



AN 8-DAY JOURNEY

WHAT'S NEXT?

A New Believer's Guide to Following Jesus

Know God • Find Freedom • Discover Purpose • Make a Difference

PASTOR JOE ANGELO

VIVID CHURCH



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Pastor Joe Angelo

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WELCOME

Your New Life Has Begun

If you recently decided to follow Jesus, I want you to know how proud we are of you. You have made the most important decision of your life—but you do not have to figure out what comes next by yourself.

Following Jesus is a lifelong journey built one faithful step at a time. You may feel excited, relieved, hopeful, uncertain, or even overwhelmed. All of those feelings are normal. You do not need to understand everything today, and you do not need to become perfect overnight.

This guide was created to help you build a strong foundation. Over the next eight days, you will learn how to grow closer to God, walk with the Holy Spirit, read the Bible, pray and worship, belong to the church, share your story, understand baptism, and love like Jesus.

Read slowly. Be honest with God. Write down what stands out. Take the practical next step at the end of each chapter. The goal is not simply to finish a book. The goal is to begin a real relationship with Jesus and keep following Him every day.

At Vivid Church, our mission is reaching people and building lives. It is an honor to walk with you as God builds yours.

Your story is just getting started.

—*Pastor Joe*

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to Use This Guide

01 Read one chapter each day

Give yourself enough time to read without rushing. Eight days is the suggested rhythm, but the goal is growth—not speed.

02 Keep your Bible nearby

Look up each Scripture in context. The Bible is the foundation; this guide is here to help you understand and apply it.

03 Respond honestly

Use the reflection questions and prayer prompts. Write, pray, and talk with someone you trust about what God is showing you.

04 Take the next step

Every chapter ends with a practical response. Small acts of obedience build a life that follows Jesus.

A simple daily rhythm

Read • Reflect • Pray • Respond

YOUR JOURNEY

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CHAPTER 01

God Wants to Be Close to You

Giving your life to Jesus is the most important decision you will ever make. It is the beginning of a brand-new life, a restored relationship with God, and a journey that will continue to unfold one step at a time.

You may feel excited about your decision. You may feel relieved, hopeful, emotional, or even a little overwhelmed. You may also be wondering what happens next. What does it actually mean to follow Jesus? How do you grow closer to God? What if you still have questions? What if you make a mistake?

Those are normal questions. You do not have to understand everything immediately. Following Jesus is not about having every answer or becoming perfect overnight. It is about beginning a relationship with the One who already knows you completely and loves you deeply.

God is not asking you to figure out your entire spiritual journey today. He is simply inviting you to take your next step with Him.

| I Know What It Means to Need Jesus

Before we go any further, I want you to know that I am not writing this book as someone who has always had life figured out. I may be Pastor Joe today, but my story did not begin behind a pulpit. It began with two broken people who desperately needed Jesus.

Krissy and I did not begin our relationship with a strong spiritual foundation. We loved each other, but neither of us knew how to love in a healthy, Christ-centered way. We were both carrying pain, immaturity, and unhealthy patterns into our relationship.

I especially caused a great deal of hurt. When Krissy and I were dating, I was a horrible boyfriend. I cheated on her multiple times. I knew I loved her, but the truth is that I did not know how to love her well. We kept hurting one another and repeating patterns we did not know how to break.

We did not need a few relationship tips. We needed healing. We needed forgiveness. Most of all, we needed Jesus.

During that season, my mom continued praying for us and inviting us to church. She believed God could reach us even when our lives were messy and we were making decisions that pulled us farther from Him. Her prayers remind me that you may be reading this today because someone refused to stop believing that God had a plan for your life.

At one point, Krissy and I had broken up. One Sunday morning, she attended the 9:00 a.m. church service, and I came later for the 11:00 a.m. service. As I arrived, I saw her walking out of the sanctuary.

Before she ever said a word, I knew something had happened.

I could see that she had encountered Jesus. Something about her was different. She had surrendered her life to Christ, and although every problem did not disappear in that moment, the foundation of her life had begun to change.

I had experienced God when I was younger, but I did not understand how to walk closely with Him every day. I knew some things about God, but I did not truly know how to build my life around Him. So, one step at a time, Krissy and I began learning what it meant to follow Jesus.

We began learning how to know God personally. We began finding freedom from the sin, pain, and unhealthy patterns that had shaped us. As Jesus changed us, Krissy found the strength to forgive me. We became friends again, eventually began dating again, and later got married.

In time, God called us into ministry. Today, we have the privilege of helping people know Jesus, find healing, strengthen their marriages, and build their lives on the truth of God's Word.

But our story did not begin on a platform.

It began with two broken people surrendering their lives to Jesus.

I am not telling you our story to suggest that every broken relationship will be restored exactly as you hope. Following Jesus does not guarantee that an ex will return, that every painful consequence will immediately disappear, or that your future will look exactly as you imagined.

I am telling you our story because I want you to know what God can do with a surrendered life.

You may not know where this journey with Jesus will take you. You may not know what He will restore, what He will remove, what He will heal, or what He will ask you to leave behind. We certainly did not know everything God had planned when we first surrendered to Him.

But you do not need to know the entire plan before you take your next step. You only need to trust the One who is leading you.

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths."*

—Proverbs 3:5–6 NKJV

God directs the path of the surrendered person. My life is proof that your worst decisions do not have to become the final chapter of your story. When you place your life in the hands of Jesus, He can forgive what is behind you, transform what is within you, and lead you into a future you could never have created on your own.

| More Than a One-Time Decision

There is a specific moment when we place our faith in Jesus and receive His gift of salvation. But following Jesus does not end with that moment. In many ways, that is where the journey begins.

Jesus described following Him as a daily decision:

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

—Luke 9:23 NKJV

Every day, we choose to trust Jesus. Every day, we learn to surrender another part of our lives to Him. Every day, we have opportunities to listen to His voice, obey His Word, and become more like Him.

Some days, those steps will feel significant. You may experience a breakthrough, overcome an old habit, or understand something about God that changes your perspective. Other days, following Jesus may look very ordinary. It may mean spending a few quiet minutes in prayer, forgiving someone who hurt you, choosing honesty when dishonesty would be easier, or trusting God when you do not understand what He is doing.

Never underestimate the importance of those daily decisions. A strong relationship with God is built through consistent, everyday steps of faith.

You do not have to take every step today. You only need to take the next one.

| God Is Not Distant

One of the first things you need to understand about God is that He wants to be close to you.

James 4:7–8 says:

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

—James 4:7–8 NKJV

What an incredible promise: when you draw near to God, He draws near to you.

Perhaps you have always pictured God as distant. Maybe you imagined Him sitting far away, watching your life but remaining uninvolved. You might see Him as disappointed, angry, or waiting for you to make another mistake. You may have grown up hearing about God without ever realizing that you could personally know Him.

Sometimes our view of God is shaped by our relationships with people. If a parent was absent, you may struggle to believe that your heavenly Father will remain close. If someone you trusted hurt you, trusting God may not come naturally. If love always felt conditional, you may believe you have to perform perfectly to earn God’s acceptance.

But God is not like the people who have failed you.

He is faithful when others are unfaithful. He is present when others leave. He is patient with your questions and compassionate toward your weaknesses. He knows everything about you—including the parts of your story you may wish you could erase—and He still desires a relationship with you.

God did not begin loving you when you decided to follow Jesus. He loved you before you ever knew how to reach for Him.

Romans 5:8 tells us:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

—Romans 5:8 NKJV

Jesus did not wait for you to clean yourself up before He loved you. He came for you while you were still lost. The cross is not proof that you were too terrible to love; it is proof that God’s love was willing to go to the greatest possible length to rescue you.

| Jesus Removed What Separated You from God

Sin created a separation between humanity and God. Every one of us has sinned, and none of us could repair that separation through our own effort. We could not become religious enough, generous enough, or morally good enough to save ourselves.

That is why Jesus came.

Jesus lived the sinless life we could not live, died the death we deserved, and rose from the grave so that we could receive forgiveness and new life. When you placed your faith in Jesus, your sins were forgiven, your relationship with God was restored, and you became part of His family.

Ephesians 2:13 says:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

—Ephesians 2:13 NKJV

Notice those words: “brought near.”

Salvation is not merely God erasing a list of your mistakes. It is God bringing you close. Jesus did not die only so you could go to heaven someday. He died so you could know God, walk with Him, hear His voice through His Word, experience His presence, and live with Him today.

Christianity is not simply about knowing information about God. It is about knowing Him personally.

You can know facts about someone without having a relationship with that person. In the same way, you can know Bible stories, attend church, and be familiar with Christian language without truly walking closely with God. God desires something deeper. He wants you to talk with Him, trust Him, invite Him into your decisions, and learn to recognize His work in your life.

| You Can Come to God Honestly

You do not need impressive words to approach God. You do not have to hide your emotions or pretend that everything is fine. God already knows what is happening inside you, and He invites you to come honestly.

If you are grateful, tell Him. If you are afraid, tell Him. If you are confused, tell Him. If you are angry or disappointed, bring those emotions to Him too.

God is not intimidated by your questions or offended by your honesty. Throughout Scripture, we see people bringing their fear, grief, confusion, and frustration to God. They learned that faith does not require pretending. Faith means choosing to bring our real lives to a real God.

Hebrews 4:16 gives us this invitation:

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

—Hebrews 4:16 NKJV

Because of Jesus, you can come boldly to God. That does not mean coming arrogantly. It means coming confidently, knowing you are welcomed. You do not have to wonder whether God wants to hear

from you. You do not have to wait until you feel spiritual enough. You can come to Him in your moment of need and trust that you will find mercy and grace.

| Your Feelings Will Change, but God Will Not

There may be days when you strongly sense God's presence. Prayer may feel natural, Scripture may seem alive, and worship may deeply move you. Treasure those moments, but understand that your relationship with God cannot be built on feelings alone.

Other days, you may not feel anything unusual. You may pray and wonder whether God is listening. You may read the Bible and struggle to understand what you are reading. That does not mean God has left you or that your relationship with Him is failing.

Feelings change. God's character does not.

God is just as present on the quiet days as He is during powerful spiritual moments. Growing in faith means learning to trust what God has said, even when your emotions tell you something different.

God has promised:

"I will never leave you nor forsake you."

—Hebrews 13:5 NKJV

When you fail, God does not abandon you. When you struggle, He does not move farther away. When you have questions, He does not withdraw His love. He invites you to turn toward Him again.

The enemy may try to use shame to make you hide from God. Shame says, "You failed, so stay away." Grace says, "You fell, so come back to the Father."

When you sin, confess it to God, receive His forgiveness, and continue walking with Him. Spiritual growth is not the absence of struggle. It is learning where to turn when the struggle comes.

| Learning to Remain Close

In John 15, Jesus compared our relationship with Him to branches connected to a vine. A branch cannot produce fruit by trying harder. It produces fruit by remaining connected to its source of life.

Jesus said:

"Abide in Me, and I in you."

—John 15:4 NKJV

To abide means to remain, continue, and make your home somewhere. Jesus is inviting you to make your home in His presence.

You remain close to Him through prayer, Scripture, worship, obedience, and relationships with other believers. These practices do not earn God's love. They help you receive the love and life He has already made available to you.

Think about any healthy relationship. Closeness grows as people spend time together, communicate honestly, listen to each other, and build trust. Your relationship with God grows in similar ways. As you spend time with Him, you will learn more about His character. As you obey His Word, your trust in Him

will deepen. As you recognize His faithfulness, you will become more confident in bringing every part of your life to Him.

This takes time, and that is okay. Relationships grow through consistency, not perfection.

| How Do You See God?

The way you see God will shape the way you approach Him.

If you see God as distant, you will hesitate to pray. If you see Him as constantly disappointed, you will try to hide your failures. If you believe His love must be earned, you will exhaust yourself trying to prove that you are worthy.

But if you see God as the loving Father revealed through Jesus, you will learn to come to Him with confidence. You will begin to understand that correction is not rejection, conviction is not condemnation, and His desire is to restore you rather than push you away.

Take an honest look at the picture of God you have carried. Where did that picture come from? Was it shaped by Scripture, or was it shaped by painful experiences, religious pressure, or the failures of other people?

Ask God to help you see Him as He truly is.

He is holy, but He is also compassionate. He is powerful, but He is also personal. He is the Creator of the universe, yet He knows you by name. He cares about what you are walking through, what keeps you awake at night, what brings you joy, and what you are afraid to tell anyone else.

You are not an inconvenience to God. You are His child.

| Your Next Step

Set aside ten quiet minutes today. Find a place where you can be alone and remove as many distractions as possible. You do not need to create a perfect atmosphere. Simply turn your attention toward God.

Begin by saying, "God, thank You for loving me and bringing me close through Jesus."

Then talk to Him honestly about your life. Tell Him what you are thankful for, what you are worried about, and where you need His help. If you do not know what to say, start there: "God, I am still learning how to talk to You, but I want to know You."

After you pray, remain quiet for a moment. You do not have to force anything to happen. Simply rest in the truth that God is with you.

Consider writing down one thought, Scripture, question, or prayer from that time. This can become the beginning of a journal that helps you recognize how God is working in your life.

| Reflection Questions

1. When you think about God, what is the first picture or emotion that comes to mind?
2. Have you viewed God as close and loving, or distant and disappointed? What experiences may have shaped that view?
3. What area of your life have you been hesitant to bring to God?
4. How does knowing that Jesus has brought you near to God change the way you think about prayer?

5. What is one practical way you can draw near to God this week?

| Prayer Prompts

Take a few moments to complete these sentences in your own words:

“God, thank You for...”

“God, I need Your help with...”

“God, I have been afraid to tell You...”

“God, help me understand...”

“God, I want to know You more by...”

| Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for loving me before I ever knew how to love You. Thank You for sending Jesus to forgive my sins, bring me near, and give me a new life. Help me see You as You truly are—not as distant or disappointed, but as a loving Father who wants a relationship with me.

Teach me how to draw near to You each day. Help me talk to You honestly, trust You when I do not understand, and believe Your Word even when my feelings change. Heal any false or painful picture of You that I have carried. Remind me that I am forgiven, welcomed, and never alone.

I give You my past, my present, and my future. Help me take my next step and follow You with my whole heart.

In Jesus' name, amen.

| Remember This

God is not waiting for you to become perfect before He comes close. Through Jesus, He has already made a way for you to know Him.

You are not beginning a journey of trying to earn God's love. You are beginning a journey of learning to live from the love He has already given you.

As your pastor, I want you to know how proud I am of you for taking this step. I may not know every part of your story yet, but I know the same Jesus who changed my life can change yours. You do not have to have everything figured out, and you do not have to walk this journey alone.

At Vivid Church, we believe church is more than something you attend. It is a family where you can know God, find freedom, discover your purpose, and make a difference. Krissy, our Vivid Church family, and I are honored to walk alongside you as you begin this journey.

This is only the beginning—but take it from someone whose life was completely changed by surrendering to Jesus: it is a beautiful beginning.

Keep drawing near to God, one prayer, one decision, and one faithful step at a time.

—Pastor Joe



CHAPTER 02

The Holy Spirit

My wife is handy. No, I mean really handy. At our house, Krissy is the handyman—or maybe I should say the DIY woman. Give her Pinterest, YouTube University, and a project, and she will figure out how to fix it, build it, or make it look better.

I am not naturally wired that way. I have helped some friends with construction projects over the years, so I know my way around hand tools and power tools, but Krissy is usually the one taking on projects at our house.

One day, she was cutting a piece of wood for something she was working on. She was using a hand saw—the kind you move back and forth with your own strength. She was sweating, working hard, and making little to no progress.

I walked into the garage, pulled out our circular saw, plugged it in, and stepped in for the rescue. A few seconds later, the wood was cut.

The piece of wood was the same. The job was the same. The difference was power. What had been taking her far too long and costing her so much energy was finished in seconds because we were no longer relying on human strength alone. We had connected the right tool to a source of power.

Now, do not misunderstand the illustration: the Holy Spirit is not a tool, and He is not an impersonal power source we use to get what we want. He is a Person. He is God. We do not control Him; we know Him, love Him, listen to Him, and surrender to His leadership.

But the Holy Spirit is also powerful. As you grow closer to Him, talk with Him, and learn to recognize His voice, you will begin to see His power at work in your life. Things you once tried to force through your own strength can begin to change as you receive His wisdom, courage, strength, and help.

That does not mean every difficult thing will suddenly become quick or easy. It means you no longer have to exhaust yourself trying to live the Christian life alone. God is with you, God is working in you, and His power is available to help you do what you could never accomplish through willpower alone.

When many people think about God, they understand something about God the Father. They have heard about Jesus, the Son of God, who came to earth, died on the cross, and rose again.

But when the Holy Spirit is mentioned, things may feel less familiar.

Some people think of the Holy Spirit as a mysterious force, a strong emotion, or an experience that happens during worship. Others have seen people behave strangely in the name of the Holy Spirit, so they have become cautious or uncomfortable with the subject.

If that describes you, you are not alone.

The Holy Spirit may be the person of God you currently understand the least, but He is absolutely essential to your relationship with God.

The Holy Spirit is not an “it.”

He is not a vague spiritual energy.

He is not merely a feeling, atmosphere, or emotional experience.

The Holy Spirit is God, and He is personal.

He speaks, teaches, leads, comforts, convicts, and empowers. He knows you, loves you, and desires to be involved in every part of your life.

You were never meant to follow Jesus through your own strength. God has given you the Holy Spirit so you can know Him, become like Him, and accomplish what He has called you to do.

| One God in Three Persons

Christians believe in one God who eternally exists as three distinct persons:

God the Father.

God the Son—Jesus Christ.

God the Holy Spirit.

The Father is God.

Jesus is God.

The Holy Spirit is God.

They are distinct from one another, but they are not three separate gods. There is one God.

This is what Christians mean when they use the word Trinity.

The word Trinity does not appear in the Bible, but it describes a truth revealed throughout Scripture. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each revealed as God, while Scripture consistently teaches that there is only one God.

Jesus spoke about all three when He commanded His followers:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

—Matthew 28:19 NKJV

Notice that Jesus said “name,” not “names.” The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons who share the one divine name and nature.

The Trinity can be difficult to understand completely. That should not surprise us. If God could be fully explained by a simple illustration, He would not be much of a God.

One picture that may help us begin thinking about it is the sun.

There is the sun itself. We might think of that as representing the Father.

There is the light that comes from it. Jesus described Himself as the Light of the World, so the light can remind us of the Son.

Then there is the heat we experience. We cannot see heat in the same way we see the sun, but we recognize its presence and experience its effects. That can remind us of how the Holy Spirit makes the presence and power of God known in our lives.

The sun, its light, and its heat are distinguishable, but they are inseparably connected.

No illustration can explain God perfectly, and every comparison eventually falls short. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not merely three different parts of God or three different ways God sometimes appears. They are three distinct, eternal persons who are fully and equally God.

You do not need to understand every mystery of the Trinity before you can have a relationship with God. What matters most at this point is recognizing that the Holy Spirit is not less important, less personal, or less divine than the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is God, and He wants you to know Him.

| Jesus Promised the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus went to the cross, He prepared His disciples for His departure.

For approximately three years, they had walked with Jesus physically. They listened to His teaching, watched Him perform miracles, asked Him questions, ate meals with Him, and traveled from place to place with Him.

The thought of continuing without His physical presence must have been frightening.

But Jesus told them something surprising:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.”

—John 16:7 NKJV

Jesus said it would be better for Him to go away because the Holy Spirit would come.

He was not saying the disciples would no longer need Him. He was explaining that His physical presence beside them would be replaced by the Holy Spirit's presence within them.

Jesus would no longer be physically limited to one location. Through the Holy Spirit, God would live within every believer, in every nation, at every moment.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Helper.

Other translations use words such as Advocate, Counselor, and Comforter. Each of these names helps us understand something about how the Holy Spirit works.

He helps us when we are weak.

He comforts us when we are hurting.

He counsels us when we need wisdom.

He advocates for us and reminds us that we belong to God.

He teaches us what is true and helps us remember the words of Jesus.

Jesus said:

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things."

—John 14:26 NKJV

Jesus was not abandoning His disciples.

He was giving them the Holy Spirit, who would continue His work in them and through them.

That promise was not only for the first disciples. It is for every person who places their faith in Jesus.

| The Holy Spirit Lives Within You

When you place your faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live within you.

You do not have to earn His presence by becoming spiritual enough. You do not receive Him because you prayed perfectly, understood everything about God, or proved that you could live without making mistakes.

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to every believer.

The apostle Paul wrote:

"Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God."

—1 Corinthians 6:19 NKJV

In the Old Testament, God's presence was associated with the tabernacle and later the temple. People traveled to a particular location to worship, and only certain priests were permitted to enter the most sacred spaces.

Because of Jesus, everything changed.

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom. The barrier separating people from the presence of God was removed. Through faith in Jesus, your sins are forgiven, you are made clean, and the Holy Spirit makes His home within you.

You have become a temple of God's presence.

That means God is not only with you when you are inside a church building. He is with you at home, at work, in your car, at school, at the gym, and in every ordinary moment of your life.

You do not leave the presence of God when the worship music stops.

