

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

# KING JESUS

PREPARING YOUR HEART FOR EASTER

*21 Day Devotional*



**foundations**  
daily devotional





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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

# SERVANT KING

## DAY 1

### JESUS THE LAMB OF GOD



**READ:** John 1:29-34

Have you ever had a prophetic word spoken to you? It's overwhelming as well as encouraging – like a blanket of love to wrap yourself in; that God would impart a piece of His love, vision, and energy to you is (as they say) priceless! I don't know about you, but it always leaves me wanting to be closer to God, to understand Him better, to know and seek His purposes and His plans, to unwrap the mystery. Consequently, I feel energized to continue the job He has me working on.

John the Baptist says, *“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, **except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, “The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.**”* John 1:32-34 (NIV)

Usually the prophetic word we are given is less specific and the picture, word or verse needs to be prayed over, seeking God further for guidance and affirmation.

This word given to John was a bit different. It is a specific purpose, a precise and intentional moment of discovery; John seeing his cousin Jesus as the prophesied Messiah. *I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was **that he might be revealed to Israel.*** John 1:31 (NIV) It's the promise of redemption that the Israelites had been waiting centuries to happen finally coming to fruition!

In these brief 5 verses there is a lot to unpack; huge moments actually! Some of these include the acknowledgement and reintroduction of Jesus (now a grown man) and crowning Him the Lamb of God. Also the fact that He is the Redeemer of all people, the atonement for our sin is made evident.

*“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* John 1:29b (NIV) John's entire life and ministry was to go before the One and prepare the way for His coming. *This is the one I meant when I said, “A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.” I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.* Jn 1:30-31 (NIV) John knew the great significance of the moment his life's work had led to – the moment the Spirit came down from heaven as a dove to remain in Jesus.

John knew his purpose so well that a few chapters later he lays it out for the people. *A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, “I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.” The bride belongs to the bridegroom. **The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.** He must become greater; I must become less.* Jn 3:27-30 (NIV)

John knew the prophetic word that was spoken over his life. He watched and waited, anticipating the beginning of the ministry of the One who is the Lamb of God.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. John the Baptist was a renowned prophet and preacher of the Word of God. His ministry, though not covered in depth throughout scriptures, is of great importance beginning from the announcement of his birth through Elizabeth and Zechariah (Lk 1:39-45 & 57-80) through to his final breaths at his beheading.

God was with John at his conception and continued through each detail of his life. John's mother Elizabeth bestowed a blessing upon Mary and the unborn Jesus. He placed his faith in God's plan and carried out his part with great faith, abundant conviction and utter devotion to the God who takes away the sins of the world.

Take out your journal and spend some time praising God for His unique and intricate plan. Thank Him for choosing to use John, a regular man whom the Heavenly Father's included as an example of someone who was watching, waiting, listening and obeying.

2. Each word in scripture has a purpose. Some we glance over quickly, but all, ALL, the words are God breathed and vital to His story and plan. The commencing of the New Covenant begins with these words: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 29b (NIV)

Reflect on this entire passage and ask God to impart a new understanding to you. Perhaps you can visualize the moment. Imagine being one of the followers John was baptizing when Jesus emerges from the baptismal waters. What would your reaction be to witnessing it?

3. The word Lamb holds great significance because Jesus himself becomes the one time sacrifice that would replace the seemingly endless burnt offerings needed to cleanse those who broke the Law of the Covenant. Give all praise and thanks to the Lamb, Jesus, who came to take away the sins of the world!

## DAY 2

### THE LIFE OF A SERVANT

 **READ:** Mt 10:1-20, Mk 6:8, Lk 9:1-2

*Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.* Mk 6:6b-7 (NIV) Jesus taught the Twelve and then sent them out to continue the work that He began. He gave them power and authority to deal with everything they encountered. He also gave them instructions on the ways they should go, how to accept help and when to pass over it.

They were sent with a specific mission: *As you go, preach this message: "The kingdom of heaven is near".* Mt 10:7 (NIV) In fact those very words were amongst the first message Jesus preached in Matthew 4:17 and in Mark 1:15 (NIV) *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* Jesus' task included raising up, preparing, educating and solidifying an army of believers who would go forth to proclaim the Gospel that He was presenting to the people.

Jesus taught the disciples from the moment they were called, revealing Himself to them and arming them with His Truth before sending them out to battle. Jesus didn't sugar

coat the task at hand, He told them it would be a bumpy ride; He revealed to them what they would walk into because of His name, yet Jesus was an encouragement: *“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. **Freely you have received, freely give.**”* Mt 10:8 (NIV)

However, it wasn't merely the forces of death and decay the disciples would face, but also the evil forces in the heavenly realms who would stop at nothing to cripple the hands and silence the mouths of those who preach in the name of Jesus. *“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before the governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”* Mt 10:17-20 (NIV)

A servant's task isn't always one that is glamorous; in fact, there are many tasks that are difficult, arduous, filthy, undesirable, repugnant and humiliating. Jesus didn't leave His disciples nor does He leave us to dangle on a ledge alone. He gives us His Holy Spirit to comfort and speak for us. *“But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”* Mt 10:19-20 (NIV) Jesus spoke those words, and those words are our promise!

In all honesty God doesn't need our help; nor did He need the help of the disciples either because all too often we muck it up. He is God, He is perfect and we simply are not. Yet God, in His tremendously gracious way, uses us. He takes our missteps, our ill-advised attempts to serve in our own strength, in our own time, with our own words and uses us. He teaches us with each step we take towards Him and when we veer off course, He pulls us back and renews our course.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. What does a servant's heart look like to you? Make a list of the attributes and spend some time praying that your heart might align with those qualities.
2. A servant needs to be close to his master to understand the details in the task they are given. Do you spend time with your Master daily? Have you submitted yourself to being a servant to the One True God? Ask God to reveal to you any area in your life that needs work, then confess those areas that you have been unwilling to surrender.
3. Thank Jesus for being the picture of a Servant. Write Him a letter thanking Him for taking on that roll, how it has changed your life.

## DAY 3

### JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE (PART 1)



**READ:** John 6:25-40

In many ways we have an easier time understanding Jesus' teaching than the crowds who followed Him did. I say easier because we have a blueprint, the Word, to follow each step of the way and we can take as long as necessary to process the message as well as cross reference as we go. Jesus left us His Words, His Teachings, His Message and His Heart to devour and hold tight to.

*Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."* Jn 6:27 (NIV)

We often get caught up in the healings, the turning of water into wine, of feeding the crowds that gathered; the miracles; those spectacular moments that set fireworks ablaze in the scriptures and still today. These moments are worthy of all glory and praise, not only because they blow our minds and humble us before Him, but because they bolster in us trust. Yet these are not the moments that fill our day to day.

Those who followed Jesus questioned Him on how they were to go about the work God required in verse 28, and Jesus' response is simple, *"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."* Jn 6:29 (NIV)

BELIEVE

Simple?

Yes and no.

