

Glow

FIRST 7 DAYS OF FAITH

Begin your exciting new life as a Christian with these short easy to read essentials for following Jesus.

Each day you'll find brief Bible passages explained in easy-to-read language that will set you on the path to growing in your faith.



Welcome to our practical introduction to living as a Christian. In *Seven essentials for new Christians*, you'll find a week of helpful reflections on what it means to be a Christian alongside key Bible passages, to help you grow in your decision to follow Jesus.

The seven essentials answer these questions:

- 1. Is God real?**
- 2. Am I new on the inside?**
- 3. Can I talk to God?**
- 4. Does the Bible guide my life?**
- 5. Is God's Spirit alive in me?**
- 6. Are we made for church?**
- 7. How can we tell and serve others?**

To help you get the most out of these seven essentials and your new Christian life, it's important to have a Bible. If you'd like a paper Bible, let us know, otherwise:

[Download a free Bible from YouVersion](#)

YouVersion is a free app providing lots of translations and languages. You can also find our Glow Church page with other Bible reading plans.

If you have any questions about *First 7 Days of Faith* or downloading the Bible, please see the Connection Hub on a Sunday..

Now let's start learning!

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LIFE SAVER

The young woman waded into the ocean, excited to be on a famous Gold Coast beach, even though troubles in her life lingered at the back of her mind and some dark clouds gathered on the horizon. At first the water was refreshing and the waves exciting but within moments she found her feet couldn't touch the sand and the friendly waves were now frightening. The sun seemed to disappear, as she started fighting for shore, but something stronger was taking her away. She tried to keep her head high but the waves kept battering her down. As exhaustion took hold, she cursed herself for her foolishness, her pride and her lack of care that had put her life in danger. Through water-filled eyes she saw some movement on the beach and desperately waved her arms, all the while certain that no one would even see her. In shock, she almost resigned herself to death, her self-hatred rearing up and telling her she deserved it. All her failures seemed to pass before her eyes and she wept for her own loss.

But then a calm voice called out and a strong arm held her above the water, helping her onto a board. She gulped in air and as the lifesaver took her back to safety, her tears were for joy and relief that she had been seen and saved. As she recovered on the beach, comforted by strangers, a warm towel around her shoulders, she promised to learn how to swim, swim between the flags, better understand the beach and swim with others. Later, she promised herself she would make the most of this new opportunity, always thankful to the one who saved her.

Just like this young woman, you have been saved. The parallels are clear. On your own you were overwhelmed by your sin and failures and the evil of a lost world. You've tried many things that promised hope but ended in despair. Maybe you felt you were going under for the last time. But then someone came to you saying, 'I come to seek and save the lost.' His name is Jesus, your lifesaver. Not only has he rescued you from being overwhelmed and exhausted in the battle, but he's also saved you into a new life of promise. Now is the time to make the most of this rescue; to be equipped to live in the new life you have been given. That's what these 7 essentials are for – to help those who were once drowning apart from God to live with strength in His love, forgiveness and wholeness, through the power of His Spirit.

The Christians around you have all been where you are. We've just had more time to grow into our new, saved life. And we want the same for you.

DAY 1: IS GOD REAL?

Becoming a Christian is not only a matter of faith, but also of reason. It's entirely reasonable to believe in God as seen in Jesus. Most Christians don't need any reason to believe other than what God is already doing in their life. But it's encouraging to learn that our faith is supported by strong evidence. And it also equips us to help those seeking these kinds of answers. So, let's look at some of the key reasons we know God is real.

Inward evidence

Most people make their initial decision to become a Christian, perhaps by praying a prayer of salvation at church, based on the evidence of their own heart. We sense the presence and call of God through Jesus and choose to respond. We feel guilt and shame lift off us, experience forgiveness, see answers to prayer, our lives and relationships improve as we follow His ways, our eyes are opened to His goodness and greatness.

Living proof

Another evidence is the lives of other Christians, perhaps our family and friends, in which we see real change because of their relationship with God. As we progress in our faith, we'll discover stories of many people over thousands of years who have made the same decision to follow Jesus and whose lives are transformed through knowing Him.

Finding God in creation, the Bible

Beyond the personal experience of ourselves and others, we also see in creation reason to believe in God. We see beauty, we see love, we see kindness, we see grace. We ask ourselves, where have these come from if there is no God?

