

the  
**REAL DEAL**  
*jumpstarting your journey*

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**Mike Patz**

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# Congratulations!

There's a really good chance that something huge is going on in your life right now. The purpose of this booklet is to help jumpstart the journey you have begun.

The earliest followers of Jesus weren't following Him to avoid hell; they weighed the evidence and concluded they would be fools to pass up His invitation into life.

*Following Jesus is the only way to die, but it's also the best way to live.*

Unfortunately, most people have not yet heard Jesus at all. Most people I meet who reject Christianity are rejecting it for really good reasons. Actually, they are rejecting a counterfeit. They've been exposed to church hypocrites and irrelevant religion, but they haven't really heard Jesus.

If they only knew.

I want you to know. I want you to experience what the Bible calls eternal life. I want you to experience the joy of seeing how faith in Jesus intersects with real life. And it changes everything.

Oh, it feels small at first. Like a seed. But if you'll let this seed go down deep into your soul, it will penetrate every aspect of your life.

Here's my suggestion: Carve out some quality time with God each day this week to do the following.

**1 - Start reading the Bible.** There is a suggested reading plan in the back of this booklet that you might find helpful.

**2 – Start talking with God.** Ask Him for help. Give thanks. Pray about things you read in the Bible. Try to listen.

**3 – Read through the seven concepts** provided in this booklet and talk about them with someone.



# Introduction

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I'm an original recipe kind of guy.

I don't drink much soda, but I have a mild weakness for one cola experience in particular. They call it the "throwback" concept. Over the years Coke and Pepsi stopped using real sugar and started using the ever-present high fructose corn syrup instead. When you drink throwback Coke, your taste buds remember how good it used to be.

The original recipe. The real deal.

The New Testament book of Acts is something like the original recipe for the people of God. It gives us some idea of how the earliest followers of Jesus took His words and turned their world upside down.

So the question is, *What was in that original recipe?*

While this is by no means comprehensive, the following pages are meant to get us started on this journey by going right back to the beginning, in Acts chapter 2.

Upon hearing the Gospel presented, a group of people were cut to the heart and asked the apostle Peter, "What shall we do?" That's where we'll pick up the story. We will focus on seven tenets that marked their new beginning. They are underlined below.

*And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ... So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls ... And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."*

(Acts 2:38,41-42)

# Repent

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Acts 2:38

Football begins with a kickoff. Baseball begins with a pitch. Your day might begin with coffee.

Life with God always begins with *repentance*.

Jesus alone can rescue you. Only He has what it takes to forgive you, redeem your life, and make you whole. He did this through His execution on a cross and His resurrection from the dead. It's all Him.

And yet.

Salvation remains untapped until you repent. Repentance is the catalyst that converts potential salvation into kinetic salvation. The possible becomes reality. Repentance releases the power of the Gospel in your actual life. This is why Jesus said there is *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than ninety-nine people that don't need to. (Luke 15:7)

More joy.

The turning point is repentance. Not deciding to try harder. Not saying a quick, superficial prayer. Heaven goes wild when just one person truly repents.

So what did Jesus mean when He said to *repent*?

Shift.

Follow Me.

Remodel your soul.

Change your mind.

Stop calling the shots.

Reconsider your approach.

Drop anything that gets in the way.

Rearrange everything in the light of the now-available presence and rule of God.

Repentance is not a feeling. It is an act of the will. A decision that you have been wrong and God has been right. That you are a bad lord and savior and Jesus is a great One. That this world has lied to you and God has told the truth.

But what does it take to repent?

On the one hand we must accept that we are utterly broke. “Godly sorrow leads to repentance.” (2 Corinthians 7:10) We are guilty. Sinful. Helpless. Poor in spirit. We must become brutally honest about how bad we really are. We have been self-centered and depraved. We must stop justifying, stop blaming, stop making excuses, and declare spiritual bankruptcy. Repentance requires that we confess our poverty, sin, and lostness. This is *humility*.

