

*A
Church
you can call
Home*

welcome
HOME

“For God **so loved** the world
that **He gave** His one and only
Son, that whoever believes in
Him shall **not perish** but have
eternal life.”

—John 3:16 NIV

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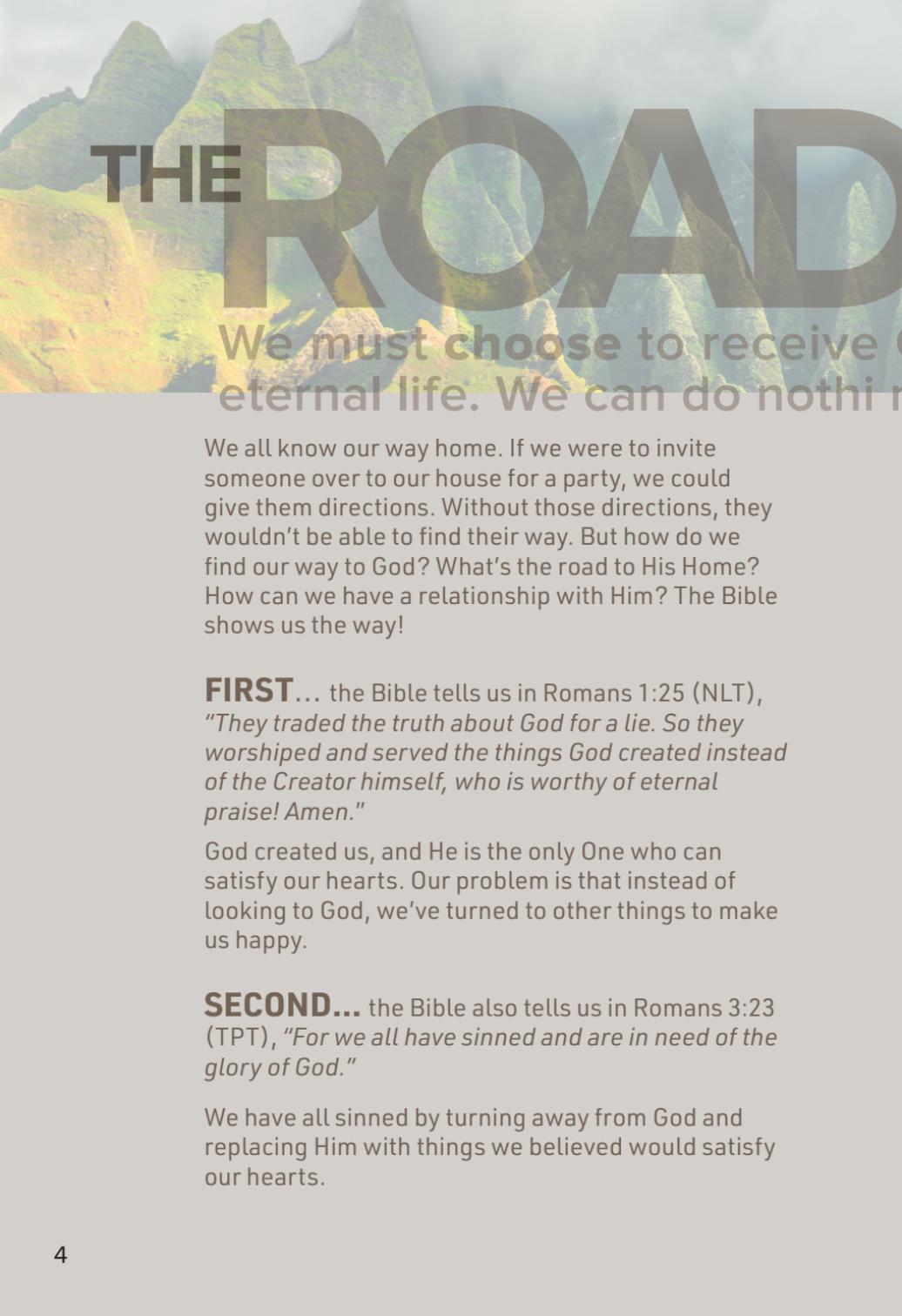


welcome to a church you can call **HOME**

When you place your faith in Jesus and decide to follow Him, you become part of God's family. He becomes your Heavenly Father, we become brothers and sisters, and the church becomes our home—a place where we all grow together in our relationship with Jesus and one another.

