

HOW TO HAVE RELATIONSHIP WITH *Jesus*



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The background of the entire image is a close-up photograph of green oak leaves. The leaves are in various shades of green, from light to dark, and are slightly out of focus, creating a bokeh effect. A white rectangular text box is centered in the middle of the image, containing the main text.

*But blessed is the man
who trusts God,
the woman who sticks with
God. They're like trees
replanted in Eden.*

—JEREMIAH 17:7-8 (MSG)

Don't think religion, think relationship.

From the beginning of time, God has invited us to be in relationship with Him. However, because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we have inherited a self-willed and sinful nature. In other words, we are spiritually dead and have been separated from God. We are hard-wired to try to earn our place in life and to trust in our own human abilities. Ironically, this is also the problem with religion. Religion is man's feeble attempt to be good without God's help. But relationship with God is entirely different and much simpler—it starts with putting our trust in Christ alone. Trusting in Jesus as the eternal Son of God, and His sacrifice on the Cross, makes us sons and daughters of God, and brings us into relationship with the Father.

And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die. —GENESIS 2:16-17 (NIV)

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. —JOHN 14:6 (NIV)

Some differences between religion and relationship are:

- 1. In religion we attempt to do more on our own, but in relationship with Christ we receive what has already been done.**

You study the scriptures diligently because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. —JOHN 5:39-40 (NIV)

- 2. In religion we try to earn God's approval, but in relationship with Christ we receive God's love.**

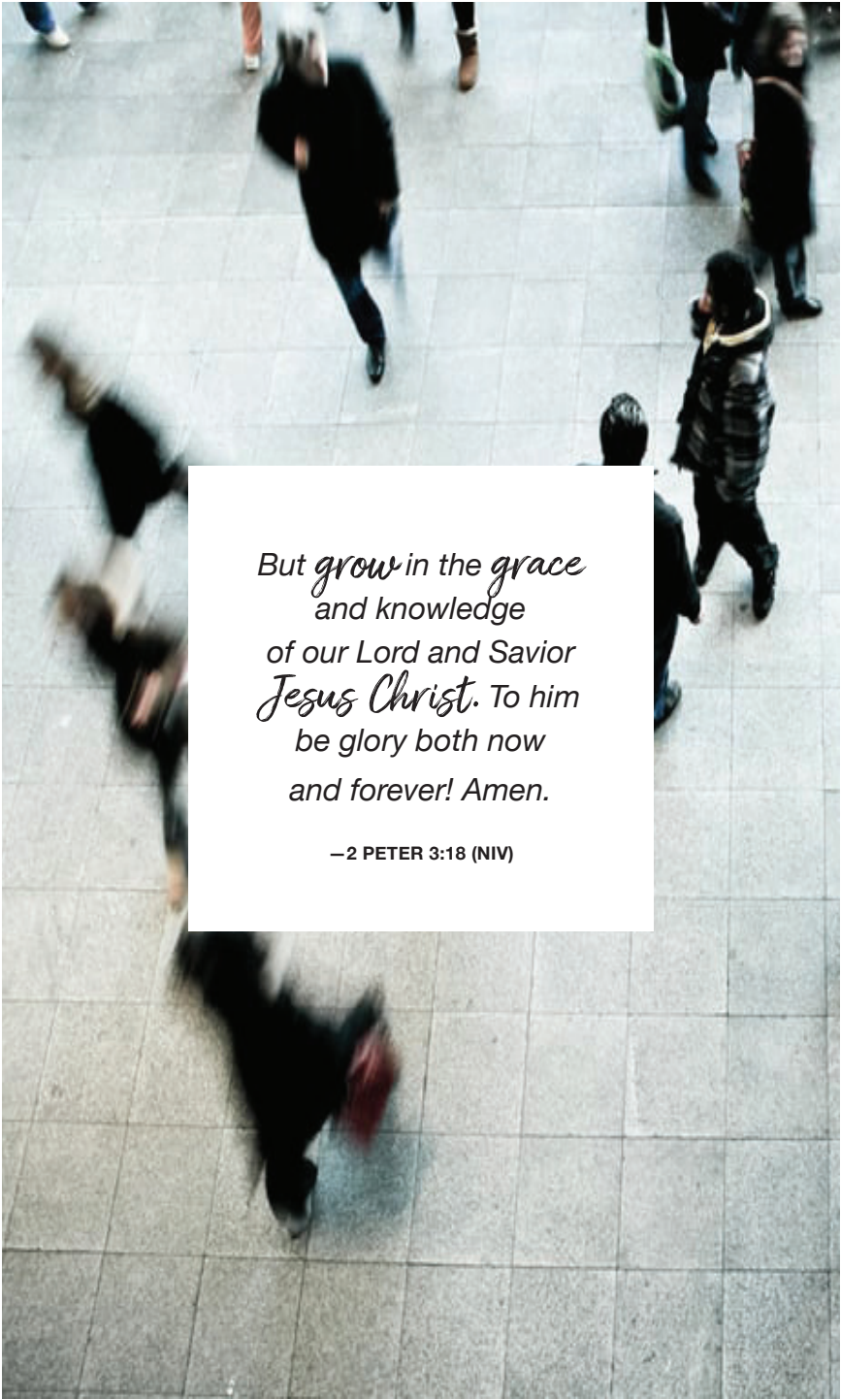
But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. —ROMANS 5:8 (NIV)

