

STARTING POINT



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)



Introduction

What is Starting Point?

Starting Point is a seven-day devotional designed to help you understand salvation and how to develop a meaningful relationship with God. For the next seven days, you will receive emails with encouraging videos from Pastor Paul Ruzinsky. Along with the videos, we've designed this Starting Point journal just for you. Each day you will have a short devotional and scriptures to read, along with reflection questions to record where you are in your life and relationship with God. Your personal reflections will help you on your journey with God.

What happens after you complete the Starting Point seven-day devotional?

We would love to get to know you and guide you in your next steps at Resonate Church. Later in the week you will have the opportunity to register for our **Grow Steps** class to help you with your next steps. We will help you get connected to a **Grow Group**, and how to get involved in one of our **Grow Teams** here at Resonate Church. We believe being involved is essential to grow in your relationship with God.

Ready to get Started?

Be sure to opt into the emails and each day you will receive a devotional email. Set aside some time to watch the video. Read and reflect on each day's content in your Starting Point journal. Welcome to the family - salvation is the best decision you could ever make!



DAY. 01



An Explanation of Salvation

Hello and welcome to Starting Point.

Congratulations on making the most important decision of your life, joining the family of God. We want to come alongside you for the next seven days to help you understand what happened when you gave your heart to the Lord!

When you confessed with your words and believed in your heart that Jesus is your Lord and Savior, God started a transformation in you. God sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for your sins. When you received and outwardly stated you believed in Jesus, God made you brand new! That means your past is erased and God looks at you as a new creation. God's righteousness is placed inside of you. You have been given a fresh start!



"Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

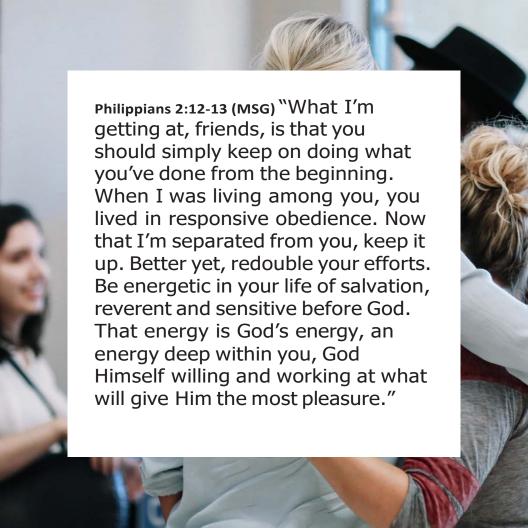
John 1:12 (NIV)

"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 (NIV)

Jesus, the Son of God, lived on this Earth and sacrificed Himself on the cross so we could all experience salvation. What is simple for us, was not simple for Jesus. He did everything He could, including dying for us, to provide salvation. All we have to do is believe and say a simple prayer, and walk it out.

What does it mean to walk out your salvation daily?





God loves us so much and was willing to pay the price for our sins. He explains His forgiveness as removing our sins, or our mistakes, as far away as the east is from the west. You can calculate the distance between the North Pole and the South Pole. However, you cannot calculate the distance from the east to the west. It is infinite. There is no beginning and no end. He removed our sins far away from us by an infinite distance!

Psalm 103:11-12 (NIV) "For as high as the Heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Read all of Psalm 103 to grasp how much God really loves us.)

Did You Know:

The distance between the North Pole and the South Pole is 12,430 miles? It would take 25 hours and 22 minutes to fly on a commercial aircraft to travel that distance.

God wants you to live your best, most purposeful life in His family. Giving your life to Jesus was the best choice you ever made!

Reflection

Think about your life. God's love is so deep for you that He separates you from your sin. What are some areas of your life where you are thankful for God's love?

Ask Him to forgive you for the times you have sinned. Ask Him to send His Spirit to guide you and give you an internal instinct to make choices aligned with His plan and purpose for your life.

As you read through the scriptures (John 1:12, Romans 10:9, Philippians 2:12-13, Psalm 103:11-12), what is God speaking to you?