We also discover that what the Bible says about the world and the nature of being human, makes sense. It explains what we encounter in life, it works when we put its teachings into practice. It has real answers for our lives today. How could that be if it is not true?

Reality of Jesus

Finally, as we turn to Jesus, we discover He is not a mythical figure from the deep past, but a real person. Many sources from history and archaeology confirm the reliability of the Bible which tells us about Jesus. As former skeptic Josh McDowell wrote, 'After trying to shatter the validity of Scripture [Bible], I came to the conclusion that it is historically trustworthy.'

Skeptics saved

The best way to know God is real is to look for yourself. Read about the life of Jesus in the Gospels – the first four books of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Many have studied these ancient writings hoping to disprove Jesus, only to come to faith in him. Journalist Frank Morison set out to write a book denying the reality of Jesus. Instead, in his own words, ‘What began as investigation ended in revelation. What I meant to expose as myth exposed my unbelief instead. Jesus lives.’ **These Bible passages will help you be assured that God is real.**

BIBLE READING

Romans 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

Acts 17:24-28 *“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him – though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist. As some of you own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”*

Hebrews 1:1-2 *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.*

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you have revealed yourself to me in so many ways. I see you at work in my life and see your wisdom for me in the Bible. Help me to keep growing from strength to strength in my faith. Amen.

MORE STEPS

- Read the Gospels. Start with Mark or John.
- Read more about the historical truth of the Bible and Jesus in books like *Simply Christian* (NT Wright), *Mere Christianity* (CS Lewis) and *More than a Carpenter* (Josh McDowell).
- Visit [Wesley Huff’s website](http://WesleyHuff.com) and watch his defence of Jesus and the Bible.

ASK YOURSELF

What signs of God have you seen in the world and in people even before coming to church or reading the Bible? How have they been confirmed by what you now know?

ESSENTIAL 1 CHECKLIST

- ☐ We know God is real from the witness of our own heart and the lives of others.
- ☐ We can see God's reality in the beauty of creation and human kindness.
- ☐ Jesus is a real historical person and the Bible is reliable.
- ☐ Many skeptics have tried to disprove God but ended up following Him.

DAY 2: AM I NEW ON THE INSIDE?

REFLECTION

Because God is real, we can expect something real to happen when we ask Jesus into our lives. Many terms are used for this decision: being saved, born again, converted, giving Jesus control, making Him Lord and Saviour. These are all ways of explaining what the Bible teaches: *If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved* (Romans 10:9).

What does it mean to be saved?

In our 'Lifesaver' story at the beginning of 'First 7 Days of Faith' we talk about being saved in another setting – at the beach. Every summer, many find themselves overcome by the power of the ocean and call out for help. Thankfully, lifesavers are often on hand to bring the drowning person back to shore. They notice real change in their life! They go from being afraid, overwhelmed, powerless, sinking and struggling to survive; to being grateful, safe, breathing, restored, wiser and sorry for their choices.

This is what happens to us spiritually when we call out to Jesus. While everyone's experience is unique and some people have more noticeable feelings than others, we can be confident that the moment we call on and believe in Jesus, we are instantly transferred from drowning to safety, death to life, darkness to light. We become His children!

We can have assurance

And even if we have a bad day, we are not back in the ocean of life needing to be saved again, instead our lifesaver is right there with us teaching us to surf! We call this 'assurance' – the certainty that when we asked Jesus to save us, he did! Even better, the Bible says, *if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God* (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). Jesus saves us by making us something entirely new. While it may take a lifetime to explore, it began the moment you called out to Him.

The gift of grace

We can be confident about this new life Jesus gives us, because it's not dependent on what we do, but on what He has done – His death on the cross and resurrection. Our new life is a gift of grace and by simply receiving this gift, He promises to make our lives His handiwork or, as one Bible translation says, *we are His masterpiece* (Ephesians 2:10).

While we receive this new life as a gift, we have a part to play. The Bible also tells us that God creates us to *do good works*. These are positive things we can do to put our new faith into action. Not to earn salvation but because of it. As well, we are called to intentionally *put off our old self* (Ephesians 4:24) and make gradual changes to leave behind our former way of life. **These Bible passages will help you be assured you are new on the inside.**

BIBLE READING

John 3:3,16 *Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. 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.*

Ephesians 2:8-10 *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. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Romans 10:9-10 *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.*

PRAYER

Dear God, thanking you for saving me through your free gift of grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Please fill me with assurance about my new creation life that no one can take away. Help me put off my old life and find your purpose. Amen

MORE STEPS

- Read the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus (known in the Bible as *Ephesians*). It's just six chapters!
- If you feel bad for something you have done or not done since becoming a Christian, you don't need to be saved all over again – just ask for forgiveness and for the Holy Spirit's strength to do better next time!
- If you haven't already, consider water baptism which is an outward and visible sign of the inward grace transformation Jesus brings.

