

# YOUR FIRST ONE THING

Setting a Foundation  
for a Relationship with God



By Dr. Randy Carlson

intentional  
*Living*

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## ***INTENTIONAL LIVING***

You can find hope for a better life in Christ with *Intentional Living*.

If you would like to discover more about this unique worldview, we are here to serve you with resources to help you live intentionally. You can listen to our nationally-syndicated radio program and learn about our marriage and parenting conferences to grow your family. You'll also find articles and resources online at our web site [TheIntentionalLife.com](http://TheIntentionalLife.com).

To make the most impact in your personal life and your family, you can turn your good intentions to reality. You'll learn to find out what pleases Christ and do it in the five essential areas of life: faith, family, health, finances and work.



### **ABOUT DR. RANDY CARLSON**

Dr. Randy has a passion to help people achieve their dreams by doing "One Thing" intentionally over time. In his newly-released book *The Power of One Thing*, he teaches that the only way to truly live a balanced, intentional life is to submit to Christ.

People are turning to Dr. Randy, a best-selling author, counselor and radio personality. He oversees *Intentional Living* and Family Life Radio, ministries of Family Life Communications Incorporated.

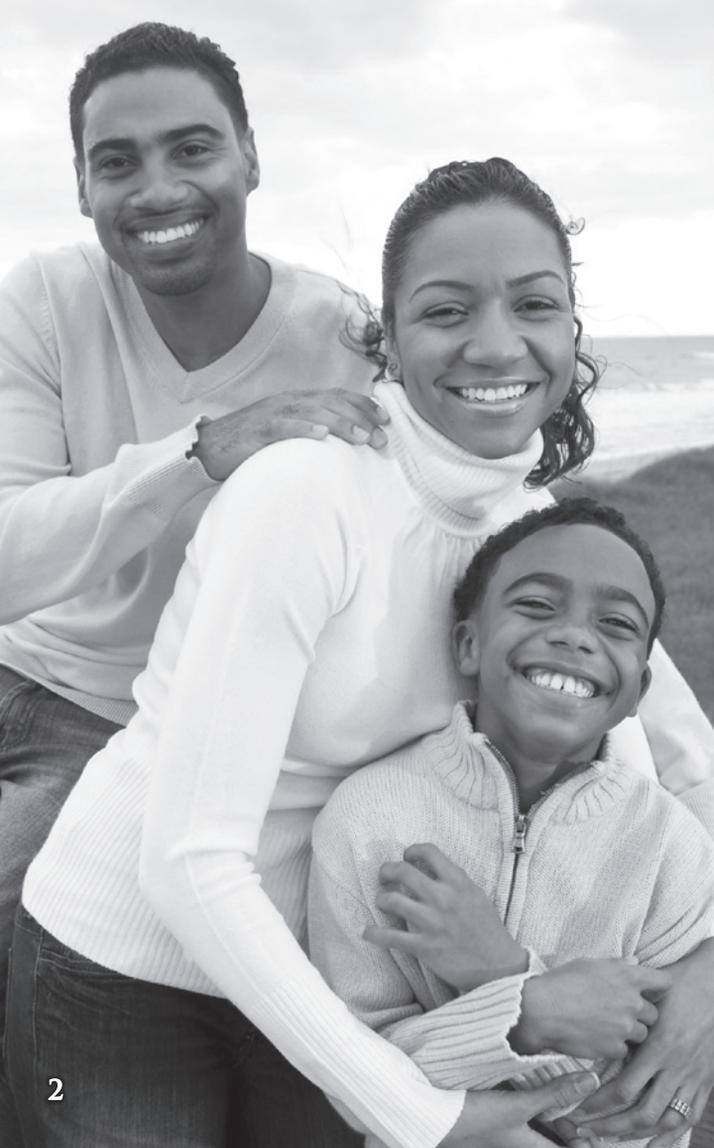
Dr. Randy has a doctorate in counseling psychology with over 25 years of experience helping people live an intentional life. He wants to serve you too.

# **YOUR FIRST ONE THING**

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## INTRODUCTION

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There are many ways to fail in life, but the only way to succeed is to be intentional. We all have things in our lives we want to improve—yet when the changes start to feel overwhelming, we often give up too soon.

