

A photograph of a person walking on a crosswalk with yellow stripes. The person is wearing dark pants and shoes. The background is a blurred street scene.

# First Steps

**10 Steps** to Take in Your  
New Relationship with God

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# 1 Embrace the new you

## Key Truth: Spiritual Identity

God has given you a new identity as a believer in Jesus

Fake IDs are a big business. People buy IDs to appear older, younger, or altogether someone else. God is in the ID business, too. John, one of the men who wrote Jesus' story, tells us, "Yet to all who did receive him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."<sup>2</sup> The moment you said "yes" to Jesus, you got a new identity. The apostle Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."<sup>3</sup> What does this new identity mean if you don't look or feel different?



### It means...

- You have been adopted as God's child
- You are free from condemnation
- You can approach God with freedom and confidence
- You are a citizen of heaven
- God is at work within you

And my favorite... Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends..."<sup>4</sup> You are officially a friend of God. Enjoy it, and embrace the new you.

### Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:17

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

### Key Quote

*The clearer we capture the vision of our new identity in Christ, the more we will realize that our deepest needs for security, significance, and satisfaction are met in Him and not in people, possessions, or positions.*<sup>5</sup>  
– Kenneth Boa

### Next Step

Whenever you're reminded of anything negative from your past, read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Then thank God for what he has done in your life and for what he's yet to do.

# 4 Talk to God

## Key Truth: Prayer

God wants to hear from you

Prayer can be intimidating. We worry about our words, motives, and authority. We wonder, "Who am I to pray?" Yet God has already told us who we are. We are his children and our heavenly father wants to hear from us. But when do we do it, how do we do it, and what do we say? Here's the formula: tell God what you're thinking, whenever you're thinking it, and pray with the confidence that he hears you.



Prayer is simply talking to God. It should be as natural as speaking to a friend. There are no secret phrases and there is no magic posture... so there's no way to get it wrong. In Psalm 55 King David wrote, "Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice." That pretty much includes the entire day. God's office hours are unlimited, so don't wait for the right time. Just take time to share your heart, in your own words, and you can be certain that God hears you.

**Key Verse:** Philippians 4:6

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

**Key Quote**

*Prayer is not a pious decoration of life but the breath of human existence.<sup>10</sup> – Henri Nouwen*

**Next Step**

Take time to pray for whatever you're excited about, worried about, or thinking about. Do it now. God cares about all of it.

## 6 Get to know God

### Key Truth: Spiritual Growth

#### Develop healthy habits

More and more restaurants and supermarkets highlight their healthy food options. Many people are developing new eating habits, disciplining their bodies to get or stay in shape. We need healthy spiritual habits, too. There are spiritual disciplines like Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, etc. that give us the best opportunity to hear from God and obey him. But, just as a diet takes work, the same is true in our spiritual development. Author Francis Chan writes, "The average Christian in the United States spends ten minutes per day with God; meanwhile, the average American spends over four hours a day watching television."<sup>14</sup> The TV or any electronic device can quickly become a web that captures our time. If you want to grow spiritually, avoid the trap and develop the following habits:



- Read your Bible each day
- Pray to God throughout the day
- Attend church every week
- Serve at your church
- Participate in a small group

Let the members of your small group know you're trying to develop healthy spiritual habits, and ask them to hold you accountable. View these new habits as tools for your benefit, or fuel for your life.

**Key Verse:** Romans 12:1, 2

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

#### Key Quote

*Spiritual disciplines are to character transformation what calisthenics are to sport. They are tools that God provides in order to create the opportunity for inner transformation. But transformation of our character is developed as we begin to live out our new values among others.<sup>15</sup> – Bill Hull*

#### Next Step

Read your Bible every day for three weeks (that will help you develop the habit). Each day, write down one thing you learned that you can think about or apply that day