ASK YOURSELF

What are some changes you have seen in yourself since you decided to become a Christian?

ESSENTIAL 2 CHECKLIST

- ☐ God is real in our lives and brings real change.
- ☐ We are saved by grace, not by what we do but what Jesus has done for us.
- ☐ When we have a bad day or week, we don't need to be saved again, but we are forgiven.
- ☐ Water baptism is an important symbol of being saved. Ask about this at church.

DAY 3: CAN I TALK TO GOD?

REFLECTION

The God we know in Jesus is personal. He loves, talks, listens, acts and responds. He's not a force, algorithm or distant power. He reveals himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – one God in three persons, whose very character is love (1 John 4:8). We are made for relationship with God and just like any relationship, communication is vital!

God wants to talk with us

The God who made the universe wants to talk with us and get to know us. We call this prayer. An ancient songwriter expresses the wonder of being known by God: *'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?'* (Psalm 8:3,4 NIV). It's true, the Almighty God sees and knows you!

How to pray

So, how do you talk to God and how do you listen to him? Jesus answered that very question for his disciples, found in Matthew 6:6-13 (see below).

Here's how to start praying: First, find a quiet time and place where there are less distractions. Then, don't worry about any special words, just bring your heart and your voice. Now, let's follow on with Jesus' instructions on prayer:

- *Our Father in heaven, holy is your name:* Start by focusing on God, acknowledging He is greater than we are. Give Him praise!
- *Your kingdom come, your will be done:* Align yourself with His will ahead of your own. Submit yourself to His ways.
- *Give us this day our daily bread:* Ask God humbly for anything big or little you need to get through today. Put aside greed but know He wants to bless your life.
- *Forgive us our sin, as we forgive others:* Ask God to forgive any sin - He's faithful to forgive. Then, deal with any grudges or unforgiveness by letting issues go – your forgiveness of others releases God's forgiveness towards you.
- *Lead us not into temptation:* Pray for strength in those areas you feel vulnerable, that might take you off track. Be honest, He already knows, but wants to help.
- *Deliver us from evil:* Ask for God's help in the world. Take a moment to push back on evil by praying for God's goodness to prevail.

Don't worry if you don't do every part every time, it's a guide. As you pray regularly, you'll find it flows for you. You might pray for just a few moments, or longer – just be yourself.

Listening to God

Finally, take a moment to ask God to speak to you – this is a good time to read some of the Bible, which is one of the main ways God speaks to us. Remember, prayer is a conversation that flows from a loving relationship. We don't do it to earn human approval or God's grace, but because we've received God's grace and want to know Him better.

BIBLE READING

Matthew 6:6-13 *But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*

John 14:12-14 *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

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

James 5:13,16 *Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray ... The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for hearing my prayers just as they are. Help me to grow in prayer not just for my own needs, but for family, friends, church and the world around me. Thank you that prayer changes things and changes me. Amen.

MORE STEPS

- Think about the best time and location in your day to spend some time praying (talking and listening). Follow the tips above to help you.
- Look for the chance to attend church prayer gathering or similar, you might be surprised at what you learn and experience.

ASK YOURSELF

Could you memorise the Lord's Prayer as millions of Christians have done over 2000 years? It's a great prayer to help centre our thoughts on God. Use the underlined text above or search on the internet for The Lord's Prayer.

ESSENTIAL 3 CHECKLIST

- ☐ God is personal, just like us and wants to communicate with us in prayer.
- ☐ Prayer is talking to and listening to God, in your own words, from your heart.
- ☐ Jesus taught His disciples how to pray and we can use this model as a guide.
- ☐ Don't pray to get approval, but do make a habit of praying regularly.

DAY 4: DOES THE BIBLE GUIDE MY LIFE?

REFLECTION

The Bible tells us about God and how to live a life pleasing to Him. Its most important message is the story of Jesus Christ, who is also known as the living Word of God. So, the Bible is the word about the Word! The Bible is your best guide for life, but even more, it's a guide to having a life-changing relationship with God and each other.