We want to congratulate you on your decision to follow Jesus. We're very excited for you as you begin this journey of faith and continue to discover all that God is and all that He promises to do for you through His Son, Jesus Christ.

This booklet is a gift to you from our pastors, Orlando & Annette Sagarnaga. In these pages, you'll learn some fundamental truths about who God is and His plan for your life, as well as some important next steps for you to take as a new Christian. Welcome to the family!



THE ROAD

We must choose to receive eternal life. We can do nothing

We all know our way home. If we were to invite someone over to our house for a party, we could give them directions. Without those directions, they wouldn't be able to find their way. But how do we find our way to God? What's the road to His Home? How can we have a relationship with Him? The Bible shows us the way!

FIRST... the Bible tells us in Romans 1:25 (NLT), *"They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen."*

God created us, and He is the only One who can satisfy our hearts. Our problem is that instead of looking to God, we've turned to other things to make us happy.

SECOND... the Bible also tells us in Romans 3:23 (TPT), *"For we all have sinned and are in need of the glory of God."*

We have all sinned by turning away from God and replacing Him with things we believed would satisfy our hearts.

GO HOME

the God's forgiveness and His gift of
going to earn it. **We receive it by faith.**

THIRD... the Bible goes on to tell us in Romans 6:23 (NLT), *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The penalty for sin is spiritual death. Everyone dies physically. But after our body dies, we don't cease to exist. Our soul will spend eternity with God in Heaven or without God in Hell. The cost for rejecting God in this life is to be judged by Him in the next. However, God loves us and offers to forgive all of our sin.

FOURTH... the Bible then tells us in Romans 5:8 (NLT), *"But God has showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."*

God loves us, so He sent His Son, Jesus, to die in our place. When Jesus was crucified, God placed all of our sin on His Son. Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, so we could be forgiven and receive eternal life. We know this because three days after He died, He was resurrected!

FIFTH... the Bible says in Romans 10:9-10 (NLT), *"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."*

We must choose to receive God's forgiveness and His gift of eternal life. We can do nothing to earn it. We receive it by faith.

Are you ready to accept God's gift of salvation?

Do you realize that only God is glorious enough to satisfy your heart? Are you ready to turn from your sin, accept God's forgiveness and receive His free gift of eternal life? If so, you can receive God's gift right now with the following prayer...

“Father, I acknowledge that You created me. I’m sorry for my sin. It’s in You, my Creator, that I find my purpose. I turn my back on You and trying to replace You with myself. I am weak and empty and deserving of eternal condemnation. You love me and I now believe that You sent Your Son, Jesus, to die for me that He rose from the dead. I receive Your forgiveness and eternal life in Your hands and choose to be a follower of Jesus Christ.”

DECLARE
YOUR
FAITH

...a ted me and that only You can satisfy my heart.
...y purpose, but I have sinned against You by turning
...e You with other things. This has left my heart hard
...l death. But I have come to learn that You love
...t Your Son, Jesus to die on the Cross for my sin and
...e Your forgiveness and gift of eternal life. I place my
...a follower of Jesus, Amen.”

The moment you finished saying this prayer, this is what just took place in your heart...

And you did not receive the “spirit of religious duty,” leading you back into the fear of never being good enough, but you have received the “Spirit of full acceptance,” enfolding you into the family of God. And you will never feel orphaned, for as he rises up within us, our spirits join him in saying the words of tender affection, “Beloved Father!” For the Holy Spirit makes God’s fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, “You are God’s beloved child!” (Romans 8:15-16 TPT)

WELCOME

Jesus Came to Change our Story

Jesus was a great storyteller. His stories weren't wrapped around fantasy or make-believe, nor were they simply to entertain people. His stories had eternal meaning, and yet, they're not hard to understand because they targeted the human heart. Jesus' words were words of life. They gave (and continue to give) hope.

In his book, *Change Your Story*, Pastor Art wrote, "Everyone has a story and every story is important to God. But not every story that everyone has is the story that everyone wants. However, Jesus is the story changer. He can change anyone's story for the better." Jesus came to change our story from the way it is back to His original design for our lives.

Jesus shared a meaningful story. It's one of the most important stories that He told. It revolves around a son who turns his back on his father to live a reckless life. When he realizes that he has wasted his life, he decides to go back home, expecting to beg an angry and disappointed father to take him back as a servant. But what his father really does shocks and amazes him.

The story is known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son. If you're not familiar with the term parable, it's simply a short story that illustrates instructive lessons or principles. A prodigal is someone who lives a reckless and wasteful life. This is a story of God's unconditional love for you as His son or daughter.

HOME

HOME

The Bible records this parable as told by Jesus in Luke 15:11-24 (TPT) ...

Then Jesus said, "Once there was a father with two sons. The younger son came to his father and said, 'Father, don't you think it's time to give me the share of your estate that belongs to me?' So the father went ahead and distributed among the two sons their inheritance. Shortly afterward, the younger son packed up all his belongings and traveled off to see the world. He journeyed to a far-off land where he soon wasted all he was given in a binge of extravagant and reckless living.

"With everything spent and nothing left, he grew hungry, for there was a severe famine in that land. So he begged a farmer in that country to hire him. The farmer hired him and sent him out to feed the pigs. The son was so famished, he was willing to even eat the slop given to the pigs, because no one would feed him a thing.

“Humiliated, the son finally realized what he was doing and he thought, ‘There are many workers at my father’s house who have all the food they want with plenty to spare. They lack nothing. Why am I here dying of hunger, feeding these pigs and eating their slop? I want to go back home to my father’s house, and I’ll say to him, ‘Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. I’ll never be worthy to be called your son. Please, Father, just treat me like one of your employees.’”

“So the young son set off for home. From a long distance away, his father saw him coming, dressed as a beggar, and great compassion swelled up in his heart for his son who was returning home. So the father raced out to meet him. He swept him up in his arms, hugged him dearly, and kissed him over and over with tender love.

“Then the son said, ‘Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. I could never deserve to be called your son. Just let me be—’

“The father interrupted and said, ‘Son, you’re home now!’

“Turning to his servants, the father said, ‘Quick, bring me the best robe, my very own robe, and I will place it on his shoulders. Bring the ring, the seal of sonship, and I will put it on his finger. And bring out the best shoes you can find for my son. Let’s prepare a great feast and celebrate. For this beloved son of mine was once dead, but now he’s alive again. Once he was lost, but now he is found! And everyone celebrated with overflowing joy.”

This story begins with a son who believed that his relationship with his father wasn't important, valuable, or necessary to live his best life. He demands his inheritance from his father, forsakes him, and sets off to build his own life, his own way. He thought he had it made; and in leaving his father, he left the most important relationship in his life...and nothing can fill the void of a fatherless life. His son attempts to fill that void with wild living, thinking he could buy his way into a life that would make him happy.

Jesus goes on to share that once his money was spent, this son found himself living with the pigs. None of the friends he bought stuck with him when his money ran out. As he's starving, he realizes that not only has he wasted his inheritance, but also his life. Surrounded by pigs, he remembers his father. He decides to swallow his pride and head back home. He expects his father to have disowned him and plans to beg for mercy. Although he feels he is no longer worthy to be his father's son, he hopes to beg his way back as a hired servant.

What this son doesn't realize is that a miracle had just taken place. His heart toward his father had changed. When he was living at home, surrounded by the finest things in life, his heart was hard and bitter toward him. But now, surrounded by the hardness and bitterness of his life, his heart toward his father had softened. Jesus said this son had, "finally come to his senses."

As this son was making his way back home, his father sees him coming from a long way off. And what this father does reflects the heart of God, our Heavenly Father, toward us. This father, with a heart full of love and compassion for his son, races out to meet him! He embraces his son and kisses him, welcoming him home. The son admits his sin and takes responsibility for forsaking his father and wasting his inheritance. He asks to be taken on as a hired servant, but his father refuses the offer. He doesn't want a servant. He wants his son.

We can learn from this story about God's love for us and our relationship with Him. Like this prodigal son, we too believed that we didn't need God to live the life we wanted. But we've "come to our senses" and returned to Him; and the story doesn't end there. Jesus said that after the prodigal son returned home, the father gave five gifts to him. These are the same gifts our Heavenly Father gives to us today.



Gift #1: God's Unconditional Love

In this world, we are offered all kinds of love, but the best kind of love is the God-kind of love. The prodigal thought he was loved by his friends, until his money ran out. What he thought was love was temporary and conditional. As he made his way back home, he was deserving of nothing. Yet, he encountered the love of God.

You should know three things about the love God has for you:

The love of God is unconditional. We saw earlier, in Romans 5:8, that even when we were sinners, God had a great love for us. His love for you isn't based on how you behave. It has no conditions. When the prodigal son returned home, he was loved by his father even though he had not been a good son.