Let's step back for a moment and imagine for a minute being one of those in the crowd Jesus had just fed. You know the stories of the Israelites and the miraculous events that took place. You know about being brought out of Egypt, the plagues that accompanied leading up to Moses' parting of the Red Sea, the Manna that rained from the heavens new each morning. You know these things, they are ingrained in you, they are the teachings of your ancestors and the story is your heritage. You even saw Him miraculously feed 5000 people. Then Jesus calls you out. He flat out tells you that you are not following Him because of the miraculous signs you've seen His hand perform but because your belly is full of the food that He provided (v 26). Ouch...that's a harsh truth, wouldn't you say?

Those who followed Jesus wanting to understand asked Him further questions. *So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave the bread from heaven to eat.'" Jn 6:30-31 (NIV)* They still seem to not be getting it, asking Jesus what He will do. Thankfully, God is good, faithful and patient with us!

*Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread of heaven but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. **For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**"*

*"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."*

*The Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. **But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

We cannot come to Jesus unless the Father brings us to Him. We cannot believe, truly believe, unless the Father nurtures that seed in our hearts and we in turn trust Him. Truly believing is more than trusting in the miracle. It is walking with Jesus, recognizing WHO HE IS in all things and walking towards Him, even if we have to walk through fire for His name.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. What has He done for you? Are you a follower at a crossroads? Spend some time asking Him to reveal to you even a small sampling of a time He was with revealing Himself to you.
2. Does this humble you? Knowing that God sent His Son so that we could have an *easier* time trusting, believing, and surrendering to Him?
3. ***I am the bread of life.*** Thank Jesus for His patience, His faithfulness and for the message He spoke to you today.

## DAY 4

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### JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE (PART 2)



**READ:** John 6:41-71

*At this the Jews began to grumble about him....* Jn 6:41(NIV)

*Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves.....*Jn 6:52 (NIV)

*On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"* Jn 6:60 (NIV)

*From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.* Jn 6:66 (NIV)

The reality of Jesus' teaching is that it is often difficult to swallow, especially when it feels like you are walking blindly, without all the information or possible outcomes at hand. But with this particular section we have the foreknowledge of the road Jesus will walk to substantiate our belief. In other words, we understand all this bread-of-life/flesh-as-food talk because we have come to understand it as a symbol of the sacrifice Christ will make on our behalf.

Yet we see another belief or trust quandary:

*"Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. **I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life.** Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. **This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**"* Jn 6:44-51 (NIV)

We can talk symbolism all day, we can even elaborate this specific topic for a good long while, but it all comes back to whether or not we believe and live it out in our daily lives.

*"The work of God is this: to **believe** in the one he has sent."* Jn 6:29 (NIV)

The Jews had Jesus in their midst, within touching distance and yet they struggled to believe. Believing in something is not an easy task. Believing in Jesus, placing your life in His hands, will mean turning your back on the world, the things your flesh desires. It could

also mean walking away from family and friends whose agenda doesn't align with the teaching in the Bible. Believing doesn't mean your life will be easy and your belly will be full. However, believing in Jesus without hesitation, following His guidance, His Word and Commands and immersing yourself in your relationship with Him daily is a reward in itself.

*Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.**"* Jn 6:53-58 (NIV)

The promise Jesus gives us in being the Bread of Life lesson is beautiful and all-encompassing. He tell us what we need to do step by step.

Believe in God, Yahweh.

Believe He sent His Son Jesus.

Believe Jesus came to us as prophesied; to save the whole world.

Believe that the Holy Spirit will infuse us with life and that He is always near.

All you have to do is surrender your life and **believe**.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

*"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe."* Jn 6:63-64a (NIV)

1. Thank Jesus. Thank Him for the message, that He Is The Bread of Life, and that He offers His life for all.
2. Is there something holding you back from giving your whole self to Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything that He wants to bring to your mind that could be standing in your way. Confess what was revealed, then ask for help, that you might lay down your life for Him.
3. Thank Jesus for the time you are living in right now! We have access to His Word, the Wisdom He imparts through the Holy Spirit, and understanding of the ages which combined draws us closer to Jesus and His Truths. Praise Him for this.

## DAY 5

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### FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE



**READ:** Psalm 139

How beautiful and humbling it is to know we were made in the image of God. That He Himself thought enough of us – His Creation – to design us so intricately, thoughtfully and uniquely to liken us to His being. *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.....So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.....God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Ge 1:26, 27, 31*

Without question he was pleased with Adam and Eve. Perhaps one of the coolest parts of this first verse is God stating, *let us make man in our image*; we were inspired and given

physical characteristics of the Trinity; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; **Let us make man in our image.** They were together before recorded time began. So cool, wouldn't you say?

Most men and women are born with an innate sense of right and wrong. We grow, often aware of something greater, bigger and more profound than us. Your awareness will often grow sharper when you are surrounded by nature, communing with the peacefulness that floods you on a clear starry night or in the midst of a slow floating, fluffy white snowfall. There is a knowing born in your spirit that your mind cannot with absolute certainty deny, though humankind has become accustomed to asserting our desires or agendas to explain away that inkling, or nudge in our spirit.

Being fearfully made, in essence, means your Creator made you to respect the authority that is His Name. He molded and shaped you in your mother's womb to be brought forth to bring Him Glory. He knows each hair on your head and characteristic in your personality. He made you for His delight, that He could lavish you with His love and affection, that you could know Him, and therefore have a relationship with Him.

*O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. You hem me in - behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.* Ps 139:1-6 (NIV)

This Psalm is a song that briefly outlines Who God the Father, The Son and Holy Spirit Are.

He knows you – everything – and as you continue to read this passage, that tug in your spirit that makes you want to get on your knees to praise the Powerful God who can do all things, the tug in your spirit that cries out to worship Him because truly knowing God means having **knowledge that is too wonderful for me, too lofty to attain.**

Being fearfully made means that when the power goes out and dark days loom in a seemingly endless future, God has instilled in us alternate resources to light our path home. He is the One who breathes life and light into us. He is the One who controls everything in and around us.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Psalm 139 (written by David) reveals God's character, not our own. Yet David's heart is exposed as well. David loved, adored and lavished God with praise in abundant ways all throughout this passage. His reverence for God explains what fearfully made means. Read the passage again while thanking God for David's window into who God is.
2. David uses words like know me, perceived, discern, created, and ordained to describe who God is. Each word encompasses a piece of God's character, but one that stands out is that He is always with us; He is Omnipresent with hands-on involvement.

*How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.....Search me, O god, and know my heart, test me and now my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*  
Ps 139:17-18, 23-24 (NIV)

God is powerful and gentle in the same breath. Thank God for the tender ways these verses have opened or re-opened your eyes to how deep His love for you is.

3. Reflection: We are fearfully and wonderfully made in His image. Everything He is is more than enough to command our love, should He choose. But He doesn't, He gives us a choice in how we will respond. Reflect on this – that God allows us to choose.

## MARTYRED KING

### DAY 6

#### PLOT AGAINST JESUS

 **READ:** Matthew 26:1-13

*Jesus said to his disciples, "As you know, the Passover is two days away – and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified. Mt 26:1b-2 (NIV)*

These revealing words came on the heels of what could perhaps be called Jesus' lengthiest teaching session. He has just imparted great wisdom to the disciples and after preaching He then reveals to them bluntly that He is to be handed over to be crucified. Do you believe it if you are one of the disciples? It seems ridiculous. Yes, He wasn't loved in all places, and yes, He faced adversary amidst skeptics and preachers of the law alike, but to be handed over to be crucified? Surely not, what was His crime? And who was doing this handing over? Certainly not any of those close to Him.

Imagine that moment for a minute. As a disciple, your mind, heart, and body is reeling from the words Jesus has just spoken. The message over the past days and hours was heavy, jammed packed (go back two chapters and read through Mt ch.23-25) and that message alone probably would take time to digest, but Jesus doesn't let anything settle; He speaks more truth; truth that simply makes no sense.

*Jesus said to his disciples, "As you know, the Passover is two days away – and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified. Mt 26:1b-2 (NIV)*

There is no further discussion between those words and the next scene when Jesus being anointed with oil. This exchange (Mt 26:6-13) is well documented and very interesting for many reasons:

1. The disciples were indignant = angry, annoyed, resentful, outraged. *"Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Mt 26:8b-9 (NIV)*

First of all, yes, it could have fetched a high price and been given to the poor, but at this point the disciples had been a party to Jesus providing for all he came in contact with byway of miraculous healings or feeding a crowd of 5000. Yes, indeed, we are called to give to the poor, just as the disciples were, but we are also asked to give all we have to Jesus, **first**, above and before all else.

2. Jesus responds to their indignant accusation of the beauty bestowed upon Him by praising her gift and by adding more detail to the foreshadowing of His previous statement. *"Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial." Mt 26:10b-12 (NIV)*

- Did the disciples understand His words in this instance?
- Did they pause to examine what this might mean or were they too caught up in

their moment of correction and outrage?

- Did they feel Jesus' emotions, knowing that being anointed with oil was drawing Him one step closer to His sacrificial death?
- Did they not experience alongside Mary, the anointer, the joy, the glory, the splendor and peace at worshiping her King?
- I wonder what the disciples were actually thinking apart from anger; or were they thinking at all?

3. *"I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."* Mt 26:13 (NIV) She anointed her King before His burial. She humbled herself, gave sacrificially, to honor Him. She gave Jesus one pure moment of complete adoration, absolute, focused praise, encouraging, preparing both His body and His Spirit for the hours to come; the hours where everyone would abandon Him.

He was not alone at that time; He gave Mary the moment by allowing her to worship Him like the **King He Is**, the way He was always intended to be worshipped. She is our example, the heart and posture we might strive to attain: *"I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."* Mt 26:13 (NIV)



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Is anything you do for Jesus a waste if it brings Him glory and allows you to worship Him to your fullest?
2. Do we hear the message Jesus is trying to speak to us or are we too busy with our "journey" to allow His voice to be heard?
3. Thank Jesus for the lessons He teaches.
  - Thank Him for how His Holy Scriptures are woven together, that we might know Him more deeply with each word.
  - Thank Jesus that nothing He did was without cause, purpose and specific intent.
  - Ask God to give you the heart and posture of Mary, that you would delight in giving Him your focused time, your first and best gifts, and that you would take great joy in sitting at the feet of your King!

## DAY 7

### SURELY NOT I, LORD?



**READ:** Matthew 26:14-30

The mood is already changing amidst Jesus and the Disciples. This section notes they were lounging; that Jesus was reclining at the table. This posture denotes the idea of relaxation, comfort or rest. But I imagine there was very little relaxation happening among any of those surrounding the table.

The air, presumably, grew thicker and fully alive when Jesus, who had a captive audience, announced to the table, *"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."* Mt 26:21 (NIV) Were there whispers? Shouting at the table due to disbelief? Did everyone's eyes dart rapidly across each person surrounding trying to decipher who Jesus was speaking of? Did Jesus appear resigned? Stressed at this confession? Filled with sorrow or the edge of bitterness? *They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I,*

*Lord?*” Mt 26:22 (NIV) Not one of the twelve believed or thought for a minute it could be them. Yet hours later, Jesus was not only betrayed, but the disciples scattered (26:56b).

Now before we get too huffy and judgmental towards the disciples, let’s put ourselves in their shoes. We all have this instinct inside of us called self-preservation. This warrants a repeat: we all have the instinct of self-preservation, and like the Disciples we all affirm our resolve and devotion to Jesus and our claim to “surely not I, Lord,” in times of relaxation or questioning, yet when the moment of truth and trial arrives we have all experienced failure.

Let’s look at it this way:

- Surely I would give what I had to help someone in tough circumstance.
- Surely I would sacrifice my own desires and earthy pleasure for the will of God and His statutes.
- Surely I would stand up and say no to what is wrong; even if it means losing family and friends.
- Surely I would stand strong and have the name of Jesus on my tongue while being held at gunpoint and asked to deny Him.
- Surely I would not betray you, Lord.

These scenarios somehow seem to change the perspective of “surely not I, Lord” a little as we place ourselves in the very real shoes of the disciples. Self-preservation is born in us, but self-preservation is also living for Jesus, following Jesus, and knowing that our time here is short and that we have eternity waiting for us because we follow and confess the name of Jesus at any cost.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Surely not I, Lord, is a reminder that we are all flawed, we all too easily stumble and fall, and most importantly, that we need to build ourselves up in Christ; through His Word, prayer and fasting, worship, service, and learning to place our trust fully in the One who gave His life for us. Confess any hesitancy in your heart. Confess any pride, self-reliance, and empty confidence in your own merit.
2. Once you’ve confessed ask Jesus to strengthen your resolve, to give you a bold voice in the face of right and wrong, to have courage to stand up and speak clearly in the Name of Jesus and that the Holy Spirit would build a fire in you so hot that there would be no time to question your devotion to your Saviour.
3. Thank the Lord for this portion of His story, that you can read it, understand it and be built up by it. Thank the Jesus for His warnings, His honesty, and His sacrificial love even in the midst of betrayal.

## DAY 8

### SIFTED, TURNED BACK AND STRENGTHENED



**READ:** Matthew 26:31-35, Luke 22:24-34 & 54-62

The Lord is so faithful in teaching us lessons, in walking with us, at being patient and gentle in the midst of the trials and fires we face. He is also no different today than he was then; **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Heb 13:8 (NIV)** In this instance we can learn through Simon Peter, and God willing, not have to walk through the same fire as he did.

The Disciples are human. We've seen time and time again Jesus' patience in His correction, rebuke, and encouragement along the way. This characteristic of Jesus doesn't change in these verses, if anything His patience and abounding love is cemented. *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."* Lk 22:31-32 (NIV)

Jesus prayed for Peter. He warred in the Heavens that Peter would come out of his testing with a strength that would encourage and buoy on his brothers. Incredible! It is also an incredible part of these verses that Jesus has again warned His disciples of His approaching death.

Peter responds to Jesus' words with another form of "surely not I, Lord" by replying, *"Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."* Lk 22:33 (NIV) Or as it's worded in Matthew 26:33, *"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."*

Jesus' response?

- *"I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."* Lk 22:34 (NIV)
- *"I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."" But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same. Mt 26:34-35 (NIV)*

We know this story, we sympathize with this story, but again, would our response be that of Peter's?

Jumping ahead now to Luke 22:54-62, Jesus is arrested, and Peter's denial is uttered three different times in three different ways. *But he denied it "Woman, I don't know him," he said. (22:57) "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. (22:58) "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" (22:60)*

*Just as he was speaking the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly. Lk 22:60b-62 (NIV)*

Jesus prayed for Peter. Peter was loved and lifted up before the Father in Heaven by His Son Jesus. Is there any question that Peter remembered the words of His Shepherd Jesus? *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."* Lk 22:31-32 (NIV) Simon was sifted. I imagine he felt shame and sorrow at his betrayal as he confessed his failings to God.

Simon's faith did not fail. I imagine in the midst of his confession he professed his unending love for Jesus. And I imagine as he sifted through the ashes of his actions he learned a hard lesson and was strengthened. Simon Peter was sifted, turned back to Jesus and was strengthened. Essentially he was renewed and refined by the fire.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Thank Jesus for His persistent love and ask Him to intercede on your behalf:
  - that your desire to draw closer to Him would grow,
  - that your tongue would confess in all circumstance that Jesus is Lord of your life,
  - that you would lean and rest in Him always.

2. Refiner's Fire. It is a phrase we use; being refined by the fire. But today we are going to pray the words of the song.

*Refiner's fire, my heart's one desire, is to be Holy, set apart for you, Lord.  
I choose to be Holy, set apart for You my Master, ready to do Your will.*

Make this your prayer, that your heart would be drawn to your King; the King who gave you His All, according to the Will of the Father.

## DAY 9

### SORROWFUL, TROUBLED AND OVERWHELMED



**READ:** Matthew 26:36-56 & Luke 22:39-56

The light of day has long faded and the dark of night has fallen around Jesus. He has been betrayed, He knows the moment is coming when He will be forsaken. The night is quiet, yet the night whispers are always the loudest when the daylight fades and the curtain of darkness fall to usher in a loneliness only the darkness can own.

Jesus feels the overwhelming burden of His task at hand. He feels the sorrow oppressing His spirit and His first instinct is to enter into the presence of His Father. Jesus confesses to His disciples his feelings, *"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."* Mt 26:38b (NIV)

When you feel the overwhelming circumstances of life bombarding you, your emotions running out of control and life seemingly falling apart around you, you seek comfort. You seek a sympathetic shoulder to rest your head, a strong arm to wrap around your brokenness, allowing you to fall apart so that you can be put back together.

Jesus asked for that comfort from the disciples, yet they seemingly remained at a distance. After Jesus confessed to them His feelings, His sorrow and overwhelm seem to grow. *Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."* Mt 26:39 (NIV).

In the midst of His trial, however, Jesus takes a moment to impart wisdom, to buoy the disciples and encourage them before their own trials and sorrows begin. Perhaps even urging them to pray alongside Him for the events that were about to unfold, that each of their resolve and devotion to the Father be solidified. *Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."* Mt 26:40-41 (NIV)

But we are all too often like the disciples in this scenario. We utter our prayers, straighten our spine and with eyes and hands raised to the heavens proclaim the name of Jesus, yet, we stumble and fall. We don't watch, wait and listen to the Father's spurring, we haven't been rooted deep enough in the foundation which is Christ Jesus; our spirits say YES, but our mind and bodies are weak.

After His warning Jesus returns to the presence of His Father. *"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."* Mt 26:42 (NIV) When Jesus returns to the disciples a second time He finds them sleeping so He returns to repeat His prayer a third time.

*"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*

*An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

Lk 22:42-44 (NIV)

Our King is broken, even before His body has been harmed His spirit is filled with sorrow and trouble. He is broken for His children, for His bride, for the agonizing road He will obediently walk. And although He is encouraged and strengthened by the angel sent from heaven, He is mourning His betrayal, and replete in sorrow, being aware He will be forsaken by the Father during His final breaths. Yet even in His overwhelm, He imparts a message to His disciples, and to us through His Word; *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”* Mt 26:41 (NIV)



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. In times of trials is it your first plan of action to turn to prayer? It was for Jesus. He found a quiet spot, a place where He could lay His burden down. Thank Jesus for teaching us the discipline of prayer.
2. Spend a moment asking God to reveal anything you might need to confess; self-reliance, stubborn pride, any type of I-can-do-it-myself attitude. There is so much to glean from these verses, but today we learn that even Jesus surrendered Himself to the Father in prayer. If Jesus wanted and needed to draw closer to the Father, shouldn't we?
3. Spend some time with Jesus. Your whole purpose here is to find the roots of your relationship with Him digging deeper into the foundation that is already there so that in your moment of darkness you will be awake, alert, and not falling into temptation.

## DAY 10

### FULFILLMENT OF THE SCRIPTURE



**READ:** Matthew 26:47-56

*“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” declares the Lord Almighty. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones.”* Zech 13:7 (NIV)

Let us look today at three fulfillments of Scripture in Matthew story:

First, Judas not only led the guards/army to the garden of Gethsemane he had worked out a sign with them to make certain they had Jesus in their custody. Judas' betrayal was more than words and the exchange of thirty silver coins (26:15). He approached Jesus and kissed Him on the cheek to physically identify Him so no mistake would be made. *Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi,” and kissed him. Jesus replied, “Friend, do what you came for.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.* Mt 26:49-50 (NIV)

We have spent the last handful of days looking at not only Jesus but the Disciple's responses and actions to the unfolding event. Judas has stepped beyond the “surely not I, Lord,” response and stumbled fully (even weighing his decision) into the clutches of the Enemy. His actions are woeful, not only in audibly betraying Jesus, but also physically committing to his choices which ultimately leave him racked with guilt. Judas, watching the story unfold returns his silver pieces and confesses, *“I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”* Mt 27:4 (NIV). However, Judas' pleas were ignored and finding

himself so overcome with his actions he hangs himself.

Second, Jesus asks the disciples to stand down with their swords. He is resigned, yes, but moreover, Jesus knows He ultimately holds the power in this situation. *“Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”* He is never without choice in this situation. And He chose us over His own life. He chose US!

Third, He is Faithful to His promises. Scattered throughout the Old Testament is prophecy of both the birth of Jesus and His prophesied death. The lonely walk to the cross that Jesus endured was proclaimed from the beginning and Jesus was faithful to see it through. *“But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”* Mt 26:54 (NIV)

Jesus even lays the truth of His faithfulness to us down for us with His words. *At that time Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.* Mt 26:55-56 (NIV)



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Take a moment for confession; confessing your silence, actions, or words that don't honor Jesus, His sacrifice, and His unending love for you. If you feel at a loss, ask Jesus to bring a situation to mind.
2. Thank Jesus for His choice in choosing us. His sacrifice is immeasurable.
3. Praise God the Father and Jesus His Son that they are faithful to keep their promises; that they are faithful in their love for their creation. Spend the remainder of your time pouring your thanks to the Jesus, the Lamb of God, for who He is and what He has done.

## DAY 11

### IN NEED OF A “BAD GUY”



**READ:** Matthew 26:57-68 Luke 22:66-23:25

He'd done nothing wrong. *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”* When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. 1Pe 2:22-23 (NIV)

The truth is they couldn't find anything to charge Jesus with. There were two different camps present; those who wanted nothing to do with Him and those who just wanted Him gone. Yet He didn't defend Himself, but only answered the questions directed at Him when ordered to. **Everything He spoke was Truth.**

*Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”*

*Then the high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”*

*“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

*Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need*

*any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"*

*"He is worthy of death," they answered. Mt 26:60b, 62-66 (NIV)*

*So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"*

*"Yes it is as you say," Jesus replied.*

*Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."*

*But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here....."*

*Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, "Crucify him. Crucify him!" Lk 23:3-5 & 20 (NIV)*

### **Jesus Is The King of the Jews. He never uttered a lie.**

Imagine if today blasphemy was a crime. Blasphemy which means: wickedness, irreverence, profanity, curse or desecration. How many of us would be left?