Over the years I've learned that intentional living is the only way out! Either you let circumstances control you or you take responsibility for what's under your control. You may not be able to make big, life changes overnight, but by committing to follow through on one small thing every day, you can inch yourself closer and closer to your goal. Ultimately, the only thing that's going to make a difference in your life is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That **ONE THING** is the foundation that every single intentional thing you endeavor to do should be built on.



## TELL THEM ABOUT JESUS

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I met my wife, Donna, when we were teenagers. Donna never saw me cry until the day my dad died. I stood at his side, held his hand and watched him take his last breath. I remember saying, "Dad, it's okay—you can go home now," and I let him go.

A year or two before he died, he recognized his health was failing and he went out and bought a cemetery plot. He called me on the phone and there was excitement in his voice. He said, "Randy, I've made the final plans for the cemetery. I've got our plot for Mom and me—**you won't believe the view.**" For my dad it was about location. He was Mr. Positive. When he talked about death he always said, "I'm going home to Heaven; don't worry about it. Just drill a hole in the ground and drop me in."

We took my dad's body back to Muskegon, Michigan, his hometown where I was born, and he was buried in Mona View Cemetery overlooking Mona View Lake. Our family followed the hearse out to the cemetery.

It was a rainy, cold, May day in Michigan. With the rain pouring down, they placed a tent over the top of the hole in the ground. After we'd said our goodbyes to family members, my brothers Warren and Larry, and I were drawn back to my dad's casket like magnets. Our wives had gotten in the car and the three of us just stood there with the water running off the tent. We joked with each other about Dad and the things he used to say to us.

I remembered very clearly him say jokingly, "Some day you'll stand over my grave." And while the three of us stood there I said, "Dad, that's exactly what we're doing."

Then I thought, *if he could say one more thing to us, I wonder what he would say.* My dad was in a coma the last three weeks of his life. I had gone to see him one afternoon. I walked out of his hospital room and he was perfectly alert. When I walked back into his room ten minutes later, he was in a coma.

I never had a chance to talk to him again. So, I thought to myself, *what would he say to us?* You know, your parents' words come back to you. And I can hear his voice sometimes in my heart. I believe

my dad would say, "Keep following Jesus, guys. It's worth it." He'd remind us, "Treat your wives with respect." And he'd be sure to mention, "Take care of your mother."

My dad's last instructions wouldn't be about bank accounts or careers. It wouldn't be about disputes or arguments. It would be about the things that matter most in order to be intentional.

I am so excited that you've made a commitment to get to know Jesus Christ. The only thing that's going to make a difference ultimately in your life is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

If my dad could have sat up one more time, I truly believe he would've said, "Tell them about Jesus." You can strive to be intentional in many things, and intentional living works, but outside of Christ it's going to be hollow. You have to know Him to really live fulfilled. It's the ultimate ONE THING.

# GETTING TO KNOW HIM

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The Bible tells us that if we confess the Lord Jesus with our mouth and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead we can be a child of God and be saved (Romans 10:9).

You have a personal invitation to know Christ and become God's child. Jesus said, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*" (John 10:27 NKJV). *But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God* (John 1:12 NLT).

From the very beginning, God created man and woman for a relationship with him. He placed them on the earth and gave them freedom of choice. Adam and Eve—the first of mankind—disobeyed God and that sin separated them from God and everyone born after them.

- Sin caused a chasm between us and God. *For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard* (Romans 3:23 NLT).
- God made a way for us to re-establish a relationship with him through his son. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16 NLT).

- Jesus became a bridge for us through his sacrifice on the cross, death burial and resurrection. *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 6:23 NLT).
- Jesus is the way, but you and I have to make a personal choice to accept him as Lord and Savior. It's the first step toward living the intentional life in Christ.

The difference between successful people and those who are not is successful people take action. Here are five ONE THINGS you can do, starting now, that will help you come to know God in an intimate way:

- Read your Bible every day.
- Talk to God in prayer.
- Spend time with other Christians in a church where the truth is preached.
- Share your story and tell others about Christ.
- Demonstrate your relationship with God by loving others.



## TIME WITH GOD IN HIS WORD

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The Bible says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

A while ago, on one of our *Intentional Living* radio broadcasts, I was talking to a young man who had made the decision to be very intentional about his faith. He explained that he, like so many others, did not spend time reading the Bible but starting that very next day he was going to make a commitment:

**Dr. Randy:** "So, you're going to start reading your Bible tomorrow and that's terrific...what passage will you start with?"

