



“Shine Your Light!”

7 Days

Joyful, purpose-filled living is grounded on relationships, love, and faith. If you’re looking for more clarity on God’s plan for your life, engage this plan to help focus your pursuit and discovery. Taken from the book, “Out of This World: A Christian’s Guide to Growth and Purpose” by David J. Swandt.

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DAY 1: The Golden Rule!

Whether it's a politician, a business leader, a motivational speaker, or just an everyday person, people from all walks of life occasionally reference the virtues of the Golden Rule. In fact, nearly everyone has heard of it and knows its meaning.

Most people would agree that “doing unto others what we would have done to us” is a necessary part of society. In many respects, it is the fabric that holds our culture, families and friendships together. The Golden Rule demonstrates the merits of serving others, extending generosity and helping those in need.

Jesus was the author of the Golden Rule which is one of the key priorities for successful Christian living. Jesus said:

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 7:12

As Christians, God calls each of us to take our faith to a level that goes beyond just believing in God. His desire is that each of us put our faith into action by touching the lives of others, thus glorifying God by showing His love and grace to them. This is truly living by the Golden Rule.

DAY 2: Keys to Successful Relationships

Every relationship, whether with a friend, family member, spouse, or even with God, has two fundamental components which make it successful: the love and affection shared between the individuals, and putting that love into action.

The truth is that real love is always accompanied by action; a true friend seeing another in need will respond with help. The same is true in our relationship with God. A true love for God is accompanied by action; touching God's heart by touching the lives of those around us.

Making the most of our relationships with others begins with our relationship with God. In fact, God asks that our relationships with others be an extension of our relationship with Him. Consider the two greatest commandments of the Bible as expressed by Jesus:

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“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’. There is no commandment greater than these.” **Mark 12:30-31**

As believers, our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with one another are what's most important to God - loving Him and loving others.

DAY 3: Growing our Love for God

Developing a love for God is perhaps a bit more challenging than with a friend or family member. One primary reason is that we cannot physically see God. So maintaining and growing a love for God requires faith.

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” **Hebrews 11:1**

Faith allows us to channel a genuine love from our hearts directly to God, even though we cannot see Him with our physical eyes. In order to grow our love for God, faith must be active in our Christian lives.

As we read God’s Word, observe His love and involvement in our lives and others, and fellowship with Him in prayer, we begin to know God more and more. Knowing Him more over time nurtures a genuine maturing love for Him in our lives.

Growing that love for God out of our faith in Him also depends on demonstrating that love through action:

“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” **James 2:17**

Our love for God through faith, accompanied by our commitment to God through action is the chemistry needed for a successful, growing relationship with Him.

While our love for God will most certainly grow as a result of putting our faith into action, it is also important to understand that these actions do not earn God’s love and favor for us.

The truth is that God already loved us intimately and without condition long before we ever knew Him. God’s love is the true source of ours: our love for Him and for others.

“We love because he first loved us.” **I John 4:19**

DAY 4: Extending Love to Others

With a vibrant and growing love for God at work in our lives, our capacity to love other people will inherently grow as well. With a maturing love for others comes a growing desire to demonstrate that love, thus fulfilling one of the most important purposes for which God created us:

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” **Ephesians 2:10**

It has been in God’s plan all along that we accompany love with action. Each one of us has a place in God’s master plan to touch the lives of others through good deeds.

Each time we touch the life of another with a kind word, respond to a certain need, or just simply lend an attentive ear to a hurting heart, we not only express our love, but God’s love for them through us.

In this way, we become key agents to shine God's glory brightly to a world that is otherwise filled with darkness and hopelessness. Consider Jesus' words:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." **Matthew 5:14-16**

Shining our light is really allowing God's light to shine through us. There are three important ways to shine God's glory to others: being an effective witness; serving others; and fellowshiping with Christians. Putting our faith into action in these three ways enables others to experience God's love, grace and mercy, all to His glory.

DAY 5: Being an Effective Witness

Knowing how to be an effective witness in our everyday world begins with understanding what God wants others to observe in our lives. The short answer is of course, Jesus. But what does that mean?

Jesus provided a perfect example of how God wants us to live. While Jesus lived his earthly life in a world much different than ours' today, He embodied the full character of God and provides a relevant example for our modern world.

It is God's character that he desires to develop in our lives and to be observed by others. This is achieved only through our personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus said:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” **John 15:8**

Just as a branch that remains in the vine it draws its life from will bear fruit, so it is for us who remain in our relationship with Jesus - we bear fruit - or demonstrate the character of God through our lives to others.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Against such there is no law.”

Galatians 5:22-23

When God’s character is working in us and through us - His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control we become an effective witness living out our everyday lives.

Just as it was in Jesus’ day, the outward, active expression of God’s character through our lives - the fruit of the Spirit - is unmistakable. It draws the attention of both Christians and unbelievers alike, and it’s not uncommon for someone to inquire about it.

“But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” **1 Peter 3:15**

Be prepared. Someone may be observing and inquire of you when you least expect it. Your personal testimony of salvation and of God’s wonderful ongoing work in your own life is a great starting point. Also, this book is another tool you can use to help someone comprehend in simple terms the wonderful message of God’s love and salvation available to all. If someone is ready to receive Christ into their life, you can lead them in a prayer similar to the one at the conclusion of the first chapter in this book, “The Biggest Decision in Your Life”.

DAY 6: Serving Others

The definition of serving is simply being available to respond to someone's need. That response may require our time, talent, resources and effort; but serving out of a love for God and for others can be one of the most joyful and rewarding experiences.

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." I Peter 4:10

"Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." Romans 12:13

Responding to the needs of others can come in many forms and can focus on the needs of Christians and unbelievers alike. There are always opportunities to serve in the local church either individually or as part of a team. You DO have something incredibly valuable to offer!

There are also opportunities which arise in simple one on one contact with people, or just simply observing someone's need, and responding with unsolicited assistance.

Any response you give, whether time, resources, talent or simply an encouraging word, is an act of serving. But God also understands that we have a limited capacity in what we can offer, so he expects us to show responsibility and good stewardship when making commitments.

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” **2 Corinthians 9:7**

God's desire is for us to give of ourselves cheerfully. While at times it is difficult for some of us to say no, the truth is that overextending ourselves can ultimately rob us of the cheerfulness and joy God wants us to have when we serve.

DAY 7: Fellowship with Christians

Giving encouragement, love and strength to other believers is one of our greatest priorities. The fact is that we need each other. That is how God designed it. God doesn't want anyone to "go it alone."

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

The truth is that building relationships with other Christians is crucial to our own growth. God often sets up "divine appointments" for us to minister to or encourage one another as maybe only we can.

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work; If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

The principle of strength in numbers applies even to Christians, and having strong relationships with fellow believers helps us grow in our walk with God!

God’s plan in establishing the local church was for you to be connected to other believers. Get involved and enjoy the benefits of giving and receiving blessings from your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ!