



February 22, 2026

On Purpose: Take a next step to follow Jesus.

1 John 2:12–14 (ESV)

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Four critical action steps for every one of us.

1. Attend a service to experience God.
2. Invite a friend to share hope.
3. Take a next step to follow Jesus.
4. Give generously to rescue others.

In the text today you might have noticed that there are three different groups.

- Baby Christians
- Adolescent Christians

- Mature Christians
- All of us fall into one of those stages of the Christian life. No matter which one describes you, there is a next step for you to take.

1 Peter 2:2-3 (ESV) *2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

A next step for baby Christians....Be hungry!

- The NLT version of 1 Peter 2:2-3 reads, “*cry out for nourishment*” so that you can have the “*full experience of salvation*”.
- A good parent enters in to their kids childish meltdown and lead them into *a full experience of life*.
- And it’s the same with baby Christians. When we’re new to following Jesus we need the right help and direction. The right words. We need spoon fed so that we can have the “*full experience of our salvation*.”
- Let’s get practical if you’re new to Jesus:
- Give your life to Jesus.
- Keep showing up to be fed.
- Seek some guidance to live the Christian life.
- Learn the scriptures. Right Now Media. Text 833-230-5960 and request the link!

Phil 2:12-13. *12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

Adolescent TEEN Christians...Feed yourself!

- For every kid there comes a point where the command is: “Feed yourself!” That’s normal and healthy.
- Every parent should say at some point to every child: ***Get it yourself!***
- Spiritually speaking, you’ve been around long enough, it’s time that you learn to feed yourself.
- *The person most responsible for my spiritual development is...me!*
- The number one contributing factor to significant spiritual growth in people is always the same thing, every time: **Personal Bible Engagement.**
- Teen followers of Jesus, here’s your next step: **Engage the scriptures and feed yourself.**
- Practical:
- Do you know you can listen to the Bible while you brush your teeth and comb your hair?
- Dig deeper with resources that can help you engage the Bible.
- Challenge: Learn to pray scripture. Talking with God requires that we speak the language of God. So learn to pray in God’s language.

- Studies show that engaging the Bible 4 times or more every week is the lowest bar to see benefit. But when it's met, the sails will fill with wind, and movement will happen in your spiritual life.

Philippians 1:9-11 *9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

- Key word here is “**abound**” or in the NLT it’s “**overflow**.” May we have more connection with God than we have room for.
- When we do, we dish it out and share our excess.

The next step for Mature Christians today: Feed others!

- There's a time you're fed. Then you grow up a little and you begin to feed yourself.
- And then later, there's a time that you step into the kitchen and make the meal. You do the work to feed others. That's maturity.
- Mature Christians have learned that there are seasons. And an appropriate behavior for each season.
- An experienced Christian looks around at ice and snow that God has sent their way and says, *Hm. It must be January.*
- The easy part for mature Christians is what to do. Notice that this is the one group that doesn't really need a command.
- They just keep on doing what they already know, to the point of overflow.
- And overflow means that they get to pass what they have been given on to others.
- The command, if there is one here, is the Royal command of love. *“My prayer for you is that **your love** would abound more and more with knowledge and discernment.”*
- Love others in an overflowing kind of way.
- When you do you'll keep growing in your own knowledge and understanding of God.
- God's plan for you in Jesus is not just a rescue, it's a **remodel**. A reshaping of your entire life.
- *Faith in Jesus means a lifelong tension between what God has already begun to bring about in your life, and what has not yet been brought under God's grace.*
- That's why everyone, no matter who, has a next step to take. What's yours today?

“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being

made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.” — C.S. Lewis, [Mere Christianity](#).

The Practice of Prayer

Notes from chapter 6 of *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* by Tim Keller.

How do we actually do prayer? St. Augustine and Martin Luther both wrote personal letters to individuals instructing them how to pray. St. Augustine wrote to a widow lady named Proba who was afraid she wasn't praying as she should. Luther wrote to his barber named Peter who asked Luther to give him a simple way to pray. Ideas extracted from both letters are what follow. Except for obvious biblical references, texts in quotes are from the original letters and represent St. Augustine and Luther's own words.

St. Augustine:

Become the right person.

- Before you know what to pray for and how to pray for it, you must become a particular kind of person. You must see clearly that no matter how great your earthly circumstances become, they can never bring you lasting peace, happiness, and consolation that are found in Christ.
- We must recognize that our hearts loves are “disordered.” The things we ought to love third or fourth are first in our hearts.
- Unless we recognize this heart disorder of ours, our prayers will be part of the problem instead of an agent for our healing. (Example: If financial prosperity is our main source of confidence and safety in life, then when our wealth is in peril we will cry out to God for help, but our prayers will be little more than “worrying in God’s direction.” When we are finished we will be more upset and anxious than before. Prayer won’t be the reorienting force it is supposed to be because our first love is our wealth, not the God of the wealth.)
- Settle this matter first...grasp the character of your heart and the desolation of your life apart from Christ. Then, and only then, you can begin to pray.

Pray for a happy life.

- St. Augustine must surely have had a bit of a smile as he wrote this. Everyone prays for a happy life. However, your prayers will be different because you have spent time understanding your disordered heart. You have realized that comforts and rewards and pleasures and fleeting excitement will bring you less enduring happiness the more you rest your heart in them.
- Psalm 27:4 “One thing have I desired of the Lord, one thing will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord.”

