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DAYS OF PRAYER + FASTING

JANUARY 9-29, 2023

Welcome to 21 Days of Prayer + Fasting

Every year at Journey, we begin the year with 21 Days of intentionally seeking God through Prayer and Fasting. This year it will be Monday, January 9 through Sunday, January 21.

The 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting is really about **3 THINGS**:

1. It's about declaring our **DEPENDENCE** on God.
I want to grow. I want to know you better. I want to go deeper. I need your provision.
2. It's about asking God for **DIRECTION**.
I need wisdom, Lord. What do I do about _____?, Where should I _____?
3. It's also about **CHANGING YOUR WORLD**.
Praying for your family, church, community, nation, etc. - How can I help, Lord?

During these 21 Days, we are encouraging our church to seek God through two spiritual habits, and the first is **PRAYER**.

Daily links will be sent to you with devotionals written by Journey staff and members. These devotionals will take you through a chapter of the Gospel of John each day. They are written in a way to not only help you enjoy what the writers

are learning and praying for themselves, but also to give you tools on how to read the Bible and pray on your own.

So make it a goal for the next 21 days to **set aside at least 15 minutes each day** to read the Bible and pray.

Also, once a week, walk your neighborhood and pray for your neighbors. Pray that hearts will be open to God.

Not only will we be seeking God through prayer, but we also believe **FASTING** can be a next step to bring clarity and revelation into your life.

Fasting is setting aside something so that you can be more focused on God. It's saying NO to one thing so you can say YES to something bigger and better. It's saying to God --- I'm more hungry for You and I am for this.

There are many ways to Fast. Primarily, when the Bible talks about fasting it's speaking of food. So, you could fast from certain types of food or certain days or certain meals. Some people fast from sunrise to sundown. Some people, believe it or not, fast from all solid foods for 21 Days!

You can also fast from certain types of activities. Social media, TV / Netflix, etc. Anything that takes up time and instead use some of that time to focus on God.

BUT ...

It's not just about what I'm fasting **FROM** — it's what I am fasting **FOR**.

Maybe it's **clarity** or to **return** to the Lord or for God to work in a particular situation or a breakthrough in a relationship.

For me personally and for our church, I know 2023 is going to bring some really exciting challenges.

Some I know are coming and others I have no idea are on the horizon.

I want to be open to God. I want to have His heart.

So jump in with us! There are **21 chapters** in the Gospel of John. We are going to read one chapter together each day, pray, fast, and see how God leads us.

How to H.E.A.R. (from God)

Highlight

Get to a place where you can focus and read the daily Scripture passage several times. From the passage of Scripture you read, highlight one or two verses that stick out. Write them down, and even consider rewriting the verse(s) in your own words.

Explain

Make some basic observations about the scripture you just read by asking these questions:

Why was this written?

To whom was it originally written?

What is the author trying to communicate?

What does the Scripture passage teach me about God and humanity?

Apply

After taking some time explaining the highlighted scriptures, begin to think about how they apply to your life. Ask yourself these questions and spend some time writing down your thoughts:

What do these verses mean today?

What does this verse(s) mean for my life?

How does this verse challenge my thinking and actions?

What changes do I need to make in my life as a result of this passage of Scripture

Respond

Your response to the passage may take on many forms. You may write a call to action. You may describe how you will be different because of what God has said to you through the Bible verses. You may indicate what you are going to do because of what you learned. You may respond by writing out a prayer to God. For example, you may ask God to help you to be more loving, or to give you a desire to be more generous in your giving. Keep in mind that this is your response to what you have just read.

Example H.E.A.R. Devotional

(BASED ON READING MARK 10:35-44)

Highlight

“Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:43-44, word of Jesus)

Explain

James and John, brothers and two of Jesus’ disciples, ask Jesus if they can have places of honor, authority, and greatness in heaven. The other disciples heard about James and John’s request, and they got mad at them. They were angry at what they perceived as arrogance. Jesus responds to this tension by teaching them about humility. He even uses his example as a teaching point. It’s about serving...not being served. The path to greatness is always grounded in the pursuit of serving.