On the other hand we realize that we are utterly loved. “The goodness of God leads you to repentance.” (Romans 2:4) We are the objects of His affection and mercy. It’s incredible: although we sold ourselves as slaves to sin, Jesus cares for us so deeply that He was willing to suffer in order to buy us back. The Bible teaches that His goodness and mercy are greater than our evil and darkness. Repentance requires that we agree that He is great and that we are loved. This takes confidence. This is called *faith*.

Humility and faith.

These are the wonder twins of repentance. And this reality will change your life because it takes your eyes off you and your wrongness and places them on Jesus and His rightness.

You shift your attention from your darkness to His light.

I hope this is what's happening in your life. You may want to pray a prayer like this one more time:

*God, I confess to You my sinfulness. I am sorry. I am broke. I need help.  
To live the life I really want, the same old ways and thinking will not  
work! But I also confess that I have confidence in You. You are Lord.  
Jesus, I know that where my sin has abounded Your grace will  
overflow. I trust You. I turn to You.  
I will follow You. Lead the way.*

## **2** Be Baptized

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Acts 2:38

There's nothing like a circumcision.

I always wanted to have a son and it took a little while before my dream came true. As much as I adored my daughters, I couldn't shake this desire to raise a boy. This daddy was going to be there for his son, whatever that meant.

Until circumcision.

Little did I know how painful it is to watch. And little did I know that the nurse escorting me to the circumcision room was philosophically opposed to what she considered a cruel and barbaric practice. As soon as we hit the hallway, she proceeded to let me know just how passionately she felt about the procedure. By the time we reached the operating table my stomach was turning. Upon completion she picked up my boy and said, "Take your son. Someone has to comfort him."

Funny thing, I've had two more sons, but never watched another circumcision.

In the Old Testament circumcision was essential. It was so much more than a medical precaution; it was the very faith response of being in covenant with God. "This is My covenant which you shall keep ...

Every male child among you shall be circumcised.” (Genesis 17:10)  
What happened if someone was not circumcised?

“That person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”(Genesis 17:14) God was so serious about this that in Joshua chapter five He commanded the people to make flint knives and circumcise every male Israelite that had been wandering in the desert but never fulfilled the covenant.

*Grown* men being circumcised. No anesthesia. No drugs.

But here was the result: “This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” (Joshua 5:9) Don’t underestimate the importance of covenant.

When we connect with Jesus we enter into covenant with Him. Instead of writing His laws on tablets, He now writes His laws on our hearts. It is an everlasting covenant.

But there is still a vital faith response to make toward God (and if you happen to be *uncircumcised* you’ll be thrilled to read these words): “In Him you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; *having been buried with Him in baptism*, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11-12)

How do we receive the circumcision of Jesus?

Baptism in water.

We’ve read how the apostle Peter was confronted with this question: What must we do to get right with God? This was his response: “Repent and *be baptized*.” (Acts 2:38). The book of Acts is filled with the pattern. After hearing Philip’s teaching the people of Samaria responded by *being baptized* (Acts 8:12). Upon hearing Philip’s gospel presentation

the Ethiopian eunuch requested to *be baptized* (Acts 8:35-36). As soon as Saul (soon to become the apostle Paul) turned to God “he rose and was *baptized*.” (Acts 9:18) When Peter realized that a group of non-Jews had connected with Jesus “he commanded them to *be baptized*.” (Acts 10:48) I could give more examples, but the point is clear.

In the Bible, baptism is an essential part of the new covenant. In some way more powerful than these words can convey, there is a cutting away that takes place in your life when you are baptized. If you have not yet been baptized in water, it’s time. ASAP.

If you have already been baptized, I need to remind you of your new *identity*. In the ancient world many people performed various immersions in water, which served to signify a shift of authority in one’s life. It was a shift of identity.

You need to know who you are.

It’s been said, if we spent more time telling people who they are, we wouldn’t waste so much time trying to tell them what to do. Because you are going to behave in ways consistent with how you see yourself.

Because of God’s mercy, you are not who you used to be.

I love how the New Testament book of Ephesians makes this clear, especially chapter 2. Here’s the picture it paints:

You *were* dead.