### **PRAYER**

Jesus we love you. It's alarming and sorrowful to be confronted with the reality of your crucifixion. How can we play such a major role in sending you to the cross? But the truth is we sent you, and just as it happened with Simon Peter who denied you, Pilate who was indifferent, and the crowds who called for you to be crucified, we are guilty.

Thank you for your humble defense. Yes, Jesus, you are King of the Jews, and for that we praise you, forevermore.

Thank you, Jesus, for obeying the will of the Father and taking a world of sin, as well as my own, on your shoulders. Thank you for atoning for me, your unworthy, but thankful, servant.

You, Jesus, are worthy beyond measure of your Kingship, for only a True and Favored King would lay down His life for His people.

Thank you, Jesus, Lamb of God, that your love for us was and is and will continue to be greater than we can imagine or deserve.

Thank you, Jesus.

## **DAY 12**

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### **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS**

 **READ:** Matthew 27:27-66 Mark 13:16-47 Luke 23:26-56 John 19:16-42

Read the scripture selected.

How do we respond to this Offered Gift of Salvation?

Kneel before your King today.

Thank Him.

Worship Him.

Praise Him.

Love Him.

**DAY 13****THE EMPTY TOMB**

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” Then they remembered his words. Lk 24:5b-8*

*“Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”*

*Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”*

*Jesus said to her, “Mary.”*

*She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means teacher).*

*Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and you God.’”*

*Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. Jn 20:15-18 (NIV)*

Where is He? We watched Him die. It's an instinctual reaction, a natural, resigned understanding to feel defeated, or deflated, after any death, never mind the impactful hours leading up to, and finally, the brutal death of Jesus.

How amazing to have seen, touched, to have been in the presence of the Risen Jesus. Our King lives! He is alive; the stone has been rolled away, the tomb is empty. New life breathes through His body, He Is the Breath of Heaven Realized; the Father's Great Plan of atonement for our sins stands victorious; Pure White, Fresh, Alive, Breath of Heaven!

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. Rev 21:4 (NIV)*

1. Praise the Lord Jesus for His victory over death; the tomb is empty, and we have this, His return, to look forward to, to anticipate.
2. Christ our Lord is Risen today!! What does His sacrifice, His gift, mean to you? Journal the out pouring of your heart; write a letter of love and thanks to Him, who is Worthy to be praised!

**PRAYER:**

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, for your obedience, for your teaching; thank you for each recorded moment of your life here on earth. Thank you for each promise you made that we can hold on to as we seek daily to follow and obey you. I pray Jesus, that you would teach me to walk in your ways, that my heart, in alignment with yours, would imitate you to my utmost ability.

Jesus, you gave me everything from your first breath, may my heart burn for you in the same manner; that each moment I live honor you.

Thank you, Jesus that your love for us didn't end with your sacrifice. Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to remain with us, to stir our hearts and intercede on our behalf. Jesus, Lamb of God, you conquered death. My heart cannot express the gift you've so freely offered. May my thoughts, my motives, my actions and deeds bring glory to your Kingdom. Strengthen my heart in the face of affliction and hone my mind to be more like you.

Thank you, Jesus, for your endless love, that you came with a purpose, as you say in Luke 19:10 (NIV) *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.* Thank you for loving and saving the lost child I am.

Thank you for finding your Creation worthy of saving.

Thank you, Father, for sending your Son.

Thank you, Jesus, for answering the Call.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for living inside us.

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## DAY 14

### I DID THAT FOR YOU

The day was not unlike any other day; it was busy and there was little time to pay attention as she ran from one place to another taking on the day, packing in as much as she could. The sun had shone brightly, and though twilight had come and gone, the warmth continued to radiate from the pavement as street lights began to illuminate her path.

If she had stopped to look around her, she would have seen filled café tables with smiling patrons, clusters of chattering teenagers whose body language and relaxed comradery boasted of commonality, acceptance and a comfort in knowing where they belonged; where they fit in.

Above her and in the near distance a bell began to ring; the sort of bell that marked something important, calling people and drawing them near with their ringing song. The bells made her smile even as people began to flood the streets and move in the same direction. The girl was caught up in a crowd as her mind slowly let go of the day and began to anticipate scenarios of what the evening had in store, what adventure was around the corner, and how she would get through the days and weeks ahead.

The foot traffic grew more congested when the street intersected and opened up into a square; the same square where the bell tower stood tall and proud in the center, continuing to draw people towards it.

The moving crowd seemed to be pulling her into the church connected to the tower, and having nowhere else to be she thought she'd let the tide of feet carry her along. The doors were tall, solid wood, covered in immaculate carvings that called for a closer look, but her feet continued to carry her through.

There was not a seat to be found and bodies lined the side aisles, gently pushing closer to each other to make room for the masses remaining in the square. She hadn't taken many steps in when her progress into the church stopped. She was jostled and seemed to be pressed from all sides before the crowd somehow stilled and the mood took on a somber feel. She turned when her eyes rested on the kind eyes next to her. The woman, a complete stranger, smiled and without words passed her a thin and fragile looking lit candle.

Taking the delicate piece of wax in her hands she looked around. The room was full, beyond capacity, yet there was a peace, a sense of calm amidst the crowd she had never felt before. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of candles lit the cathedral making the already spectacular seem like something from a dream, something from heaven. The ceiling was a work of art, the walls adorned with gold and sculpted into a story.

She looked around and her eyes grew. She'd never seen anything like it, she'd never felt anything like it for that matter. There was singing and teaching, though her mind was so focused on the scene around her and the growing resonance of her heart she heard and saw little else. The flicker and glow of the fragile candle caught her attention. The flame danced between her fingers and spoke to her heart a story.

A story of life.

A story of struggle.

A story of redemption.

A story that burned so brightly, so powerfully that if that little flame could illuminate something as majestic as the cathedral she was standing in, how would that flame and its story ignite something in her heart.

The minutes ticked by yet time seemed to stop. That calm, that peace, grabbed a hold of her and she felt it pour over her and through her as she watched that tiny flame flicker. Tears streamed down her face as the dancing flame took on new meaning. The flame represented the life of Jesus, and it burned bright and bold, yet delicate and fragile. She was holding the life of Jesus in her trembling hands.

And as the flames slowly began to go out through the cathedral she understood something more. She had to blow out her flame too. With her own hands and with her own breath the flame had to be extinguished.

She fought it, not wanting any part of it, knowing the gruesome road Jesus walked. She didn't want to see the pictures flashing through her racing mind or imagine being the one throwing stones, spitting, kicking, shouting, sentencing an innocent man, or worst of all, the one who drove the nails through His hands or raising the cross to stand tall on that gruesome and lonely hill.

But the flame had to go out.

