

Follow
JESUS



Following Jesus

Following Jesus and accepting Him as your Lord and Savior is the most important decision you'll ever make. It's a decision that impacts you for eternity. This booklet is designed to help you understand what is entailed in that decision and what comes next.

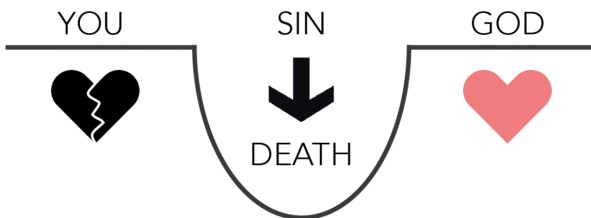
Step 1: Commit Your Life to Jesus

From the moment sin entered the world, brokenness ensued, and mankind was separated from God, creating an insurmountable chasm between us. Each of us was born into that brokenness, and we often spend our lives trying to somehow make up for it, but we always fall short. Because of God's great love, He has provided a way for people to be reconciled to Him through His beloved Son Jesus Christ.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

Why Do I Need Jesus?

There's nothing we can do to bridge the gap between us and God – we can't work for it or jump through religious hoops for it. Only Jesus can rescue us by bridging the gap.



“... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...” Romans 3:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23

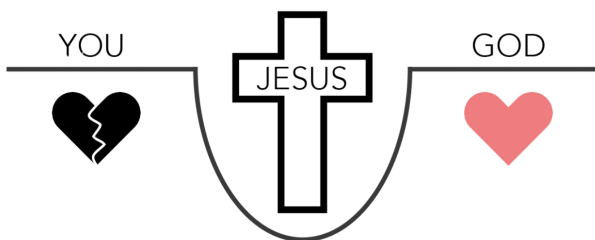
What Did Jesus Do for Me?

The Good News (Gospel) is the message of God's great gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a perfect life and willfully submitted to a brutal death on a cross to pay the price for our sin. Three days later, He rose from the dead to demonstrate victory over death, bridging the gap and providing a way for us to be reconciled to God.

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
Romans 5:8

How Do I Cross the Bridge Jesus Provides?

God's Word (the Bible) shows us that, by believing that Jesus is God's Son and that He died for our sins and rose from the grave, we can be saved. When we choose to follow Jesus, we surrender our lives to Him, fully committing ourselves to His will.



“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8–9

Committing your life to Jesus begins with the ABCs:

Admit you’ve sinned and fall short of God’s standard.

Believe that God sent his Son Jesus to die for your sin.

Commit to receive this gift of grace and to follow Jesus.

This happens through a simple prayer of surrender. Here’s an example:

God, thank You for loving me and pursuing a relationship with me. I ADMIT I’ve sinned, separating me from You. I BELIEVE You sent Your Son Jesus to die on the cross for my sins and that He rose again to provide a bridge to be reconciled to You. I turn from my sins, COMMIT my life entirely to You, and ask You to save me. Amen.



Step 2: Be Baptized Like Jesus

After you have committed your life to Jesus, baptism is your next step. Baptism is an opportunity to celebrate your new life in Christ by publicly declaring your faith in Christ and being immersed.

While baptism doesn't save us, it's an opportunity to follow Jesus' example:

"One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy."
Mark 1:9-11 NLT

Why is Baptism so Important?

Baptism represents what happens when you commit your life to Jesus, symbolizing your new life in Christ. When you come out of the water during baptism, you're showing everyone that you've buried your old life of sin and have been raised to a new life in Christ. It's the first step of saying "yes!" after committing your life to Jesus.

"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

"... Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
Acts 2:38

For more details about our next Baptism Sunday, visit sunnybrookchurch.org.



What if I Was Baptized as an Infant?

Your infant baptism was certainly a very special moment for your family. Once you personally come to an age where you choose to follow Christ, believer's or immersion baptism can be a great next step as a way to publicly profess your faith.

I've Been Baptized- Now What?

Kudos to you for your decision to be baptized – what a great step of faith on your part! It's a life-changing decision; an event you'll likely not forget for the rest of your life. But what happens next? Maybe you're even asking yourself, "Is this the pinnacle? Where do I go from here?" Great questions.

After you dry off, there's still much to learn, experience, and do. You have an adventurous journey ahead with many discoveries about God and about yourself. High peaks and low valleys are sure to ensue. There are waves of grace to experience and gifts to receive. There's more obedience to push yourself toward, more disobedience to root out, and more spiritual muscle to build.

But you don't have to face this journey alone. And you can take your cues from Jesus, emulating what He did after His own baptism. Here are two things that you can apply now:

Take a look at yourself

Maybe you're thinking this sounds a little crazy. But listen, after baptism, something changed about you, and it changed permanently. And you don't want to miss it.