The Holy Spirit goes with you.

When you feel strong, He is with you.

When you feel weak, He is with you.

When you understand what God is doing, He is with you.

When you feel confused, He is still with you.

Your feelings may change from one day to another, but His presence is not dependent upon your emotions.

You are never alone.

| What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

The Holy Spirit is involved in every part of your life with Jesus.

He first helps you recognize your need for salvation. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Conviction is different from condemnation.

Condemnation says, "You are hopeless. God wants nothing to do with you. You might as well hide."

Conviction says, "This is not God's best for you. Bring it into the light, receive forgiveness, and allow God to change you."

Condemnation pushes you away from God. Conviction draws you toward repentance and restoration.

The Holy Spirit reveals what needs to change, but He does not expose it so He can humiliate you. He exposes what is harming you so He can heal and transform you.

He also helps you understand the Bible. The same Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture lives within you and helps you recognize its truth.

That does not mean every passage will immediately become easy to understand. You will still need to read Scripture in context, ask questions, and learn from mature believers. But you are not reading the Bible alone. The Holy Spirit can illuminate the words, show you how they apply, and bring them back to your mind when you need them.

He gives wisdom when you are making decisions.

He brings peace in the middle of anxiety.

He comforts you when you are grieving.

He strengthens you when you are tempted.

He helps you pray when you do not know what to say.

He corrects you when your attitude or behavior does not reflect Jesus.

He reminds you of your identity when shame tries to define you.

He empowers you to love people you could never love through your own strength.

The Holy Spirit is not interested in visiting only the spiritual parts of your life. He desires access to everything—your thoughts, relationships, words, habits, finances, work, sexuality, plans, pain, and future.

There is no part of your life in which His presence is unnecessary.

| Learning to Recognize His Voice

One of the most common questions new believers ask is, “How do I know when the Holy Spirit is speaking to me?”

That is an important question.

Jesus said:

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

—John 10:27 NKJV

God wants to lead you. He is not playing a game in which He hides His will and then punishes you for failing to discover it.

However, recognizing His voice is something you learn as your relationship with Him grows.

Think about someone you know well. If that person called you from an unfamiliar number and began speaking, you might recognize their voice before they told you their name.

You recognize their voice because you have spent time with them.

You know their tone, personality, values, and the kinds of things they would or would not say.

Learning to recognize the Holy Spirit's voice happens in a similar way. The more time you spend praying, worshiping, reading Scripture, and obeying God, the more familiar His voice becomes.

The Holy Spirit may lead you in different ways.

A Scripture may come to mind at exactly the moment you need it.

You may sense a quiet conviction about something you said or did.

You may feel prompted to encourage someone, pray for someone, give generously, apologize, forgive, or take a step of faith.

You may experience peace about a difficult decision or an unsettled feeling warning you to slow down and seek wisdom.

God may also use mature believers, pastors, circumstances, or spiritual gifts to provide direction and confirmation.

But every impression must be tested.

Not every thought that enters your mind comes from the Holy Spirit. Some thoughts come from your own desires, fears, past experiences, or emotions. Some ideas are influenced by the culture around you. We should remain open to God without becoming careless about claiming that every feeling is His voice.

You do not need to say, “God told me,” every time you have an idea.

Sometimes it is wiser to say, “I believe the Holy Spirit may be leading me,” and then continue praying, testing, and seeking confirmation.

Humility protects us from confusing our preferences with God's direction.

| Test Everything by Scripture

The first and most important test for anything you believe the Holy Spirit is saying is the Bible.

The Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word of God because He is the One who inspired it.

He will never lead you to lie, manipulate, seek revenge, embrace sexual immorality, feed your pride, abandon your responsibilities, or participate in something Scripture identifies as sin.

He will not tell you that disobedience is acceptable simply because it feels peaceful.

Feelings are real, but feelings are not always reliable.

You may feel relieved after avoiding a difficult conversation, but that does not necessarily mean avoidance was God's direction. You may feel excited about an opportunity, but excitement alone does not prove that it is God's will. You may feel justified in holding onto bitterness, but God's Word still calls you to forgive.

The Holy Spirit does not rewrite Scripture to accommodate our desires. He uses Scripture to reshape our desires.

That is why reading the Bible is foundational to recognizing His voice.

You cannot confidently recognize what sounds like God if you are unfamiliar with what God has already said.

The more God's Word fills your heart, the more quickly you will recognize thoughts that do not reflect His character.

When you sense that God may be speaking, ask:

Does this agree with Scripture?

Does this reflect the character of Jesus?

Will this produce spiritual fruit?

Have mature believers confirmed it?

Am I willing to obey if the answer is different from what I want?

If what you are sensing clearly contradicts Scripture, you do not need further confirmation. It is not the Holy Spirit.

| Look at the Fruit

Another way to recognize the Holy Spirit's activity is by examining the fruit being produced in your life.

Galatians 5:22–23 says:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

—Galatians 5:22–23 NKJV

Notice that Scripture calls this the fruit of the Spirit, not the fruit of human effort.

An apple tree does not strain until apples appear. It produces fruit because it is alive, rooted, and receiving what it needs.

In the same way, spiritual fruit grows as you remain connected to Jesus and surrender to the Holy Spirit.

Over time, you should begin becoming more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled.

This does not mean you will display every quality perfectly. Fruit grows gradually. God may be working in one area of your character while revealing another area that still needs attention.

The question is not, "Am I perfect?"

The question is, "Am I becoming more like Jesus?"

You may still become impatient, but are you quicker to recognize it and apologize?

You may still feel anger, but are you learning to respond without allowing anger to control you?

You may still experience temptation, but are you becoming stronger in saying no?

You may still struggle to forgive, but are you willing to surrender your pain to God and take steps toward freedom?

These are signs that the Holy Spirit is working within you.

Spiritual experiences can be meaningful, but experiences alone are not the clearest evidence of spiritual maturity.

A person may speak loudly about spiritual gifts and still treat people harshly. Someone may have emotional moments in worship but remain unwilling to forgive, serve, or live with integrity.

The clearest evidence that the Holy Spirit is transforming you is not how spiritual you appear during a church service. It is whether your everyday life is becoming more like Jesus.

| The Holy Spirit Will Challenge You

The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, but that does not mean He will always make you comfortable.

Sometimes He will comfort you in your pain. At other times, He will challenge the attitudes and behaviors keeping you from becoming more like Jesus.

He may ask you to forgive someone when you would rather remain angry.

He may prompt you to apologize when your pride wants to defend itself.

He may reveal that a relationship is pulling you away from God.

He may challenge how you spend your money or use your time.

He may ask you to show generosity when you feel afraid that you will not have enough.

He may lead you to serve when it would be easier to remain comfortable.

He may ask you to share your faith, pray for someone, or take a step that feels beyond your ability.

The Holy Spirit will often lead you beyond what is comfortable, but He will never lead you outside what is biblical.

His correction is an expression of His love.

A good parent does not ignore behavior that is harming a child. In the same way, the Holy Spirit loves you too much to leave you trapped in the habits, lies, and wounds that Jesus came to free you from.

When He convicts you, respond quickly.

Do not argue, hide, or make excuses. Bring the issue into the light and pray, "Holy Spirit, thank You for showing me this. Forgive me and help me change."

Conviction is not evidence that God has abandoned you. It is often evidence that He is actively working within you.

| Abiding Over Striving

At Vivid Church, one of our values is Abiding over striving.

Striving says, "I have to change myself. I have to prove that I am good enough. I have to work harder so God will accept me."

Abiding says, "Jesus has already accepted me by grace. I will stay close to Him and allow His Spirit to transform me."

Jesus used the picture of a vine and branches. He said:

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself...neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

—John 15:4 NKJV

A branch cannot produce fruit after being disconnected from the vine.

In the same way, you cannot produce the life of Jesus through willpower alone. You may be able to change certain behaviors temporarily, but lasting spiritual transformation comes from remaining connected to Him.

Abiding means making room for God in your everyday life.

It means praying even when you do not have perfect words.

It means reading Scripture so your mind can be renewed.

It means worshiping when you feel close to God and when you do not.

It means responding when the Holy Spirit convicts you.

It means depending upon His strength instead of pretending you have enough strength of your own.

Spiritual disciplines are not a way to earn God's love. They are ways of remaining aware of and responsive to the love He has already given you.

You do not obey so God will accept you.

You obey because, through Jesus, He has accepted you and given you the Holy Spirit to help you live differently.

| The Holy Spirit Gives You Power

The Holy Spirit does not only change your character. He also gives you power to continue the mission of Jesus.

Before returning to heaven, Jesus told His disciples:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me."

—Acts 1:8 NKJV

The disciples had watched Jesus minister, but observation was not enough. They needed the power of the Holy Spirit to do what He was calling them to do.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled them, and ordinary people began speaking boldly about Jesus. The same Peter who had denied knowing Jesus became courageous enough to preach publicly. Thousands responded to the gospel.

The Holy Spirit transformed fearful people into faithful witnesses.

You need that same power.

God has not called you only to attend church and become a nicer person. He has called you to represent Jesus, love people, pray boldly, serve faithfully, share the gospel, and make a difference.

You cannot accomplish that mission through talent or personality alone.

The Holy Spirit empowers you to do what you could never do through your own ability.

He may give you courage to speak when you would normally remain silent.

He may give you compassion for someone you would normally overlook.

He may give you wisdom beyond your experience.

He may strengthen you to remain faithful in a difficult season.

He may work through you to bring encouragement, healing, freedom, or direction to someone else.

God does not only want to work in you. He also wants to work through you.

| The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to believers so we can serve others and build up the church.

First Corinthians 12 describes gifts such as words of wisdom, words of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

Other passages identify gifts such as serving, teaching, encouragement, generosity, leadership, and mercy.

These gifts are not trophies that prove someone is more spiritual than others. They are tools God gives us to help people.

A hammer does not receive the glory for building a house. The builder does.

In the same way, when the Holy Spirit works through us, we do not receive the glory. Jesus does.

Every believer has a part to play.

You may not preach from a stage, but the Holy Spirit can still use your life powerfully. He may use you to encourage someone who is ready to quit, recognize a need no one else noticed, pray with faith for someone who is hurting, teach a child, welcome a new family, lead with wisdom, or serve in a way that changes someone's experience.

Do not compare your gift with someone else's.

The goal is not to have the most visible gift. The goal is to be faithful with what the Holy Spirit has given you.

At Vivid Church, Starting Point is one of the ways we help people discover how God has designed them and where their gifts can make a difference.

Your gift is not only for you.

God wants to use it for the common good.

| Being Filled With the Holy Spirit

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit comes to live within us when we place our faith in Jesus. Scripture also teaches that believers should continually be filled with the Spirit.

Paul wrote:

"Be filled with the Spirit."

—Ephesians 5:18 NKJV

Being filled with the Holy Spirit means surrendering more fully to His influence and allowing Him to empower every area of your life.

This is not about receiving more of the Holy Spirit as though He arrived in incomplete portions. It is about the Holy Spirit receiving more of you.

You can have the Holy Spirit living within you while still resisting His direction. You can ignore His conviction, fill your mind with things that dull your spiritual sensitivity, and attempt to control every part of your life yourself.

Being filled begins with surrender.

You can pray, "Holy Spirit, fill me. I give You my thoughts, words, plans, desires, relationships, and future. Empower me to become like Jesus and do what He has called me to do."

At times, God may meet you in a powerful or emotional way. You may sense His presence deeply, begin weeping, experience overwhelming peace, or receive a spiritual gift.

At other times, His work may feel quiet. You may simply receive the strength to make one obedient decision.

Do not measure the reality of the Holy Spirit only by the intensity of an emotional experience.

Emotions can accompany His presence, but the Holy Spirit is present even when you do not feel something dramatic.

Remain open to everything God wants to do, while keeping your faith grounded in Scripture and your attention focused on Jesus.

| Do Not Grieve or Resist Him

Because the Holy Spirit is personal, Scripture teaches that He can be grieved.

Paul wrote:

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.”

—Ephesians 4:30 NKJV

We grieve the Holy Spirit when we knowingly hold onto sin, ignore His conviction, speak destructively, remain bitter, or resist what He is asking us to do.

This does not mean the Holy Spirit immediately abandons you every time you make a mistake. It means your choices affect your closeness and responsiveness to Him.

If you repeatedly ignore His voice, your heart can become less sensitive.

The first time you sense conviction about something, it may feel strong. If you continue making excuses, the conviction may become easier to dismiss—not because God approves, but because you have practiced ignoring Him.

That is why quick obedience matters.

When the Holy Spirit prompts you to apologize, apologize.

When He reveals sin, confess it.

When He tells you to forgive, begin taking steps toward forgiveness.

When He prompts you to encourage someone, do not assume you can always do it later.

Sensitivity grows through obedience.

The more consistently you respond to the Holy Spirit, the more clearly you will learn to recognize His leadership.

| What If I Do Not Feel Him?

There will be moments when you strongly sense God's presence. There may also be seasons when you do not feel much at all.

Do not assume that a lack of emotion means a lack of presence.

The Holy Spirit's work is often quiet and steady.

You may notice it when you respond with patience in a situation that once would have made you angry.

You may recognize it when an old temptation no longer has the same control over you.

You may see it when you suddenly remember a Scripture in a difficult moment.

You may experience it as strength to keep trusting God during grief, disappointment, or uncertainty.

You may not feel dramatic power, but you recognize that you are not the person you used to be.

That is the work of the Holy Spirit.

If God feels distant, continue praying, reading Scripture, worshiping, gathering with the church, and obeying what you already know.

Ask Him to examine your heart. If there is sin you need to confess, bring it into the light. But do not invent condemnation simply because you are going through a quiet season.

Faith is not pretending to feel something you do not feel. Faith is trusting God's character and promises even when your emotions are quiet.

The Holy Spirit is faithful.

| Invite Him Into Every Part of Your Life

The Holy Spirit is already present within every believer, but you must continually welcome His leadership.

You can begin each day with a simple prayer:

"Holy Spirit, fill me today. Help me recognize Your voice. Teach me what is true. Show me anything in my life that needs to change. Give me the strength to follow Jesus, and use me to help someone today."

Then make room to listen.

Do not rush through every prayer with constant talking. Spend a few moments quietly surrendering your thoughts to God.

You may remember a Scripture.

You may recognize an attitude that needs to change.

You may think of someone who needs encouragement.

You may sense direction about a decision.

You may not sense anything specific at all.

Do not force an experience or overcomplicate the moment. Your responsibility is to remain available, grounded in Scripture, and willing to obey.

As you move through your day, continue the conversation.

Before a meeting, pray, “Holy Spirit, give me wisdom.”

When you feel tempted, pray, “Holy Spirit, give me strength.”

When someone is hurting, pray, “Holy Spirit, show me how to love them.”

When you make a mistake, pray, “Holy Spirit, help me respond with humility.”

When you need to make a decision, pray, “Holy Spirit, guide me in truth.”

Following the Holy Spirit is not limited to special moments inside a church service. It is a daily relationship.

He wants to walk with you through ordinary life.

| Your Next Step: Surrender and Listen

Your next step today is to intentionally surrender your day to the Holy Spirit.

Find a quiet place and remove distractions for a few minutes.

Begin by thanking Jesus for giving you the Holy Spirit.

Then pray:

“Holy Spirit, I acknowledge that You are God and that You live within me. I surrender every area of my life to You. Help me recognize Your voice, understand God’s Word, and become more like Jesus. Show me anything I need to confess or change. Fill me with Your power and use my life to make a difference.”

After you pray, remain quiet for a moment.

If a Scripture, person, decision, or area of your life comes to mind, write it down. Compare it with Scripture and ask God what your obedient response should be.

Perhaps you need to apologize to someone.

Maybe you need to forgive.

You may need to remove something that has been pulling you away from God.

You may feel prompted to encourage, serve, give, or pray for someone.

The next step may not feel dramatic. It may be one simple act of obedience.

Take that step.

The goal is not merely to hear the Holy Spirit. The goal is to follow where He leads.

| Reflection Questions

1. Before reading this chapter, how did you think about the Holy Spirit?
2. Have you thought of the Holy Spirit primarily as a person, a force, a feeling, or an experience?

3. How does knowing that the Holy Spirit lives within you change the way you view your everyday life?
4. In what areas have you recently experienced conviction rather than condemnation?
5. What helps you recognize whether a thought or impression agrees with Scripture?
6. Which fruit of the Spirit do you see growing in your life?
7. Which fruit of the Spirit do you most need the Holy Spirit to develop in you?
8. Is there an area of your life in which you have been resisting His leadership?
9. Has the Holy Spirit recently prompted you to forgive, apologize, encourage, serve, give, or take another step of obedience?
10. How could God use your gifts to serve someone else?
11. What would abiding over striving look like in your current season?
12. What is one practical way you can make room to listen to the Holy Spirit each day?

| Prayer Prompts

Take a few quiet moments and complete these prayers in your own words:

"Holy Spirit, thank You for being with me when..."

"Holy Spirit, help me recognize Your voice concerning..."

"Holy Spirit, show me anything that needs to change in..."

"Holy Spirit, help me understand what God says about..."

"Holy Spirit, produce more of this fruit in me..."

"Holy Spirit, give me strength to resist..."

"Holy Spirit, give me courage to obey You by..."

"Holy Spirit, show me how You want to use my gifts to..."

"Holy Spirit, fill and empower me for..."

"Jesus, help me abide in You instead of striving to..."

| Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for loving me and sending Jesus to save me. Thank You that You have not left me to follow Jesus through my own strength. Thank You for giving me the Holy Spirit to live within me, guide me, teach me, comfort me, correct me, and empower me.

Holy Spirit, I welcome Your leadership in every part of my life. Help me understand that You are not merely a force, feeling, or experience. You are God, and You are personal. Teach me to know Your voice and respond when You speak.

Help me remain grounded in Scripture. Protect me from confusing my feelings and desires with Your direction. Give me humility to test what I sense, receive wise counsel, and obey God's Word even when it challenges what I want.

Produce the character of Jesus in me. Grow love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in my life. Show me where my attitudes, words, habits, and relationships need to change.

Forgive me for the times I have ignored Your conviction or resisted Your leadership. Make my heart sensitive again. When You prompt me to forgive, apologize, serve, give, encourage, or take a step of faith, give me the courage to respond quickly.

Fill me with Your power. Use the gifts You have placed within me to serve people and build Your church. Help me remember that the gifts are not for my glory. Everything You do in me and through me is meant to point people toward Jesus.

Teach me to abide instead of strive. Help me remain close to Jesus and depend upon Your strength. Walk with me through every ordinary moment, every difficult decision, every temptation, and every opportunity.

My life belongs to You. Fill me, lead me, change me, and use me.

In Jesus' name, amen.

| Remember This

The Holy Spirit is not an "it."

He is not a vague force, emotional atmosphere, or mysterious spiritual energy.

The Holy Spirit is God, and He is personal.

When you place your faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live within you. He teaches you, comforts you, convicts you, guides you, strengthens you, and helps you become more like Jesus.

You are never alone.

Learning to recognize His voice takes time. Remain close to Jesus, become familiar with Scripture, examine the fruit being produced, receive wisdom from mature believers, and respond when He prompts you to obey.

The Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word of God. He may lead you beyond what feels comfortable, but He will never lead you outside what is biblical.

You do not have to transform your life through willpower. At Vivid Church, we choose abiding over striving because lasting transformation comes from remaining connected to Jesus and surrendering to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit also wants to work through you. He gives you gifts, courage, wisdom, and power so you can love people, serve the church, share the gospel, and make a difference.

Do not compare your gift with someone else's. Do not wait until you feel impressive or completely prepared. Make yourself available to God.

Begin each day with a simple invitation:

"Holy Spirit, fill me, lead me, change me, and use me today."

Then listen, trust, and obey.

You were never meant to follow Jesus in your own strength.

The Holy Spirit lives within you, walks with you, and empowers you to become the person God created you to be.

—Pastor Joe



CHAPTER 03

How to Read the Bible

There are moments in life when we wish someone would simply tell us what to do.

We face questions about relationships, finances, parenting, our future, and the decisions in front of us. We wonder which direction to take, whom to trust, and how to respond when life does not go according to plan.

Sometimes, we wish life came with an instruction manual—something that could give us wisdom when we feel confused, direction when we feel lost, and encouragement when we are ready to give up.

Here is the good news: God has given us His Word.

The Bible is not merely an old book filled with religious rules and historical stories. It is the inspired Word of God. Through Scripture, God reveals who He is, shows us who we are, and teaches us how to live.

The Bible helps us understand God's character, recognize His voice, receive His promises, and build our lives on truth. It corrects us when we are heading in the wrong direction, comforts us when we are hurting, and gives us wisdom when we do not know what to do next.

Hebrews 4:12 says:

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."

—Hebrews 4:12 NKJV

God's Word is living and powerful.

That means the Bible is not simply something we study to collect information. God uses His Word to transform us. You can read a passage you have heard many times, but suddenly it speaks directly to something you are walking through. A verse can give you wisdom, encouragement, conviction, or direction at the exact moment you need it.