- If we have made God our greatest love, and if knowing and pleasing him is our highest pleasure, it transforms both what and how we pray for a happy life. (Example: Proverbs 30:7-9. “Give me a job so that I won’t be poor.” That is an appropriate thing to ask God for. Yet, the Proverbs 30 prayer reveals also the only proper motivation beneath the request. The wrong motivation would pray: “Make me as wealthy as possible.” The Proverbs 30 prayer is different. It is to ask, “Lord meet my needs, and give me wealth, yes, but only as much as I can handle without it harming my ability to put you first in life. Because ultimately I don’t need status or comfort - I need you as my Lord.”)

Use the Lord’s prayer to guide you in the specifics.

- Notice all the kinds of prayer it contains: adoration, petition, thanksgiving, confession. Notice the order and form of the petitions. Think long and hard about this great model of prayer and make sure your own requests to God fit it.

Pray for change and strength.

- Sometimes, even after following the first three rules, “...we still know not what to pray for as we ought in regard to tribulations. Tribulations...may do us good...and yet because they are hard and painful...we pray...that they may be removed from us.”
- Which is right? To pray for change in circumstances or the strength to endure them? Augustine points to Jesus’ own prayer on Gethsemane, which is perfectly balanced between honest desire - “let this cup pass from me” - and submission to God - “nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.”
- Romans 8:26 promises that the Spirit will guide our hearts and prayers when we are groaning and confused.
- Pour out your heart’s desire, but remember the wisdom and goodness of God as you do so.

Martin Luther: “A Simple Way to Pray”

Cultivate prayer as a habit.

- “It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business of the morning and the last at night.” Luther proposed praying twice daily.
- “We are as strictly and solemnly commanded to pray as in the others...not to kill, not to steal, etc. We must pray whether we feel like it or not.”

Prepare your heart and mind to pray.

- It is wrong that believers should be “cool and joyless in prayer,” and therefore Luther proposes a preparation for prayer that he calls “recitation to yourself.”
- The recitation is a form of meditation of the Scripture, but also not mere Bible study. It is taking the words of scripture and pondering them in such a way that your thoughts and feelings converge on God.

- By this practice, “I want your heart to be stirred and guided...rightly warmed and inclined toward prayer.”
- How to practice “recitation to yourself” from a passage of scripture:

1) What is the instruction of the text?

2) In light of the text, what do I have to praise God for or thank him for?

3) In light of the text, what in my life do I need to confess?

4) In light of the text, what should I pray for? What should I ask for?

- By this practice, Luther is teaching us how to generate a small but rich spectrum of insights that can be immediately lifted to God as prayer. It ingeniously forces you off the theoretical plane to consider what the biblical truth you are pondering should actually do to you and in you...how it should lead you to praise God, to repent and change your heart, and also what it should lead you to do in the world.

Luther’s own example of using this method to meditate on the first of the Ten Commandments:

“I am the Lord your God, etc. You shall have no other Gods before me,” etc. Here I earnestly consider that...my heart must not build upon anything else or trust in any other thing, be it wealth, prestige, wisdom, might, piety, or anything else. Second, I give thanks for his infinite compassion by which he has come to me in such a fatherly way and, unasked, unbidden, and unmerited, has offered to be my God, to care for me, and to be my comfort, guardian, help, and strength in every time of need... Third, I confess...for having fearfully provoked his wrath by countless acts of idolatry. I repent of these and ask for his grace. Fourth, I pray...preserve my heart so that I shall never again become forgetful and ungrateful, that I may never seek after other gods or other consolation on earth or in any creature, but cling truly and solely to thee, my only God.

Utilize the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

- Pray through each petition of the Lord’s Prayer, paraphrasing and personalizing each one using your own needs and concerns.
- Luther insists that in doing this, the persons praying should personalize each section, putting their own needs and aspirations into their own words.
- Luther’s own example: “‘Give us....our daily bread,’ I commend to thee my house and property, wife and child. Grant that I can manage them well, supporting and educating them.”
- This exercise addresses one of the things that plagues us in prayer - distracting thoughts. We turn from planning an event to prayer, and find that we are still thinking only about the event. Ordinary prayer, which is usually extemporaneous, or based on a list of prayer needs, often cannot draw the mind’s attention away from what occupied it previously. Praying the Lord’s Prayer in our own words commands the mental faculty, and helps greatly with the problem of giving God full attention.

- This exercise also forces us to pray for more than just the items that most trouble us at the moment.
- Addressing to God, with the authority of Jesus' own words, all our most pressing concerns, is actual prayer. Praying the Lord's Prayer brings boldness and comfort, and, of course, warms up the heart to slide right into the most passionate prayer for our most urgent concerns.

Luther notes that this exercise need not be burdensomely time consuming, often taking only two or three minutes. However, this prayer could "catch fire" and last quite a long time too.

Pray from the heart.

**Luther does give one more piece of advice that is not really a step or practice to go with the others, but something to be kept in mind: the Holy Spirit.

- He writes: "If an abundance of good thoughts come to us, we ought to disregard the other petitions, make room for such thoughts, listen in silence, and under no circumstances obstruct them. The Holy Spirit himself preaches here, and one word of his sermon is better than a thousand of our prayers. Many times I have learned more from one prayer than I might have learned from much reading and speculation."
- Again, he writes: "If in the midst of such thoughts the Holy Spirit begins to preach in your heart with rich, enlightening thoughts, honor him by letting go of this written scheme...remember what he says and note it well and you will behold wondrous things in the law of God. (Psalm 119:18)"