Feeling helpless, guilty, filthy and unworthy, she closed her eyes and poured out the cry of her heart.

"I don't want to do this, Jesus," she pleaded. As the words poured from her heart, the calm took its place.

"You have to," she heard in whispered response. Allowing a brief moment to stare at the flame and gathered the courage she understood she needed to extinguish the flame, she needed to understand her part in sending Jesus to the cross.

She gathered her breath, blinked, and a slow, shaky breath blew out the flame. Pinching her eye tight she felt the shame and filth leave her and in its place love rushed in. A love so deep, so full, so overwhelming, she found herself sitting on the steps of the church long after the crowd had dispersed, weeping, holding fast to the fullness in her heart. Knowing she had to leave, she looked to her hands where the thin piece of wax laid and she

whispered, “thank you”.

The voice answered, “I did that for you.”



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Jesus calls us. He loves us. He has so much planned for His children. Take some time to thank Him for all He’s done for you. Worship Him for His sacrifice on your behalf. Praise Him for calling you, for loving you, and for the unique way He speaks to your heart.

# RETURNING KING

## DAY 15

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### THE GREAT COMMISSION



**READ:** Matthew 28:18-20

Our King’s last words on earth before He ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father in heaven are a declarative command for all people; yes, all people, big and small, young and old, in every corner of the world! It is the mission that was born inside of us, directed by the One for whom we live.

*“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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* Mt 28:19-20 (NIV)

It is no small task, but Jesus left us with the Holy Spirit, so though He is no longer with us in body, He is with us in Spirit, as we are taught through the scriptures, *I can do things through him who gives me strength.* Php 4:13 (NIV)

It is a precious and fragile task He has commissioned, but He has not only left us His Holy Spirit, He has also left us His Word; the blueprint, the guide, the map, if you will! Here is what the Paul says to the Romans about the Holy Spirit.

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.....*

*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called to his purpose.* Ro 8:14-18 & 26-30 (ESV)

This is more affirmation of the love of God. He sends us His Spirit to intercede on our behalf! *For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* When we walk in His Will we are equipped, through the Holy Spirit, to do the Work He has sent us to accomplish. Such a promise!

There is no situation, scenario, event or obstacle we could face that isn't covered within the pages of your Bible. However, we must fully rely, trust, submit and obey to His leading; remember, it is His task we are working on, He will not abandon His task; **and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" Mt 28:20 (NIV)



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. The Great Commission is for all people. It is a task that does not leave us, not for a moment – at work, school, in our homes – we are called to make disciples. Ask the Holy Spirit if there is someone specific you could be praying for. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you courage to invite them to church, sit down and have a conversation, or reach out in new ways for the Kingdom. Remember, it is a work you were created to do!
2. Thank God for the Holy Spirit and that He intercedes on your behalf. What a wonderful proclamation that you are not alone but that there is someone interceding, praying, and petitioning for you before the throne. Thank Him. Praise Him.
3. We were made to do great things for Jesus!! Sign up for a seminar, do some volunteering, make a personal ministry appointment, join a cell. The options available to you are not limited and no task is too small. No task, done for Jesus, for the Kingdom, is too small!

## DAY 16

### MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISH

 **READ:** John 21

We all have tasks and jobs that become routine in our day. There is nothing wrong with being task oriented, but what happens when the task doesn't cooperate with your timetable? I wonder about that timetable in regards to the disciples. After Jesus' death the disciples were back at their fishing post and were stuck. Sometimes when we feel at a loss for what to do next, we go back to what we know....hence, for the disciples, or more specifically Peter, fishing.

Jesus wasn't physically with them anymore, their Leader had given them tasks while He was with them, but the moment He wasn't present to micromanage the disciples veered off task (back in their boats).

Do we do this? Forget what God wants us to do? Get weighed down by the overwhelming circumstances of our purpose? Distract ourselves with what we know instead of following through with what we were tasked, and meant to accomplish or become?

Thankfully, Jesus, our Miraculous King is beyond patient and generous with us, as He was with His disciples.

*Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.*

*He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"*

*"No," they answered.*

*He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Jn 21:4-6 (NIV)*

Knowing Jesus utilizes teachable moments, we can dig deeper to the real meaning of this story. Was Jesus trying to teach them how to catch more fish? I wonder how long Jesus stood on the shore watching the futility of the disciples' work. He had spent a quality chunk of time with them, teaching, infusing them with heavenly wisdom and revealing to them what they would encounter after His death, and still, they went right back to fishing when they were pressed with reality. I wonder if Jesus didn't shake His head at them. But again, He is patient beyond measure.

Jesus then offers the solution to them....**Do it My way, see what happens!** *"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."* When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Jn 21:6 (NIV) This lesson had nothing to do with catching fish or the occupation of fishing; it had to do with teaching them to follow the path that they had been on when Jesus first called them.

Further in the story (Jn 21:15-25 NIV) Jesus confronts Peter and drives His point home. *"Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"*  
*"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."*  
*Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."*

Three times Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" and Peter's response is, "Yes, of course." To which Jesus offers, *"Feed my lambs", "Take care of my sheep", "Feed my sheep"*. Jesus is saying, "get back on the horse, Peter, we've got work to do. What are you doing veering off the path to engage your effort in fishing when I asked you to do something else entirely?" Peter gets it but he's still stuck on the circumstances that surround him in verses 20-21. Jesus sets him straight once and for all. *Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."* Jn 21:22 (NIV)

Just like Peter we worry about what is going on around us, what people will think, how they will react, or we compare our directives from God to the directives others have been given. Jesus clears this up by saying, *"If I want him to remain alive until I return, **what is that to you? You must follow me."***

Chapter 21 has nothing at all to do with fishing and everything to do with where we put our trust and whether or not we obey along the way, regardless of what's going on around us.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Trust: Trust is often hard and we often fail to follow through and become fully dependent on Jesus. It's a part of growing in relationship with Him and learning to talk to Him and hear His voice. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind a situation where you failed to trust fully. Confess the circumstances in your life where you struggle to put your whole trust in God.
2. Wait: Waiting, patience; it's one of those universal lessons we must all learn. However, while we are in that place of waiting we are not necessarily called to be idle. Our purpose is the same – continue working hard throughout your days until you receive new orders. Ask God if there is any area that He is calling you to focus on; perhaps volunteering with in a new ministry, with children, a local charity, school or sports team. There are endless ways that we can reach people for the kingdom.

3. Obey. Even when nothing is happening and the circumstances have changed, when God gives you a task, you keep at it. You don't quit, unless He gives you new directives. There is no obstacle too great for Him to conquer.

Obedience isn't always easy, just watch a child whose been told "no"! Even Peter was asked repeatedly by Jesus, "Do you love me?" And like Peter, you love Jesus, too! So follow Him. Wait on His voice as you pray and seek His guidance in your life. Then follow through and be obedient to where He is leading.

Thank Jesus for this lesson. Thank Him for where He is leading you and ask that He strengthen your spine and the feet that carry you towards Him. Be obedient, the reward is Jesus!