We can trust the Bible

The Bible is a very reliable book. It is one of the best attested documents of ancient history – with many thousands of historical manuscripts showing its consistency. As well, ongoing archaeological discoveries support the Bible's accuracy.

The Old and New Testament

So, what is this Bible we trust in? It consists of two sections – the Old Testament which is similar to the Jewish (Hebrew) Scriptures and which for Christians, points to the coming of Jesus (who was Jewish). It has 39 books covering history, biography, poetry, prophecy and wisdom, written between 1400 – 400 BC.

The second part is the New Testament (27 books) which begins with four Gospels, each telling the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. It continues with the story of Jesus' first followers in Acts and then teaching letters sent to churches as Christianity spread. The final book, Revelation, is a prophetic and symbolic book that points to the return of Jesus. The New Testament was written in the first century AD.

Scripture is God-breathed

As the Apostle Paul reminded his young assistant Timothy, *'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'* (2 Timothy 3:17). Or as the Psalmist says, the Bible is a *lamp for our feet and a light on our path.*

Develop a Bible habit

It's vital to have a regular habit of Bible reading. Like Joshua, a young leader in the Old Testament, we should keep *'this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it'* (Joshua 1:8). We can do this by reading a portion of Scripture daily (along with praying) at a convenient time, perhaps using a devotional to assist. A devotional is material written by a mature Christian that helps explain and apply the Bible. We can also experience God's word at church on Sunday, in Connect Groups and special courses such as Essentials, Alpha and Disciple.

The Holy Spirit teaches us

Most importantly, the Holy Spirit will be your teacher as you read the Bible and learn what a relationship with God looks like, how to live a Christian life and how to help others, among many other things. The Bible also helps us pray by aligning our prayers with God's will. Of course, we are not just to read the Bible, but to put it into action with the Holy Spirit's help. We do this not to earn God's love because He already loves us.

BIBLE READING

Psalms 119:103-105 *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*

John 1:1-3,14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

1 Peter 1:23-25 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.*

2 Timothy 3:14-17 *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

James 1:22 *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for your word, the Bible that guides us through life and teaches about you. Help me to read the Bible every day and show me new things relevant to my life. Help me obey your word, putting it into action. Amen

MORE STEPS

- To further appreciate the reliability of the Bible, [read this post](#) by Australian Bible scholar, John Dickson or [this article](#) by Pentecostal theologian Jacqueline Grey.
- To help with your personal reading of the Bible, use some of the plans available on YouVersion or visit the [Bible Project](#) for further resources.
- [Read about](#) one approach to reading the Bible – the SOAP method.

ASK YOURSELF

Memorising Bible verses allows the Holy Spirit to bring them to mind when needed. Here's a good place to start: *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).

ESSENTIAL 4 CHECKLIST

- ☐ The Bible is God's word for us, especially telling us about Jesus.
- ☐ The Bible we read today is accurately translated from many early manuscripts.
- ☐ The Bible is God-breathed and teaches how to live, how to know God, how to pray.
- ☐ Don't read the Bible to get approval but do put it into action!

DAY 5: IS GOD'S SPIRIT ALIVE IN ME?

REFLECTION

God is known to us as three-in-one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Not three separate gods, but one God in three persons, distinct but not divided – the Trinity. It's a bit hard to understand but that's not surprising as our human minds do our best to grasp God! The important point for today's devotion, is that the Holy Spirit is God (not a force, power or magic trick) who has always been part of creation, with the Father and Son.

The Spirit and the promise

The Holy Spirit was always present in different ways with God's people and King David, as one example, was desperate to remain in close relationship with the Spirit: *Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me* (Psalm 51:11).

David lived during the old covenant between God and humankind and he expresses some uncertainty about the Spirit's ongoing presence. We live in the days of the new covenant (promise) established by Jesus. This includes giving us his Spirit, not based on our righteousness, but His! Not because we deserve God's Spirit to live within us, but because Jesus has gifted us forgiveness and righteousness through faith in Him.

So now the Holy Spirit is present with Jesus' followers (including you!). It was Jesus' special promise to us that we would have the Spirit as an advocate, counsellor, comforter and empowerer (John 14:16-17).