The love of God offers genuine acceptance. The prodigal son was covered in pig slop. His clothes were tattered. He hadn't bathed in who knows how long. And yet, when he returned home, his father hugged and kissed him. God accepts us for who we are right now because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross. We don't have to clean up our act in order for God to accept us.

The love of God provides total forgiveness. Many times, after living a certain way for so long, we find it impossible to forgive ourselves. So, we believe no one else can forgive us either, including God. But the love of God obliterates our hopelessness and provides forgiveness for every wrong we have ever done.

This unconditional love that God has for you is an amazing gift!

Gift #2: The Robe of Righteousness

The second gift the father gave to his son was to cover him with the finest robe he had. He was no longer seen by the worn, tattered and dirty clothes from the pig pen. He was now covered with the best robe his father had to offer. This robe speaks of the gift of righteousness that God gives to us when we place our faith in Jesus.

Righteousness is a fancy-sounding word, but it has an incredible meaning. It means to have right-standing with God. In other words, we can approach Him as our Heavenly Father without any sense of guilt, fear, condemnation or shame. Not only does this gift of righteousness cover us, it also changes us from the inside-out.

The Bible puts it this way, *"When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun! All these new things are from God who brought us back to himself through what Christ Jesus did...for God was in Christ, restoring the world to himself, no longer counting men's sins against them but blotting them out..."* (2 Corinthians 5:17-19, TLB).

When someone becomes a C
brand new

Gift #3: The Ring of Authority

The third gift the father gave to his son was to place a ring on his finger. In Bible times, wearing a ring was a sign of wealth, honor and dignity. This son was content to be treated as a slave if accepted back into his father's house. However, that wasn't his father's plan. In placing a ring on his finger, he was restoring His son's identity, position, and authority.

Wherever this son went, the ring on his finger showed that he was his father's son and carried his father's authority. We are now sons and daughters of God. John, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, said, *"But to all who believed [Jesus] and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God"* (John 1:12, NLT).

God's design for us as His children is not to live defeated lives. He's given us His authority, so we can overcome all of life's challenges. John also wrote, *"For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith"* (1 John 5:4, NLT).

Christian, he becomes a

person
inside.

Gift #4: The Shoes of Purpose

The fourth gift the father gave his son was to place sandals on his feet. He wanted him to walk with purpose in life and to protect him from the various dangers he would encounter on that journey.

God has a dream for our lives, a plan and purpose for us to walk out. The Bible tells us in Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT), *"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."*

When we chose to follow Jesus, God restored our purpose and direction in life. A journey of faith is ahead of us. We don't have to figure things out on our own. Our lives are more than the house we live in, the car we drive, the clothes we wear, and the money we make. We have an eternal purpose.

"For I know the
plans I have
They are
plans for
to give you a future

Gift #5: A Church You Can Call Home

The fifth gift the father gave to his son was to celebrate his homecoming! It's amazing that Jesus ends His story by expressing the heart of the father toward his son, *"We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found." So the party began*" (Luke 15:23-24).

God, your Heavenly Father, is overjoyed to love you and freely give to you His righteousness, authority and purpose. As He celebrates us, He places us into His family, the church, so that we can do life together.

To be a part of His church is to be celebrated, supported, encouraged and equipped to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. None of us can follow Jesus alone, which is why it's important to make yourself at home by taking some important next steps in your journey of faith.

love for you,' says
the Lord.
for good, and not for
disaster,
ture and a hope."
Jeremiah 29:11

Make yourself at

HOME

When the prodigal son first left home, he demanded his inheritance and then wasted it. When he returned home with a repentant heart, he was given a new inheritance: the love of God, righteousness, authority, direction and purpose, and was welcomed home. He would not waste these precious new gifts.

Max Lucado, a Christian author and pastor, said, "God loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus." If we are going to successfully follow Jesus and enjoy the gifts God has given to us, we need to take some important next steps in our journey of faith.

#1: Devotional Life

Start Spending Time with God Every Day

A "Daily Devotion" is simply spending time with God through Bible reading and prayer. We can't discover who God is or His promises for our lives, without spending time with Him. Starting your day by spending time with God is not an obligation; it's a privilege!

The Bible says in 1 Chronicles 22:19 (NIV), “*Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God...*”

Developing your personal devotional life with God starts with some simple planning and leads to a heart full of life. There are several ways to have a daily time of devotion with God, but here are some steps that will help you get started.

First... decide on a regular time. Treat your time with God like a calendar appointment. First thing in the morning, before we start our day, is usually the best time to read the Bible and pray. However, choose a time where you won't be distracted or interrupted.