The words have not changed, but God uses them to change us.

| More Than an Ordinary Book

The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books written by many different human authors over a long period of history. Those authors lived in different places, held different occupations, and wrote in different circumstances. Yet together, their writings tell one unified story.

Each of those human authors was inspired by the Holy Spirit. God worked through their unique personalities and experiences while guiding them to write the message He intended.

It is the story of a holy and loving God pursuing broken humanity.

The Bible begins with creation, shows us how sin entered the world, and reveals God's plan to rescue and restore us. Throughout the Old Testament, we see God preparing the way for Jesus. In the New Testament, we see Jesus arrive, give His life for our sins, rise from the grave, and establish His church. The Bible ends with the promise that Jesus will return and make all things new.

Jesus is not a minor character who appears halfway through the story. He is at the center of the entire story.

When you understand that, the Bible begins to fit together. The Old Testament points toward Jesus. The Gospels reveal His life and ministry. Acts shows the beginning of the church. The letters teach believers how to follow Jesus together. Revelation points toward His final victory.

Every book has its own setting and purpose, but together they reveal God's plan of redemption.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 says:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

—2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV

Scripture teaches us what is true. It reveals where our thinking or behavior has moved away from God. It corrects our direction and trains us to live in a way that honors Him.

The Bible does not merely inform us. It forms us.

| Bible Over Opinion

At Vivid Church, one of our values is Bible over opinion.

We live in a culture filled with competing voices. Everyone has an opinion about what is true, what is right, what will make us happy, and how we should live. We hear those opinions from social media, entertainment, friends, family, influencers, political leaders, and even our own feelings.

Some of those voices may contain wisdom, but none of them has the authority of God's Word.

Culture changes. Feelings change. Popular opinions change. God's truth does not.

Jesus said:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

—Matthew 24:35 NKJV

Choosing Bible over opinion means we allow Scripture to have the final word in our lives. We do not rewrite the Bible to fit our preferences. We allow the Bible to reshape our preferences.

That will not always feel comfortable.

There will be times when Scripture confirms what you already believe, but there will also be times when it confronts you. You may read something that challenges the way you have been living, exposes an unhealthy attitude, or calls you to forgive someone you would rather avoid.

That discomfort is not proof that the Bible is harmful or outdated. Sometimes it is evidence that God is lovingly correcting us.

A doctor may need to identify what is wrong before healing can begin. In the same way, God's Word reveals what is happening within us—not to condemn us, but to heal and transform us.

When Scripture confronts an attitude or decision in your life, resist the urge to argue with it or explain it away. Pause and ask, "God, what are You showing me? What needs to change in me?"

Following Jesus means trusting that His wisdom is greater than ours.

| Recognizing the Voice of God

One of the most common questions people ask is, "How do I know if God is speaking to me?"

Here is something I want you to remember:

The best way to learn to recognize the voice of God is to become familiar with the Word of God.

God will never tell you to do something that contradicts what He has already revealed in Scripture. He will not lead you toward dishonesty, bitterness, sexual immorality, pride, revenge, or anything else His Word calls sin.

Sometimes people say, "I feel like God told me," when what they really mean is, "This is what I want to do." That is why our feelings must be tested by Scripture.

Our feelings are real, but they are not always reliable.

You may feel justified in holding onto bitterness, but Scripture calls you to forgive. You may feel as though telling a lie would make life easier, but Scripture calls you to walk in truth. You may feel that you are alone and forgotten, but Scripture says God will never leave you nor forsake you.

When your feelings and God's Word disagree, build your life on God's Word.

Psalm 119:105 says:

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path."*

—Psalm 119:105 NKJV

A lamp does not always show you the entire journey. It gives you enough light to take your next step.

You may want God to reveal everything about your future at once. You may want to know what will happen next year, how every problem will be resolved, and where every decision will lead. Most of the time, God does not show us the entire road. He gives us the truth we need to obey Him today.

The Bible may not answer every specific question by name, but it gives us the wisdom and principles needed to make decisions that honor God.

| What If the Bible Feels Overwhelming?

If you have never consistently read the Bible, beginning can feel intimidating.

The Bible is a large book. It contains names that are difficult to pronounce, cultures that may seem unfamiliar, and passages you may not immediately understand. You might open to a random page, become confused, and wonder whether you are doing something wrong.

You are not doing anything wrong. You are learning.

You do not need to understand the entire Bible before you begin reading it. You just need to start.

Think about learning any important skill. You do not master it on the first day. You become familiar with it through consistent practice. The same is true of Scripture. As you continue reading, you will begin recognizing names, themes, and connections that you did not notice before.

Do not become discouraged by what you do not understand. Focus first on what you can understand.

If you read only a few verses and one truth stands out to you, take that truth with you. Ask God to help you live it. One small section understood and obeyed can make a greater difference than several chapters read and immediately forgotten.

You are not in a race, and you are not being graded.

The goal is not merely to finish a reading plan. The goal is to know God and allow His truth to shape your life.

| Where Should You Begin?

The Bible is not arranged in chronological order, and you do not have to begin with Genesis and read straight through to Revelation.

If you are just beginning to follow Jesus, I recommend starting with one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

The Gospels tell us about the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Each Gospel presents the true story of Jesus from a particular perspective and helps us understand who He is.

I especially recommend beginning with the Gospel of John. John clearly shows us the identity of Jesus, the love of God, and what it means to believe and receive eternal life.

Begin with a small section—a few verses at a time. A chapter is one of the larger numbered divisions within a book of the Bible. A verse is one of the smaller numbered sentences or portions inside that chapter. For example, John 3:16 means the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16.

You do not have to finish an entire chapter every day. Read slowly until something stands out to you. Maybe it is one word. Maybe it is a sentence within a paragraph. Maybe it is a story that helps you see Jesus differently. When something captures your attention, pause there. Read it again, think about it, and ask God what He wants to show you through it.

The goal is not to cover the most pages. The goal is to notice what God is revealing and allow His Word to take root in your life.

After John, you could read the Gospel of Mark, which gives a fast-moving account of the ministry of Jesus. You could then read Acts to learn how the Holy Spirit empowered the first believers and how the early church began.

Psalms and Proverbs are also helpful books to read regularly. Psalms will teach you how to bring your emotions honestly before God. Proverbs provides practical wisdom for decisions, relationships, words, work, money, and everyday life.

| A Simple Way to Read the Bible

You do not need an advanced Bible degree to receive something meaningful from Scripture. Begin with a simple process.

Before you read, pause and pray:

“God, open my heart. Help me understand Your Word and show me what You want me to see today.”

After reading, ask three questions:

1. What does this teach me about God?

Look for what the passage reveals about God’s character, His promises, His priorities, or His actions.

Does it show that God is faithful, holy, patient, powerful, compassionate, or just? Does it reveal something Jesus said or did? Is there a promise God wants you to trust?

The Bible is first a revelation of God. Before asking what a passage says about you, ask what it shows you about Him.

2. What does this teach me about myself?

Pay attention to what the passage reveals about the human heart.

Is there an attitude you recognize in yourself? Is there a sin to confess, a lie you have believed, or a behavior that needs to change? Is there an example you should follow or a warning you should take seriously?

Allow Scripture to become a mirror.

James 1:22 says:

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

—James 1:22 NKJV

God does not want us merely to hear His Word. He wants us to respond to it.

3. What is one thing I can apply today?

Try to make your response specific.

Instead of writing, “I need to be more loving,” you might write, “Today I will call the person I have been avoiding and ask how they are doing.”

Instead of writing, “I should trust God,” you might write, “I will pray about this decision before allowing fear to control me.”

Instead of writing, “I need to forgive,” you might write, “I will stop rehearsing what that person did and begin praying for God to heal my heart.”

Bible reading becomes powerful when truth moves from the page into your life.

Read it. Understand it. Apply it.

| Read Scripture in Context

One of the most important habits you can develop is learning to read every verse in its context.

A single sentence can be misunderstood when it is removed from the conversation surrounding it. The same thing can happen with the Bible.

It can be tempting to open the Bible randomly, point to a verse, and assume that sentence is God's specific direction for your situation. God can certainly use a verse to encourage you, but we must be careful not to force Scripture to say something it was never intended to say.

When you read a passage, ask:

Who wrote this?

Who was the original audience?

What was happening when it was written?

What comes before and after this verse?

What point is the author making?

You do not have to answer every question perfectly, but asking them will help you read more responsibly.

For example, Jeremiah 29:11 is a beloved verse about God's plans for His people. It is encouraging and reveals something true about God's faithfulness. However, it was originally spoken to people living in exile who would have to wait many years before returning home.

Understanding that setting makes the promise deeper, not weaker. God was not promising them an easy life or immediate relief. He was assuring them that even in a long and painful season, He had not abandoned His purpose for them.

Context protects us from turning the Bible into a collection of inspirational sayings. It helps us understand what God actually communicated and how that truth applies to us today.

| Choosing a Bible Translation

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Bible translations allow us to read those ancient writings in our own language.

Some translations stay very close to the wording and sentence structure of the original languages. Others focus on communicating the meaning in language that feels more natural to modern readers.

At Vivid Church, we use translations that are trustworthy and understandable.

The New King James Version is a reliable translation that preserves much of the familiar language of the King James Version while updating older words and grammar. The English Standard Version is another more word-for-word translation that stays close to the structure of the original languages. The

New Living Translation communicates the meaning of Scripture in clear language that is often easier for a new believer to understand.

The best Bible translation for daily reading is a trustworthy translation you can understand and will consistently read.

You may also find it helpful to compare translations when a passage is difficult. Reading the same verse in two or three reliable translations can help you understand its meaning more clearly.

Be careful, however, not to keep searching until you find a translation that makes the verse say what you want it to say. The purpose of comparing translations is to understand God's Word more accurately—not to avoid a truth that challenges us.

| Using Bible Resources Wisely

You are not expected to understand every passage without help.

Pastors, teachers, study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, and commentaries can help explain the historical background and meaning of difficult passages. The Bible App also provides reading plans that can help you develop a consistent habit.

A resource I often recommend is Enduring Word. Its commentary can help you understand the background, structure, and message of a passage in accessible language.

Ten-Minute Bible Studies with Pastor Joe

I have also recorded a series of ten-minute Bible studies that walk through books of the Bible and make them easier to understand. These videos can help you see the background, message, and major themes before or while you read a book for yourself.

[Watch Pastor Joe's Bible studies on YouTube](#)

These resources are valuable, but they should support your reading of the Bible, not replace it.

Do not become dependent on another person telling you what every verse means before you have taken time to read and think about it yourself. Begin with Scripture. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand it. Observe what the passage says. Then use trustworthy resources to deepen your understanding or answer questions.

You should also test every teaching against Scripture—even teachings from people you respect.

The believers in Berea were commended because they received the message eagerly and then searched the Scriptures to determine whether what they had heard was true.

You do not honor a pastor or teacher by accepting everything without examination. Faithful teachers want you to know the Bible well enough to recognize truth for yourself.

At Vivid Church, we do not want you to build your faith entirely on what you hear from a platform. We want Sunday teaching to inspire you to open the Bible throughout the week and discover God's truth in your own time with Him.

| When You Read Something Difficult

At some point, you will encounter a passage you do not understand or one that raises difficult questions.

Do not panic, and do not assume that your questions mean you lack faith.

God is not threatened by your questions. Honest questions can lead you into deeper understanding when you bring them to God with humility.

When a passage confuses you, write down your question. Continue reading the surrounding chapters. Compare trustworthy translations. Look at a reliable commentary or study Bible. Ask a pastor, small-group leader, or mature believer to help you understand.

Some questions may be answered quickly. Others may take time.

It is also important to remember that not every biblical command was given directly to every person in every time. The Bible contains history, poetry, prophecy, letters, wisdom literature, parables, and laws given to ancient Israel. We must understand what kind of passage we are reading and how it fits into the larger story of Scripture.

All Scripture is valuable and inspired, but not every passage is applied in exactly the same way.

For example, the Old Testament sacrificial system teaches us about the seriousness of sin and the need for atonement. Christians do not continue offering animal sacrifices because Jesus fulfilled that system by offering Himself as the final and perfect sacrifice.

This is why we read individual passages in light of the entire story of the Bible, with Jesus at the center.

Do not let one confusing passage cause you to abandon the whole Bible. Stay curious. Keep learning. Ask for help.

Understanding grows over time.

| Reading for Transformation

There is a difference between reading the Bible for information and reading it for transformation.

Information asks, "What does this passage mean?"

Transformation also asks, "How should my life change because this is true?"

It is possible to know many Bible verses without allowing them to shape the way you live. Knowledge is valuable, but knowledge alone is not the goal.

Jesus told a story about two people who built houses. One built on rock, and the other built on sand. Both heard His words, but only one put them into practice.

When the storms came, the house built on the rock remained standing.

The difference was not hearing. The difference was obedience.

A strong life is not built merely by owning a Bible, attending church, or listening to sermons. It is built by hearing the words of Jesus and putting them into practice.

You can read about forgiveness, but transformation happens when you forgive.

You can read about generosity, but transformation happens when you give.

You can read about trusting God, but transformation happens when you obey Him in an uncertain situation.

You can read about loving people, but transformation happens when you show love to someone who cannot repay you.

Do not read the Bible simply to finish a chapter. Read it with a surrendered heart.

Ask, “God, what do You want to change in me?”

| Storing God’s Word in Your Heart

Another powerful practice is Scripture memorization.

It is one thing to read God’s Word when a Bible is open in front of you. It is another thing to store that truth in your heart so you can draw upon it when life becomes difficult.

Psalm 119:11 says:

*“Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.”*

—Psalm 119:11 NKJV

When a verse stands out to you, highlight it. Write it in a journal. Put it on an index card. Save it as the background on your phone or place it somewhere you will see throughout the day.

Read it repeatedly. Say it aloud. Think about what it means. Turn it into a prayer.

Then, when fear appears, you have Scripture to stand on.

When temptation appears, you have Scripture to fight with.

When discouragement appears, you have Scripture to remind you what is true.

When you do not know what to do, the Holy Spirit can bring God’s Word back to your mind.

Jesus demonstrated this when He was tempted in the wilderness. Each time the enemy tempted Him, Jesus responded with Scripture. He knew the Word, trusted the Word, and used the Word to resist deception.

You do not need to memorize an entire book this week. Begin with one verse.

Choose a verse that speaks to your current season. Write it down and review it daily until it begins to settle into your heart.

| What If Bible Reading Feels Dry?

There will be days when the Bible feels alive and personal. You will see connections, gain insight, and sense God speaking directly to your heart.

There will also be days when reading feels ordinary.

You may finish a chapter and feel as though nothing stood out. You may become distracted or struggle to remember what you read. That does not mean you failed, and it does not mean God was absent.

Keep showing up.

You do not remember every meal you have eaten, but those meals still nourished your body. In the same way, you may not remember every chapter you read, but a consistent diet of Scripture will nourish your soul and shape your thinking over time.

Do not base the value of Bible reading entirely on whether you experienced a strong emotion.

Relationships grow through ordinary moments of consistency. Your time in Scripture is not wasted simply because it did not feel dramatic.

Some seeds begin growing beneath the surface before anything becomes visible.

Keep planting God's Word in your heart.

| Making Bible Reading Part of Your Life

Consistency becomes easier when you choose a time, place, and plan.

Decide when you will read. For many people, the morning works well because it allows God's Word to shape the beginning of the day. Others may have more focused time during lunch or before bed.

Choose a time that fits your life and protect it.

Choose a place where you can focus. It might be a chair in your living room, the kitchen table, your car before work, or a quiet place outside.

Then choose a plan. Do not wake up each day and wait to decide what you will read. Begin with the Gospel of John and continue one chapter at a time.

Keep a Bible, journal, and pen nearby. If you use the Bible App, consider turning off notifications or placing your phone in Do Not Disturb mode while you read.

Start with an amount you can sustain. One thoughtfully read chapter every day is better than attempting ten chapters, becoming overwhelmed, and stopping altogether.

If you miss a day, do not allow guilt to turn one missed day into a missed month. Begin again.

The purpose of a reading plan is to help you meet with God, not to become another source of condemnation.

| You Do Not Have to Read Alone

Personal Bible reading matters, but God also designed us to learn Scripture in community.

Continue attending Sunday services and bring your Bible with you. Take notes. Write down questions. Return to the main passage during the week and read it for yourself.

Join a small group where you can talk about what you are learning, hear the perspectives of other believers, and ask honest questions. Take Starting Point so you can understand more about your relationship with God, your purpose, and your place in the Vivid Church family.

There are things God will show you during your personal time with Him, and there are things He will teach you through other believers.

You were never meant to figure everything out alone.

As your pastor, I want you to feel free to ask questions. You do not have to pretend to understand something that confuses you. Questions are not a sign that you do not belong. They are often part of how you grow.

Bring your questions. Keep your heart open. Let us learn together.

| Your Next Step: Start Reading Today

Your next step today is simple: open the Bible and start reading until something stands out to you.

If you do not have a physical Bible, download the Bible App. Begin with the Gospel of John. You might start at John 1, but you do not need to finish the whole chapter today.

Before you read, pray:

“God, thank You for giving me Your Word. Open my heart and help me understand what You want to show me today.”

Then read slowly. When a word, sentence, or part of the story catches your attention, stop there. Read it again and ask God why it stood out to you.

Write down your answers to these three questions:

What does this teach me about God?

What does this teach me about myself?

What is one thing I can apply to my life today?

Highlight what stood out or write it in your journal. Return to it throughout the day, and consider making it the first verse you memorize.

Do not read merely to check a box. Read to know God, hear His heart, and allow His truth to shape your life.

The goal is not just to get through the Bible. The goal is for the Bible to get into you.

| Reflection Questions

1. What has your experience with the Bible been up to this point?
2. Has anything made reading the Bible feel confusing or intimidating?
3. Which voices have had the greatest influence on how you think and make decisions?
4. What would it look like for you to choose Bible over opinion in your current season?
5. Is there an area of your life in which your feelings and God's Word may be pointing in different directions?
6. What time and place would help you read the Bible consistently?
7. What is one question about the Bible you would like to explore with a pastor, leader, or small group?
8. What verse would be helpful for you to begin memorizing?

| Prayer Prompts

Take a few quiet moments and complete these prayers in your own words:

“God, thank You for giving me Your Word because...”

“God, help me understand...”

"God, show me the truth I need for..."

"God, correct my thinking about..."

"God, give me the courage to obey You by..."

"God, help me build a consistent habit of..."

"Holy Spirit, remind me of Your truth when..."

| Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for giving me Your Word. Thank You that I do not have to walk through life without wisdom, direction, or truth. Through Scripture, You reveal who You are, show me who I am, and teach me how to follow You.

Give me a hunger for Your Word. Help me approach the Bible with humility, expectation, and an open heart. When I do not understand something, keep me from becoming discouraged. Give me patience to keep learning and wisdom to ask for help.

Teach me to recognize Your voice by becoming familiar with what You have already spoken. Help me choose Your truth over my feelings, culture, and the opinions around me. Correct me when I am wrong, encourage me when I am weary, and guide me when I do not know what to do.

Do not let me become someone who only hears Your Word. Give me the courage to obey it. Show me one step I can take today, and help me build my life on the words of Jesus.

Place Your Word deep within my heart so I can stand on it when fear, temptation, confusion, or discouragement comes.

In Jesus' name, amen.

| Remember This

The Bible is not a textbook you must master before God will accept you. It is one of the primary ways your loving Father reveals His heart and teaches you how to walk with Him.

You will not understand everything immediately. That is okay.

Start with one chapter. Ask honest questions. Use trustworthy resources. Read Scripture in context. Write down what you are learning, and put it into practice.

Some days, a verse may feel as though it was written specifically for what you are facing. Other days, your reading may feel quiet and ordinary. Remain consistent in both seasons.

God's Word is working in you.

At Vivid Church, we choose Bible over opinion because we believe God's wisdom is greater than ours. Culture may change, circumstances may change, and feelings may change, but the truth of God's Word remains.

As your pastor, I do not want you to depend only on what I teach on Sundays. I want you to open the Bible for yourself, discover the character of God, recognize the voice of Jesus, and build a faith that remains strong when the storms of life arrive.

Open the Gospel of John today. Read one chapter and ask God to speak to your heart through His Word.

Then return tomorrow and do it again.

One chapter at a time, one truth at a time, and one act of obedience at a time, God will use His Word to transform the way you think, the way you live, and the way you follow Jesus.

—Pastor Joe



CHAPTER 04

Prayer and Worship

When Krissy and I first gave our lives to Jesus, our relationship was deeply broken. Krissy hated me—and honestly, I understood why. I had cheated on her again. She was not even sure that my surrender to Jesus was real. She thought I might simply be trying to get back into her good graces.

Over time, however, she began to see that something in me had truly changed. My decision to follow Jesus was not perfect, but it was real. Slowly, we began becoming friends again.

That friendship had to be rebuilt through communication, and the communication did not begin with long, meaningful conversations. At first, it was little hellos in passing, an occasional message, and a few short sentences at a young adult gathering. The conversations may have felt small, but each one created a little more room for trust.

As time passed and trust began to return, those conversations became longer. We started sharing more, listening more, and allowing one another back into the places that had been closed off. Our friendship grew because communication became more honest, consistent, and personal.