## DAY 17

### WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY?

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

You ever get to the climax of a movie or book and find a giant smirk on your face? Your thoughts may run along the lines of, "take that, you scoundrel!" or "serves you right, allegiance-of-bad-guys". Perhaps you're of the more positive personality who roots for the hero, "he's beginning to believe", or "she's come into her own" sort of character. Whatever your thoughts in that moment, you likely have an elevated heart rate or the need to physically pump your fist in the air in approval, like in the big game when your team is about to win and you can see the victory unfolding before your eyes.

*Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? 1 Cor 15:55 (NIV)*

Insert fist pump!

Our reaction to our loved ones turning to Jesus and receiving the gift He offers should indeed cause that feeling, or need, to throw your hands in the air and shout in victory. Yet, that moment of acceptance, or "beginning to believe", is only the beginning. *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 1 Co 15:51-53 (NIV)*

Everything you know and everything that has ever lived will change in a moment; a moment you cannot know with certainty, but a moment you must anticipate, a moment you must look to the future and be prepared for all the same.

We have the game plan written out for us in the pages of scripture; live for the Living God. Lay down your choices. Submit to the One who has planned for you the best life. Follow Jesus, who gave His life for you and each person you know.

It is a moment wrapped up in conflicting emotions;

- fear – excitement,
- sorrow – joy,
- uncertainty – confidence.

All these emotions are natural; they are not bad, there is a lot going on around you today and will continue until that very moment. If you didn't feel fear for those you loved and the

state of their salvation your heart wouldn't be in the right place. If sorrow didn't invade as you look around at our seemingly collapsing world, at the famine, the war, the bullying, the neglect, and division that plagues our hearts, you likely wouldn't be capable of much love at all. If uncertainty didn't taint the waters of your heart you might not know right from wrong or have any reason to search for Jesus and put your trust in Him.

These emotions are all valid, but they are not the focus of this exciting moment we are preparing for.

No!

- Excitement – Our risen Lord has promised to return, and He is coming soon!
- Joy – He has given us understanding of His ways that we might choose Him. He has nurtured a love in our heart with His own that is incomparable to any other. Praise and glory be to Him who will be revealed to all in that tremendous moment.
- Confidence – His promises are solid. The moment we surrender our lives and chose to follow His plan daily we had assurance of salvation! We have every reason to be confident in God's plan!

***Death has been swallowed up in victory.*** “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! **He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* 1 Co 15:54b-58 (NIV)

Insert fist pump!



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Fear – Excitement. We often let the fear over take us when truly we as believers have every reason for full confidence. Confess any fears you might have that you focus on instead of anticipating the moment of His return. If you have trouble here, ask the Holy Spirit to bring a specific fear to mind, a root that stirs that fear in you. Confess that fear and ask the Lord to give you a new perspective and a renewed excitement for His plan.
2. Sorrow – Joy. Sorrow is a natural feeling too. Jesus himself felt the depths of this emotion as He journeyed through His final hours to the cross. However, our sorrow is empty if it is born of our own selfish pursuits. Our sorrow ought to be for those around us who are lost, who haven't chosen to live for the One, True God. Our sorrow must not be for the things of this earth, but rather for those who will be lost in the moment of His return.

Ask the Lord to help you realign your priorities. This is a daily effort of laying down your life and taking up the cross to follow Him. Ask the Lord to reveal to you where your hands and feet can be used in the Harvest. Thank Him, with a joy that can come only from Him, for all He has revealed to you.

3. Uncertainty – Confidence. Nothing is certain in this life except the promises of God. He is faithful - He is Good, and He has promised to return to bring His children Home. ***But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*** 1 Co 15:57 (NIV) Praise God indeed!

**DAY 18****THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST****READ:** Hebrews 4:14- 5:10

Our Great High Priest whose hand created every living thing loves you so much that He entrusted His creation to your hands and wants great and wonderful things for your life. His plan for you is greater than you can imagine. Do you believe that the God who called into being the oceans and every living creature within them, the stars and constellations that are different in each hemisphere, the animals that survive the coldest climate to those who exist only in the tropics; do you believe that He loves you, has greater plans for you, willingly gave His life for you, that He could delight in the love He gives and receives from you?

Name Above All Names

The Lord Most High

Beautiful Saviour

Lamb of God

Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords

The One Who Saves

He quiets the raging sea, stirs the wind, and whispers the clouds into formation that they might quench the dry earth with His nourishing and healing rain. He is everywhere, in everything, ALWAYS. He is Jesus, Our Great High Priest, at the right hand of the Father, on the throne of David, our King, forevermore, who, being perfect in every way and having been tempted and proven triumphant has already given you everything. He has given you EVERYTHING. He Chose You!

*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, **but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*** Heb 1:1-3 (NIV)

Our Great High Priest is Worthy. He is waiting for you; His return is delayed that we have every opportunity to turn to Him. He chose you; He wants you to receive Him, to grab hold of the sacrifice He made for you and to claim the victory that will set you free from the chains of sin. He has given everything He has for you – now it's your turn to offer Him everything you are and to receive His Grace, His abundant and free-flowing Love.

*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* Heb 4:16 (NIV)

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Thanksgiving: *Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts of sacrifices for sins.* Heb 5:1 (NIV) *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.*** Heb 4:14-15 (NIV)

Jesus is more than we deserve as a sinful people. He was tested, He was tried, and though He bore the weight of hell, He was blameless. Thank Him for who He is, what He has done, and for loving you more than His own life.

2. Confession: We cannot do life on our own, and any attempt lacks the shine and depth only heaven can usher forth. Confess your rebellious heart, stubborn pride, and lack of faith that pushes you to lead a life following your own selfish pursuits. Jesus gave His all for you, confess your weakness to hold yourself back from fully giving yourself over to Him in all areas of your life.
3. Submission: It's simple really; Jesus submitted to the Father and was found worthy. Our response must become like that of Jesus. *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.* Heb 5:7-9 (NIV)

Ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen your resolve to run the race to which you are called by Him; that your life would be a representation of His love, your obedience to Him and His will and that each breath you breathe might bring Him glory.

## DAY 19

### SAVIOUR KING – HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD

Hillsong music has a song called "Savior King." Here are the lyrics:

*And now the weak say I have strength  
By the Spirit of power that raised Christ from the dead  
And now the poor stand and confess  
That my portion is Him and I'm more than blessed*

*Let now our hearts burn with a flame  
A fire consuming all for your Son's holy name  
And with the heavens we declare  
You are our King*

*We love you Lord, we worship you  
You are our God, you alone are good*

*You asked your Son to carry this  
The heavy cross, our weight of sin*

*I love you Lord, I worship you  
Hope which was lost, now stands renewed  
I give my life to honor this  
The love of Christ, the Saviour King*

*Let now your church shine as your bride  
That you saw in your heart as you offered up your life  
Let now the lost be welcomed home  
By the saved and redeemed, those adopted as your own*

***Let now my hearts burn with a flame  
A fire consuming all for your Son's holy name  
And with the heavens I declare  
You are our King***

***I love you Lord, I worship you  
Hope which was lost, now stands renewed  
You asked your Son to carry this  
The heavy cross, my weight of sin  
So, I love you Lord, I worship you  
Hope which was lost, now stands renewed***

***I give my life to honour this  
The love of Christ, the Saviour King***



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. If you have this song to listen to great, if not the words are no less poignant. Spend some time reading and praying through and meditating on these words, giving thanks, praise and pouring out your heart to your Saviour, your King.