Take a minute to look in the mirror and realize that God calls you His son or daughter. He loves you. And He is pleased with you. There is nothing you can do that will make Him love you more, and nothing you can do that will make Him love you less. Nothing!

Seriously, look at yourself and say this out loud: "I'm a son/daughter who God loves, and He's pleased with me. I'm part of His family and He rejoices over me with singing." If you're having trouble believing that, consider these truths:

You are created by God

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalm 139:13-14

You are not an afterthought or an accident. God, the ultimate Creator, created you on purpose and for a purpose. When God sees you, He doesn’t see a person who has no reason for being. He sees someone He intentionally put here for a reason. Your identity is found, not in who you are, but WHOSE you are!

You are clothed by God

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Galatians 3:27

When you received Christ as Savior and Lord of your life, you’ve put on the nature of Christ; He is in you, on you, and around you. His love, His compassion, His righteousness—it’s all there. Jesus trades your sin for His salvation, your fallenness for His forgiveness. No longer does He see you as a sinner; God now sees you clothed in Christ’s righteousness!

You are changed by God

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ... 2 Corinthians 5:17a NKJV

“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.” Romans 12:2

You are not identified by your past. Scripture says that you become a new creation when Jesus infiltrates your life. He wipes the slate clean. This instantaneous change starts a process that continues throughout your life. God will continue to transform your thoughts, attitudes, and actions as you surrender more fully to Him. All so they match the new person He has made you to be.

You are celebrated by God

Check out what happened to Jesus after He was baptized: when He comes out of the water, God speaks. Audibly. A voice from Heaven thunders and says, *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him, I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:17) God expresses His love for Jesus, calls Him his Son, and tells everyone how pleased He is with Him.

Do you realize that God feels the same way about you?

When you made the decision to follow Jesus and then be baptized, God smiled. The Bible tells us that He rejoices over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17); He is pleased to forgive your mistakes (1 John 1:9); He is ecstatic to welcome you into the family (1 John 3:1); and even angels marked the event with a party (Luke 15:7). That’s amazing!

Team Up

Now that you’ve had a little chat with yourself, it’s time to bring some people around you. That’s what Jesus did.

Shortly after Jesus was baptized, He was taken into the desert and tempted by Satan. By the way, you might get ready for that yourself. It’s possible that Satan does His utmost to distract you, discredit you, and plant seeds of doubt in your mind. Don’t fall for his tricks (more on that later).

But after this, Jesus finds some friends (twelve to be exact), and not just any ordinary kind of friends. These would be the kind of friends that would be by His side, spending nearly every day with Jesus for three years until His crucifixion. They traveled together, ate together, prayed together, and learned what it meant to follow God together.

Who Jesus surrounded himself with was an important decision. And who you surround yourself with is no less significant. You can’t follow Jesus alone. And even if you could, you were created for community. You need people who will support you, ask you hard questions, laugh with you, push you in the right direction. You need people who will pray with you, meet you for chips and salsa just to catch up, and who can come to you if their life gets sideways. In other words, you need people to follow Jesus with.



**Not quite sure how to find a follow-Jesus team?
Find your people at our Grow Together/Groups
page at sunnybrookchurch.org.**



Step 3: Learn From Jesus

To follow Jesus is to be His disciple; a word that simply means learner. That's exactly what you became when you were saved and baptized. And whether you tend to be a good student or not, this just might be the best school on earth. It's hands-on. It's interactive. And there are no pop quizzes. You simply notice the things that Jesus did, and then you do your utmost to do the same.

Disciple is also the root in a word most people don't like: discipline. And before you hyperventilate, a discipline is just a practice that allows you to be a disciple, a learner.

Jesus routinely connected to God through spiritual disciplines. These pathways are for you as well, practices that allow you to experience God in the here and now.

Here are a few things Jesus did:

Pray

Jesus routinely got away and spent time talking and listening to God. Sometimes He'd do it with friends (Luke 11:1-4), and other times, He would steal away to pray alone (Luke 5:16). Sometimes, His prayers were short (John 11:41-42), and other times, the prayers were a bit lengthy (John 17:1-26).

The key to prayer isn't in how long you can go without taking a breath or how eloquent the language is. The secret is just to do it. Speak to God. Hide nothing from Him (He knows it all anyway). And allow space to listen.



Jesus knew we'd need help, so He left us an example to follow when it comes to prayer. You can find this epic prayer (also known as The Lord's Prayer) in Matthew 6:9-13. And just to help you out, here's an acronym to help- the P.R.A.Y. model:

P - PRAISE

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name ..." verse 9

Praise and adore God for who He is and what He has done.

R- REPENT

"Forgive us our debts ..." verse 12

Ask God to forgive your sins and then turn away from them.

A- ASK

"Give us today our daily bread ..." verse 11

What needs can you pray about? Every one of them!