Your relationship with Jesus can begin in a similar way. When you are new to prayer, you may not know what to say. Your first conversations with God may feel short, simple, or even awkward. That is okay. You do not need to begin with perfect words or long prayers. You can begin with a few honest sentences and allow trust and closeness to grow over time.

When you gave your life to Jesus, you began a real relationship with God. Prayer is how you communicate with Him. Worship is how you turn your attention and affection toward Him. Neither is a religious performance. Both are invitations to spend time with the God who loves you and wants to be close to you.

First Thessalonians 5:16–18 says:

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 NKJV

Notice how these instructions belong together: rejoice, pray, and give thanks. God is showing us what it looks like to live with a heart that remains connected to Him throughout the day.

This does not mean you must spend every moment with your eyes closed or your hands folded. It means you can live with an ongoing awareness of God’s presence. You can talk to Him while driving, thank Him while working, ask for wisdom before making a decision, or worship Him quietly when fear begins to fill your thoughts.

God does not want to be limited to one hour of your Sunday. He wants to walk with you through every moment of your life.

| Learning to Talk with God

When Krissy and I began seriously following Jesus, we did not have everything figured out. We were not pastors. We were two people who needed God to heal us, change us, and teach us how to build our lives differently.

We had to learn how to invite Jesus into the real parts of our lives—not only the parts that looked spiritual.

We had to bring Him our brokenness, our relationship, our past decisions, our fears, and the patterns we did not know how to change. We discovered that prayer was not about pretending to be better than we were. Prayer was where we could become honest about how much we needed God.

That is still how I pray today.

Being a pastor does not mean I always have the perfect words. There are moments when I know exactly what I want to say to God, and there are other moments when all I can say is, “God, I need You.”

Sometimes that is enough.

You may hear someone pray at church and think, “I could never pray like that.” Maybe they know more Scripture, use words you have never heard, or seem completely comfortable praying aloud. Do not let that intimidate you. Prayer is not a performance, and God is not grading your vocabulary.

Prayer is simply a conversation with God.

You can talk to Him as honestly and naturally as you would talk to someone you trust. Tell Him what happened today. Tell Him what made you happy, what hurt you, what you are afraid of, and what you do not understand. Ask Him for help. Thank Him for what He has done. Admit when you have made a mistake.

God already knows everything about you, but He still wants you to share your heart with Him.

Psalm 62:8 says:

*“Trust in Him at all times, you people;
Pour out your heart before Him;
God is a refuge for us.”*

—Psalm 62:8 NKJV

You do not have to filter your emotions before bringing them to God. You can pour out your heart to Him because He is a safe place for you.

| Prayer Is Not About Impressing God

Jesus warned His followers not to turn prayer into a performance. Some people in His day prayed so others would notice how spiritual they sounded. Jesus taught that prayer was never meant to impress an audience. It was meant to connect us with our Father.

In Matthew 6:6, Jesus taught His followers to go into a private place and pray to their Father.

That does not mean public prayer is wrong. We pray together at Vivid Church every Sunday. Our pastors pray throughout the service, our Dream Team prays together, and our prayer team is available to stand with people who are walking through difficult situations.

There is something powerful about believers praying together. However, corporate prayer can never replace personal prayer.

God wants one-on-one time with you.

He wants to meet with you when no one else is watching. He wants you to know that you do not need a pastor, a church service, or a special environment before you can speak to Him. Because of Jesus, you have direct access to God.

You can pray in your bedroom, in your car, at work, while walking through your neighborhood, or while sitting at the kitchen table. God is not more present in a church building than He is in your everyday life.

You are not trying to get His attention. You already have it.

| A Simple Pattern for Prayer

If you are new to prayer, you may wonder what you are supposed to say. Jesus gave His disciples a pattern for prayer in Matthew 6:9–13. We often call it the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus was not merely giving us words to repeat. He was showing us how to approach God and what we can talk to Him about.

The prayer begins with the words, "Our Father in heaven." Before asking for anything, Jesus reminds us whom we are speaking to. God is holy and powerful, but He is also our Father. We approach Him with reverence, but we also approach Him with the confidence of a child who knows they are loved.

Jesus then teaches us to honor God's name and surrender to His will. Prayer is not only about asking God to bless our plans. It is also about allowing Him to shape our hearts so that we desire His plans.

The prayer includes asking God for daily provision. Nothing you need is too ordinary to bring to Him. You can pray about your family, health, finances, work, decisions, relationships, and future. God cares about the spiritual parts of your life, but He also cares about the practical parts.

Jesus also teaches us to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others. Prayer is where we allow God to search our hearts. We confess our sins, receive His grace, and ask for His help releasing the people who have hurt us.

Finally, Jesus teaches us to pray for protection from temptation and evil. We need God's strength to follow Him. We were never meant to overcome every temptation or spiritual battle through willpower alone.

You can use this pattern when you do not know how to begin:

Begin by honoring God for who He is. Surrender your plans to Him. Ask Him for what you need. Confess anything that needs to be made right. Forgive those who have hurt you, and ask God for strength and protection.

Your prayer does not have to be long to be sincere. Some of the most meaningful prayers are also the simplest.

"Jesus, help me."

"Father, thank You."

"God, give me wisdom."

"Lord, forgive me."

"God, I trust You."

These may be short prayers, but when they come from an honest heart, they matter to God.

| Prayer Includes Listening

Healthy communication is not one person doing all the talking. Prayer includes speaking to God, but it also includes becoming quiet enough to listen.

This may feel unfamiliar at first. You might sit silently and wonder whether you are doing it correctly. Your mind may wander to your schedule, your responsibilities, or what you are going to eat later. That is normal. Learning to quiet your heart takes practice.

When you become distracted, do not become discouraged. Simply turn your attention back toward God.

You might begin by praying, "Holy Spirit, help me hear what You want to show me today."

Then remain quiet for a few moments.

God does not usually speak to us through an audible voice. He often speaks through Scripture, brings a truth to our minds, gives us wisdom, or places a gentle conviction in our hearts. Sometimes He may remind us of someone who needs encouragement or reveal an area of our lives that needs to change.

As you learn to listen, remember that God will never contradict His written Word. If a thought encourages you to sin, harm someone, act dishonestly, or violate Scripture, it is not direction from God.

That is one reason reading the Bible is so important. As you learned in the previous chapter, the more familiar you become with God's Word, the better you will understand His character and recognize when a thought lines up with His truth.

You should also know that silence does not mean God has left you. Sometimes you may sit with God and feel as though you did not hear anything. That is okay. You are not wasting your time.

Closeness is still growing, even in the quiet.

When a child sits beside a loving parent, they do not always need to talk. Sometimes their nearness is enough. In the same way, there are moments when prayer simply means becoming aware that your Father is with you.

| Bringing Your Anxiety to God

Prayer is not only something we practice when life is peaceful. It is also where we turn when life feels overwhelming.

Philippians 4:6–7 teaches us to bring everything to God through prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving. As we do, God promises that His peace will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This passage does not say you will never experience anxiety or face circumstances that concern you. It teaches you what to do when those concerns appear.

You can turn your worry into prayer.

When you are afraid about the future, talk to God about it. When a conversation will not stop replaying in your mind, bring it to Him. When you feel pressure about your family, finances, health, or responsibilities, name those concerns in prayer.

Prayer does not always change your circumstances immediately, but it changes what you are carrying and how you carry it. You are no longer holding the weight alone. You are placing it into the hands of the One who is stronger than you.

Do not miss the role of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving does not mean pretending that your problems are not real. It means reminding yourself that your problems are not the only things that are real.

Your difficulty is real, but so is God's faithfulness.

Your uncertainty is real, but so is God's wisdom.

Your weakness is real, but so is God's strength.

When you thank God for what He has already done, you strengthen your heart to trust Him with what He has not done yet.

| Worship Turns Our Attention Toward God

Worship is another essential part of growing closer to God.

When many people hear the word worship, they immediately think about singing in church. Singing is a powerful expression of worship, but worship is much bigger than music.

Worship is our response to who God is and what He has done.

We worship when we sing, pray, give thanks, obey God, serve others, give generously, and surrender our plans to Him. Worship is not limited to a song. It is expressed through the way we live.

Romans 12:1 describes surrendering our lives to God as an act of worship. That means worship can happen anywhere. You worship God when you choose integrity at work, forgive someone who hurt you, care for your family, serve a person in need, or obey God when it would be easier to follow your feelings.

Worship says, "God, You are worthy of more than a song. You are worthy of my life."

At Vivid Church, our worship time is not background music before the sermon begins. It is not a performance from the people on the platform. It is an opportunity for all of us to turn our attention toward Jesus and respond to Him together.

You may not know all the songs yet. You may not feel comfortable raising your hands, singing loudly, or expressing yourself the way someone else does. That is okay. Worship is not about copying another person's expression. It is about offering God your authentic response.

Start where you are. Read the words. Think about what they mean. Sing the parts you understand. Thank God for what He has done in your life. As you become more comfortable, allow your expression of worship to grow.

| An Easy Way to Begin Worshiping at Home

If you do not know where to begin with worship music, make the next step simple: open YouTube and search for “worship music.” Choose a song, read the words, and let those words help you focus your attention on God.

A few songs you can search for are “Too Good to Not Believe” by Brandon Lake and Bethel Music, “God I’m Just Grateful” by Elevation Worship and Chandler Moore, “Build My Life” by Pat Barrett, “Spirit Break Out” by Kim Walker-Smith, “Oceans” by Hillsong UNITED, “What a God” by SEU Worship, and “Who You Say I Am” by Hillsong Worship.

You do not need to know every song or sing every word perfectly. Begin with one song. Listen closely, think about what it says about God, and respond to Him honestly. That simple moment can become the beginning of a daily rhythm of worship.

| Worship Is a Choice

Sometimes people assume that those who worship God must not be experiencing any real problems. They see someone singing, thanking God, or raising their hands and imagine that everything in that person’s life must be going well.

That could not be further from the truth.

We do not worship because everything is perfect. We worship because God is still good.

Some of the deepest worship you will ever offer God will come from the middle of a difficult season. Worship becomes powerful when you choose to declare who God is before you see your circumstances change.

The prophet Habakkuk described a season in which the crops failed, the fields produced no food, and the livestock disappeared. His circumstances were devastating, but he made a decision:

*“Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.”*

—Habakkuk 3:18 NKJV

The word “yet” is important.

Habakkuk was saying, “This is painful. This is not what I hoped for. I do not understand what is happening. Yet I will worship.”

You can have your own “yet” worship.

“I am still waiting, yet I will worship.”

“My heart is hurting, yet I will trust God.”

“I do not know what will happen next, yet I will praise Him.”

“I have not seen the answer, yet I believe God is faithful.”

Worship does not deny reality. It declares that God is greater than the reality you currently see.

Your circumstances may change, but God's character does not. He is faithful when life is uncertain. He is present when you feel alone. He is worthy when you receive the answer you wanted, and He is still worthy when the answer looks different than you expected.

| Worship Changes Your Perspective

Prayer and worship may not always change what is happening around you immediately, but they will change what is happening within you.

When your eyes remain fixed on your problems, those problems can begin to feel larger than everything else. Worship lifts your eyes. It reminds you that God is greater than what you are facing.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were beaten, placed in prison, and secured in stocks. Around midnight, they began praying and singing hymns to God.

They were not worshiping because they were comfortable. They worshiped while they were hurting and before they knew how the story would end.

As they prayed and sang, an earthquake shook the prison, the doors opened, and their chains were released. Their worship became part of a miracle that ultimately affected not only them but also the jailer and his entire household.

Worship will not always result in an immediate, visible breakthrough. However, it will always remind your heart where your hope belongs.

Sometimes God changes the situation. Sometimes He changes you while you are still in the situation. Often, He does both in ways you do not immediately recognize.

| Creating a Daily Rhythm

You do not need to wait until Sunday to pray and worship. You can begin creating a daily rhythm of meeting with God right now.

One simple way to begin is something I call the First 15.

Give God the first fifteen minutes of your day:

Spend five minutes reading the Bible.

Spend five minutes talking to God.

Spend five minutes worshipping or sitting quietly and listening.

This is not a rigid formula, and you do not need to watch the clock anxiously. It is simply a starting point. Some days you may spend more time reading. Other days you may need to spend most of your time praying about something heavy on your heart.

The goal is not to complete a religious checklist. The goal is to create consistent space for your relationship with God.

When you give God the first part of your day, you are choosing to hear His voice before all the other voices begin competing for your attention. Before checking social media, reading emails, or allowing your responsibilities to take over, you are reminding your heart, "God is first, and I need Him today."

If mornings are genuinely impossible because of your schedule, choose another consistent time. The most important thing is not the exact hour. The important thing is that you intentionally make room for God.

Start small enough to remain consistent. Fifteen focused minutes every day will help you grow more than one long prayer time followed by weeks of neglect.

Relationships grow through consistency, not intensity alone.

| When You Miss a Day

You will probably miss a day at some point. You may oversleep, become distracted, or allow your schedule to take over. When that happens, do not let guilt push you away from God.

Simply begin again.

God is not standing over you with a record of every morning you missed. He is inviting you back into relationship. Spiritual disciplines are meant to help you experience God's grace, not become another way to condemn yourself.

There is a difference between conviction and condemnation. Conviction gently draws you back toward God. Condemnation tells you to hide because you have failed.

Romans 8:1 says:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

—Romans 8:1 NKJV

If you miss your time with God, you have not ruined the relationship. Return to Him at lunch, in the car, before bed, or the next morning.

Do not turn one missed day into a reason to stop altogether.

There have been many moments in my journey when I have needed to reset my priorities and rebuild my rhythm with God. Growth does not mean you never become distracted. It means you learn to recognize when you have drifted and choose to come close again.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is relationship.

| You Were Never Meant to Grow Alone

Your personal relationship with God matters, but following Jesus was never meant to become a private journey disconnected from other believers.

Continue attending church consistently. Worshiping with other believers will encourage your faith, especially during seasons when you feel weak. There will be Sundays when someone else's faith helps carry you. There will also be Sundays when your worship encourages someone standing near you.

Allow people to pray with you. You do not have to face everything alone. At Vivid Church, our prayer team would be honored to stand with you, believe with you, and help you bring your needs before God.

Take your next step by attending Starting Point. Join a small group where you can build relationships and grow in your faith. As you continue growing, find a place to serve on the Dream Team and use what God has placed inside you to help others.

Prayer and worship connect you with God, while the church surrounds you with people who can help you keep following Him.

| Your Next Step: Practice the First 15

Tomorrow, before the demands of your day take over, set aside fifteen minutes for God.

Begin with five minutes in Scripture. You could read Psalm 23, Psalm 34, or Matthew 6:5–13. Read slowly. You are not trying to finish a large amount of Scripture. Ask yourself, “What does this passage show me about God?”

Then spend five minutes in prayer. Thank God for three specific things. Tell Him what is on your mind. Ask Him for help with anything you are facing, and surrender your day to Him.

Finally, spend five minutes worshipping or listening. You might play a worship song and focus on its message. You could sing, sit quietly, or simply tell God why you love and trust Him.

Before you finish, pray this simple prayer:

“God, help me recognize Your presence throughout my day.”

You may not experience an overwhelming emotion or hear a dramatic message. That is not the goal. The goal is to show up, turn your heart toward God, and begin building a daily relationship with Him.

Keep showing up. Over time, those quiet moments will become some of the most important moments of your life.

| Reflection Questions

1. What have you believed prayer is supposed to sound or feel like?
2. Is there anything that has made you feel nervous or unqualified to pray?
3. What is one area of your life you need to speak honestly with God about?
4. When have you found it most difficult to worship God?
5. How could worship help change your perspective in your current season?
6. What time and place would help you practice the First 15 consistently?
7. Who could pray with you and encourage you as you grow?

| Prayer Prompts

Take a few quiet moments and complete these prayers in your own words:

“Father, thank You for...”

“God, I need Your help with...”

“Jesus, I am worried about...”

“Lord, forgive me for...”

“God, help me surrender...”

“Holy Spirit, help me hear...”

“Father, remind me that You are...”

| Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that I can come to You just as I am. Thank You that I do not need impressive words or a perfect prayer. Because of Jesus, I am welcomed into Your presence, and I can speak to You with honesty and confidence.

Teach me how to pray. Help me bring You my worries, questions, needs, victories, and failures. Teach me to become quiet and recognize Your voice through Your Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Give me wisdom to know what comes from You, and help me obey when You show me my next step.

Teach me how to worship You in every season. When life is good, remind me to thank You. When life is difficult, help me declare that You are still faithful. Turn my attention away from fear and back toward Your goodness.

Help me build a consistent rhythm of spending time with You. When I become distracted or miss a day, keep me from hiding in guilt. Remind me that You are always inviting me to return.

I give You my day, my plans, my relationships, my worries, and my future. Help me live with an awareness of Your presence and worship You through the way I live.

In Jesus' name, amen.

| Remember This

Prayer is not about finding the perfect words. It is about bringing your real heart to a real God.

Worship is not limited to singing on Sunday. It is the daily decision to turn your attention toward God and give Him the honor He deserves.

Some days, prayer and worship will feel powerful. Other days, they may feel quiet and ordinary. Keep showing up in both seasons. God is present even when your emotions are not strong, and your relationship with Him is growing through every faithful moment you spend with Him.

As your pastor, I want you to know that you do not have to become an expert before you begin. Start with fifteen minutes. Say the honest prayer. Sing the song even if you do not know every word. Sit quietly even if listening feels unfamiliar.

God is not asking you to impress Him. He is inviting you to know Him.

At Vivid Church, we want to help you know God, find freedom, discover your purpose, and make a difference. Krissy, our Vivid Church family, and I are honored to walk with you as you grow in your relationship with Jesus.

Tomorrow morning, give God your first fifteen minutes. Then continue the conversation with Him throughout your day.

One prayer at a time, one act of worship at a time, you are learning what it means to walk closely with God.

—Pastor Joe



CHAPTER 05

You Were Never Meant to Follow Jesus Alone

When I was in my early teens, I met Jesus. Around that same time, I also met Chase, our pastor's son. Chase and I became best friends quickly, and I remember thinking, This is great. Who better to be friends with if I want to get closer to God?

I was still spending time with old friends who partied, drank, and smoked weed. I thought that if I spent more time with Chase, I would naturally leave that life behind. So Chase and I began hanging out more and more.

Then one night, even though we had arrived separately, we somehow ended up at the same party. We were both smoking weed when we realized that each of us had been hiding the same struggle from the other.

That could have been the moment when we looked at each other and said, "We have to beat this. Let's help each other follow Jesus." Instead, we gave ourselves permission to go further in the wrong direction. The friend I thought would strengthen my walk with Christ was now helping make it easier for me to compromise—and I was doing the same thing to him.

I am not blaming Chase. I made those decisions just as much as he did. And, thankfully, God was not finished with either of us. Today, we are both pastors, so I guess it all worked out in the end.

Back then, Chase and I could have incredible experiences with God at church or youth group on Sunday. We would feel convicted, pray, and promise that we were done drinking and smoking. But when the next weekend arrived, we often found ourselves right back in the same place, doing the same things.

Looking back, I realize that Chase and I had friendship, and we both loved Jesus, but we did not have the kind of community we needed. We needed people who could coach us, give us practical next steps, ask us hard questions, and hold us accountable when our promises met real temptation.

After I backslid and later surrendered my life to Christ again at twenty-one, I found that kind of community. I became part of a group of young adults and stayed close to our young adult pastors. I spent as much time as I could around people who were a few steps ahead of me—and some who were much further ahead.

Men like Jim Muldoon taught me what it meant to be a man of God. I saw what a godly husband looked like and what it meant to be a present father. I intentionally got around people who were not merely friends I enjoyed, but people I respected, people I could learn from, and people whose lives showed me the kind of man I wanted to become.

That is why small groups matter so much at Vivid Church. We follow the pattern we see in Acts 2:42: gathering consistently, learning God's Word together, sharing meals, praying, and building genuine

relationships. In our groups, we talk through the Sunday message, help one another apply it, pray for one another, and make the kind of friends who help us keep following Jesus when the weekend comes.

You need friends, but you also need spiritual community. Friendship gives you people to enjoy life with. Healthy community gives you people who will encourage you, challenge you, teach you, and help you become who God is calling you to be.

Giving your life to Jesus is a personal decision, but following Jesus was never meant to be a private journey.

God created you for community. From the beginning, His plan was never for people to move through life alone, separated from meaningful relationships and attempting to carry every burden by themselves. We were created to know God personally, but we were also created to know, love, encourage, and support one another.

This is why becoming connected to a church family is such an important part of following Jesus.

Church is more than a service you attend on Sunday. It is more than a building, a worship experience, or a message you listen to once a week. The church is a spiritual family where you can grow, heal, serve, and become the person God created you to be.

You need people who will celebrate with you when life is going well and stand beside you when life becomes difficult. You need people who will pray for you when you feel weak, remind you of God's promises when you begin to doubt, and lovingly challenge you when you start moving in the wrong direction.

You were never meant to follow Jesus alone.

| God Created You for Community

The desire to belong is not a weakness. It is part of how God designed you.

