detail. It shows us that the whole story of the Bible points to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God revealed his plan for salvation throughout the Old Testament, through the story of Israel, and the words of the prophets, all of which pointed to the coming saviour who would establish his kingdom.

Practice Together Now

Thank God for all that the cross and the resurrection of Jesus mean for us

You can use these words:

- Thank you, Lord, that I am forgiven because you died on the cross for my sin.
- Thank you, Lord, that you paid the wages of death and I am free from my debt of sin.
- Thank you, Lord, that you overcame death through your resurrection, and that I can now have eternal life.
- Thank you, Lord, that you are alive today, and I can be a witness of your resurrection.

The cross and resurrection show the passage from death to life - where hopelessness turns to hopefulness according to the promises of God. Where are you each now experiencing hopelessness? Consider your family life, work life or spiritual life? Where do you need a resurrection? Pray for the resurrection power of Jesus to come into your situation.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Start each day thanking God for the most important thing:
 - Pray again the prayers from this step.
 - Sing a song of worship to the Lord.
 - Think of creative ways you can express your gratitude to him.
- Live free from shame. If there is a particular sin that haunts you, confess it to Jesus, receive his forgiveness, and thank him that he finished your shame over that sin with his death.
 - Read Romans 5:8 aloud - "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- Whatever you noted as a place of hopelessness in your life, pray that God would infuse it with his life.
- Refresh your memory of John 3:16.



Step 5

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Following Jesus

learning and living his way

Step 6

Start Here

- If you could develop a particular skill or expertise, what would it be?
- Who is the best in that field that you would like to learn from?
- What do you think would be difficult about learning?

Main Idea

Throughout history people have learned their trade, skills, and livelihood by serving as apprentices to a master. They listen, watch, and copy the ways of their teacher. They follow the pattern given to them, and develop their abilities by putting into practice what they are taught.

Jesus' call to us is to follow him and be his apprentices, not just to be saved. We often refer to this as being a disciple – someone who learns from him and lives his way.

Read these verses together. What does following Jesus look like?

- Matthew 4:19-20
- Matthew 7:24-27
- Matthew 11:28-30

Explore the Word

Jesus is very clear that there is a cost to following him. Throughout the New Testament we see the call to discipleship is a whole-life commitment. Read these verses and discuss what we learn about being a disciple.

- Matthew 16:24-27
- John 12:24-26
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- Galatians 2:20

These verses teach us that to be a Christian, a follower of Christ, we must live for him and let him shape every aspect of our lives.

Discuss

Because of the cost of discipleship, when Jesus called people, there were

different responses. Some like Peter, James, John, and Matthew immediately left everything and followed him (e.g. Matthew 9:9). Some people had other priorities and did not become disciples (Luke 9:57-62).

In John 6:66-69, after Jesus had given some challenging teachings, we see that many people who had been following him took offense and no longer followed him. But others decided to remain with Jesus and keep learning and living his way.

- What reason did Peter give for remaining Jesus' disciple?
- What are the reasons for us to choose to be wholehearted disciples, even when it is challenging?

Explore the Word

As Peter showed, the best decision we can make is to be Jesus' disciples. Yes, there is cost, but the joy and reward of remaining with him far outweighs any sacrifice.

Read these verses and list more reasons why following Jesus with our whole life is the best decision we can make.

- John 8:12
- John 10:10-11
- John 11:25
- John 14:6
- John 15:11

Now it's your turn: as you've read the Bible over the last few weeks, can you think of any verses that remind you of yet another great reason to follow Jesus? Write the verse and add that to your list.

Practice Together Now

Share your experiences of following Jesus.

- What have you learned from him that has already changed the way you live?
- What else is he teaching you that you now need to put into practice?
- What steps can you take this week to begin?

Take time to pray and tell the Lord that you want to be his disciple. You can use these words:

- Lord, I want to be your disciple: to learn from you, follow you, and put into practice what you teach me.
- Lord, I want to be changed by you, so that I live like you and live for your purposes.
- Lord, I choose to deny myself because I trust that you are the way, the truth,

and the life.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Practice following Jesus:
 - Consider what the Lord is teaching you or asking you to do. Choose to follow him in it this week by putting it into practice.
 - Share how you are following Jesus with each other during the week.

- Plan time together before your next step.

Jesus taught his disciples to love others and enjoy relationship. He did this by taking his disciples to weddings where they learned to celebrate; dinner parties where they become friends with people different to them; the disciples learned how to live life together as they travelled, talked, ate meals, and worshiped together.

Before doing the next step, plan to enjoy time together. Some ideas:

 - Share a meal or a drink
 - Enjoy the outdoors together
 - Introduce your family and friends to each other
 - Try a new activity together

Step 6

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The Holy Spirit

God's empowering presence

Step 7

Start Here

Do you remember a time when someone's presence gave you strength, guidance and/or encouragement and helped you persevere?

Or perhaps a time when your presence helped someone else to be successful?

Discuss

All of us are on a journey in life.

As believers, we are now on our most important journey – following the resurrected Lord.

But being a disciple can be challenging. Sometimes in our eyes it seems impossible.

- How have you grown as a disciple in your journey so far?
- In what ways are you finding your journey challenging?
- What would be helpful for you in your journey?

Explore the Word

How is it possible for us to be faithful disciples in our journey?

Read the following verses which Jesus specifically spoke to his disciples just before his crucifixion.

What do you learn about how Jesus empowers us to follow him?

- John 14:16-18
- John 14:26
- John 16:13

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus fulfilled his promise and his disciples were baptized in power (Acts 2).

Main Idea

The good news is that Jesus, having lived as a human, knows the challenges and

sufferings we face. He promised to empower us and not to leave us alone on our journey by giving us his Holy Spirit.

The Bible says whoever comes to faith is sealed with the Holy Spirit. It also teaches us we can walk in the Holy Spirit and be filled afresh with his presence and power. It is in the power of the Spirit that we can:

- Live in healthy relationships with each other (Galatians 5:22-24)
- Walk in obedience and holiness (Galatians 5:16)
- Pray effectively (Romans 8:26)
- Be a witness to the world (Acts 1:8)

That's why the New Testament constantly refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in the church and in our lives.

Practice Together Now

Take time now to pray together to be empowered and filled afresh with the Holy Spirit. Here is how you can pray:

- Thank Jesus for sending the Holy Spirit and posture yourself (mind, heart, and body) to receive.
- Express your need and desire to be filled afresh with the Spirit.
- Pray, "Come, Holy Spirit".

Spend a few minutes waiting on the Lord either through praise and worship, or silently meditating on the promises of God. Keep in mind that people experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in different ways as he fills them and gives gifts. For some it is a quiet, gentle experience, for others it is energetic and joyful. Whatever happens as you pray, be assured that the promise of being filled with the Holy Spirit is for all who continue to pursue and ask to be filled.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Let's remember to keep being filled by the Spirit. To do this, start each day praying the following.
 - Holy Spirit, please fill me afresh today and bless me with your presence.
 - Holy Spirit, empower me to love the people I interact with today in the way that you would love.
 - Holy Spirit, strengthen me to walk in obedience and holiness today.
 - Holy Spirit, teach me to pray according to your plan and purpose.
 - Holy Spirit, enable me to be a bold witness for you.
 - After praying, spend a few moments waiting on him.
- Call each other through the week to share ways that you have felt directed, strengthened, and encouraged.

As you continue to read your daily chapter from Luke and the Psalms, also read Ephesians 5:18-20. Spend some time giving thanks, and making music in your heart to the Lord. Is there a song you can share with a friend? Send it to them



through social media.

Step 7

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It's Good News

tell others

Step 8

Start Here

One of the greatest joys of life is sharing good news with others. For example, a couple telling their friends and family they are expecting their first child. Or a doctor who tells a patient that their test results are clear.

- Do you remember a time when you shared good news with others?
- Who did you tell first? How did you tell them?
- How did it feel to share the news?

Discuss

We have the best news to share with others

Think of what we have journeyed through together: Isn't it all wonderful news?

1. We can know and spend time with God.
2. We are his children – that's our identity.
3. We have a heavenly Father who is all powerful but who also wants to relate to us.
4. Jesus came to rescue us.
5. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the most important story in history.
6. We can follow Jesus.
7. God sends his Spirit to fill us.

If people you know come to believe and experience all this, how would it impact them?

What other good news about God can you think of that would bring great joy and hope to others if they receive and believe?

Main Idea

We can all share good news – you don't need special qualifications.

Every follower of Jesus can share good news. There are no classes to pass, or exams to take before you can start. You don't have to be a church leader, pastor, or theologian.

What if people reject us?

Jesus gently invites people to follow him, he does not use force. We follow his

example and invite others to follow. Often others won't accept what we say at first. They may even be hostile. Many who are believers today rejected Jesus at first.

All we can do is plant the seeds of good news in people. We then pray that God will cause those seeds to grow and bring the fruit of joy and salvation to them. It's not our job to save them – only Jesus can do that. Our job is to let them know the good news.

Explore the Word

Read these verses, describing what the disciples did after first meeting Jesus.

- John 1:41-42
- John 1:45-46
- John 4:39-42

They didn't even know Jesus much at all, but they started introducing others to him. We can do the same.

Practice Together Now

Who can you share the good news about Jesus with?

We all know people who need to hear the good news of Jesus. We can start by sharing him with them. Here is how you can start if you have not already:

- Each of you create a list of ten people you know – they could be family, friends, or anyone else in your life that comes to mind.
- Share the list with each other and then take five minutes to pray together for each person by name.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you courage and opportunities to share Jesus with them.

Spend a few minutes preparing what you will say.

One of the best ways of sharing the Good News of Jesus is to tell others our story and what Jesus has done for us. You can keep it really short with three simple points:

1. Talk about what your life was like before you met Jesus.
2. Explain how you came to know Jesus.
3. Share how your life has changed. (You can include some of the things we've learned so far.)

Take ten minutes to prepare what you will say using these three simple points. Try to make what you say no longer than three minutes to begin with – no longer than one minute for each point.

Now, tell it to each other.

Put it into Practice Daily

Share the good news with at least one other person in the next 24 hours:

- Pray that God will open the opportunity.
- Go for it. Here are some ideas:
 - Visit them or speak to them over the phone/internet and share your testimony.
 - Give them a New Testament. Tell them, "I've met Jesus Christ through this book, and you can meet him too."
 - Send them a link to one of your favourite videos, songs, or verses, and tell them, "I would like to talk to you about this – Jesus has changed my life."
- Share your experience with each other.
- If someone is ready to Jesus as saviour and make him Lord, one way is for them to use the prayer below. This prayer is also available at the end of the New Testament. Then help them start their journey of discipleship through Safar.

Prayer

- Dear Lord, I confess that I am a sinner. I acknowledge that in my own strength or by my own good deeds I cannot be saved or restored to you. I believe that you died for me on the cross and were buried, and after three days you rose from the dead. I believe that you are alive and have the authority to forgive my sins so that I can be considered righteous before God. I repent and turn away from all my sins, and completely surrender my heart and my life to you. I pledge to follow you for the rest of my life, and live according to your will. I ask you to accept me and give me a new life, as you have promised. Thank you that you hear my prayer. Amen.

Step 8

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Prayer

how to talk with God

Step 9

Start Here

Reflect on the last five steps. Which has been most helpful to you?
Can you give an example of how it has helped you?

Discuss

What does prayer mean to you? How has your experience of prayer changed since you became a Christian?

What about prayer do you find easy?

What do you find hard?

Main Idea

Jesus was always praying. His disciples saw him pull away for times of solitary prayer. They watched him pray with crowds. They were invited to join in some of his most intimate conversations with the Father. They saw that his prayer life was effective. So, one day they asked Jesus to teach them to pray and realised they could grow in their ability to pray (Luke 11:1).

Jesus answered them and gave them a model to follow in prayer. We know this as "The Lord's Prayer." Though it is short, it is packed with power for all of life (Luke 11 and Matthew 6).

Join the disciples in this request. Take a moment to ask Jesus to teach you to pray.

Explore the Word

Read Matthew 6:9-13 aloud.
What phrase strikes you? Why?

This prayer gives us a pattern to help us to learn to pray. Let's consider how we can pray through its different parts:

Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.