Getting to know the Spirit

As we grow as Christians, we can expect to grow in our understanding of how God's Spirit dwells with and works in us:

- When you said yes to Jesus and became a Christian, God sealed that agreement by giving you His Spirit, a bit like a guarantee that we belong to Him from that day on (Ephesians 1:13-14).
- The Spirit seeks to empower us supernaturally to live the Christian life, especially to help us tell and show others about Jesus (Acts 2:1-4). We call this being baptised or filled with the Spirit.
- Day by day as we live open to the presence of the Spirit, He bears fruit within our character that makes us more like Jesus and helps us live well with others – the fruit of the Spirit! (Galatians 5:22-25).

- Alongside changing us to be more like Jesus, the Spirit gives 'spiritual gifts' that are supernatural expressions of God's love and power to build up the church (one another). One list of these gifts can be seen in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

BIBLE READING

Genesis 1:1-2 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

John 14:16, 17 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth.*

Acts 2:1-4 *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

Ephesians 1:13-14 *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.*

Galatians 5:22-23, 25 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

1 Corinthians 12:7-10 *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.*

PRAYER

Dear Holy Spirit, I have so much more to learn about you and how you move in my life. Please reveal more of yourself to me and help me stay open to your presence as you glorify Jesus through me. Amen

MORE STEPS

- [Read about](#) doing life with God by walking in the Spirit.
- [Learn more](#) about how the Holy Spirit helps us to grow more like Jesus.
- [Listen to](#) this Pentecost Sunday message on the Holy Spirit.
- Talk to a pastor, friend or Connect leader about being baptised in the Spirit.

ASK YOURSELF

Read the list of fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 above. Which fruit feels strong in your life and which ones could you ask the Spirit to help you with?

ESSENTIAL 5 CHECKLIST

- ☐ The Holy Spirit is God, alongside the Father and Son – three in one.
- ☐ From the first moments of creation, the Holy Spirit has been active in the world.
- ☐ Jesus gives us the Spirit when we are saved as a guarantee of salvation.
- ☐ We can be filled with the Spirit's power, exercising the fruit and gifts of the Spirit.

DAY 6: ARE WE MADE FOR CHURCH?

REFLECTION

Western society increasingly values hyper individualism – my truth, my story, my dreams, my way. But it's not working. Rates of loneliness and even suicide have never been higher, despite the relative wealth many experience. Thankfully, there's a better way.

Made for relationship

A key truth of the Christian faith is that we are personal beings made for relationship. This flows from what the Bible teaches about God, who reveals himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In our reading from Genesis (below), God makes humans in 'our image' (Genesis 1:26). Just as God is relational, so are we. That's also why He made us male and female – the same but different – a further example of our being relational.

When we become a Christian, God ensures we don't have to go it alone. Not only can He heal our existing relationships (marriage, family, friendships) but He leads us into His family – the church.

Called out to gather

The word church in the original New Testament language (Greek) is *ecclesia*, meaning 'called out to gather'. Becoming a Christian is the 'called-out' part – called out of sin, darkness, despair. The church is the 'gather' part – it's how Christians do life in community – through a local church like Glow. It's not an optional extra – we need each other to grow and succeed as Christians. Not only to receive from other Christians, but to learn how to love one another.

Jesus sees the church as His body, and we are all part of it, each with a unique purpose! Or as the Apostle Peter puts it, we are like living stones which Jesus builds into a living house for His Spirit to dwell in – the church!

Simple and central

The church at its simplest is a group of Christians who gather regularly to worship Jesus and encourage each other in their faith. But the church also bears witness to the Kingdom of God and His plan for humanity. The church is central to God's work on earth.

BIBLE READINGS

Genesis 1:27 *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

Matthew 16:18 *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

John 13:34-35 *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

Romans 12:4,5 *For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

Hebrews 10:24,25 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

1 Peter 2:5,6 *... you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, Thank you for our church family. Please give me a passion for the church so that I can give and receive in love alongside my brothers and sisters. Bless and protect us I pray, Amen.

MORE STEPS

Set your heart on taking these basic steps towards being part of the Christian community known as your local church:

- Attend a service on Sunday regularly to worship God, receive teaching, and use your gifts to serve.
- Join a Connect group – smaller midweek gatherings in which we get to know people better, share meals, pray for one another, help one another and grow together.

- Find a team to serve on – and maybe become a leader of a team or ministry – as God leads you and calls you.
- Give to the church your time and tithe – churches are ‘user-operated’ organisations – it’s up to us to pull together!
- Pray for the church, its leaders and members, because we are in a spiritual war and together need the protection of prayer.
- Invite people to church because like you, they may find Jesus and the family they never knew they had.