In the opening chapters of Genesis, God repeatedly looked at His creation and called it good. However, after creating Adam, God identified something that was not good.

"It is not good that man should be alone."

—Genesis 2:18 NKJV

Although this verse leads directly into the creation of marriage, it also reveals something important about human nature: we were created for relationships.

We need other people.

That does not mean every person needs to have a large number of friends or be surrounded by people every moment of the day. Some people are naturally more outgoing, while others need more time alone to rest and recharge. However, regardless of personality, no one was created to live completely isolated from meaningful relationships.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 says:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion."

—Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 NKJV

Life will include moments when you fall.

You may experience disappointment, grief, temptation, confusion, exhaustion, or spiritual doubt. There may be times when your faith feels strong and other times when you struggle to believe what you once knew was true.

In those moments, you need someone who can help lift you.

Sometimes you need another person to pray when you cannot find the words. Sometimes you need someone to remind you of what God has said because your circumstances are making it difficult to remember. At other times, you may simply need someone to sit beside you so you do not have to carry your pain alone.

Community also gives you the opportunity to lift someone else.

God does not only bring people into your life because of what they can do for you. He also wants to use your presence, prayers, encouragement, experience, and gifts to strengthen them.

Healthy community allows us to carry one another through difficult seasons and celebrate together during joyful ones. This is one of the reasons Scripture repeatedly reminds us that we are better together.

| Jesus Built a Community

Jesus could have carried out His ministry by Himself. He was the Son of God and did not lack wisdom, power, or ability.

Yet when Jesus began His public ministry, one of the first things He did was call people to follow Him.

He formed a community of disciples who traveled with Him, learned from Him, served together, asked questions, made mistakes, and grew in their faith. Jesus taught large crowds, but He also shared meals, conversations, and everyday life with a smaller group of people.

The disciples were far from perfect.

They misunderstood Jesus, argued about which of them was the greatest, reacted emotionally, and occasionally said things they probably wished they could take back. Peter was impulsive. Thomas struggled with doubt. James and John wanted positions of influence. Judas eventually betrayed Jesus.

Jesus knew their weaknesses, but He still chose to build His ministry through relationships.

Following Jesus together did not eliminate their differences. It taught them how to love, forgive, serve, and remain united despite those differences.

After Jesus returned to heaven, the early believers continued following this pattern.

Acts 2:42 says:

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

—Acts 2:42 NKJV

The early church did not only gather to hear teaching. They shared life together. They ate together, prayed together, worshiped together, cared for one another, and helped meet practical needs.

Their community became part of their witness.

People did not only hear what Christians believed. They saw a new kind of family made up of people from different backgrounds who had been brought together by Jesus.

That is still God's desire for the church today.

| What Is the Church?

When many people hear the word church, they immediately think about a building.

They may picture a sanctuary, rows of chairs, a stage, stained-glass windows, or a cross displayed on the wall. Those spaces can be meaningful, but the building is not the church.

The church is the people of God.

A church can gather in a beautiful auditorium, a school cafeteria, a home, a rented building, or beneath a tent. The location may change, but the identity of the church remains the same.

The church is made up of people who have placed their faith in Jesus and have been brought together as His family.

The Bible uses several pictures to help us understand the church. It describes the church as the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the household of God, and a spiritual family. Each picture reveals something important about who we are and how we are meant to relate to one another.

As the body of Christ, every person has a part to play.

As the bride of Christ, the church belongs to Jesus and is deeply loved by Him.

As the household of God, we are no longer strangers. Through Jesus, we have been welcomed into God's family.

Paul wrote:

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

—Ephesians 2:19 NKJV

When you place your faith in Jesus, you become part of something much larger than yourself. You are connected to believers from every generation, nation, culture, and background.

You become part of the family of God.

| Church Is a Family You Belong To

At Vivid Church, we do not believe church is simply an event you attend.

Church is a family you belong to.

It is possible to attend a service every week and still feel alone. You can enter the building, sing the songs, listen to the message, and leave without allowing anyone to know you.

Attendance places you in the room, but relationships help you experience belonging.

Belonging begins when you decide to take a step toward other people. It grows when you introduce yourself, begin having conversations, join a small group, serve alongside others, and allow trustworthy people to know what is really happening in your life.

This can feel uncomfortable at first, especially if you have been hurt by people in the past.

Perhaps you trusted someone who betrayed you. Maybe you experienced rejection, gossip, manipulation, or hypocrisy in a previous church. You may have entered a community expecting to find love but left carrying wounds.

If that is part of your story, your hesitation is understandable.

Church hurt can be especially painful because it happens in a place where we expect to encounter the character of Jesus. When Christians fail to represent Him well, the damage can affect the way we view people, the church, and sometimes even God.

Your pain should not be ignored or minimized.

However, the failure of people does not change God's design for His church. Although unhealthy community may have caused some of your wounds, healthy community can become part of how God brings healing.

You do not have to trust everyone immediately. Trust grows over time through consistent character, honesty, wisdom, and healthy boundaries. You can move carefully without closing your heart completely.

Ask God to lead you toward safe, mature people who will help you follow Jesus.

Do not allow what someone did in your past to keep you isolated from the family God wants to give you in your future.

| Why Gathering Matters

There are parts of following Jesus that you can practice on your own. You can pray alone, read the Bible alone, worship alone, and spend personal time with God.

Those habits are essential, but they are not a replacement for gathering with other believers.

Hebrews 10:24–25 says:

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another.”

—Hebrews 10:24–25 NKJV

Notice that gathering is not only about what you receive. It is also about how your presence strengthens other people.

When you gather with the church, you hear God's Word taught, worship with other believers, receive prayer, and remember that you are part of something bigger than yourself. You also have opportunities to encourage others, welcome someone new, share what God is teaching you, and use your gifts to serve.

There will be Sundays when you arrive feeling full of faith and ready to encourage someone else. There will also be Sundays when you arrive tired, distracted, disappointed, or barely holding yourself together.

On those days, someone else's faith may strengthen yours.

You may hear a lyric that reminds you of God's faithfulness. A Scripture in the message may speak directly to your situation. Someone may pray for you without realizing how desperately you needed it. A simple conversation may remind you that God sees you and that you are not alone.

You cannot experience everything God designed for His church while remaining disconnected from it.

Watching a service online can be helpful when you are sick, traveling, caring for someone, or unable to attend in person. Technology allows us to receive teaching and remain connected in ways that previous generations could not.

However, watching church is not always the same as belonging to a church.

A screen can deliver a sermon, but it cannot fully replace sitting beside someone, serving together, receiving personal prayer, having a real conversation, and being known.

God's desire is not merely that you consume spiritual content. He wants you to become part of a spiritual family.

| Consistency Builds Connection

Relationships are rarely built through occasional contact.

If you attend church only when your schedule is completely open, when you feel spiritually motivated, or when nothing more appealing is happening, it will be difficult to develop meaningful relationships.

Consistency creates familiarity, and familiarity creates opportunities for connection.

When you attend regularly, people begin recognizing you. Conversations grow beyond simple introductions. You learn people's stories, and they learn yours. Over time, unfamiliar faces can become friends, and a room full of strangers can begin to feel like family.

Consistency does not mean you will never miss a Sunday. There will be vacations, illnesses, work responsibilities, family needs, and unexpected circumstances.

The issue is not perfect attendance. The issue is priority.

Jesus is worthy of more than our leftover time, and spiritual community is too important to be included only when it is convenient.

One of the most practical decisions you can make is to establish a rhythm of gathering with your church family. Decide ahead of time that Sunday will be part of how your family follows Jesus.

When church becomes a priority instead of a last-minute decision, connection has room to grow.

| Starting Point: From Attending to Belonging

One of the reasons we created Starting Point at Vivid Church is to help people move from simply attending Vivid to truly belonging at Vivid.

Every journey has a beginning. When you start a new job, join a team, attend a school, or become part of an organization, there is usually a place where you learn what it is about and how you fit into it.

Starting Point provides that opportunity at Vivid.

It is where you can learn more about who we are, what we believe, and where we believe God is leading our church. You will discover our mission, values, and the ways we are working together to reach people and build lives.

However, Starting Point is not only about helping you learn who we are.

We also want to learn who you are.

God has placed gifts, passions, experiences, personality, and purpose within you. Even the difficult parts of your story can become places where God brings healing to someone else.

You are not at Vivid by accident, and you were not created to sit on the sidelines.

Starting Point helps you discover how God has uniquely designed you and identify practical ways you can become connected, serve others, and make a difference.

You do not have to know everything about the Bible before attending. You do not need to have your entire life figured out. Starting Point is designed to help you take your next step from wherever you are.

You may be new to following Jesus. You may have attended church for years without ever becoming involved. You may be returning after a long time away.

Whatever your story may be, there is a starting point for you.

| You Have a Part to Play

First Corinthians 12 describes the church as a body.

A human body has many different parts, and every part contributes something important. The eye has a different function from the hand, and the hand has a different function from the foot. Their differences do not make one valuable and the others unnecessary.

Each part is needed.

Paul wrote:

"But now indeed there are many members, yet one body."

—1 Corinthians 12:20 NKJV

The church works in the same way.

Some people teach, lead, or speak publicly. Others serve quietly in ways many people may never notice. Some are gifted at welcoming people, organizing details, caring for children, solving problems, showing mercy, praying, giving, encouraging, or helping people feel safe.

Every gift matters because every person matters.

You may look at someone with a visible role and assume their contribution is more significant than yours. However, visibility does not determine value.

The person preaching may deliver the message, but someone else created the environment in which people could receive it. Someone opened the building, set up chairs, prepared the children's areas, ran sound, welcomed guests, prayed for the service, cleaned the room, or helped a nervous family feel at home.

What appears to be a simple task can make an eternal difference in someone's life.

Perhaps you welcome a person at the door who almost turned around and went home because they were anxious about entering an unfamiliar church. Your smile and kindness may help them feel safe enough to stay.

Maybe you serve in the children's ministry and teach a child that Jesus loves them. Years later, that child may still remember the truth you helped plant in their heart.

You might set up a chair that is eventually occupied by someone who gives their life to Jesus.

You may operate a camera that allows someone at home to hear the gospel.

You may pray with a person who arrived feeling hopeless.

You may never see the complete impact of what you do, but God sees it.

You have a part to play.

| The Dream Team

At Vivid Church, we call the people who serve our church and community the Dream Team.

Joining the Dream Team is not simply about filling an empty position or completing a task. It is an opportunity to use what God has placed within you to serve people and make a difference.

Serving changes the way you experience church.

When you only attend, it can be easy to evaluate everything according to your preferences. You may begin thinking primarily about whether you liked the music, enjoyed the message, felt comfortable in the room, or received what you wanted from the service.

Serving shifts your attention from "What can I receive?" to "How can God use me?"

Jesus modeled this kind of life.

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."

—Mark 10:45 NKJV

Jesus deserved to be served, yet He chose to serve others. He washed His disciples' feet, welcomed children, touched people others avoided, fed the hungry, and gave His life for the world.

When we serve, we are becoming more like Him.

Serving is also one of the best ways to build relationships. There is something powerful about showing up consistently, serving beside the same people, solving problems together, praying together, laughing together, and working toward the same mission.

Some of the strongest relationships in your life may begin because you decided to stop sitting alone and start serving alongside someone else.

You may feel nervous when you first join a team. You may not know everyone's name or understand how everything works. That is normal. You are not expected to arrive knowing everything.

You simply need to be willing to learn, remain faithful, and serve with the right heart.

God can do extraordinary things through ordinary people who make themselves available to Him.

| Small Groups Help Make a Big Church Feel Personal

Sunday gatherings are important, but they are not always the easiest environment for deeper relationships.

On Sunday, people are arriving, serving, caring for children, preparing for the service, and talking with many different people. Although meaningful conversations can happen, there is not always enough time to share what is really taking place in your life.

Small groups create room for those relationships to grow.

A small group gives you an opportunity to sit with others, talk about what you are learning, ask questions, pray together, and walk through life with people who know your name and your story.

You need a Sunday gathering, but you also need people who know what is happening on Monday.

You need people who recognize when something is wrong, celebrate when God answers a prayer, and notice when you have been missing.

Small groups help move community from a general idea into a personal experience.

You may feel intimidated about joining a group. You might worry that everyone else will know more about the Bible or that you will be expected to share personal details immediately.

A healthy small group will allow relationships to develop naturally. You can listen, learn, and share at a pace that reflects growing trust. You do not have to impress anyone or pretend you have everything together.

The goal is not to create a room filled with perfect people. The goal is to create a safe place where imperfect people can follow Jesus together.

| Community Requires Honesty

You can be surrounded by people and still remain unknown.

True community requires more than being physically present. It requires honesty.

This does not mean sharing every personal detail with every person you meet. Wisdom and healthy boundaries matter. Some parts of your story should be shared only with people who have demonstrated maturity, trustworthiness, and care.

However, if no one ever knows where you are struggling, no one will know how to support you.

James 5:16 says:

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

—James 5:16 NKJV

Sin and shame grow in secrecy. Healing often begins when we bring what has been hidden into the light with God and trustworthy people.

You may be carrying a struggle that feels too embarrassing to share. Perhaps you are battling an addiction, experiencing difficulties in your marriage, struggling with anxiety, questioning your faith, or feeling overwhelmed by something happening in your family.

Isolation will tell you that no one would understand. Shame will tell you that people will reject you if they know the truth.

Healthy community reminds you that you do not have to fight alone.

The church should be a place where people can tell the truth, receive prayer, accept wise counsel, and take steps toward freedom.

This does not remove personal responsibility. Community cannot make every decision for you or do the work of obedience on your behalf. However, the right people can encourage you, hold you accountable, and walk beside you as God changes your life.

| Community Is Not Always Comfortable

The word community sounds warm and inviting, but real relationships are not always easy.

Whenever imperfect people spend time together, misunderstandings and disagreements will eventually happen. Someone may say something carelessly, forget to follow through, overlook your contribution, or respond differently than you expected.

You may disappoint someone too.

Christian community is not powerful because everyone behaves perfectly. It is powerful because Jesus teaches imperfect people how to love, forgive, and remain committed to one another.

Colossians 3:13 says:

"Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another...even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."

—Colossians 3:13 NKJV

Forgiveness does not mean pretending that something did not hurt. It does not mean remaining in an abusive or unsafe situation, and it does not remove the need for wisdom, boundaries, or accountability.

Forgiveness means surrendering your right to revenge and refusing to allow bitterness to control your heart.

There may be times when you need to have an honest conversation, clarify a misunderstanding, apologize, or give someone an opportunity to repair what was damaged.

If you leave every community as soon as something becomes uncomfortable, your relationships will never become deep enough to transform you.

Some relationships should end because they are unsafe, manipulative, or consistently destructive. However, many relationships simply need patience, humility, communication, and grace.

God often uses community to reveal areas in us that still need to grow.

People may expose our impatience, pride, insecurity, selfishness, or need for control. That process can be uncomfortable, but it can also help us become more like Jesus.

Community is not only where we are comforted. It is also where we are shaped.

| You Need People Ahead of You, Beside You, and Behind You

Healthy spiritual community includes different kinds of relationships.

You need people who are ahead of you—mature believers who can offer wisdom, model faithfulness, and help you avoid unnecessary mistakes.

You also need people beside you—friends who are walking through similar seasons and can share the joys and challenges of everyday life.

Eventually, you need people behind you—those you can encourage because of what God has already taught you.

You may feel as though you are too new to help anyone, but God can use even the beginning of your journey. You do not need to know everything before you can encourage someone with what you have learned.

If God helped you through a difficult season, your story may give hope to someone who is entering one. If you have learned how to pray, you can pray with someone who does not yet know what to say. If you have experienced God's forgiveness, you can remind another person that grace is available to them too.

Spiritual growth was never meant to stop with you.

God brings people into your life to help build you, and He will also use your life to help build others.

| Reaching People and Building Lives

At Vivid Church, our mission is simple: reaching people and building lives.

We want to reach people who are far from God with the love and message of Jesus. However, we do not want to stop after someone makes a decision to follow Him. We want to help people build lives that are rooted in God's Word, connected to healthy relationships, filled with purpose, and making an eternal difference.

Our desire is to help people know God, find freedom, discover their purpose, and make a difference.

None of that happens through one person working alone.

It takes a church.

It takes people willing to pray, give, invite, lead, serve, teach, encourage, and love. It takes people who are willing to set aside personal preferences for the sake of reaching one more person.

When you become part of the church, you become part of that mission.

You are no longer watching from a distance. You are helping create a place where people can encounter Jesus and find a family.

We can accomplish far more together than any of us could accomplish alone.

Your gifts may strengthen someone else's weakness. Their experience may provide wisdom you do not yet have. One person may see the vision, another may organize the details, someone else may provide the resources, and another may have the ability to carry it out.

Together, we reflect Jesus in ways none of us could by ourselves.

| Do Not Wait Until You Feel Ready

One of the greatest obstacles to community is waiting until you feel completely comfortable.

You may tell yourself that you will introduce yourself next week, join a group during the next season, attend Starting Point when life slows down, or begin serving after you feel more spiritually prepared.

However, community is not something you find by standing at a distance. Community is something you build by taking a step toward people.

You may not feel ready, but you can still take one step.

Stay after service and have a conversation instead of leaving immediately.

Introduce yourself to someone you recognize.

Go through Starting Point.

Join a small group.

Ask how you can serve.

Tell a trustworthy person what is happening in your life.

Invite someone to lunch or coffee.

The first step may feel awkward. Most beginnings do.

You do not build meaningful relationships in a single conversation. You build them through repeated moments of showing up, listening, serving, being honest, and choosing to care.

Do not allow the fear of awkwardness to keep you trapped in isolation.

The people who eventually become some of your closest friends may currently be strangers waiting for someone to take the first step.

| What If I Feel Like I Do Not Fit In?

Walking into a new church can feel intimidating.

You may look around and assume everyone else already has friends, knows where to go, understands the songs, and has their spiritual life figured out.

Usually, that is not true.

Many people in the room have felt exactly what you are feeling. Some are new too. Others remember how uncomfortable their first visit felt. Even people who appear confident may still be searching for meaningful relationships.

Do not confuse unfamiliarity with rejection.

Feeling out of place at first does not mean you do not belong. It simply means relationships have not had enough time to grow.

Give people an opportunity to know you, and give yourself time to know them.

You will not connect deeply with every person, and that is okay. Even Jesus had different levels of relationship. He ministered to crowds, traveled with twelve disciples, and shared some experiences with an even smaller group.

You do not need everyone to become your closest friend. You need a few healthy relationships in which you can be known, encouraged, and challenged.

Ask God to help you recognize those people, and be willing to become that kind of person for someone else.

| There Are No Perfect Churches

Vivid Church is not a perfect church because it is filled with imperfect people.

Every church is.

People will occasionally make mistakes. Leaders will not always communicate perfectly. Systems will sometimes fail. Someone may overlook something important to you. There may be decisions you do not fully understand or preferences that are different from your own.

That does not mean we ignore serious problems or excuse unhealthy leadership. Biblical accountability, integrity, transparency, and safety matter.

However, we must also recognize the difference between an unhealthy church and an imperfect one.

An unhealthy church refuses accountability, protects abusive behavior, manipulates people, or consistently places human control above biblical truth. An imperfect church is a family of people who still make mistakes but are willing to listen, repent, grow, and keep becoming more like Jesus.

If your expectation is perfection, you will eventually become disappointed with every church you attend.

The goal is not to find a perfect church. The goal is to become part of a healthy church where Jesus is honored, Scripture is taught, people are loved, and you can grow and serve.

Do not only ask, "What can this church do for me?"

Also ask, "How can I help this church become everything God has called it to be?"

You are not only looking for a family.

You are becoming part of one.

| Your Next Step: Choose Connection

Your next step is to make a commitment to stay connected.

Begin by attending church consistently. Do not wait until you feel inspired every week. Build your life around the priority of gathering with God's people.

If you have not gone through Starting Point, sign up and attend. Learn more about Vivid Church, discover how God has designed you, and begin finding your place in our church family.

Join a small group when the opportunity becomes available. Give people enough time to move beyond introductions and begin building real relationships.

Find a place to serve on the Dream Team. You do not have to begin with the perfect role. Start somewhere, remain teachable, and allow God to use your willingness.

Most importantly, refuse to hide.

Ask God to give you the courage to let trustworthy people know you. If you are struggling, reach out. If you need prayer, ask for it. If God has done something in your life, share it so someone else can be encouraged.

Community will require effort, patience, vulnerability, forgiveness, and consistency. It may sometimes feel inconvenient or uncomfortable.

But it is worth it.

God has placed people around you who can help you grow, and He has placed something within you that they need too.

You have a place in God's family.

You have a purpose in His church.