Second... decide on a place. We all need a “secret place” where we are comfortable and can focus on our time with God.

Third... follow a Bible reading plan. You can download a mobile app from Word of Life Arizona with a daily devotional that you can use. It starts with a Bible verse and has a short lesson that teaches us more about God. To download the app, just search for “Word of Life Arizona” in either the Apple Store or Google Play.

Fourth... set an atmosphere. Whatever place you decide to have your time of devotion, create a reverential atmosphere. You can start with singing along to some worship music and asking God to reveal Himself to you as you read His Word, the Bible.

Fifth... take time to meditate and listen. Meditation isn't emptying your mind of thoughts. It's the exact opposite. Meditation means to ponder and think about what you are reading in the Bible. Focus on what you're reading and chew on it with your mind like a piece of gum.

Sixth... write your thoughts in a journal. Keep a written record of what you're learning from your Bible reading, including questions you may have, as well as what you are praying for. As you build new friendships in church, it's amazing what you'll be able to share and learn with others.

#2: Church Life

Start Attending Church Every Week

The same way a family gathers together at home, Christians gather together at church for worship. It's important to make the time every Sunday to gather with us as we worship together and hear the preaching of the Word of God. Supernatural things happen when God's people meet together. In fact, God promises, *"Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish..."* (Psalm 92:13, NKJV).

You and your family may not be in the habit of attending church every Sunday, but as you commit to rearranging your schedule to attend church, like a tree being planted in rich soil, your life will begin to flourish. Our church meets every week on Sunday. You don't need to do anything special to come to church. Just come as you are!

We know life can get busy, but life works best when we make God our priority. Jesus told His disciples, *"Instead, make your top priority God's kingdom and his way of life, and all these things will be given to you as well!"* (Matthew 6:33, NTE).

#3: Life Groups

Start Connecting with Friends Who Will Help You Follow Jesus

As we gather together as a church on Sundays, we also meet in Life Groups throughout the week. God designed us to do life together. This is why relationships are such an important part of following Jesus. We need friends in our lives who will help us get to where God wants us to be.

Life Groups are small gatherings of people who meet up every week to share their lives with one another, encourage and support each other, and pray together. Every Life Group has a leader who's committed to, "promote your progress and joy in believing" (Philippians 1:25, AMPC). Our church has many Life Groups that meet throughout the week, in various areas. Finding a Life Group you can be a part of is easy!

If you have a friend or family member who invited you to church, they may already be part of a Life Group. If they haven't already invited you to join them, just ask! You can email us at info@wordoflifeaz.church for help finding a Life Group.

#4: Life Class

Start Getting Equipped

As you continue to grow in your relationship with Jesus through your devotional life, attending church and being a part of a Life Group, your next step should be to enroll in Life Class. It's a nine-week course designed to strengthen a new Christian's faith in Jesus. Life Class will guide you through the core elements of what it means to follow Jesus and prepare you to encounter God in a life-changing way.

Life Class is offered throughout the year. It's not your typical classroom experience. Life Class is a creative environment and highly interactive! Your Life Group Leader can let you know the class schedule and help you register. Life Class is more than a class. It's life!