- 3. In religion we obey out of duty, but in relationship with Christ we obey through love.**

If you love me, you will obey my commands. —JOHN 14:15 (NIV)

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

— 1 JOHN 2:15-17 (KJV)



*But grow in the grace
and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ. To him
be glory both now
and forever! Amen.*

—2 PETER 3:18 (NIV)

The only way to have a relationship with God is through Jesus.

As we have already noted, sin breaks our close relationship with God and brings death. It causes us to be afraid of God and to stubbornly live our lives outside of His will.

The wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. —ROMANS 6:23 (NIV)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. —ROMANS 5:8 (NIV)

God is on one side and all people are on the other side, and Christ Jesus is between them to bring them together, by giving His life for all mankind.

—1 TIMOTHY 2:5 (TLB)

God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him by sending His Son Jesus to sacrifice His life and shed His blood for our sins. He took the initiative. Now He waits for each of us to individually receive what Christ has done for us by confessing our sins, believing in Jesus, inviting Him to be Lord of our lives and, accepting His free gift of salvation.

CONFESS

- 1. In order to establish a relationship with God you must confess that God has not been first place in your life, and ask Him to forgive your sins.**

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. —1 JOHN 1:9 (NIV)

BELIEVE

- 2. Believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins, and that He rose from the dead and is alive today.**

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. —ROMANS 10:9-10 (NLT)

INVITE

3. Invite Jesus Christ to come in and be the Lord of your life.

To all who received him, he gave the right to become children of God. All they needed to do was to trust him to save them. All those who believe this are reborn! — not a physical rebirth resulting from human passion or plan — but from the will of God. —JOHN 1:12-13 (NLT)

ACCEPT

4. Accept God's gift of salvation. Don't try to earn it.

For it is by grace you are saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. —EPHESIANS 2:8,9 (NIV)

Our relationship with God is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis of what Jesus already did for us.

Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in ... —REVELATION 3:20 (HCSB)

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

—ROMANS 10:13 (NLT)

Declare outwardly what you have experienced inwardly.

You can begin your relationship with God by praying this simple prayer:

“Father, thank you for creating me and for loving me even when I’ve ignored you and gone my own way. I realize I need you in my life, and I’m sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for me. As much as I know how, I want to follow Christ from now on. Please fill me with the Holy Spirit and make me a new person inside. I accept your gift of salvation. Please help me to grow now as a Christian.”

Once you make a decision to follow Christ and pray the prayer of confession, the next step is water baptism. We practice baptism by immersion in water—the way Jesus was baptized and the way the Bible describes.

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.


— MARK 1:9-10 (NIV)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit.

— MATTHEW 28:19 (NIV)

Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. —MATTHEW 10:32-33 (NIV)

By being water baptized you are following the example set by Christ, demonstrating your changed life and declaring your commitment publically.