DAY. 02



Jesus came to earth as a human, as flesh and blood, to live for you, die for you, and rise again on the third day for you. He lived a full life, from childhood to young adulthood on earth. His ministry and the miracles He performed did not mature overnight, but through His own growing process.

It takes time to produce fruit. When we talk about producing fruit, we are talking about the results of our actions. Often, we talk about the good fruit. The good results we want from our hard work, our dedication, or our sacrifices made. We must also be aware that we can produce bad fruit or bad results from the poor choices that we make. Understanding how actions affect results will help us understand the fruit we produce living a life with God.



Did You Know:

In the California vineyards, it takes three years for a vine to be able to produce grapes that can be harvested for wine. For the first three years, the farmers do not harvest grapes for wine. They dispose of them and dress the vines each year so the new growth produces a new harvest of grapes. After three years, the roots of the vines have grown deep enough for the vine to be enriched by the nutrients in the soil and to produce grapes that are worthy to be harvested to make wine.



"On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and His disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to Him, 'They have no more wine.'

'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.'

His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever He tells you.'

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. Each held twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water;' so they filled them to the brim.

Then He told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.'

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.' What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." John 2:1-11 (NIV)

These verses are some of the first verses where Jesus' disciples, or followers, believed in Him. It is because they saw what He could do. They pursued Him, and walked with Him before He produced any miracles. This week as you're learning about what salvation means, and understanding how to pursue relationship with God, don't just look to Jesus for miracles. Believe that as you pursue Jesus, miracles will follow.

You will begin to produce fruit in your life because you are following the Creator of the world. You made a wise choice in your journey and will start to produce fruit. It may just take time. Like the California grapevines, God is going to provide the nutrients you need to produce healthy results and a healthy life. Making the choices to follow His guidance and taking action in areas that will result in healthy fruit will take time. God has sent the Holy Spirit who will come alongside you to guide you in your decision making.

Every year the vineyard owner dresses, or prunes, the vines. Jesus said God is the land owner. He is the vine dresser and we are the vine. He prunes that which produces fruit. As you begin to produce fruit, God will manage, direct, and guide you by pruning you.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

John 15:1-2 (NIV)

As you begin to produce fruit know that:

- 1. You are a child of God.
- 2. You're following the Word of God, which is an instruction manual for life.
- 3. You will produce fruit. You are a new creation in Christ.

Reflection

Read the story in John 2:1-11. Jesus attended a wedding in Cana where He performed His first miracle. The servants had run out of wine, which was an important part of weddings in that culture. The result, or fruit, of this miracle was that the servants had plenty of wine for the festivities. Even though Jesus performed the miracle, He gave the servants an opportunity to be a part of it. They were a part of what He was doing; they were a part of His miracle! Because of the faithful obedience of the servants, an entire group of people were blessed with a miracle. Jesus doesn't want to just perform miracles in your life - He wants you to be a part of them. Have you ever felt like you were waiting on God? You feel as though you have been patient and just don't know when God will come through. Maybe God is waiting on you.

What next step of obedience do you feel God is calling you to take?

As you read through the scriptures (John 2:1-12), what is God speaking to you?

DAY. 03



Learning to Identify God's Voice

The voice of God is active! Only on a few occasions did God speak audibly to His servants in the Old Testament.

"And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, 'Jacob! Jacob! Here I am,' he replied."

Genesis 46:2 (NIV)

"As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered Him."

Exodus 19:19 (NIV)

Scripture tells us that God audibly spoke in Jesus' life only a handful of times.

"And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.""

Matthew 3:17 (NIV)

"Father, glorify your name! Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him."

John 12:28-29 (NIV)

"While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Matthew 17:5 (NIV)

We have occurrences in scripture when God spoke audibly, but God also spoke through His Son and His servants on Earth. He continues to speak through the living Word, the Bible which is alive and can speak to you today.