You do not have to follow Jesus alone.

| Reflection Questions

1. How have your past experiences shaped the way you currently view the church?
2. Do you think of church primarily as an event you attend or as a family to which you belong?
3. What has made it difficult for you to build meaningful relationships with other believers?
4. Have you experienced hurt or disappointment in a previous church? How has that experience affected your willingness to trust people?
5. Who currently knows what is really happening in your life?
6. Are you attending church consistently, or has gathering with other believers become optional in your schedule?
7. Have you attended Starting Point and begun discovering your place at Vivid Church?
8. What gifts, passions, experiences, or abilities could God use to serve others?
9. What might be your next step toward joining the Dream Team?
10. How could joining a small group help you develop deeper relationships?
11. Is there a struggle you have been carrying alone that you need to share with someone trustworthy?
12. Who is someone ahead of you spiritually from whom you could learn?
13. Who is walking beside you and encouraging your faith?
14. Is there someone you could begin encouraging or helping in their journey with Jesus?
15. What is one practical step you can take this week to move from attending to belonging?

| Prayer Prompts

Take a few quiet moments and complete these prayers in your own words:

"Father, thank You for the people who have helped me by..."

"God, heal the hurt I have carried from..."

"Jesus, help me forgive..."

"Father, give me the courage to be honest about..."

"God, lead me toward trustworthy people who..."

"Holy Spirit, show me how You have designed me to..."

"Jesus, help me serve others by..."

"Father, help Vivid Church become a family where..."

"God, show me who I can encourage this week by..."

"Jesus, help me stop standing at a distance and begin..."

| Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that You did not create me to move through life alone. Thank You for bringing me into Your family through Jesus and giving me a place where I can grow, heal, serve, and belong.

Help me understand that church is more than an event I attend. Teach me to see it as a spiritual family where I can know others and allow myself to be known.

Heal any wounds I carry from past relationships or church experiences. Give me wisdom to recognize healthy people, courage to trust again, and grace to forgive those who have hurt me. Do not allow the failures of imperfect people to keep me isolated from the community You designed for me.

Help me make gathering with other believers a priority. On the days when I feel strong, show me how to encourage someone else. On the days when I feel weak, give me the humility to receive prayer and support.

Show me the gifts, experiences, and passions You have placed within me. Help me understand that I have an important part to play in the body of Christ. Lead me toward the right place to serve, and help me use what You have given me for Your glory and the good of others.

Give me the courage to go through Starting Point, join a small group, become part of the Dream Team, and begin building meaningful relationships. Help me move beyond simply attending church and begin truly belonging.

Teach me to be honest without abandoning wisdom. Bring trustworthy people into my life who will pray for me, challenge me, encourage me, and walk with me. Make me that kind of person for someone else.

When relationships become difficult, give me patience, humility, and a willingness to forgive. Help me speak the truth in love and refuse to allow offense, pride, or fear to push me back into isolation.

Thank You that I have a place in Your family and a purpose in Your church. Use my life to reach people and build lives. Together, help us lead people to know God, find freedom, discover their purpose, and make a difference.

I do not want to follow Jesus alone.

In Jesus' name, amen.

| Remember This

Giving your life to Jesus is a personal decision, but following Jesus was never meant to be a private journey.

God created you for community. You need people who will celebrate with you when life is going well, support you when life becomes difficult, pray for you when you feel weak, and remind you of God's truth when you begin to forget.

Church is more than a building or a Sunday service. The church is the family of God.

Attending places you in the room, but relationships help you experience belonging. That belonging develops as you show up consistently, allow people to know you, join a small group, serve on the Dream Team, and take intentional steps toward others.

You have gifts, experiences, and passions that the church needs. No role is unimportant when it helps someone encounter the love of Jesus.

At Vivid Church, Starting Point can help you move from simply attending to truly belonging. It will help you learn who we are, discover how God has designed you, and begin finding your place in our church family.

Community will not always be easy. People are imperfect, relationships require work, and trust grows over time. However, you should not allow fear, past pain, or discomfort to keep you isolated.

You have a place here.

You have a purpose here.

You have people who need what God has placed within you, and there are people God wants to use to strengthen you.

You were never meant to follow Jesus alone.

—Pastor Joe



CHAPTER 06

Share Your Story

When I gave my life to Christ at twenty-one, I immediately started telling all my friends how bad they were. I literally remember sending each of them an individual text message.

These were not strangers. We had grown up together. Some of them had been my friends since I was ten years old. We went to school together, spent years hanging out, and later drank and smoked together. They knew my history because they had lived a lot of it with me.

Then I encountered Jesus and went full turn-or-burn on all of them. I had changed, and I wanted them to change too, but my approach was basically to point out everything they were doing wrong and preach at them through a text message.

Needless to say, it did not work.

The problem was not that I cared about their relationship with God. The problem was that I had not learned how to share what Jesus had done in my life. I gave them a sermon about their behavior instead of a story about His grace.

People may argue with your opinions or resist being preached at, but they cannot erase what Jesus has done for you. Your story matters because it shows how the gospel became personal—who you were, how you encountered Jesus, and what He has been changing since then.

In this chapter, I want to help you frame that story so you can share it honestly, clearly, and naturally. You do not have to condemn people or pretend you have everything figured out. You simply need to tell them what Jesus has done for you.

When Jesus changes your life, your story becomes one of the most powerful ways you can help someone else discover Him.

You may not know everything about the Bible. You may not feel prepared to answer every theological question. You may still be learning how to pray, understand Scripture, recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit, and become connected to the church.

That does not mean you have nothing to share.

If you have encountered Jesus, you already have a story.

Your testimony is simply the story of what your life was like before Jesus, how you encountered Him, and what He has been doing in your life since then. You do not need a dramatic past, a perfect presentation, or a microphone in your hand. You only need the willingness to honestly share what Jesus has done for you.

Before Jesus returned to heaven, He gave His followers a mission that we often call the Great Commission.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”

—Matthew 28:19 NKJV

This mission was not given only to pastors, missionaries, or the first disciples. It belongs to every person who has chosen to follow Jesus.

That includes you.

Jesus wants to use your life to help other people know Him. One of the most natural ways you can do that is by sharing your story.

| Your Story Matters

Right now, you may be experiencing God changing your life in ways you did not expect.

Perhaps you have more peace than you had before. Maybe you are beginning to experience a joy that is difficult to explain. You may have once awakened angry, discouraged, anxious, or hopeless, but something is beginning to change within you.

You may not have all the answers yet. You may still have questions, habits you are trying to overcome, difficult emotions you are learning to process, and areas of your life that need healing.

However, you know something is different.

You know Jesus has met you.

Your testimony is not about pretending you have become perfect. It is about honestly sharing that Jesus met you in your brokenness and is changing you.

Some people hesitate to share their stories because they believe their testimony is not dramatic enough. They hear about someone being rescued from addiction, healed from a serious illness, or completely transformed after a life-changing encounter with God, and they assume their own story is less important.

However, the power of a testimony is not determined by how shocking your past was. Its power comes from the faithfulness of the One who saved you.

If Jesus forgave your sin, your story matters.

If He gave you hope, your story matters.

If He restored your relationship with God, your story matters.

If He has been patiently changing your heart, your story matters.

You do not need to exaggerate what happened or make your past sound worse than it was. You also do not need to minimize what God has done. Simply tell the truth and allow the Holy Spirit to use it.

Revelation 12:11 says that believers overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. The blood of Jesus is what saves us, but our testimony gives us an opportunity to tell others about the Savior who changed us.

| Sharing Your Faith Does Not Have to Be Complicated

Sharing your faith can feel intimidating, especially when you are beginning your own journey with Jesus.

You may worry that someone will ask a question you cannot answer. You may be afraid of saying the wrong thing, being rejected, or making the conversation feel awkward. You may assume you need to explain the entire Bible or prove every part of the Christian faith before you can talk about Jesus.

You do not.

You can begin with three simple parts:

This is who I was.

This is how I encountered Jesus.

This is what He has been doing in my life since then.

Your story does not need to explain everything. It only needs to help someone understand what Jesus has done for you.

In John 9, Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth. Religious leaders began questioning him about Jesus, but the man did not pretend to know everything. He simply told them what he knew:

“One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”

—John 9:25 NKJV

That was his testimony.

He did not have every theological answer, but he could not deny what Jesus had done in his life.

You can do the same.

You can say, “I do not know the answer to every question, but I know what my life was like before Jesus, I know how I encountered Him, and I know what He is doing in me now.”

That honest story may open someone’s heart in a way that an argument never could.

| A Simple Framework for Sharing Your Story

One of the easiest ways to prepare your testimony is to organize it into three parts:

1. I Was
2. Then Jesus
3. Since Then

This framework will help you tell your story clearly without feeling as though you need to share every detail of your life.

Step One: I Was

Begin by briefly describing what your life was like before you encountered Jesus.

What were you searching for? What controlled you? What were you afraid of? Where did you look for identity, satisfaction, love, security, or purpose? What was missing in your life?

You do not need to share every sin you have committed or every painful experience you have endured. Focus on the part of your past that helps someone understand why you needed Jesus.

You might say:

"Before Jesus, I was angry and carrying a lot of unforgiveness."

"Before Jesus, I looked successful on the outside, but I felt empty inside."

"Before Jesus, I was trying to find my identity through relationships and the approval of other people."

"Before Jesus, I believed in God, but I did not have a real relationship with Him."

"Before Jesus, fear and anxiety controlled many of my decisions."

Be honest, but do not glorify your past. The purpose is not to impress people with how bad you were. The purpose is to show them how good Jesus has been.

Here is how I might begin my story:

"Hi, I'm Joe. Before Jesus, I was selfish, arrogant, and prideful. I was trying to satisfy myself by chasing money, recognition, substances, and whatever I believed would make me feel significant. However, none of it gave me what I was searching for. No matter what I pursued, I was still empty."

That describes who I was without making my past the hero of the story.

Jesus is always the hero.

Step Two: Then Jesus

The second part explains how you encountered Jesus.

Perhaps someone invited you to church. Maybe a friend shared the gospel with you, you opened a Bible during a difficult season, or you experienced God's presence during prayer. You may have grown up around church but eventually reached a moment when your faith became personal.

Describe what happened in a simple and understandable way.

What helped you recognize your need for Jesus? What did you learn about Him? When did you decide to trust Him? What did you experience in that moment?

Here is how I would share this part of my story:

"Then I experienced the real and living God during a prayer meeting. I felt His love surround me like a physical embrace. In that moment, the walls around my heart began to break. I realized that Jesus was not merely part of a religion or something other people believed. He was real, He loved me, and He was inviting me to surrender my life to Him. That encounter gave me a new desire to love God and begin treating people with the same love and respect I wanted to receive."

This part of the story does not need to sound dramatic or overly spiritual. Use language that feels natural to you.

The most important truth is that Jesus met you.

Step Three: Since Then

The final part of your testimony explains what Jesus has been doing in your life since you placed your faith in Him.

Notice that this section is called “Since Then,” not “Everything Is Perfect Now.”

Following Jesus does not mean you never struggle, fail, experience pain, or have another difficult day. It means you no longer face those things without Him. Jesus forgives you, changes you, strengthens you, and leads you into a new way of living.

Share the difference He has made.

Has He given you peace, hope, direction, freedom, or purpose? Has He changed the way you treat people? Has He restored a relationship, helped you forgive, or given you strength to overcome something that once controlled you?

Here is how I would complete my story:

“Since then, Jesus has set my life on a completely different trajectory. The woman I once cheated on multiple times is now my wife and the mother of my children. The selfish ambition that once drove me is being replaced by a desire to love God and love people. Jesus has given my life purpose and is now using my story to help others.

“I still make mistakes, and God is still changing me. However, I now understand that following Jesus is not about earning my way to God. It is about receiving the grace Jesus made available to me, allowing Him to cleanse me from sin, and learning to walk in the new life He has given me. I would not have the life I have today without Jesus.”

That final sentence communicates the heart of my testimony:

I would not have the life I have today without Jesus.

| Keep Jesus at the Center

When sharing your testimony, it can be easy to spend most of the time talking about your past.

Your past provides important context, but it should not become the main focus. The goal is not to make people remember everything you did before following Jesus. The goal is to help them see what Jesus can do with a surrendered life.

Try to keep the “I Was” portion clear and relatively brief. Spend more time explaining how you encountered Jesus and what He has done since then.

Your testimony should point beyond you.

It should communicate, “If Jesus met me, forgave me, and began changing my life, He can do the same for you.”

You should also protect other people when sharing your story. If part of your testimony involves someone else’s failure, sin, or private experience, do not expose details that are not yours to share. You can be honest about what happened to you without publicly humiliating someone else.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you share your story with truth, humility, wisdom, and love.

| Prepare Your Story

Take a few minutes to write your testimony using the three-part framework.

I Was

Begin with this sentence:

“Before I encountered Jesus, I was...”

Describe what your life was like, what you were searching for, or what was missing. Keep this section focused and honest.

Questions to consider include:

What controlled my life?

Where did I search for identity or satisfaction?

What pain, fear, sin, or emptiness was I carrying?

What did I believe about God?

Why did I need Jesus?

Write two or three sentences that describe the most important part of your life before Jesus.

Then Jesus

Continue with this sentence:

“Then I encountered Jesus when...”

Describe the moment, process, conversation, church service, prayer, or relationship God used to draw you toward Him.

Questions to consider include:

How did I hear the gospel?

Who helped me understand Jesus?

What made me recognize my need for forgiveness?

When did faith become personal to me?

Why did I decide to trust Jesus?

Write two or three sentences describing how you encountered Jesus and chose to follow Him.

Since Then

Finish with this sentence:

“Since then, Jesus has...”

Describe what has changed and what He is still changing.

Questions to consider include:

What difference has Jesus made in my heart?

How has He changed my priorities, relationships, or decisions?

What has He helped me overcome?

What hope, peace, freedom, or purpose have I found?

What is He still teaching me?

Write two or three sentences explaining how your life is different because of Jesus.

Once you have written each section, read the entire testimony out loud. Your goal is to explain your story clearly in approximately two or three minutes.

Do not worry about memorizing every word. Remember the three parts and allow yourself to speak naturally:

I was.

Then Jesus.

Since then.

| Move From Your Story to His Story

Your testimony explains what Jesus has done for you, but you should also be prepared to explain what Jesus wants to do for the person listening.

The gospel means good news. It is the good news that God loves us, Jesus came to rescue us from sin, He died and rose again, and everyone who places their faith in Him can be forgiven and receive new life.

After sharing your testimony, you can transition by saying:

“For me, everything changed when I made the decision to surrender my life to Jesus. I understood that responding to Him was as simple as A-B-C: admit, believe, and confess.”

This gives you a simple way to explain the gospel.

A — Admit

We must admit that we have sinned and need God's forgiveness.

Romans 3:23 says:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

—Romans 3:23 NKJV

Sin is more than making a few mistakes. It is our decision to live independently from God and choose our own way over His. Every one of us has sinned, and none of us can repair our relationship with God through good behavior, religious activity, or personal effort.

The first step is admitting the truth: I have sinned, and I need a Savior.

B — Believe

We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for our sins, and that He rose from the dead.

Jesus lived the sinless life we could not live and died the death our sin deserved. On the cross, He carried our guilt and paid the price for our forgiveness. Three days later, He rose from the dead, defeating sin and death.

Salvation is not something we earn. It is a gift we receive through faith in Jesus.

C — Confess

We must confess Jesus as Lord, turn from our sin, and surrender our lives to Him.

Romans 10:9 says:

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

—Romans 10:9 NKJV

Confessing Jesus as Lord means more than repeating a sentence. It means placing your trust in Him and surrendering the direction of your life to Him.

Repentance means turning away from sin and turning toward God. It does not mean you will become perfect immediately. It means you have chosen a new direction, and you are trusting Jesus to forgive you, change you, and teach you how to follow Him.

| Inviting Someone to Follow Jesus

After explaining the gospel, you can ask a simple question:

"Would you like to ask Jesus to forgive your sins and become the Lord of your life?"

Do not pressure the person or try to force an emotional response. Your responsibility is to share the truth with love. The Holy Spirit is the One who draws people to Jesus.

If the person says yes, you can invite them to pray with you.

The words of a prayer do not save someone. Jesus saves us when we genuinely place our faith in Him. Prayer simply gives us a way to express that faith and surrender.

You can pray:

"Dear God, I admit that I have sinned and need Your forgiveness. I believe Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead. I repent of my sin and turn toward You. I confess Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Forgive me, give me new life, and fill me with the Holy Spirit. Help me follow You from this day forward. In Jesus' name, amen."

If you are sharing your story in a video or online, you can say:

"If you prayed that prayer and genuinely placed your faith in Jesus, let us know. Write, 'I just accepted Christ,' in the comments or send us a message so we can celebrate with you, pray for you, and help you take your next step."

If you are speaking with someone personally, celebrate their decision and help them understand what comes next. Encourage them to begin praying, reading the Bible, attending church, being baptized, and building relationships with other believers.

Do not only help someone make a decision. Help them begin following Jesus.

| Pray for One

You do not have to share your story with everyone at once.

Start with one person.

It could be a friend, family member, coworker, classmate, or neighbor. Ask God to place someone on your heart and begin praying for them consistently.

Pray that God would reveal His love to them. Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare their heart and give you an opportunity to encourage, listen to, serve, or invite them.

Pay attention to what is happening in their life. They may be carrying pain that you cannot see. They may be searching for hope, forgiveness, peace, purpose, or a place to belong.

You do not need to force a spiritual conversation. Love them genuinely. Listen to their story. Serve them consistently. When God opens the door, be ready to share your story.

You can also invite them to church.

Sometimes sharing your faith begins with a sentence as simple as:

"God has been doing something real in my life, and I would love for you to come to Vivid Church with me."

Do not underestimate what God can do through one invitation, one conversation, one prayer, or one act of kindness.

Someone prayed for you.

Someone invited you.

Someone shared the gospel with you.

Someone helped create an opportunity for you to encounter Jesus.

Now God wants to use you to do that for someone else.

| One More Over Comfort

At Vivid Church, one of our values is One More over comfort.

This means we are willing to move beyond what feels comfortable because there is always one more person who needs to experience the love and grace of Jesus.

There are people in your family who are searching for hope. There are people at your workplace carrying pain you may know nothing about. There are people in your neighborhood who feel alone. There are people throughout Orange County searching for peace, forgiveness, purpose, and a place to belong.

We know the One they are searching for.

His name is Jesus.

We never want to become so focused on ourselves that we forget the people who are still far from God. Jesus did not rescue us so that His grace would stop with us. He wants His love to flow through us and reach someone else.

That is why our mission at Vivid Church is reaching people and building lives.

We carry hope into hopeless places. We bring light into dark places. We make room for one more person to experience the same grace that changed our lives.

The conversation may feel uncomfortable. Your voice may shake. You may not know exactly how the other person will respond.

Share anyway.

You are not responsible for changing someone's heart. You are responsible for being faithful with the story God has given you.

The Holy Spirit will help you.

| Your Next Step: Write It, Practice It, and Share It

Your next step is to prepare your testimony.

Write your "I Was" section.

Write your "Then Jesus" section.

Write your "Since Then" section.

After you have written it, practice saying it out loud. Ask yourself whether someone who does not attend church would understand what you mean. Remove unfamiliar church language and explain your experience in a clear, natural way.

Try to keep your testimony to approximately two or three minutes. You can always share more if the conversation continues, but preparing a shorter version will help you communicate clearly when an opportunity appears unexpectedly.

Next, write down the name of one person who needs to experience the love of Jesus.

Begin praying for that person every day.

Ask God for an opportunity to listen to them, encourage them, serve them, invite them to church, or share your story. When the opportunity comes, trust the Holy Spirit and take the step.

Start with one.

Pray for one.

Invite one.

Share your story with one.

God changed your life for you, but He also wants to use your life to help change someone else's.

| Reflection Questions

1. What was your life like before you personally encountered Jesus?
2. What were you searching for before you found your hope in Him?
3. How did you first hear and understand the gospel?
4. Was there a specific moment when you decided to place your faith in Jesus?
5. Who did God use to help you encounter Him?
6. What has changed in your heart, priorities, relationships, or decisions since following Jesus?
7. What is Jesus still changing in your life?
8. Have you ever believed that your testimony was not dramatic enough to matter?
9. Which part of sharing your faith feels most intimidating to you?
10. Can you explain your story using "I Was," "Then Jesus," and "Since Then"?
11. Who is one person God may be asking you to begin praying for?
12. What practical way could you serve or encourage that person?
13. Is there someone you could invite to Vivid Church?
14. Are you prepared to explain the gospel using admit, believe, and confess?
15. What step can you take this week to move beyond comfort for the sake of one more person?

| Prayer Prompts

Take a few quiet moments and complete these prayers in your own words:

"Jesus, thank You for rescuing me from..."

"Father, thank You for using this person to help me..."

"Jesus, since meeting You, my life has changed by..."

"Holy Spirit, help me clearly communicate..."

"God, forgive me for allowing fear to keep me from..."

"Father, place one person on my heart who..."

"Holy Spirit, prepare an opportunity for me to..."

"Jesus, help my life show others that..."

"Father, give me courage to invite..."

"God, use my story to help someone..."

| Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for loving me and sending Jesus to rescue me. Thank You for meeting me in my sin, pain, confusion, and brokenness. Thank You that my past does not have the final word over my life.

Jesus, You are the hero of my story. Everything good You have done in me is the result of Your grace. Help me never become ashamed of the gospel or afraid to tell others what You have done.