You *once* walked in darkness.

You *used* to live in the passions of your old nature.

You *were* by nature a child of wrath.

You *were* separated from God.

*Without* hope.

*Without* God.

That was your old identity. And then the shift:

*But God...*(Ephesians 2:4) Those are two of my favorite words in Scripture. *But God*, being rich in mercy, did what we couldn't do for ourselves. He changed us from the inside out.

When Peter called people to repent and be baptized, he invited them into a reality where they could say (and you can say):

I am a child of God. God is my Father. (John 1:12)

I am a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I am God's masterpiece. (Ephesians 2:10)

I am saved by grace. (Ephesians 2:8)

I am complete in Jesus. (Colossians 2:10)

I am chosen and adopted. (Ephesians 1:3-8)

I have been made right with God. (Romans 5:1)

I have been bought with a price. I belong to God. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

You do not change by trying harder; you change by comprehending more deeply the amazing grace of God. He changes your nature and your behavior follows suit. Little by little. Day by day. From the inside out.

You are not who you used to be.

*God, begin to reveal to me the power and privilege  
of being in covenant with You. Give me the courage to respond  
completely to You. Cut away everything that does not belong to one of  
Your children. Show me who I am in You.*

# 3 Receive the Spirit

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Acts 2:38

In Acts 8 there is a fascinating story of a guy named Philip going to the city of Samaria to preach the Gospel. The results are dramatic: people believed, many were baptized, healings and miracles took place, evil spirits came out of people, “... and there was great joy in that city.”(8:8)

You’d think that when the leaders back home heard the reports, they would have been content.

But something crucial was missing.

As soon as they heard the story, an alarm went off in their hearts. All of this kingdom activity was amazing, just not enough. Immediately they sent Peter and John to Samaria to complete what was lacking in order to set these new believers up for victory.

What did they do?

They “...prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 8:15-16)

A quick explanation is in order.

First, every believer has the Holy Spirit living inside of him or her. “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Galatians 4:6) However, every believer is not always *filled* with the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul says in Ephesians 1:13 that all believers were *sealed* with the Holy Spirit, but then four chapters later he says to “not be drunk with wine ... but be *filled* with the Holy Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18).

The apostles knew what they were doing in Acts 8. It is entirely possible to be forgiven, baptized, and on your way to heaven – but still remain unfilled. Catch the lesson: *Be filled*.

Paul compared being filled with God’s Spirit to coming under the influence of alcohol. You lose some of your natural inhibitions; you have more boldness; your tongue gets loosed; and you aren’t afraid of what people will think. This is why in Acts 19 Paul’s opening question to a group of disciples was, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (Acts 19:2)

It is safe to say that most Christians have drastically underestimated the importance of the experience of the Spirit.

We are wired to follow Jesus. And Jesus did everything in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I’m somewhat of an expert on chocolate milk. I make it from scratch, combining just the right amount of cocoa and sugar. But there is one more crucial step. *You have to stir it up*.

If it just sits there, all the chocolate settles at the bottom. When you get filled the Spirit is stirred.

It’s a tragic thing; while the world has become more spiritual, many Christians have become secular. Natural. You were never wired to be satisfied with a purely natural life. There’s so much more! You were made to experience God.

Don't settle for a natural Christian life; be filled with the Spirit. Don't settle for the passing buzz of only a splash of God's Spirit; receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

So how do you do it? You focus your heart and ask.

“How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13) If you asked for a fish, He would not give you a snake. If you asked for an egg, He would not give you a scorpion. And when you ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit, you will not get something else.

In the Bible it was common for Christian leaders to lay hands on the person wanting to receive, and agree with them in prayer. This may help. But the point is to *ask*, and then keep on asking.

*Father, I ask to be filled with Your precious Holy Spirit. Fill me to overflowing. Lord, I want to receive everything you have for me.*

## 4 Apostles' teaching

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Acts 2:42

Every.  
Single.  
Day.

That's the commitment I made when I began following Jesus. I'm not sure where I got the idea, but few decisions in life have paid bigger dividends than my decision to read the Bible every single day.