- When you begin to pray, pause to remind yourself of who he is - our Father in

heaven. This means he is good, sovereign, and able. Spend some time worshipping him.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

- Before bringing your own needs and desires before God, align your will and your desires with his good and perfect will. Ask for his kingdom to rule and bring peace into our chaotic world.

Give us this day our daily bread.

- Bring your needs before the Father. These needs can be spiritual, physical or emotional. He cares about them all.

Explore the Word

(Part 2)

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- Acknowledge where you have sinned against God and ask for his forgiveness. Where others have hurt you, walk through the process of forgiving them.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

- Ask the Lord for his protection in this dark world, bringing specific areas of concern to him, especially where you may feel under attack.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.

- Finish where you started, by focusing on the Father and worshipping him.

Discuss

How does this pattern differ from how you currently pray? Which part is most comfortable for you and reflects your current prayer life? Which parts do you not pray regularly?

Why is it important to use all the parts in your prayer life? What would happen if we only pray one or two parts on a regular basis?

Practice Together Now

Pray through all parts of the Lord's prayer together now:

- Worship the Father
- Align with God's will

- Ask for your needs
- Receive and extend forgiveness
- Ask for protection
- Return to worship

Help each other find words for the parts you don't normally use.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Memorize the Lord's prayer.
- As you pray daily, use the pattern of the Lord's prayer in full.
- Note how your prayer life grows, and share what you learn with each other.

Step 9

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The Church

the family of God

Step 10

Start Here

- What verses did you choose to memorize this week?
- Can you repeat them to one another?
- In what ways did these verses encourage you in your walk with the Lord?

Discuss

Think about healthy family relationships that you have observed – in your own life, people you know, or even those you've seen from afar. In what ways were grandparents, parents, children, siblings, and other relatives a blessing to each other? How do your observations shape what you believe healthy family life should look like?

Main Idea

Family life has a profound impact on everybody. Some have had good experiences, while for others the relationships are difficult or altogether absent.

Regardless of your family experience, as believers we all have the privilege and joy of being members of the family of God – his church. And Jesus promised to be with his church wherever they meet, even in small groups of two or three (Matthew 18:20). The church is not a building or an institution. Rather the church is the people. As we gather together in his name in buildings, in homes, outdoors, or even online, his Spirit nurtures us, builds us, and empowers us. It is through the family that we learn to live in love and peace, grow in our worship of God and participate in his kingdom coming.

Explore the Word

Jesus gave a very clear command to his disciples about how he wanted them to relate to one another.

- Read John 13:34-35

What does he want his church to be known by? Whose example are we to follow as we love each other?

When the church was born on the day of Pentecost, the family of God began to grow. In Acts 2, we read a simple description of what this looked like.

- Read Acts 2:42-47

What did the family of God actually do together? List at least seven ways the believers were involved in building the church.

In what ways are you participating in the church and playing your part in the family?

Explore the Word

The church is not perfect because we are not perfect. Sometimes we hurt each other or offend one another. But that does not give us a reason to leave the body. Rather, we stick together and love each other through our imperfections, and we commit to nurture and contribute to the body's health and strength. We all have a part to play.

As the church grew and spread, it faced opposition from those outside the church as well as inevitable challenges of dealing with differences within the family.

Therefore, the New Testament is full of encouragement to believers to keep going in love and pursue the way of Jesus together.

- Read Hebrews 10:23-25

Why is this instruction important for us? What role do you have in the church?

Practice Together Now

All over the world there are different local expressions of the family of God. Some are large and some are small.

- Are you part of a gathering of believers?
- If not, where could you start?
- If yes, make a plan to engage more in the life of your church:
 - What can you participate in that will strengthen you?
 - What can you do to reach and serve others?

Together thank the Lord that you belong to the family. Commit to Jesus to stay connected to his family, and ask for opportunities to interact with more brothers and sisters in the Lord.

What else can you thank God for as you think about the church?

Put it into Practice Daily

- Find time to actually engage in the ways you discussed together.
- Share a prayer request with someone in your local church family and if possible, have them pray with you in person.
- Ask others in your church how you can pray for them.
- Volunteer to help at your next church gathering.



Step 10

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