## DAY 20

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### FULFILMENT OF THE LAW, PEACE OR A SWORD, THE NARROW AND WIDE GATES

The pages of scripture are filled with so much encouragement, leadership, guidance, teaching, and laws that often we can find our heads swimming with the words. The beautiful thing about God is that He does not contradict Himself. He does not make mistakes. He does not say one thing and mean or do another.

He has already done so much for us; calling us His children, drawing us to Him, sacrificing His Son for us and sending us His Holy Spirit. He has given us His Word, the Guidelines, the Blueprint. It cannot be stressed enough the lengths to which He has gone to help us get it, but because we need reminding, His Word is at our finger tips!

He is Faithful, He is Patient, and He loves His children. And we need to respond to both His encouragement and admonishment, and not fear it, knowing that *He* doesn't change who He is just because we receive an uplifting word one day and a difficult one the next.

We have been on this journey for the past few weeks of understanding Jesus in a new and deeper way. We've seen Him as Teacher, Servant, King and we anticipate His promised return. So while we wait for that Glorious Day, we must arm ourselves with His Truth, His Wisdom, and His Righteousness in all aspects of our lives; He has shown us The Way. This isn't always an easy task, but thank The Lord for His Grace in giving us His Word to teach us how to take up our cross and follow Him. Here are some of the difficult promises from Jesus.

**Promise 1: Fulfillment of the Law**, Matthew 5:17-20 (NIV) *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices*

*and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

These words come from the mouth of Jesus. He tells us without pause or apology that He didn't come to earth to abolish the law; No, rather, He came to abolish the atonement required of us to enter into His presence.

**The Law and every Word from God before the birth of Jesus stands today.** The only difference is that when Jesus died on the cross He took upon Himself our need to give sacrifice, or atonement, for the wrongs we do. It is through Him we find salvation, through Him we are forgiven; when we give ourselves to Jesus and ask Him to be our World, He becomes the Lamb we offer God to receive forgiveness. We are still to follow the Law, but He is there to dust us off when we stumble, if we confess the Truth that is the Law and submit to HIM.

**Promise 2: Peace or a Sword**, Matthew 10:34-39 (NIV) *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; **and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses is life for my sake will find it.”***

Jesus did not come to accept the world around Him. No! He came that we might see Light and have Life in the fullest. This means that when we follow Him, we will face adversity. It will come from all sides, including the people closest to us, those we love, and we will have to choose; to abide with them or abide In Him. Jesus or the world.

It won't be easy, but the reward waiting for us when we kneel before the Throne on that day will wipe away every tear we've ever shed, every hurt we've ever endured, and only Jesus will remain.

Make Jesus your Reward.

**Promise 3: Narrow Gate**, Matthew 7:13-14 (NIV) *“**Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**”*

We have been warned; and if these three promises are any indication, the warning is merited because as we continue to live for Christ, life will not be easy. The question then is this: What greater reward might we find than spending eternity with Jesus, the Man who gave us His All, in a new heaven that He has created for us?



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Jesus is our strength, our example, our Mighty Atonement when we stumble. Confess your weakness and selfishness in living your own way and straying from the Laws that God established through Moses. We are all weak and we all need help. Ask Jesus to focus your thoughts, words and deeds on Him, the Light of the World, the Bright Morning Star, our Returning King.

2. Pray that Jesus would refine you, build you up and make Him all that you seek. We face unknown variables that will work to destroy our relationship with Jesus. Pray that the roots in your heart would be able to withstand an attack from any source. Pray for discernment and Biblical wisdom as you face each day. Ask Jesus to help you lose your own life to find life in Him.
3. He has prepared a room for you, a place with Him in heaven. You, His child who has followed, obeyed, and loved Him. Is there anything holding you back from giving Him your all? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind anything that you are holding up between you and Jesus; anything that you are holding on to or anything that is holding on to you.

Confess anything He shows you and ask Jesus to take over and to set your feet on the narrow path that leads to Him. Praise and thank Him for His promises, for the Word, and for His Holy Spirit who convicts us and guides us to where He needs us to be when we submit willingly to Him.

## DAY 21

### THE BEGINNING AND THE END

He is the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega. All breath, all life, All Creation, comes from His hand. He controls the rising of the sun and the tides of the seas. He knows each hair on your head, your intentions before you act, and the secrets you bury in the darkest place of your heart. We are no mystery; our ways are no surprise to the King who loves us beyond human reasoning.

We rest in the palm of His hand. He is worthy of all we offer and more than we can comprehend.

*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." Rev 1:7-8 (NIV)*

Jesus is the end game. He was with God in the beginning and will continue to sit at the right hand of God until the final day when the inhabitants of all creation will bow before Him and proclaim Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

When was the last time you read a book cover to cover? Did it entertain; wrap you in an intended emotion? Did it disturb you, intrigue or fascinate? Did the world fade away as you were pulled into a world of imagination or the chronicles of real-life events? When your eyes fell on the last words did you have an understanding of the author? Did you understand the nuance of what that individual was striving to impress upon the audience?

The author always has an agenda, a purpose, a point, or a message to convey. It is not always overt, easily understood, but make no mistake, there is an agenda to be found.

The problem with that book you just set on a shelf is that the likelihood of speaking with that author, of knowing their intended purpose or the heart behind their body of work is incredibly slim. The truth is you may never know the author's heart or the truth behind each word.

This is not the case with the Bible. We know the author personally! We have been given the Holy Spirit to guide us in seeking Him. His Words are at our fingertips and His Heart, the intent behind His words, is spilled heavily on each page.

He loves us.

He created us to be His.

A guide for how we are to live is imprinted on each page.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life, is laid before us in print as an example for us to learn from and in turn lay down our lives to follow.

We can know Him by reading His Word; His love letter to us, to help us grow in love and understanding of His Heart!

*Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.*  
Rev 22:7 (NIV)

*Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the end... Rev 22:12-13*

*"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."*

*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.*

Rev 22:12-13&16-21 (NIV)



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Spend some time praying for God's heart, for His compassion, His empathy, His love, and an understanding of His Word.
2. Thank God for sending Jesus that we might come to know Him in a deeper manner than we could have before. Thank God that when Jesus left earth to return to the Father that He did so with a promise of one day returning to take Home His Bride.
3. Reflect on this: The beginning and the end. We are taught by society to look forward to stuff, to anticipate, even crave the excitement of the future. It's likely excessive and to the point of living in the state of denial that anything bad could happen. We rely on our own merit and understanding, a twisted reality that all too often forsakes us. But's God's promise is echoed throughout scripture. He has made a way for us to spend eternity with Him as He originally planned.





## King Jesus

Easter is a time for celebration, a time of rejoicing in all Jesus has done for us. But before we can rejoice in the sacrifice our Saviour has made, we must mourn our sins and the reason He gave His life for us, His undeserving children. We are His flawed people, His church, His bride. But we are called as His beloved to walk in obedience to His Word and teaching with guidance from the Holy Spirit.

There is so much to be thankful for as we acknowledge Jesus' gift to us with reverence over the next few weeks: He is our Healer. He is our Teacher. He is a Servant. He Is the Lamb of God. And He is a King.

### **Matthew 26:56** (NIV)

*"But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."*