Devotion to the apostles' teaching refers to our commitment to the Bible.

Someone asked the great Christian thinker G. K. Chesterton what was the one book he would choose if he were stranded on a desert island. He paused to reflect and then gave his classic answer: "Why, A Practical Guide to Shipbuilding, of course." Not bad. When you're stranded on an island you want a book that tells you how to get off.

And when you're stranded in life, the Bible is your book. I might add that when you're on the mountaintops of life, the Bible is your book.

Because it's not just a book. It really is the inspired Word of God to you.

Although God will not be explained, He has chosen to reveal Himself

through His words and teaching. God wants us to know His heart, which means He's *good*. But He is also competent enough to preserve His Word, which means He's *great*.

This belief was tested when I went to college. I was unprepared for the professors who took it upon themselves to announce (as a matter of fact) that the Bible was unreliable, corrupted by humans and just another piece of literature. Yet the experience forced me to ultimately wrestle my way to a confidence in the Bible and a conviction about God: His ability to preserve His word is greater than the human capacity to corrupt it.

Charles Spurgeon nailed it when he compared the Word of God to a lion. You don't have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose.

This book will change your life. So carve time out of your daily life to "let the lion loose."

Here are a few suggestions to get you started.

First, go get a Bible. *Which one? There seem to be so many versions and translations.* The bottom line is that you need to get the one you will actually read. The King James Version was written in the 1600's. Loads of people love its poetic charm and beauty, but I'd suggest you find a translation that makes it easy for you to understand. I read the English Standard Version (ESV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) the most. Jesus spoke the language of the common man because that's part of the point: God speaks our language.

Once you have a Bible, you need to pick a place to start reading. Go straight to Jesus. That would be the New Testament, specifically the first four books. I suggest beginning with the book of *Mark* (which is fast-paced) or the book of *John*. These books will tell you who Jesus is and what He did. I might go from there to the book of *James*. Then I might check out the book of *Romans* or *Genesis*. I'd also make my

way to the book of *Acts* as soon as possible to see how the first Jesus-followers turned the world upside down. Check out the appendix for a suggested reading guide.

Final suggestion: Expect opposition. There really is a devil who does not want you to read God's Word. Expect distractions. Expect to sometimes get bored. But keep going anyway, because these words will change your life.

Go for it.

Every.  
Single.  
Day.

*Father, stir inside of me a desire for the Bible.  
Open my eyes to see wondrous things in Your Word.  
Lead me to the passages You want me to see right now,  
and transform my thinking with Your truth.*

## 5 Fellowship

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Acts 2:42

Sharing. Isn't that a fun word?

I'll never forget the Christmas when my three year old became a scrooge. Everybody had gathered at my house to open presents. We already have seven children, so to add aunts and uncles and grandparents and cousins was too much for one of my boys to handle. What I assumed would be a moment of joy turned into raw anguish as the morning progressed. With every additional gift, he became increasingly concerned that someone would snatch them away in the name of *sharing*.

Oh, how he hated that word.

By morning's end I noticed that his pile of presents was gone. While everybody else was enjoying the moment, I watched as my boy anxiously snuck back to a bedroom where he'd hidden all his gifts. Unused. Unopened. And perfectly guarded. It was a pitiful sight.

If only he knew how to share.

Sharing is at the center of this word fellowship. It's a rich word that refers to authentic community, participation, and intimacy. It's about sharing life and walking the journey with other people.

The earliest followers of Jesus were devoted to fellowship because they had discovered that the way of Jesus cannot be lived alone. Take a look:

*“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.”*

(Acts 4:32-33)

Don't miss the point; this was not communism. But it was absolutely an alternative to a life centered on self. And the results spoke for themselves. Power. Grace. There is nothing like fellowship.

This is a challenge for many of us coming from a culture like ours. Individualism is the rule of the day. Narcissistic self-interest is unquestioned.

Devoting yourself to fellowship means refusing to settle for superficial community. You decide to take the risk and share life with other people growing in the same direction - toward God.