Give me wisdom as I prepare my testimony. Help me honestly describe who I was, how I encountered You, and what You have been doing in my life since then. Keep me from glorifying my past, exaggerating my experiences, or pretending that I am perfect. Help every part of my story point people toward You.

Holy Spirit, give me courage when an opportunity comes. Help me listen before I speak, love people without an agenda, and recognize the doors You open. Give me the right words and help me trust You with the results.

Place one person on my heart. Show me how to pray for them, encourage them, serve them, and invite them. Prepare their heart to experience Your love.

Help me choose One More over comfort. Do not allow fear, awkwardness, or insecurity to keep me from sharing the hope I have found in Jesus.

Use my story to reach people and build lives. May someone else discover forgiveness, freedom, purpose, and new life because I was willing to tell them what You have done for me.

In Jesus' name, amen.

| Remember This

You do not need to be a pastor, Bible scholar, or professional speaker to tell someone about Jesus.

You simply need to share what He has done for you.

Your testimony can be prepared with three simple statements:

I was.

Then Jesus.

Since then.

Describe what your life was like before Jesus, explain how you encountered Him, and share what He has been doing in your life since then.

Your testimony is not about pretending you are perfect. It is about pointing people toward the perfect Savior who met you in your brokenness and began changing your life.

When God opens the door, move from your story to His story. Explain that we must admit we have sinned, believe that Jesus died and rose again, and confess Him as Lord as we turn from our sin and surrender our lives to Him.

You are not responsible for changing someone's heart. Your responsibility is to love people, share the truth, and remain faithful. The Holy Spirit will do what only He can do.

Start with one person.

Pray for one.

Invite one.

Share your story with one.

Your story matters because Jesus is the One who changed it.

—Pastor Joe



CHAPTER 07

Water Baptism

Krissy and I were baptized on the same day, which sounds like it should have been a perfectly spiritual and romantic moment. It was not.

We were fighting. I had done something stupid again—what it was, neither of us could probably tell you now—but we were both mad at each other as we prepared to be baptized. I am pretty sure Krissy was hoping the pastor might keep me under the water a little longer.

Even with all our unresolved issues, something about that moment became deeply personal for me. As I went beneath the water and came back up, I felt as though something had fallen off me. It was a weight I did not even realize I had been carrying.

Baptism is such a physical moment. You step into real water. Someone lowers you beneath it. Then you rise again, soaking wet, in front of other people. Yet that physical act tells a deeply spiritual story: the old life has been buried with Christ, and you are being raised to walk in newness of life.

Krissy and I did not come out of the water with every relationship problem solved. Baptism did not suddenly make either of us perfect. But we came out having publicly declared that our old lives would no longer define us. We belonged to Jesus, and we were choosing to follow Him—even while He was still changing us.

When you gave your life to Jesus, you made the most important decision of your life.

You chose to trust Him, receive His forgiveness, and begin following Him. In that moment, God began changing you from the inside out.

That does not mean you became perfect overnight. Following Jesus is a lifelong journey of becoming more like Him. As you gather with the church, spend time in prayer and worship, read the Bible, and learn to obey God, your life should gradually begin to look different.

Your desires begin to change. Your priorities begin to shift. You start recognizing habits, relationships, attitudes, entertainment, and environments that are pulling you away from God. Things that once seemed normal may no longer fit the new life Jesus is calling you to live.

This is part of becoming a disciple—a person who is learning to follow Jesus in every area of life.

One of the first steps Jesus asks every new believer to take is water baptism.

Water baptism is an outward expression of the inward transformation that began when you gave your life to Jesus. It is a public declaration that says:

My old life is gone.

I belong to Jesus.

I am choosing to follow Him.

Baptism is not merely a religious tradition or something reserved for people who have reached a certain level of spiritual maturity. It is a personal response of faith and obedience to Jesus.

If you have decided to follow Jesus, baptism is your next step.

| What Is Water Baptism?

The word baptism comes from a Greek word that means to immerse or submerge. In water baptism, a follower of Jesus is lowered beneath the water and then raised back up.

That physical action tells a spiritual story.

Baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It also represents what has happened in your life because you have placed your faith in Him.

Romans 6:4 says:

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

—Romans 6:4 NKJV

When you go beneath the water, it symbolizes your old life being buried with Christ. When you come out of the water, it symbolizes being raised to live a new life with Him.

You are declaring that the person you used to be no longer defines you. Your past no longer owns you. Your sins have been forgiven, your identity has been changed, and you now belong to Jesus.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

—2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV

Baptism gives you a visible moment to declare that spiritual reality.

You are not claiming that every struggle has disappeared. You are declaring that Jesus is now the Lord of your life and that you intend to follow Him wherever He leads.

| Baptism Does Not Save You

It is important to understand what baptism does and does not mean.

Baptism does not save you. Jesus saves you.

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is not something we earn through good behavior, church attendance, religious rituals, or water baptism. It is a gift we receive because of what Jesus accomplished through His death and resurrection.

Ephesians 2:8–9 says:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

—Ephesians 2:8–9 NKJV

The water does not wash away your sin. The blood of Jesus does that.

Baptism does not make you a Christian. It shows that you have become a Christian by placing your faith in Jesus.

We often explain baptism by comparing it to a wedding ring. My wedding ring does not make me married to Krissy. Our marriage began when we made a covenant with one another on our wedding day. Even on a day when I am not wearing my ring, I am still married to her.

The ring is a visible sign that I belong to someone and have entered a covenant relationship. In the same way, baptism does not create your salvation. You are saved when you place your faith in Jesus and surrender your life to Him.

Baptism is the outward sign of that inward decision. It tells the world, “I belong to Jesus.” The symbol matters because the relationship it represents matters.

We should never treat baptism as though it saves us, but we should not treat it as though it is unimportant either. Jesus instructed His followers to be baptized, and obedience matters.

| Jesus Gave Us the Example

Jesus Himself was baptized.

When I realized that Jesus Himself chose to be baptized, my response was simple: if Jesus was baptized, I sure knew I needed to be baptized too.

He had no sin to confess and did not need forgiveness. Yet before beginning His public ministry, Jesus went to John the Baptist and was baptized in the Jordan River.

Matthew 3:16–17 says:

“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

—Matthew 3:16–17 NKJV

Jesus did not ask us to take a step He was unwilling to take Himself.

His baptism marked a public moment of identification, surrender, and obedience to the Father. When we are baptized, we follow His example.

Jesus also commanded His followers to help others become disciples and baptize them.

Before returning to heaven, He said:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

—Matthew 28:19 NKJV

Baptism was not invented by a church denomination. It was commanded by Jesus.

That is why we believe every person who has placed their faith in Jesus should be baptized. It is one of the first opportunities we have to say, “Jesus, I trust You enough to obey You.”

| The Pattern of the Early Church

Throughout the New Testament, people who believed in Jesus responded by being baptized.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached the gospel, and thousands of people responded. Acts 2:41 says:

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized.”

—Acts 2:41 NKJV

When Philip shared the gospel with an Ethiopian man, the man believed and immediately asked to be baptized. Acts 8:36 records his response:

“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

—Acts 8:36 NKJV

When the jailer in Philippi placed his faith in Jesus, he and the members of his household who believed were baptized that same night.

Again and again, the pattern is clear:

People heard the good news about Jesus.

They believed.

Then they were baptized.

They did not wait until they knew the entire Bible. They did not wait until they had overcome every struggle. They did not wait until they felt spiritually impressive.

They believed in Jesus and responded in obedience.

That same pattern continues today.

| Going Public With Your Faith

Faith in Jesus is personal, but it was never intended to remain private.

Baptism is your opportunity to go public with your faith.

It is a moment when you stand before your church family and declare, “I have decided to follow Jesus.”

Jesus said:

“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”

—Matthew 10:32 NKJV

There is something powerful about publicly identifying yourself with Jesus.

For some people, this may feel exciting. For others, it may feel intimidating. You may feel nervous about being in front of people, going underwater, or sharing part of your story.

Those feelings are understandable. Courage does not mean you feel no fear. Courage means you choose obedience even when you feel nervous.

You may also wonder whether your story is dramatic enough.

Maybe you did not come out of addiction, survive a life-threatening crisis, or experience a sudden emotional moment. Perhaps you simply recognized that you needed Jesus and chose to follow Him.

That is still a miracle.

Every person who moves from spiritual death to spiritual life has a story worth celebrating. You do not need a dramatic past for God's grace to be powerful.

Your baptism is not a performance. It is a declaration.

It says, "Jesus saved me, Jesus changed me, and my life belongs to Him."

| A Picture of Death and New Life

Baptism gives us a vivid picture of what Jesus has done in us.

Before Christ, sin separated us from God. We could not rescue ourselves, clean ourselves up, or become righteous through our own effort. Jesus came to do what we could never do.

He lived the sinless life we could not live. He died the death our sins deserved. He was buried, and on the third day, He rose again in victory.

When we place our faith in Him, we become united with Him.

His death paid for our sins.

His resurrection becomes the source of our new life.

Baptism acts out that story. Going under the water pictures burial. Coming out of the water pictures resurrection.

Colossians 2:12 describes believers as:

"Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God."

—Colossians 2:12 NKJV

You go into the water carrying the story of who you were, and you come out declaring who you now are in Christ.

Your shame is no longer your identity.

Your failure is no longer your identity.

Your addiction is no longer your identity.

Your family history is no longer your identity.

Your worst decision is no longer your identity.

You belong to Jesus.

Baptism does not erase the memory of your past, but it publicly declares that your past no longer has the final word. Jesus does.

| Your Old Life Is Being Left Behind

The new life Jesus gives us should affect the way we live.

Baptism is not a promise that you will never struggle again. It is a declaration that you will no longer make peace with the things Jesus died to free you from.

Before following Jesus, you may have built your life around your own desires. You decided what was right, what was wrong, and which direction you wanted to go.

Following Jesus means surrendering that authority to Him.

You are saying, "Jesus, You are not merely part of my life. You are Lord of my life."

That surrender will touch every area: your relationships, words, sexuality, finances, work, habits, priorities, and future.

Some changes may happen immediately. Other areas will take time as the Holy Spirit works in you. You may still face temptation. You may make mistakes. You may need help breaking old patterns and healing from past wounds.

That does not mean your decision was not real. It means you are learning how to live from your new identity.

When you fall, you do not have to return to your old life. You can confess your sin, receive God's forgiveness, and continue following Jesus.

Baptism marks the direction of your life.

You are not declaring, "I have arrived."

You are declaring, "I have decided whom I will follow."

| Do I Need to Be Perfect First?

One of the most common reasons people delay baptism is that they do not feel ready.

They think they need to understand more, overcome a particular habit, or become a better Christian first.

But baptism is not a graduation ceremony for people who have mastered Christianity. It is a beginning step for people who have decided to follow Jesus.

You do not need to know everything about the Bible.

You do not need to have your entire life figured out.

You do not need to be free from every struggle.

You do not need to feel spiritually mature.

You simply need to understand the gospel, place your faith in Jesus, and choose to follow Him.

If perfection were required, no one would ever be baptized.

Baptism is not about showing everyone how good you have become. It is about showing everyone how good Jesus has been to you.

Your confidence is not in your ability to live perfectly. Your confidence is in the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to continue transforming you.

Philippians 1:6 says:

“He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

—Philippians 1:6 NKJV

God is not finished with you.

You are being baptized because His work has begun, not because His work is complete.

| What If I Was Baptized as a Baby?

Some people were baptized or sprinkled as infants because their parents wanted to honor God and raise them in the faith. That decision may have been a meaningful expression of your family's love for God.

However, throughout the New Testament, baptism follows a person's decision to believe in and follow Jesus.

An infant cannot personally understand the gospel, repent, or make a public declaration of faith. That is why we encourage people who were baptized as babies to be baptized after personally deciding to follow Jesus.

Choosing to be baptized now does not have to dishonor what your parents did. You can be grateful that they desired to point you toward God while also taking ownership of your faith as an adult.

This baptism becomes your declaration.

You are saying, “This is no longer only what my family believed for me. I have personally decided to follow Jesus.”

| What If I Have Already Been Baptized?

If you were baptized after personally placing your faith in Jesus, you generally do not need to be baptized again every time you recommit your life or walk through a new season.

Your baptism does not become invalid because you struggled, drifted, or experienced a period of spiritual weakness. God's grace is greater than your failure.

You may need to repent and return to Jesus, but repentance does not always require another baptism.

However, if you were baptized before you understood the gospel or before you had personally decided to follow Jesus, you may want to be baptized now as a genuine expression of your faith.

Perhaps you participated because your family expected it, your friends were doing it, or you felt pressured. Maybe you did not understand what baptism represented. Or perhaps you were far from God at the time and have only recently made a sincere decision to surrender your life to Jesus.

In that situation, being baptized now can mark the faith you have personally chosen.

If you are unsure, talk with one of our pastors or leaders. We would be honored to listen to your story and help you decide your next step without pressure or judgment.

| What Happens at a Baptism?

At Vivid Church, baptism is simple, meaningful, and full of celebration.

Before you are baptized, someone from our team will connect with you and explain what to expect. You will have an opportunity to ask questions, share your story, and understand the meaning of the decision you are making.

On the day of your baptism, you will be lowered briefly beneath the water and raised back up in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

You do not have to be a strong swimmer. You do not have to prepare a sermon. You do not need to worry about making the moment perfect.

Our team will walk with you through every part of it.

Wear clothing that can get wet and bring a dry change of clothes and a towel. Our team will give you any additional instructions before the baptism.

Most importantly, invite the people you love.

Invite your family, friends, coworkers, and anyone who has been part of your journey. Your baptism gives you an opportunity to show them what Jesus has done in your life.

Someone you invite may be far from God. Seeing you baptized and hearing your story could become part of how God reaches them.

Your obedience may encourage someone else to take their next step.

| Baptism Is a Celebration

At Vivid Church, we love celebrating baptisms.

We do not believe baptism should feel like a quiet religious ceremony. It is a celebration of new life.

Jesus told stories about a lost sheep being found, a lost coin being recovered, and a lost son coming home. Each story ends with celebration because heaven rejoices when people return to God.

Luke 15:10 says:

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

—Luke 15:10 NKJV

If heaven celebrates changed lives, the church should celebrate too.

That is why we cheer when someone comes out of the water. We are not trying to draw attention away from God. We are celebrating the grace of God at work in a person's life.

Every baptism tells a story:

Jesus still saves.

Jesus still forgives.

Jesus still makes people new.

When you hear people cheering, remember that they are not judging your past. They are celebrating your future.

They are saying, "You are not alone. We are with you. Welcome to the family."

| A Marker You Can Remember

Baptism becomes a spiritual marker in your journey.

There may be days in the future when following Jesus feels difficult. You may face temptation, disappointment, questions, or seasons when God feels distant. In those moments, you can remember your baptism.

You can remember the day you went beneath the water and publicly declared that your life belongs to Jesus.

You can remind yourself:

I have been made new.

My past has been forgiven.

I belong to Jesus.

I am not going back to my old life.

God is still working in me.

The moment itself is not magical, but the decision it represents is powerful.

Throughout the Bible, God's people created markers to remember what He had done. Those reminders helped them remain faithful when circumstances became difficult.

Your baptism can become one of those markers.

It is a moment you can look back on and say, "That was the day I publicly declared that Jesus is my Savior and Lord."

| Do Not Allow Fear to Delay Obedience

Fear often appears when we are about to take an important step.

You may think:

What will people think of me?

What if I become emotional?

What if I am uncomfortable in front of everyone?

What if my family does not understand?

What if I still have questions?

Do not allow fear to make your decisions for you.

You do not need to wait until you feel completely confident. Confidence often grows after we take the step of obedience, not before.

You may also be tempted to delay baptism because life feels busy. You may tell yourself that you will do it next time, when the schedule is easier or when you feel more prepared.

Be careful not to turn “later” into “never.”

Delayed obedience is still disobedience.

If Jesus is asking you to take this step, trust Him. The One who saved you will also give you the courage to identify yourself with Him.

Your fear may be real, but it does not have to be in charge.

| Your Next Step: Say Yes to Baptism

If you have placed your faith in Jesus but have not been baptized since making that decision, your next step is clear.

Let us know that you are ready.

You can fill out the baptism form through Church Center, stop by the Welcome Table after a Sunday service, or speak with someone on our team.

You do not need to have every question answered before beginning the conversation. Let us help you understand what baptism means, prepare for the day, and walk with you through the entire experience.

Tell someone you trust that you are ready to be baptized. Invite them to pray for you and celebrate with you.

Then begin thinking about your story:

What was your life like before you surrendered to Jesus?

What helped you recognize that you needed Him?

How has Jesus begun changing your life?

You do not need a long or dramatic answer. Your story can be simple:

"I realized I needed Jesus. I placed my faith in Him, and today I am being baptized because I have decided to follow Him."

That is enough.

You have made the decision to follow Jesus.

Now it is time to go public with your faith.

| Reflection Questions

1. What did you previously believe about water baptism?
2. Have you personally decided to place your faith in Jesus and follow Him?
3. What does the picture of being buried and raised with Christ mean to you?
4. Is there any fear, confusion, or hesitation keeping you from being baptized?
5. Have you been baptized before? If so, was it your personal decision after placing your faith in Jesus?
6. What part of your old life is Jesus asking you to leave behind?
7. In what ways has Jesus already begun changing your desires, priorities, or decisions?
8. Who would you want to invite to celebrate your baptism with you?
9. How would you describe what Jesus has done in your life?

| Prayer Prompts

Take a few quiet moments and complete these prayers in your own words:

"Jesus, thank You for saving me from..."

"Jesus, I surrender this part of my life to You..."

"Father, give me the courage to..."

"God, help me leave behind..."

"Holy Spirit, continue changing..."

"Jesus, I want people to know..."

"Father, remind me that my identity is..."

| Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for loving me and sending Jesus to save me. Thank You that my salvation does not depend on my goodness, my effort, or my ability to become perfect. I am saved by Your grace through faith in Jesus.

Thank You that because of Jesus, my sins can be forgiven and my life can be made new. My past no longer has the final word. My failures do not define me. I belong to You.

Give me the courage to follow Jesus in every area of my life. Show me anything I need to leave behind, and give me the strength to obey You. Continue changing my desires, decisions, relationships, habits, and priorities.

If baptism is my next step, help me not to delay because of fear, nervousness, or the feeling that I am not ready. Remind me that baptism is not a declaration that I am perfect. It is a declaration that Jesus is my Savior and Lord.

Help me go public with my faith. Use my story to encourage others and point people toward Jesus. Let my baptism become a marker I can remember throughout my life—a reminder that my old life is gone and that I have been raised to walk in newness of life.

I have decided to follow Jesus. Give me the faith and courage to take my next step.

In Jesus' name, amen.

| Remember This

Water baptism is an outward expression of an inward transformation.

It symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. When you go beneath the water, it represents your old life being buried with Christ. When you come out of the water, it represents being raised to live a new life with Him.

Baptism does not save you. Jesus saves you.

Baptism is your response to the salvation you have already received through faith. It is an act of obedience and a public declaration that your life belongs to Jesus.

You do not need to know everything.

You do not need to overcome every struggle first.

You do not need to become perfect.

You simply need to have made the decision to follow Jesus.

At Vivid Church, we will not allow you to take this step alone. Our church family will stand with you, pray for you, and celebrate what God is doing in your life.

As your pastor, I cannot wait to see you come out of the water and hear our church celebrate your new life in Christ.

You have decided to follow Jesus.

Now it is time to go public with your faith.

—Pastor Joe



CHAPTER 08

Love Like Jesus

Throughout this journey, you have learned what it means to begin following Jesus.

You have learned about the decision to surrender your life to Him. You have discovered how the Holy Spirit helps you, why the Bible must become the foundation of your life, how prayer and worship help you build a relationship with God, why you need the church, how to share your story with others, and why baptism matters.

Now we come to one of the clearest marks of a person who follows Jesus:

Love.

Following Jesus should change what you believe, but it should also change how you treat people.

It should affect how you speak to your spouse, respond to your children, treat your coworkers, interact with strangers, handle conflict, forgive those who hurt you, and care for people who cannot do anything for you in return.

Throughout Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we see Jesus loving people.

He loved the overlooked.

He loved the broken.

He loved the rejected.

He loved the difficult.

He loved people whom everyone else had already given up on.

Jesus consistently moved toward the people others avoided. He touched those whom society considered unclean, welcomed children when others treated them as interruptions, ate with people who had terrible reputations, defended those who were publicly humiliated, and showed compassion to those who were suffering.

Jesus did not merely talk about love.

He demonstrated it.

Now He calls us to do the same.

| Love Is the Evidence

On the night before Jesus was crucified, He gave His disciples a new commandment:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you.”

—John 13:34 NKJV

Jesus did not simply tell His disciples to love people according to their own understanding of love. He gave them a standard:

“As I have loved you.”

This changes everything.

We often love people based on how they treat us. We are kind to those who are kind to us. We remain patient with people who do not test our patience. We forgive when the offense feels small, serve when it is convenient, and give when we know our generosity will be appreciated.

Jesus loved differently.

He loved people who misunderstood Him, doubted Him, abandoned Him, betrayed Him, denied Him, and crucified Him.

He did not wait for people to deserve His love.

He loved first.

Romans 5:8 says:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

—Romans 5:8 NKJV

God did not wait for you to clean yourself up before loving you. He did not wait until you understood the Bible, broke every bad habit, repaired every relationship, or proved that you could behave correctly.

Jesus came for you while you were still lost.

He loved you in your sin, confusion, pain, and brokenness. His love met you where you were, but it did not leave you there.

That is the kind of love He calls you to show others.

| Love Is More Than a Feeling

Our culture often describes love primarily as an emotion.

Feelings are an important part of love, but biblical love is much deeper than an emotion. Feelings can change quickly. Some days you will feel affectionate, patient, and generous. Other days you may feel tired, frustrated, disappointed, or offended.

If love depends entirely on how you feel, it will disappear whenever loving someone becomes difficult.

Jesus teaches us that love is also a decision and an action.

Love forgives.

Love serves.

Love shows patience.

Love chooses grace.

Love speaks the truth.

Love gives generously.

Love remains present when walking away would be easier.

Love notices needs and responds.

First John 3:18 says:

"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

—1 John 3:18 NKJV

It is easy to tell someone that you love them. It is more difficult to slow down, listen carefully, sacrifice your time, apologize sincerely, forgive completely, or serve without receiving recognition.

Real love eventually becomes visible.

If your faith never changes the way you treat people, something is missing. The closer you grow to Jesus, the more His love should begin flowing through your life.

| Grace and Truth

Loving people does not mean agreeing with everything they believe or approving of everything they do.

Jesus was full of both grace and truth.

He welcomed sinners, but He did not pretend that sin was harmless. He offered forgiveness, but He also invited people into a new way of living. He showed compassion without compromising truth.

We must learn to do the same.

Some people believe that love means never confronting harmful or sinful behavior. Others believe that defending truth gives them permission to treat people harshly.

Jesus shows us a better way.

Truth without grace can become cold, condemning, and self-righteous. Grace without truth can become shallow and unwilling to help people change.

Jesus offers both.

Loving someone may mean encouraging them, serving them, or patiently walking beside them. At other times, love may require an honest conversation, a healthy boundary, or the courage to say that something is wrong.

Love does not require you to remain in an abusive, dangerous, or consistently destructive situation. You can forgive someone while maintaining appropriate boundaries. You can desire their restoration without giving them unrestricted access to your life.

Biblical love seeks what is truly good for another person. It does not ignore sin, excuse abuse, or pretend that destructive behavior is acceptable.

Love tells the truth, but it tells the truth with humility, wisdom, and compassion.

| Loving Difficult People

It is easy to talk about loving people in general.

The real test comes when we have to love a particular person who has hurt, disappointed, irritated, or offended us.

You may have someone in your life who constantly challenges your patience. Perhaps it is a family member who knows exactly what to say to upset you, a coworker who makes your job more difficult, a neighbor who frustrates you, or someone at church whose personality is very different from yours.

Jesus does not call you to love only those who are easy to love.

He says:

“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you.”

—Matthew 5:44 NKJV

This does not mean you will immediately feel affection toward everyone who has hurt you. It means you refuse to allow hatred, revenge, or bitterness to control your heart.

You can pray for someone even when you do not trust them.

You can forgive someone while still requiring accountability.

You can treat someone with dignity without pretending the relationship is healthy.

You can release your desire for revenge without denying the pain they caused.

When you love a difficult person, you are not declaring that their behavior was acceptable. You are declaring that their behavior will not determine the condition of your heart.

This kind of love is not produced through willpower alone. You need the Holy Spirit to help you.

Ask Him to give you patience when you want to react, wisdom when you do not know what to say, courage when a boundary is necessary, and compassion when you are tempted to become bitter.

| Forgiven People Forgive People

One of the most powerful expressions of love is forgiveness.

Everyone who lives in relationship with other people will eventually be hurt. Someone may betray your trust, speak carelessly, make a decision that affects you, or fail to show up when you need them.

Forgiveness does not mean pretending that nothing happened. It does not mean that trust is instantly restored or that consequences disappear. Forgiveness and reconciliation are connected, but they are not identical.

Forgiveness can begin in your heart even when the other person has not apologized. Reconciliation requires honesty, repentance, and participation from both people. Trust may need to be rebuilt gradually through consistent behavior.

Forgiveness means surrendering your right to revenge and refusing to allow bitterness to become your prison.

Ephesians 4:32 says:

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

—Ephesians 4:32 NKJV

We forgive because we have been forgiven.

That does not make forgiveness easy. Some wounds are deep, and healing may require time, prayer, wise counsel, professional help, and healthy boundaries.

Forgiveness may not be a one-time emotional moment. You may need to surrender the offense to God repeatedly whenever the memory returns.

However, every time you release bitterness, you are choosing freedom.

You are saying, “What happened to me was wrong, but I will not allow it to determine who I become.”

| Love Begins with the People Closest to You

Sometimes it is easier to show kindness to a stranger than to love the people in your own home.

We can be patient in public and harsh in private. We can serve people at church while neglecting our spouse. We can speak encouragingly to coworkers and then become impatient with our children.

But the people closest to us should experience the love of Jesus through us too.

Your home is one of your most important places of ministry.

If you are married, loving like Jesus means learning to listen, serve, forgive, communicate honestly, and place your spouse's well-being above selfishness. It means refusing to keep score and being willing to apologize when you are wrong.

If you are a parent, loving like Jesus means being present, patient, consistent, and willing to model the faith you want your children to develop. Your children will learn about God not only through what you say but also through how you live.

If you live with relatives, roommates, or friends, love is demonstrated through everyday decisions: sharing responsibility, showing consideration, keeping your word, resolving conflict, and treating people with respect.

The people closest to you do not need you to be perfect.

They need you to be genuine.

They need to see you admit when you are wrong, ask for forgiveness, pray when you are overwhelmed, and continue allowing Jesus to change you.

Do not become so busy trying to show the world the love of Jesus that you forget to show His love to the people in your own home.

| Slow Down Enough to See People

There are opportunities to love people all around you every day.

The question is whether you will slow down enough to notice them.

Jesus was never too busy to see the person in front of Him. Even when He was traveling somewhere important, He noticed people others ignored.

He saw Zacchaeus in a tree.

He heard blind Bartimaeus crying from the side of the road.

He noticed the woman who touched the edge of His clothing in a crowd.

He welcomed children whom His disciples attempted to send away.

Jesus paid attention.

Loving people often begins by noticing them.

You may notice that a coworker who is normally talkative has become quiet. You may recognize that a neighbor needs help carrying something. You may see a parent at church who appears overwhelmed. You may remember that someone recently experienced a loss and needs encouragement.

You do not have to solve every problem.

Sometimes love looks like listening without rushing.

Sometimes it looks like remembering someone's name.

Sometimes it means sending a thoughtful text, bringing someone a meal, offering to pray, helping with a practical need, or simply sitting with someone who is hurting.

Small acts of love may feel insignificant to you, but they can become powerful reminders to another person that God sees them.

| Serving Is Love in Action

Jesus said:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."

—Mark 10:45 NKJV

Jesus deserved to be served, yet He chose to serve others.

He washed His disciples' feet. He fed hungry people. He welcomed children. He touched those others avoided. Ultimately, He gave His life for us.

When we serve, we become more like Him.

Serving is not about receiving recognition, earning spiritual status, or proving our importance. It is about using what God has given us to help someone else.

You may serve in children's ministry and teach a child that Jesus loves them.

You may greet someone at the door and help them feel comfortable enough to stay.

You may set up a chair that is eventually occupied by someone who gives their life to Jesus.

You may operate a camera that allows someone at home to hear the gospel.

You may pray with a person who arrived feeling hopeless.

You may help a family in need, serve at a community outreach, or quietly complete a task that most people never notice.

You may never see the complete impact of what you do.

God sees it.

No act of service is insignificant when it helps someone experience the love of Jesus.

At Vivid Church, we call the people who serve our church and community the Dream Team. Joining the Dream Team is not simply about filling an empty position. It is an opportunity to use your gifts, experiences, personality, and abilities to serve people and make a difference.

You have something to contribute.

You have a part to play.

| Generosity Is an Expression of Love

Love also affects the way we use our resources.

John 3:16 tells us that God loved the world and, because He loved, He gave.

Generosity flows from love.

God may use your time, finances, possessions, experience, or influence to meet someone else's need. You may be able to purchase groceries for a family, support the work of the church, help fund an outreach, provide transportation, or give something you no longer need.

Generosity is not measured only by the size of the gift. It is measured by the willingness of the heart.

You do not need to be wealthy to become generous.

You can share what you have.

You can give your time.

You can open your home.

You can offer encouragement.

You can use your abilities.

You can support the mission of reaching people and building lives.

Generosity reminds us that everything we have ultimately belongs to God. We are stewards of the time, resources, and opportunities He has placed in our hands.

When we become generous, we loosen the grip of selfishness and allow God's love to move through us.

| Love Crosses Boundaries

Jesus did not limit His love to people who looked like Him, thought like Him, or came from the same background.

In John 4, He spoke with a Samaritan woman when cultural expectations said He should avoid her. In Luke 10, He told the story of a Samaritan who showed mercy to an injured man whom others passed by. Throughout His ministry, Jesus crossed social, religious, and cultural boundaries to reach people.

Following Jesus will sometimes require you to love people who are different from you.

They may have a different background, political perspective, culture, personality, income level, or life experience. They may not understand your faith. They may live in ways you would not choose.

You do not have to abandon biblical conviction to treat someone with dignity.

Every person you meet was created in the image of God and is someone Jesus died to save.

Love listens before making assumptions.

Love refuses to reduce a person to a label.

Love recognizes that every person has a story you may not know.

Love does not ask, "Are they like me?"

Love asks, "How would Jesus treat them?"

The church should be one of the clearest demonstrations that Jesus can bring different people together and teach them to become a family.

| Love and the Mission of Vivid Church

At Vivid Church, our mission is reaching people and building lives.

We cannot reach people without loving people.

We cannot build lives without being willing to walk with people.

Reaching people requires us to move beyond ourselves. It means noticing those who are far from God, creating room for one more person, and being willing to go where people are.

Building lives requires patience. People rarely change all at once. They need encouragement, truth, prayer, relationships, and opportunities to take their next step.

Love does not only celebrate someone's decision to follow Jesus.

Love stays long enough to help them grow.

Love helps someone learn to pray.

Love answers questions.

Love encourages baptism.

Love invites someone into community.

Love serves beside them.

Love believes that God is still working even when progress feels slow.

This is why every part of the church matters. It takes people who are willing to pray, give, serve, invite, encourage, teach, lead, listen, and show up consistently.

Together, we can create a church where people encounter Jesus, experience freedom, discover their purpose, and make a difference.

| Your Life Can Change Your Family

The decision you made to follow Jesus may not only change your life.

It can change your family.

It can change your children.

It can affect generations that have not yet been born.

As you follow Jesus, the people closest to you will watch your life.

They will see how you respond when things go wrong.

They will see how you forgive.

They will see how you pray.

They will see how you serve.

They will see how you treat people who cannot benefit you.

They will see whether your faith is something you only talk about or something you actually live.

You may be the first person in your family to follow Jesus, but you do not have to be the last.

God can use your decision to begin a new legacy.

Perhaps anger, addiction, abandonment, pride, bitterness, or broken relationships have been repeated throughout your family's history. In Jesus, those patterns do not have to continue.

You can become the person who chooses forgiveness.

You can become the parent who prays.

You can become the spouse who serves.

You can become the family member who brings peace into conflict.

You can become the person who points the next generation toward Jesus.

This does not mean you will never make a mistake. It means that when you fail, you return to Jesus, take responsibility, receive His grace, and continue growing.

Your family does not need you to pretend you are perfect.

They need to see what it looks like when an imperfect person genuinely follows Jesus.

| Becoming More Like Jesus

Spiritual maturity is not measured only by how much of the Bible you know, how long you pray, or how many church services you attend.

Those practices matter, but they should produce something within you.

They should help you become more like Jesus.

Galatians 5:22–23 describes the fruit the Holy Spirit produces in our lives:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

—Galatians 5:22–23 NKJV

Notice that love comes first.

The more you walk with the Holy Spirit, the more His character should become visible in your relationships.

You should become more patient, not more easily offended.

More compassionate, not more judgmental.

More generous, not more selfish.

More forgiving, not more bitter.

More humble, not more prideful.

This growth does not happen overnight. Becoming like Jesus is a lifelong process.

There will be moments when you recognize that your response did not reflect Him. You may lose your patience, speak carelessly, ignore someone's need, or allow selfishness to influence a decision.

When that happens, do not hide from God or surrender to shame.

Return to Him.

Confess what happened.

Receive His forgiveness.

Apologize when necessary.

Ask the Holy Spirit to change you.

Then take another step.

Following Jesus is not about never failing. It is about continuing to surrender every area of your life to Him.

| Do Not Stop Here

Completing these eight chapters is worth celebrating, but this is not the finish line.

This is your starting point.

You have begun building a foundation, but foundations are built so that something can be constructed upon them.

Keep attending church consistently.

Keep praying.

Keep worshipping.

Keep reading your Bible.

Take your next step through water baptism.

Go through Starting Point.

Join a small group.

Find your place on the Dream Team.

Begin using your gifts to serve others.

Share your story.

Keep becoming more like Jesus every day.

At Vivid Church, we want to help you know God, find freedom, discover your purpose, and make a difference.

Knowing God is where the journey begins, but He does not want you to remain where you started.

He wants to bring healing into the broken areas of your life. He wants to free you from the sin, shame, fear, and patterns that have held you back. He wants to reveal how He has designed you and show you the purpose He has placed within you.

Then He wants to use your life to make a difference.

The grace you have received can become grace you extend to someone else.

The encouragement you have received can become encouragement you give.

The freedom you experience can become a testimony that gives someone else hope.

The love of Jesus has reached you.

Now His love can flow through you.

| Your Final Challenge: Love One Person

Ask God to show you one person you can love in a practical way today.

Do not begin with a vague goal to become a more loving person someday.

Begin with someone specific.

Maybe you need to encourage someone who feels forgotten.

Maybe you need to forgive someone who hurt you.

Perhaps you need to apologize because you were wrong.

You may need to serve someone, give generously, listen patiently, make a phone call, send a message, bring a meal, or simply remain present during a difficult moment.

Ask:

“God, who needs to experience Your love through me today?”

Then slow down and listen.

When He places someone on your heart, take the step.

Do not wait until you feel completely ready. Do not assume someone else will do it. Do not underestimate what God can accomplish through a small act of obedience.

Love is not only something we feel.

Love is something we do.

| Your Next Step: Build a Life of Love

One loving action matters, but Jesus is inviting you into more than a single moment.

He wants to build a life of love within you.

Begin each day by asking the Holy Spirit to help you see people the way Jesus sees them. Ask Him to make you aware of needs you would normally overlook.

Before reacting in anger, pause and ask what love requires.

When someone shares their pain, listen before attempting to fix them.

When you recognize a need, respond if God has given you the ability to help.

When someone hurts you, take the pain to Jesus before allowing bitterness to take root.

When you make a mistake, apologize quickly and sincerely.

When you see someone standing alone, move toward them.

When you have an opportunity to serve, do not wait for recognition.

When God blesses you, look for a way to become a blessing.

These small, consistent choices will shape the person you are becoming.

You may never know the complete impact of your love. A conversation you barely remember may become the encouragement someone needed to keep going. A child you served may remember the truth you taught years later. A person you invited to church may eventually surrender their life to Jesus. A family pattern you chose to break may change the direction of generations.

God sees every act of love offered in His name.

Nothing surrendered to Him is wasted.

| Reflection Questions

1. When you think about the way Jesus has loved you, what stands out most?
2. How has your understanding of love changed since beginning a relationship with Jesus?
3. Do you tend to think of love primarily as a feeling or as a decision expressed through action?
4. Who are the people you find most difficult to love?
5. Is there someone you need to forgive or a past offense you need to surrender to God?
6. Is there a relationship in which forgiveness is possible but wisdom and boundaries are still necessary?
7. Are the people closest to you experiencing the love of Jesus through the way you treat them?
8. Is there someone to whom you need to apologize?
9. When was the last time you slowed down enough to notice someone else's need?
10. What gifts, resources, time, or abilities has God given you that could be used to serve someone?
11. How could joining the Dream Team help you put love into action?
12. How has generosity been an expression of love in your life?
13. Are there people you have judged or avoided because they are different from you?
14. What family pattern could God begin changing through your decision to follow Jesus?
15. Which fruit of the Spirit do you most need the Holy Spirit to develop in you?
16. What is one practical way you can love someone today?
17. Which next step from this eight-day journey do you need to take now?
18. What kind of spiritual legacy do you want your life to create?

| Prayer Prompts

Take a few quiet moments and complete these prayers in your own words:

"Jesus, thank You for loving me when..."

"Father, help me receive Your love in the area where..."

"Holy Spirit, teach me to love people by..."

"God, forgive me for the way I have treated..."

"Jesus, help me forgive..."

"Father, give me wisdom about the boundary I need to..."

"Holy Spirit, help me notice..."

"God, show me how I can serve..."

"Father, use my resources to..."

"Jesus, help my family see You through..."

"Holy Spirit, develop greater patience, kindness, and self-control in..."

"God, show me one person I can love today by..."

| Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for loving me before I knew how to love You. Thank You for sending Jesus while I was still lost, sinful, and broken. I did not earn Your love, and I could never deserve it. You gave it freely through Jesus.

Help me understand how deeply I am loved by You. Heal the places in my heart that still struggle to receive Your grace. Let Your love become the foundation from which I live.

Jesus, teach me to love people the way You have loved me.

Help me love through both my words and my actions. Make me patient with difficult people, compassionate toward those who are hurting, generous with what You have given me, and willing to serve when no one is watching.

Forgive me for the moments when I have been selfish, impatient, judgmental, harsh, or too busy to notice the people around me. Show me where I need to apologize, forgive, serve, or make something right.

Give me wisdom to hold grace and truth together. Help me never use truth as an excuse for cruelty or grace as an excuse to ignore what is harmful. Teach me to speak honestly with humility and compassion.

Holy Spirit, produce Your fruit in my life. Make me more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. When my natural response does not reflect Jesus, help me pause, surrender, and allow You to lead me.

Bring healing to the relationships that can be restored. Help me forgive those who have hurt me without ignoring wisdom, accountability, or necessary boundaries. Free my heart from bitterness and my mind from the desire for revenge.

Help the people closest to me experience Your love through my life. Make me a more loving spouse, parent, relative, friend, neighbor, coworker, and member of my church family.

Use my life to begin a new spiritual legacy. Break unhealthy patterns that have traveled through my family, and help me model what it looks like to follow Jesus with honesty and humility. Let the generations after me know You because I decided to surrender my life to You.

Show me where I can serve. Reveal the gifts, abilities, experiences, time, and resources You have placed within me. Help me use them to reach people and build lives.

Thank You for everything You have taught me throughout this journey. Give me the strength to continue praying, worshiping, reading Your Word, following the Holy Spirit, staying connected to the church, sharing my story, and loving people.

I know this is not the finish line.

This is my starting point.

Show me one person I can love in a practical way today. When You reveal that person, give me the courage to take the step.

Let my life point people toward Jesus.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Remember This

The clearest evidence that you are becoming more like Jesus is not simply that you know more about Him.

It is that you are learning to love like Him.

Jesus loved the overlooked, the broken, the rejected, and the difficult. He moved toward the people others avoided, served those who could not repay Him, forgave those who hurt Him, and gave His life for people who had not earned His grace.

That is how He loved you.

Now He calls you to allow that same love to flow through you.

Love is patient.

Love serves.

Love forgives.

Love tells the truth with grace.

Love gives generously.

Love slows down enough to see people.

Love moves beyond comfort for the sake of one more.

You will not do this perfectly. There will be moments when you fail, react selfishly, or overlook an opportunity. When that happens, return to Jesus. Receive His forgiveness, learn from the moment, and continue growing.

These eight days were never meant to give you every answer about following Jesus.

They were designed to help you begin.

Keep building your relationship with God.

Keep allowing Him to bring freedom into your life.

Keep discovering how He has designed you.

Keep using your life to make a difference.

Ask God to show you one person you can love today.

Then take the step.

Your life is being changed.

Your purpose is being revealed.

Your story is just getting started.

—Pastor Joe



YOUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

Take Your Next Step

| Keep gathering

Attend church consistently and build relationships with people who will encourage your faith.

| Be baptized

If you have decided to follow Jesus and have not been baptized, make your faith public through water baptism.

| Go through Starting Point

Discover who Vivid Church is, how God designed you, and how your purpose can come alive in community.

| Join a small group

Find freedom and grow through honest relationships with other believers.

| Serve on the Dream Team

Use your gifts to help reach people, build lives, and make a difference.



WELCOME HOME

You Don't Have to Follow Jesus Alone.

Vivid Church exists to reach people and build lives. We want to help you know God, find freedom, discover your purpose, and make a difference.

SUNDAYS AT 10:00 AM

El Modena High School • Orange, California

REACHING PEOPLE. BUILDING LIVES.