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Philippians 4:6

Y- YIELD

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven ..." verse 10

Pray for God's will to be done in your family, church, ministry, job, future, city, nation, and the world.



Read the Bible

Jesus was dedicated to studying the Scriptures. That's pretty amazing considering He wrote them.

As a learner of Jesus' ways, reading the Bible is significant. One of the major ways God communicates to His people is through His Word (2 Timothy 3:16). It's even described as a sword, an offensive weapon for the battles you're sure to face (Ephesians 6:17).

Jesus unsheathed His sword right after his own baptism when Satan tempted Him in the desert. How did Jesus rebuff the demonic? By quoting Scripture (Matthew 4).

The word of God is powerful. It's something you should be routinely engaging with. Just like prayer, there are myriad ways of doing it—reading with friends, reading alone, reading whole chapters, or focusing on specific verses. The key point here—just start. And keep going; keep reading God's story and apply it to your life.

If you're not sure where to start, the Gospel of John is a great place to get to know what Jesus says about Himself and about how to follow Him. Or check out the reading plan below.

Prayer and Bible reading go extremely well together—so find time every day when you can get away for a few minutes each day and begin a new rhythm.

***Check out our 31-day reading plan
on our Follow Jesus tab at
sunnybrookchurch.org.***



Serve

Jesus stated clearly that He did not come to be served, but to serve:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

As we follow Jesus, we do likewise, serving others as we’re compelled by His love. Scripture teaches that we’ve each been given spiritual gifts—gifts empowered by God’s Holy Spirit when we believe; when we become part of the “body of Christ”. And these gifts are meant to be used to serve. We use our gifts:

“... so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”
Ephesians 4:12–13

We’re also called to serve “the least of these”, for whatever we do to serve those in need, it’s as if we’re serving Jesus (Matthew 25:40).

When you serve, you’re growing yourself, you’re growing the body of Christ, and you’re loving others, just as if you’re loving Jesus.

Not sure what your gifts are or where you might consider serving? Complete the *Spiritual Gifts* assessment [here](#).



For all the ways you can engage in serving at Sunnybrook or in the community, check out our *SERVE OTHERS* page at sunnybrookchurch.org.



Share

Just like discovering a dynamic fishing hole or an epic restaurant, good news is meant to be shared. And never is that truer than when it comes to your faith in Christ. This Good News has the potential to impact eternity in the lives of others. So share away!

Here's a simple strategy for sharing the life-changing Good News of Jesus Christ:

1. Build relationships with those who are far from God.

God has already placed people in your life—family, friends, co-workers and acquaintances—who are just one invitation away from experiencing all that God has for them. Don't abandon your unsaved friends; begin to pray for them and let them see the change in you that comes from following Jesus.

2. Share a verbal witness.

When you sense a curiosity about spiritual things in someone's life, don't hesitate to share your story. Remember this is Good News and you don't want them to miss out. Simply share:

- What was your life like before you met Christ?
- How did you come to commit your life to Jesus?
- What impact has following Jesus made in your life?

3. Invite them to church.

You never know where a simple invitation to church might lead. When people have the opportunity to experience welcoming and authentic community, a vibrant people who love Jesus, and the Gospel presented in a culturally relevant way, they may forever be changed as a result.

***To equip yourself to share the Gospel,
familiarize yourself with the
COMMIT YOUR LIFE TO JESUS
section of this booklet.***

Do What He Says

Your new faith is not only about internal changes (like being more joyful or patient). It's also about the things you physically do in the world around you. Jesus said that one measure of how much we love Him is if we are doing the things He said and did (John 14:15). Jesus' biological brother, James, said that internal faith and external actions go hand in hand (James 2:14-26).

Paul, a pillar of the early church, said this: *"... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."* (Philippians 2:12b-13)

Paul never visited a gym, but when you read the words "work out your salvation," don't you just picture some free weights or the leg-press machine? The more you "work out," the stronger you become, and the more weight you can move. It's the same for your faith. Put it into action, and it will grow.

When you observe Jesus' life, we see Him practicing other spiritual disciplines like engaging in public worship (Luke 4:16), giving financially (Mark 12:41-44), solitude (Luke 5:16), and fasting (Luke 4:1-2). All those things are fantastic and will grow your faith. But the most important thing He emphasized is love. (John 13:34-35)

All of these are built on the foundation of daily prayer and Bible reading. So get started there, and slowly add in additional disciplines as you feel your spiritual muscles growing.

You are in for a wild adventure of a life that is more beautiful, more difficult, more world-changing, and more unexpected than anything you could imagine. Welcome to the family of God!

If you have more questions or are ready to take a next step as a follower of Jesus, check out the NEXT STEPS tab at sunnybrookchurch.org.