True community is incredible. It's part of our being created in the image of God. When we are connected, we thrive. When we are disconnected, we wither.

In community, we find out who we are really are in Christ through the loving voices of those who know us best. Gifts, talents, and passions get called out that you never knew you had. Community rejoices with you at your high points and carries you when you are down. Your spiritual blind spots get covered by friends who want the best for you and leaders called to oversee you. It is in Christ we find out who we are and what we are made for, but it is often in community where this gets called out and confirmed. Sure, it's messy. It means you have to be selfless instead of selfish, and there is the possibility that you could get burned. But outside of community, we dry up. We sin.

We fall short. The lone ranger can only go so far by himself. But in fellowship? Power and grace.

You need other believers in your life. Stronger ones. Weaker ones. Older ones. Younger ones.

Ask God for this.

You need an *official* church community, where the Bible is preached and elders are established. You also need a *relational* church community, where the people know you intimately. Be consistent in the large group - like the weekend worship services. Be faithful in the small group - we call these microchurches. Search until you find one. Ask for help if you don't find one right away.

*Father, help me devote myself to fellowship.  
Lead me to a community. Give me the courage  
to open my heart to Your people.*

# 6 Breaking of Bread

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Acts 2:42

Breaking of bread is a way of describing communion. Every time we partake of communion, we re-enact the Gospel. “This is My body, which is broken for you.” (1 Corinthians 11:24). Apparently, the earliest followers of Jesus took communion all the time, and thereby had a built-in reminder to center their lives on God’s good news.

They understood the Gospel is a substitution story. They knew the essence of mankind’s problem is a substitution.

Most of us have some experience with the vocabulary word *sin*. But it’s easy to pass by the word too quickly and miss the point. Let’s back up – way back – to the very beginning.

You may remember that God gave Adam and Eve one simple rule: Don’t eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2-3). They were allowed to eat from any tree they desired - just not the fruit from one forbidden tree. Despite the fact that their entire rulebook could fit into a fortune cookie, they still found a way to disobey.

And the results were devastating.

In the Garden of Eden the problem wasn't just the forbidden fruit. Adam's trouble didn't stem from a technicality in an obscure legal code. Adam pulled a substitution. He took God's place.

I am so tempted to see God's laws like an irritating traffic light. Have you ever been stuck waiting at a red light really late at night while there's no one else on the road? You look to your left. You look to your right. Nothing. Nobody. So pointless.

When I hear people talk about "sin" I can't help but feel like we miss the point. We imagine a useless stoplight and a minor traffic violation. We spell the word sin with a lower case s, but our problem is a serious offense with a capital Substitution.

Adam and Eve didn't just break a little rule; *they made a proclamation* that they would call the shots. They told the King of kings to get off the throne. They determined that they would be in charge. They substituted themselves for God.

And so did we.

Everybody has eaten the forbidden fruit. "All have sinned..." (Romans 3:23)

Which is why Jesus substituted Himself for us.

He was broken, so I would not have to be. He lived the life I should have lived and then He died the death I should have died. He took my record and gave me His. He absorbed my death and gave me His life. He took my place on death row and then gave me a place in paradise. That's what happened on the Cross.

That is why you don't just need a moral teacher; you need someone to take your place. You need a Savior. You need a life-giver. And when you realize that He stood in for you on the Cross, it begins to melt your heart. Contrary to dead religion, the Gospel is not really about behavior modification; it's all about substitutionary transformation.

When you take communion, *you make a new proclamation.*

“You proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:26)  
You proclaim that you accept His glorious substitution. You proclaim that you now exchange the forbidden tree for the tree of life.

But it can’t stop there. You have to relinquish the throne of your heart to this merciful Savior. Because the Savior is also *the Lord*. The Chief. The King. The Leader.

He took your place on the Cross. Which is why you’ll never be more alive than when you relinquish the throne of your heart to Him.

*Jesus, I choose to remember what You have done for me.  
The throne of my soul belongs to You. Come and take  
Your place at the center of my heart.*

# 7 Prayers

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Acts 2:42

What's up with prayer?

It's so simple that little children are often the best. It's so complicated that I wonder if I even know what I'm doing.

The key to any relationship is communication. If you're serious about getting to know God, you're going to have to learn to communicate with Him. This is the essence of prayer: communication with God. If you're like me, you're thinking, *I have a hard enough time communicating with people that I can see. What do I do with a God I can't see?*

You make the same request the disciples of Jesus made: "Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke 11:1)

I love this verse because it shows that this whole prayer thing can be learned. No one is born knowing how to be the perfect husband. Or mother. Or pray-er. You aren't the first Jesus-follower to have a hard time figuring this out.

I'm no expert but I'll share a few insights I wish I'd known earlier.

*God hears me even when I don't think I can hear Him.* I've often been

tempted to think that my prayers were getting nowhere because I could not “feel” something happening. Or, I have felt like I was being a hypocrite to pray when I didn’t really feel into it. My love is weak, my heart is distracted. Yet I have learned that even my weak love and feeble prayers mean loads to our Father in heaven.

*Don’t act like a professional.* Remember, the whole point of prayer is connecting with God. Don’t try to sound cool. Don’t try to learn the religious lingo of strange Christians you meet. Just get real with God.

*The Bible helps.* I used to separate my Bible reading and prayer. But something happened when I started to use the Bible to help me pray.

*There are many pathways in prayer.* Of course we can pray quietly with our eyes closed. But we can also pray loudly with our eyes open. We can write our prayers – or type our prayers. We can pray in a closet or on a chair, standing or kneeling. Some people really connect while in nature. Some connect while singing or listening to music. Silence is good. So is darkness. Or a sunrise. You get the idea.

*I need both structure and spontaneity.* It’s no mistake that Jesus left us a very sticky, but structured prayer that many call the Lord’s prayer. (Matthew 6:9-13) I often use that as my prayer prompt. And then I also go completely off-script and pray my heart. Sometimes I buy my wife a greeting card with structured poetry written by someone else. But then I add my own words as well. I use both.

*Scheduling God is good.* Some people are spontaneous and others are quite scheduled. Regardless, life has a way of slipping away from you. Twenty-four hours come and go and you can’t figure out where they went. If communication with God is going to happen, it needs to make the schedule. Every single day. Pick a time. Avoid giving your leftovers. Get with God, turn the phone off, and let it rip.

*There is a threshold.* I can’t explain this scientifically, but I have found that there is something like a threshold in the place of prayer that, once

crossed, makes all the agony in getting there worth it.

*Hell hates prayer.* Expect every possible distraction to keep you from pursuing your relationship with God in this way. Depressed people get hope in prayer. Husbands start loving their wives in prayer. Children soften their hearts in prayer. So I expect an emergency to try and interrupt my time with Jesus. I expect a million reminders of things I need to do today. I expect to become sleepy. I expect to become bored. But victory is assured for those who press through the distractions.

*Lord, teach me to pray.*

# Random Thoughts

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*Your Father in heaven adores you. I just had to throw that in.*

*Memorizing Scripture will change your life.*

*Join Jesus among the poor. God has chosen to reveal Himself among the poor, broken, and needy in ways that you will encounter nowhere else. Some people are poor in body while others are poor in spirit. If you really want to know Jesus, go where He is.*

*When you blow it, learn this lesson. Admit it, quit it, and forget it.*

*Don't be surprised when your feelings contradict the truth. And go with the Bible. I don't always feel like I belong to Jesus. I don't always feel like God loves me. I don't always feel like I'm forgiven. But I have learned that if I'll choose to chew on the truth instead of my feelings, those feelings have a way of lining up.*

*You're going to do what you want to do. Which is why the key is never going to be suppressing all the wrong desires. You need to awaken the right desires. Jesus has a way of changing what you want.*

*The way of Jesus is NOT dead religion. Dead religion says, "If you're really good, then God will love and accept you." Jesus teaches, only when you receive God's love and acceptance will you ever really become good. Dead religion tells you to clean up your act in order to draw near to God. Jesus teaches that only by drawing near to God will you ever get cleaned up. Dead religion says your self-worth is based on how hard you work and how well you perform. Jesus says your self-worth is centered on the perfect work of your Savior. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.*

# Suggested Readings

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Here are ten books I would really love you to read. I wish I had time to tell you how much I like these books. I starred the first five I would beg you to read.