*For from the very
beginning **God** decided
that those who came to
him... should become
like his Son.*

—ROMANS 8:29 (LV)

Grow up to be like Jesus.

Salvation comes when we have faith in Christ to forgive us of our sins but spiritual maturity involves growing up to become like Christ. This is not automatic, it is a process that takes time and discipline through public worship, Bible study, prayer, fellowship with other believers, being generous, and living a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life.

Public worship

At New Community Church we place a strong emphasis on corporate worship. We believe that as Christians we are now one family who does life together and worships together publically and regularly.

*Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing.
Instead, let us encourage one another. —HEBREWS 10:25 (GN)*

Bible study

We believe that the Holy Bible is the authoritative Word of God. It alone is the final authority in determining all doctrinal truths. In its original writing it is inspired, infallible, inerrant, and its canon is closed. There are not, nor will ever be, any other books, verses or ideas added to the Bible or placed beside it as equal in authority or revelation.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

—2 TIMOTHY 3:16 (ESV)

Prayer

In the beginning, we were created to have fellowship with God. Because of Adam's fall, Jesus sacrificed Himself to make a relationship with God possible. Jesus exemplified a personal relationship with God through prayer that gave Him great strength. Every person who has ever been effective in service for God has developed this habit. The only way to be a healthy Christian is to spend time with God daily through prayer.

This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. —MATTHEW 6:9-13 (NIV)

Fellowship

God never intended for us to go through life alone. Throughout the Bible, we see the importance of being in community. In fact, authentic life-change happens in the context of relationships.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship,

to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. —ACTS 2:42-47 (NIV)

Generosity

The Gospel is the ultimate demonstration of God's generous nature towards mankind. The Bible consistently teaches that God blesses us so that we may bless others.

Just as you excel in everything... in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness... see that you also excel in the grace of giving.
—2 CORINTHIANS 8:7 (NIV)

Four areas of generosity:

1. Time

We should be generous with our time by pouring what God has lavishly given to us into people we meet and live with. Our multiple volunteer opportunities at New Community Church allow a great outlet for generous giving of your time.

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.
— EPHESIANS 5:15-16 (NASB)

2. Talent

We should generously give of the talents God has equipped us with, to help in the church and serve those around us.

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.
— 1 CORINTHIANS 12:7 (NLT)

3. Mind

We should generously share the knowledge that God has given to each of us with people who know little about following Christ. We are taught in scripture that we should have the "mind of Christ," so we should think as He thought and give as He gave. This changes us from former values to the core values of Jesus.

Remember the Lord your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath. —DEUTERONOMY 8:18 (NLT)

4. Treasure

We should be generous with our resources. God has richly blessed us to generously bless others and to establish His kingdom on the earth. By paying our tithe and giving our offerings we set ourselves in covenant with God to receive His best, which helps us give our best.

If your gift is... giving, give generously. —ROMANS 12:8 (NLT)

We practice tithing for the support of Christ's body, the Church, as God commands. We recognize that giving the first ten percent of our income is the biblical standard of giving. Many people love to give to God, but need to have confidence in the methods and purposes used by organizations to which they give. Therefore, there are a great number of people willing to give if they are able to see honesty, integrity and genuine spiritual values reflected in the lifestyles of their church leaders.

The giving of tithes and offerings is worship to Jesus Christ and is an expression of the relationship between the individual giver and the Lord. Funds are not "income only," they are worship, and must not be considered as a business transaction but as an expression of gratitude toward God.

A tithe of everything... belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.

—LEVITICUS 27:30 (NIV)

Living a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life

Being a follower of Christ involves the infilling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Without the help of the Holy Spirit we will needlessly struggle, walk alone and lack direction. Just as Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit to do good things, so should we depend upon the Holy Spirit's power.

Life with the Holy Spirit produces:

1. Comfort

And I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever. —John 14:16 (NIV)

2. Conviction

But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But 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; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

—JOHN 16:5-8 (NAS)

3. Guidance

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all

truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. —JOHN 16:13 (NKJV)

4. Power

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

5. Character

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. —GALATIANS 5:22-23 (NIV)