ASK YOURSELF

What aspects of church life are you already part of and what aspects would it be good to explore in the next few weeks?

ESSENTIAL 6 CHECKLIST

- ☐ Like God, we are made for relationship – to be connected to other people.
- ☐ Jesus said He would build His church – we are all living stones in this spiritual house.
- ☐ The church is the gathering of believers but also the witness to God’s plan.
- ☐ Plan to go to church regularly, join a Connect group and find a way to serve.

DAY 7: HOW CAN WE TELL AND SERVE OTHERS?

REFLECTION

There's nothing like hearing some really good news. Perhaps the only thing better is getting to tell someone else about it! Interestingly, the name given by the first Christians to the message of Jesus Christ was just that – good news or gospel. When we talk of the gospel of Jesus, we are talking about good news for everyone.

Sharing good news

It's natural for humans to want to share good news. If you've recovered from illness, got a new job, are getting married, having a baby and so on – we love sharing the good news.

So naturally, when we meet Jesus – discovering a God who loves us, forgives us, gives us eternal life and a new way of living, it's very good news. So go ahead and share it, just as you would any good news. The more natural and authentic you are, the better.

People won't know if we don't go

There's also a serious side to this. If people don't hear this good news, because nobody tells them, they may miss out on the good things mentioned above. They may live with the despair of sin and brokenness instead of finding freedom and hope.

Which is why the Bible encourages us not to keep the good news of Jesus to ourselves. In fact, Jesus' last words should be our first priority: *Go and make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19). These words are from what we often call The Great Commission – when Jesus commissions all His people to tell others about their faith.

Spirit-enabled witness

To help, He sends His Spirit to enable us to share our faith – giving us the opportunity, words and boldness to speak up. The simple message of how Jesus died on the cross and rose again has a supernatural power of its own. As Paul says, *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes* (Romans 1:16).

Some people are very good at sharing this good news – we might say they have a gift of evangelism – a term that comes from the Greek word for good news. But sharing the good news of Jesus is not the responsibility of only a few. It's for all of us. Just as we enjoy sharing other kinds of good news, let's share the best news of all – Jesus has set me free!. Don't forget, there may be no one else who can share this good news in your family, with your friends, in your workplace or with your interest group or sporting team.

How to share your faith

What's the best way to share? Tell the story of what happened to you – no one can argue with your personal story (also called your testimony). Look for opportunities such as when someone asks a leading question like, 'You seem different lately?' or 'What did you get up to on the weekend?' Or use prayer as a door opener – if people are telling you of their troubles and hardship, gently and politely offer to pray. Most people are extremely grateful and it may open the way to further conversation.

A simple invitation to church is another way to share your faith. Explain that it will be different to what they imagine: they won't be embarrassed, it's full of friendly people, no one will ask them for money and it's not for perfect people, but for everyone.

BIBLE READING

Matthew 28:19,20 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Romans 1: 16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes...*

2 Corinthians 5:19, 20 *And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

1 Peter 3:15 *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, Thank you for the good news of your love and forgiveness that has changed my life. Give me opportunities to share my good news story with others. Amen.

MORE STEPS

- Practice telling the story about how you became a Christian. Keep it short – like an elevator pitch – start with where you were at, then what happened when you became a Christian and finally how life has changed. Make it about Jesus, not just yourself.
- [Listen](#) as Ps Moni Alaga describes the importance of sharing our Christian story and hear some amazing testimonies of change.
- Sharing our faith is not just about words. Sometimes the best way to share Jesus is through kindness, generosity and care for others, especially when they are struggling. Who could you serve this week?

ESSENTIAL 7 CHECKLIST

- ☐ We all love sharing good news and there's no better news than God's love.
- ☐ The story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection is the gospel that changes lives.
- ☐ People will be open to our personal story and usually are grateful for our prayers.
- ☐ Telling others about Jesus is for everyone – who can you tell this week?

*This is our final devotion in the **First 7 Days of Faith**. Continue to grow in your faith by attending church, joining a Connect group, registering for Alpha, Essentials or Disciple or one of our other programs. And of course, keep growing by praying, reading the Bible, walking in the Spirit, serving others and sharing the good news.*

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FIRST 7 DAYS
OF FAITH