A Christian evangelist, Billy Graham, was asked, in Biblical times, did Godspeak to people in a voice they could hear? If so, why doesn't He do it today? He answered, "Yes, on occasion God did speak audibly to some of His servants in the Bible — but only rarely. More often, God gave them an inner conviction of His truth, or made His will clear to them through circumstances. Most often He made His will clear through the written messages He had given in the past — in other words, through the Bible."

Graham, B. (2010, April 28). Answers. billygraham.org ©2017 BGEA



God does speak to you in your life. His active voice is a conviction through prayer, the Bible and circumstances. God sent the Holy Spirit, also known as the Comforter. He is the One who comes alongside you, directs you, comforts you, heals you, and guides you. He is the active voice of God in our daily lives.

KEYS TO HEARING GOD'S VOICE:

1) Give permission for God to speak. Early in the morning say, "Holy Spirit, I give you permission to speak to me today. My ears are open to hear you".

In **1 Samuel 3**, we read about a boy, Samuel, who was trained in a Tabernacle. A Tabernacle is similar to the local church of a community. Samuel was trained, but when God called out to him at night, Samuel thought it was the High Priest speaking to him. The High Priest realized God was calling out to Samuel and instructed him to go back to sleep. If he heard the voice again, he was to say, **"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."**

Find a quiet place, and give Him permission to speak to you.

2) God speaks life and love. God speaks to convict and encourage you, not condemn you. Remember the previous day we talked about how He'll prune, or dress, areas of your life to guide you?

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."

John 3:17 (NIV)

Condemnation, or bad thoughts and negative feelings, is not God speaking. He came to redeem with convicting thoughts. When you are in the midst of making a choice, and can feel an inner conviction, that is the Spirit of God urging you to make the right choice. That is His convicting Spirit. There is a difference between God's voice and man's voice. God speaks life. He speaks love.

3) Go to the Word of God. Be open and ready. He can speak to you directly by speaking through His Word. The Word of God is the expressed breath and voice of God in scripture. It is ordained and amazing. It is the instruction guide for your life.

God may also speak to you through another person, prophetically. Anytime anything is spoken to you, or you read something online, you can verify it with the scriptures. It if doesn't line up with scripture, you should not follow that direction. Ask God for His conviction and His direction in your life.



Anything prophetic, or a word from God, should line up in these 3 ways:

- 1. It will be a word of confirmation.
- 2. The word will align with scripture.
- **3.** It will be a word that strengthens, encourages and brings comforts.

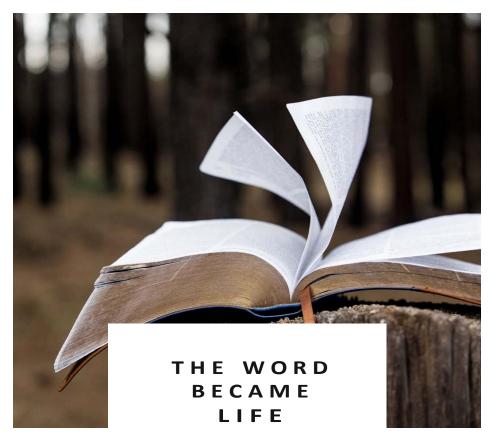
Reflection

Do you have a daily routine of making space for God to speak? If so, when is it? If you do not, set a reminder on your phone, or make a plan to set aside time every day. Ask God to speak to you and tell Him you are open to hearing what He is telling you.

How does understanding God's voice sit with you? Have you felt condemned, or guilty of something from your past? Tell God those feelings. Ask Him for His peace. Let God's voice preside over any other thoughts or voices you may hear and feel.

As you read through the scriptures (Genesis 46:2, Exodus 19:19, Matthew 3:17, John 12:28-29, Matthew 17:5, 1 Samuel 3, John 3:17), what is God speaking to you?

DAY. 04



How to Read & Apply the Scriptures

Today is practical application. This is a follow up from yesterday's discussion about hearing from God. We want to encourage you to read God's Word and make it your priority every day. God gave us the Bible to be a guide and instruction to help us. As discussed yesterday, this is how He can speak to you!