## Basics of the faith:

*Basic Christianity*, by John Stott \*

*Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis

*Reason for God*, by Tim Keller \*

## Learning to do life with God:

*The Divine Conspiracy*, by Dallas Willard \*

*The Life You've Always Wanted*, by John Ortberg

## Learning to seek God:

*Secrets of the Secret Place*, By Bob Sorge

## Understanding, becoming amazed with the Gospel:

*The Prodigal God*, by Tim Keller \*

*What's So Amazing About Grace*, Philip Yancey \*

## True discipleship:

*Crazy Love*, by Francis Chan

*True Discipleship*, by William MacDonald

One more suggestion. Go online and download (for free):

*The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*, by Thomas Chalmers

# Anything Else?

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**FOUNDATIONS.** If you live in Gainesville, I strongly suggest you come to our Foundations class, this Wednesday night at 7PM. It's an interactive way to get rooted in your faith and ask loads of questions.

**FIND A MICROCHURCH.** This is a smaller group of five to fifteen people committed to living lives of worship, community, and mission.

## **STAY CONNECTED.**

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Follow Mike on Twitter: @mikepatz

**SERMONS.** If you are interested in watching or listening to a message from our sermon archives, here are a few you might find helpful:

DNA of Discipleship	(9/20/09)
Waste (devotion to Jesus)	(5/9/10)
Spiritual Warfare	(7/25/10)
CIAJ (dealing with trials)	(8/29/10)
Doubts	(9/19/10)
The Beauty Myth (self image)	(1/30/11)
Sex is not about Sex	(2/13/11)
Psalms 23 (God as our Shepherd)	(3/20/11)
Series: Holes in our Gospel (justice, poverty)	(Fall 2009)

**BIBLE.** All of the Bible is equally inspired, but not all of the Bible is equally beneficial at any given moment. That's why it might be helpful to know where to start. Here is my suggestion. Read *Mark* or *John*. Read *James*. Read *Acts*. Read *Genesis*. Read *Ephesians*. Slip in some *Psalms* and *Proverbs*. Or, if you are the kind of person who likes a plan, try the reading plan on the following page.

# Bible Reading Plan

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- Day 1 Mark 1, Genesis 1
- Day 2 Mark 2, Genesis 2
- Day 3 Mark 3, Genesis 3
- Day 4 Mark 4, Acts 1
- Day 5 Mark 5, Acts 2
- Day 6 Mark 6, Acts 3
- Day 7 Mark 7, Acts 4
- Day 8 Mark 8, Acts 5
- Day 9 Mark 9, Acts 6
- Day 10 Mark 10, Acts 7, James 1
- Day 11 Mark 11, Acts 8, James 2
- Day 12 Mark 12, Acts 9, James 3
- Day 13 Mark 13, Acts 10, James 4
- Day 14 Mark 14, Acts 11, James 5
- Day 15 Mark 15, Romans 1, Psalm 1
- Day 16 Mark 16, Romans 2, Psalm 23
- Day 17 John 1, Romans 3, Psalm 27
- Day 18 John 2, Romans 4, Psalm 40
- Day 19 John 3, Romans 5, Psalm 51
- Day 20 John 4, Romans 6, Psalm 63
- Day 21 John 5, Romans 7, Psalm 91
- Day 22 John 6, Romans 8, Psalm 103
- Day 23 John 7, Romans 9
- Day 24 John 8, Romans 10
- Day 25 John 9, Romans 11
- Day 26 John 10, Romans 12
- Day 27 John 11, Romans 13
- Day 28 John 12, Romans 14, Proverbs 1
- Day 29 John 13, Romans 15, Proverbs 2
- Day 30 John 14, Romans 16, Proverbs 3