Life Class...
designed to
strengthen
your faith
in Jesus

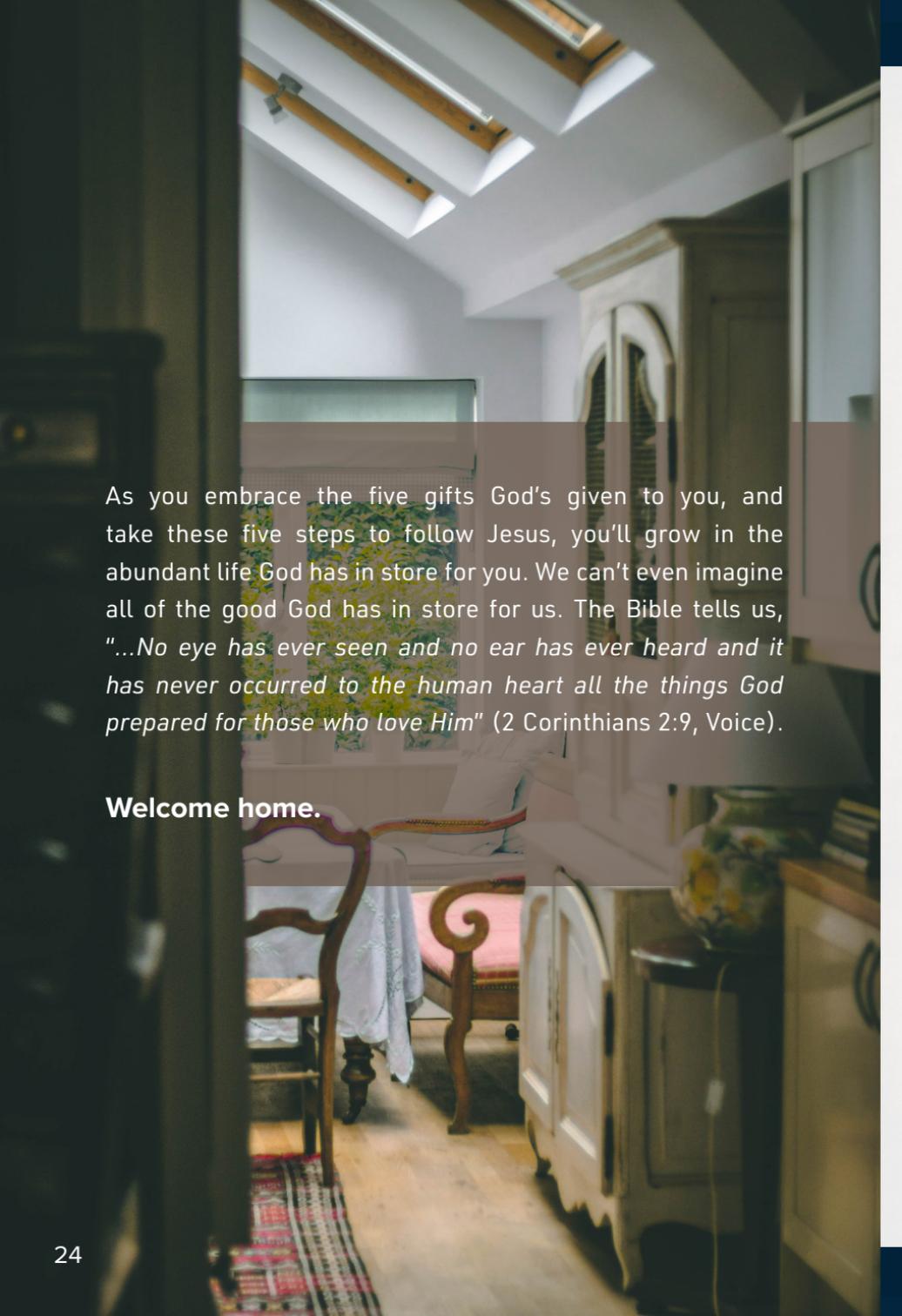
#5: Sharing Your Story

Start Telling Others About Jesus

Tell your world about Jesus! You heard about Jesus because someone took the time to tell you about Him. Now, you have the same privilege of sharing Jesus with others. The world is full of hurting people, and they're not strangers. They're our own family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. They're the people we live next to, go to school with, and interact with on social media. And they all matter to God. This is why in James' letter to the church, he wrote: *"My dear friends, if you know people who have wandered off from God's truth, don't write them off. Go after them. Get them back and you will have rescued precious lives from destruction and prevented an epidemic of wandering away from God"* (James 5:19-20, TMB).

In Jesus' day, a man in need was crying out for help. The Bible states: *"So Jesus stood still and commanded [the blind man] to be brought to Him. And when he had come near...Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight...'* And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him..." (Luke 18:40-43). When we bring people to Jesus, He changes their lives.

Ask God to show you someone you can share your story with. Start praying for them. When the opportunity arises, share with them how Jesus has changed your life. Invite them to church with you to experience God for themselves, firsthand. You'll be amazed at how God uses you to make a difference in someone else's life!



As you embrace the five gifts God's given to you, and take these five steps to follow Jesus, you'll grow in the abundant life God has in store for you. We can't even imagine all of the good God has in store for us. The Bible tells us, *"...No eye has ever seen and no ear has ever heard and it has never occurred to the human heart all the things God prepared for those who love Him"* (2 Corinthians 2:9, Voice).

Welcome home.

Here are some ways to
stay connected with us!

Instagram / @WordOfLife_Arizona

Facebook / @WOLArizona

Youtube / youtube.com search for Word of Life Arizona

Church Service Info
WordOfLifeAZ.Church

Connect with a Life Group
WordOfLifeAZ.church/life-groups

If you have any questions, email us directly at
info@wordoflifeaz.church

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