Reading the Word is the best way to know what God says about you, your life, and to know more about who God is. It is a living word. It applies to our daily lives.

"For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)



Quote:

The Hebrew language is not a precise mathematical language. It is alive. It desires to be known. It dares you to chase after it, pursue it and immerse yourself within it. So do not take it lightly. Spend time with it. Get to know it. It is complex and mysterious and deserves your time."

What does the word *living* really mean? Christopher Abel answered it like this, 'Like most living things, it wants deeply to be known. When you read God's Word, what is taking place is more than just a one-way "study" from person to object. Instead, God's Word is indeed living as God moves it to work in your life—and make you more like Him""

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Are you starting to sense a pattern from what you've read this week? Make space, make time, be a part, be patient, engage! God desires you to be in relationship with Him, to spend time with Him, and to know Him! Take time to read your Bible by making time in your schedule. Just as we plan meetings, appointments, and daily tasks, plan time in your day to read from your Bible. Decide when is best for you.



Ideas for reading your Bible:

Download a Bible app on your smartphone, or tablet. We recommend YouVersion, which is supported in our app and includes the full text in over 1,400 versions and over 1,000 languages.

Read a little bit every day. Start in the New Testament. We suggest starting in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) to learn how God feels about you and to read the story of Jesus' life on Earth.

Read a daily devotional that provides some context and guidance for scriptures to read that day. There are hundreds of published devotionals you can buy at your local bookstore from Christine Caine, Joyce Meyer, John Maxwell, Sarah Young, Max Lucado, and many more. The YouVersion app includes thousands of devotional plans that are updated daily. They are organized by categories such as: new to faith, marriage, prayer, forgiveness, fasting, leadership, work, etc.

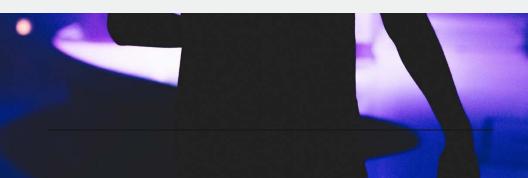
Read something every day, even if it's just a daily verse, then think about how it can apply to your life.

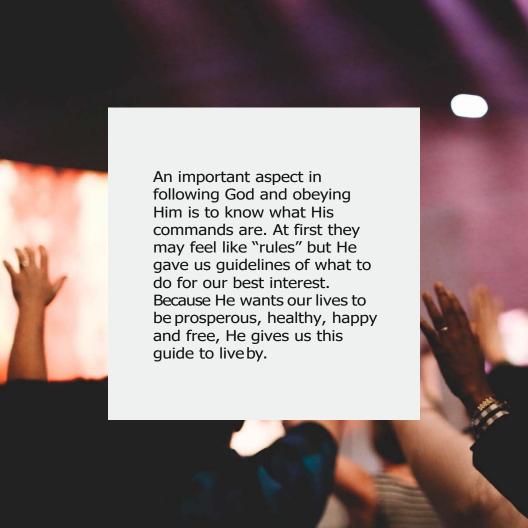
It is so important to God that we are communicating with Him. Prayer is telling Him what we need, and what is on our heart and mind. Reading the Bible is hearing from Him, hearing what we need for our lives, what we should do, and how we should act, speak and live. Reading the Bible also allows Him to tell you how much He loves you.

"If you love me, keep my commands. 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. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you

will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

John 14:15-21 (NIV)







But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it...they will be blessed in what they do. James 1:25 (NIV)

Reflection

How do you approach the Bible? Do you approach it with fear or intimidation? Do you analyze it like a textbook? Do you read it like a storybook? In whatever your approach is to the Bible, is it alive to you? What does that mean to you?

When do you read the Bible daily? What time works for you? If you haven't set aside time, try setting a daily reminder on your phone. Take a few moments to stop what you are doing, and read the Bible, even if it's reading only one verse at a time on your smartphone!

As you read through the scriptures, what is God speaking to you?