**Caller:** "I don't know, I haven't thought about it. I was just going to flip it open and see what jumped out."

This is a very unintentional approach to an intentional decision. If you're new to reading the Bible, I suggest starting with the book of John, in the New Testament. The Bible is divided into books, each with a different title. Sometimes the book is named after the person who wrote it (as is the case with John) or what is written about (like the book of Kings).



Wherever you decide to start reading, don't get discouraged if you suddenly don't understand something. Ask God to show you what He wants you to learn, take a deep breath, and keep going. Don't give up! Reading God's Word will be a main source of growth in your new relationship with Him. Whatever tool you use, I pray God blesses you as you grow in faith and study His Word each day.

## TIME WITH GOD IN PRAYER

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Prayer isn't as difficult as it may seem. It's just conversation with God. He is my constant companion, with me at all times so it stands to reason that I can talk to him at any moment. He's my close personal friend and I talk to him that way.

## THE INTENTIONAL CHRISTIAN

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Thank you so much for being intentional enough and bold enough to give your life to Christ. My passion is to see you live an intentional life in Christ.



An intentional Christian is a Christ-follower who actually follows. As followers of Jesus Christ, it's easy to be very unintentional in our submission to Him. We make excuses and justify our actions when we want to go our own way.

Have you ever watched a child follow? Imagine those little feet walking closely behind a parent—even placing their little feet directly into the footprints of the one they are following. They often mimic the actions, repeat the words, and follow specifically each thing that parent does.

Now, there is nothing today that's keeping us from being a true follower of Jesus Christ. It's a decision that you and I have made. The Bible tells us that none of us just naturally seek to be a follower of Christ. *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want* (Galatians 5:17 NIV). It's because of God's wooing that draws us, and we find ourselves in a position that we want to accept Him and make him a part of our lives.

Only when you make an intentional decision to live your faith will you experience growth. Are you ready to grow in Him today?



## THE DECISION TO GROW

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Living an intentional life as a follower of Jesus Christ is a decision that you and I need to make. And there are three things you need to realize about being an intentional Christian.

1. We have to know enough about what God expects. That means it is important to understand what the Bible teaches us as we continue our journey following Him.
2. We have to understand enough about what we need to do. How does the Holy Spirit speaking in my life translate into what I need to be doing in my life? (I believe that God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit individually at times.)
3. We have to do enough to experience growth in our lives. We have to do something (act) in order to grow as a follower of Christ.

You and I will be as spiritual in our lives as we decide to be. There is nothing today that keeps us from being really turned on in our faith. There's nothing that's keeping us from being a true follower of Jesus Christ. God does the saving, but we do the growing. You're the one that decides if you're going to submit and follow Him. Would you choose to grow in your walk with Christ today and focus on one of these three things?



## WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

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I want to help you in your faith walk. I desire to see you live each day purposefully and intentionally in every area of life.

To that end, I'd like to know how you're doing in your new and growing relationship with Christ. Email me at any time to share your story:

**DrRandy@TheIntentionalLife.com**. While I can't respond to every email I receive, I certainly will read your email, and I will join you in prayer.

In addition, my staff and I would count it a privilege to pray for you and any needs that you're experiencing. I urge you to leave your prayer request on our 24/7 prayer line at 888-907-PRAY. Prayer is the "One Thing" we all can do to support each other as Christ-followers.

Finally, if we can help you with products, resources or general questions about the ministry, please don't hesitate to call our ministry center at **888-888-1717**, online at **TheIntentionalLife.com** or you can write to us at:

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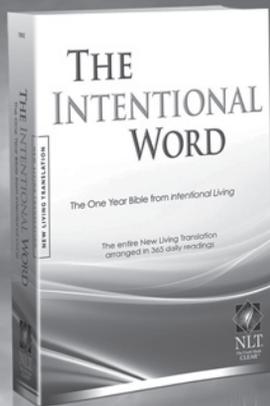
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## Looking for a very intentional tool to read and study God's Word each day?



The Intentional Word —The One Year Bible from Intentional Living is a daily reading bible that's divided into 365 sections so you can read through the entire Bible in one unforgettable year in as little as 15 minutes a day! Call **888-888-1717** to order or go online to [TheIntentionalLife.com](http://TheIntentionalLife.com)

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