DAY. 05



How, When & Where to Pray

Prayer is an essential element to the Christian walk and relationship with God. Praying in groups is effective and beneficial, but praying on your own is tremendous. Please understand that prayer does not have a set form, nor does it have an exact script.

In John 11, we read one of Jesus' most powerful prayers recorded in scripture. Before He raised Lazarus from the dead, He looked up to the Heavens and said, "Father, I know you hear my prayers, hear me now as evidence to these people." He looked at the tomb and said, "Lazarus, come forth." This is the shortest prayer in scripture and it was so powerful that Lazarus came back from the dead!

"Then Jesus looked up and said,
'Father, I thank you that you have
heard me. I knew that you always
hear me, but I said this for the benefit
of the people standing here, that they
may believe that you sent me.'

When He had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face."

John 11:41-43 (NIV)

As you are learning to pray, don't be too concerned about what words you're praying; it's about to whom you're praying. Prayer is a conversation between you and God. God is with you every day, all the time, so you can have conversation with Him at any time. God can read your heart, so say what is on your heart. Be honest with God. Share your heart and speak your mind. As you start to share your heart with God, He will start to share with you and minister to you. He sent the Holy Spirit, who is called the Comforter. He is the one who comes alongside you to help you navigate through life.

Jesus shares an example of prayer called The Lord's Prayer. It teaches us how to pray.

He instructs:

- 1. **Set aside a time to pray and talk with God.** This can be during your drive to work, while you brush your teeth, at the dinner table, or lying in bed at night. It's important to set aside time to be with God.
- 2. **Say what's on your heart.** Remember, there's no perfect script. The Lord's Prayer is a great example.

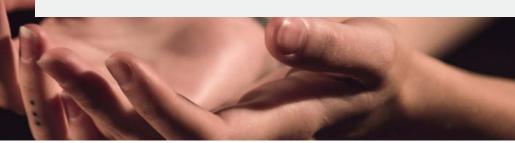
The Lord's Prayer

"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."'

Matthew 6:9-14 (NIV)

When you set aside time to pray, go to that secret place, to the Father who already knows what you need. He wants to know you're setting aside time to put Him in a place of precedence in your life. He's already gone before you to make a way. He works all things out together for your good.



"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:28 (NIV)

Reflection

What is on your heart that you are praying for, or need to start praying for? Write down your thoughts, your needs, your prayers. Pray over them. Every once in awhile, reflect back on your list of prayers. Thank God for how He has answered them, changed circumstances, or even changed your prayers to be aligned with His will for you!

Try to write your own prayer, using this line-by-line guide to help you construct your words to Him.

Here is the Lord's Prayer, explained line-by-line:

Our Father in Heaven, (Start off praying to God as your Father)
hallowed be Your name, (You're addressing that God is Almighty)

Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. (You are asking for God's ways to be done)

Give us today our daily bread. (You're asking God to provide what you need for today)

And forgive us our debts, (You're asking for forgiveness for your mistakes)

as we also have forgiven our debtors. (If we forgive others, God will forgive us. Sometimes we need help forgiving those who have hurt us)

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. (Ask God for help to do the right thing and protect us from evil)

For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. (God has all the power and glory)

As you read through the scriptures (John 11:41-43, Matthew 6:9-14, Romans 8:28), what is God speaking to you?

DAY. 06



Now that you have become a new member of God's family, things in your life will change. Some things may be new to you. This is normal, and all within God's plan for you. Remember, we've discussed a lot this week about the time it takes to see results, to experience miracles and to grow in your relationship with God.

When you accepted Christ, God began to work in you. His convicting Spirit may have already persuaded you to change choices, habits or behaviors, and maybe even some friends. These changes are good. They can also be lonely or scary. God will place relationships in your life for your growth and best interest. You will make new friends who are like-minded, who can encourage you and build you up when you need it. And you can do the same for them.





Have you heard the phrase, "Show me your friends and I'll show you your future?" This is actually a biblical concept.

"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."

Proverbs 13:20 (NIV)

Chaplain Ronnie Melancon states, "An old Jewish proverb says: 'A friend is one who warns you.' Fools don't do that. They're caught up in themselves, but a true friend is caught up in YOU.

Friendship is on the decline.

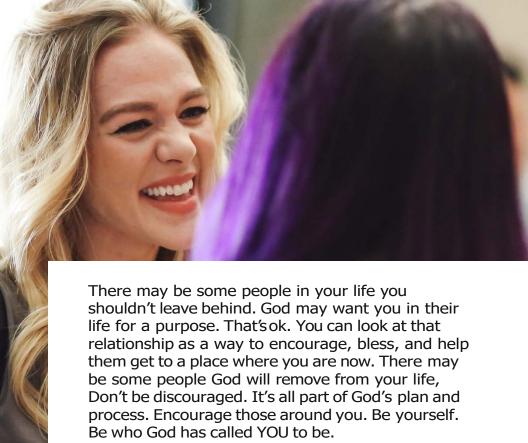
We are more connected and yet more isolated than at any other time in history.

We've traded:

Trust for 'Tweets'
Smiles for 'Statuses'
Love for 'Likes'
Conversations for 'Comments'

'A friend loveth at all times.' You can have 1,000 people on your newsfeed and have none of them be a true friend. Why? Because 'a friend loveth at all times.'





"I have given them the glory that You gave me, that they may be one as we are one - I in them and You in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

John 17:22-23 (NIV)

As this week is starting to come to an end, we encourage you to be committed at Resonate or a good local church. Be engaged and involved through attending, serving, and becoming a part of a community of believers. God will work through others and work through you!

We're here for you. We invite you to be a part of our community!

Reflection

Who has God placed in your life or in your heart that you need to pray for? Is there anyone on that list that you need God's help to forgive? Is there anyone on that list that does not know God? Are there any that need encouragement or a true friend? Ask God to show you how to forgive. Ask God how to love those who need His touch.

How are you feeling? The first week after salvation can be an emotional roller coaster. We have discussed so many topics this week, yet only scratched the surface of growing and understanding God's love for you. We encourage you to connect with your local church. If you are interested in learning more about Resonate Church and your new journey, take the **Grow Steps** class. Be a part of a **Grow Team**, and a **Grow Group**. Get connected with those who will point you to Jesus, and will encourage you as you grow in relationship with God.

As you read through the scriptures (Proverbs 13:20, John 17:22-23), what is God speaking to you?

DAY. 07



Next Steps

Welcome to the Family! When you are born into Christ, you are born into a family of believers. Jesus is the head and we are the body. All those who believe are a part of the Church. The building is not the Church, it is simply a place believers come together.

"Righteous Father, though the world does not know You, I know You, and they know that You have sent me. I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known in order that the love You have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

John 17:25-26 (NIV)

We encourage you to consider Resonate Church and be a part of our church family. Take the **Grow Steps** class, get involved in a **Grow Group**, and serve on a **Grow Team**. Connect with people face-to-face.



God desires us to be together. When we lean on each other for help, there is healing, restoration and fellowship. There will be times when you need your community of believers around you. You will need them to believe with you, to pray with you, and encourage you!

We want you to get involved. Let us encourage you and help you grow in your relationship with God!



WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT STEPS TO GROW AND FIND COMMUNITY:

The **Grow Steps** class is for anyone who wants to grow and get connected at Resonate. You are welcome to join at any time. Register at <u>resonline.org/qot-saved</u>.

Be sure to connect with a local church and get around like-minded people who will encourage and build you up in your new faith.

Reflection

What is the Next Step in your walk with God? How do you get connected to the local church, and in community with other believers?

Write a personal action step (i.e. I am going to set aside 15 minutes at 7:00am every morning to read the Bible on my tablet). Write a community action step (i.e. I am going to register for the **Grow Steps** class and attend the next session.)

NEXT

STEPS

Enroll in the **Grow Steps** class for new believers at http://resonline.org/got-saved