Apply

I always need to be challenged in my understanding of “greatness”. Why? Because the pursuit of greatness will ultimately transform me into a person of meekness. This continues to jump out at me because pride and recognition have such deep roots in my life. When this battle comes, the question I need to ask is...”How can I serve someone today?”

Respond

Today I’m going to look for someone to serve with no strings attached and in a way that doesn’t elicit any recognition. “Heavenly Father, please open my eyes to someone I can serve today, and give me the strength to seek no gain or recognition from it. Amen.”

DAY 1

Monday, January 9, 2023

JOHN 1

JOHN 1:38-39 — *Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.”*

Devotional

Scotty Priest
SENIOR PASTOR

The first words of Jesus in the gospel of John are in the form of a question...

“What are you seeking?”

He’s asking me and you that same question today.

What is it that you are seeking? What are you hoping for?
Searching for?

The disciples’ answer was simple. And so was Jesus’ response.

“Come and you will see.”

For me personally and for our church, I know 2023 is going to bring some really exciting challenges. Some I know are coming and others I have no idea are on the horizon. I want to be open to God. I want to have His heart.

So jump in with us starting today.

Let's seek God together and see where he'll lead us!

Make a commitment to seek God through the Bible, prayer, and fasting over the next 21 days. Follow Jesus. Stay close to him. And you will see. You will find what you are searching for.

Prayer

“Father, thank you for inviting me to seek You, especially over these next 21 days. Please guide, challenge, and help me know you more. Amen.”

Journal Day #1

JOHN 1

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 2

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

JOHN 2

JOHN 2:11 — “*.[Jesus] thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*”

Devotional

Jaime Waits

GROUPS PASTOR

As a mom of three young adults, I often think about our kids' younger years. I think about the decisions we made as parents, the priorities of our family, and the foundation of faith with which my husband and I raised our kids. We were not and are not perfect. There has been brokenness and healing, joy and tears, pride and humility, and so many opportunities to grow. We did approach raising our children with intentionality though. We made decisions on how we wanted to parent our children early with an outcome in mind. As believers, we can also live intentionally with the end in mind through Christ's example.

Everything that Jesus did and said during his ministry on earth was intentional. He pointed to why he came in the flesh through every word and action. He came to offer grace that we cannot earn and eternal life, through His death and resurrection, that we can not repay.

John 2 begins with Jesus's first miracle, and he opens with pointing to the resurrection in verse 4. Throughout, we see Jesus is concerned with the struggles of all involved,

just as he is with us today. His ultimate concern, though, is our salvation. Verse 11 concludes the story with “..He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.” Jesus had a purpose in mind when he performed this miracle (turning water into wine), and he signaled to the disciples that he is God’s Son, the Messiah who came to save them.

The second half of this passage takes place at the temple courts in Jerusalem. Jesus traveled there with his mother and disciples. Right away he saw that there was injustice occurring. People who came to make a sacrifice to God were being taken advantage of. Jesus is concerned with the holiness of his house, just as we should be with ours. After he cleared the temple, the Jews demanded a ‘miraculous sign’ to prove his authority. He spoke of his crucifixion and resurrection, pointing them to salvation. We end this chapter with noting that many more miraculous signs were performed and many believed!

Jesus’ actions and words were intentional. Let ours be as well in all we do. So how do we do this? Stay grounded in the Bible, seek God in prayer, and approach each day with the mind of Jesus.

Prayer

“Lord, I desire to live my life focused on you. As I am in the Word and in prayer, speak to me and give me your wisdom. I want my words and actions to point to you so others can see your hope, grace and truth through me so that they may have eternal life with you.”

Journal Day #2

JOHN 2

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 3

Wednesday, January 11, 2023

JOHN 3

JOHN 3:16 — *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Devotional

John Barksdale

SMALL GROUP LEADER

Time to start over..

I hate having to turn around. There have been dozens of times that I have left home to do an errand, forgot something I needed, and had to turn around. Even worse is having to start over. I was recently putting a new floor in my home and messed up to the point that I had to tear out everything and start over, Argg!

In John chapter 3, Jesus is having a conversation with a Jewish leader named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was confused by Jesus’ ideas because they were contrary to the teaching from Jewish leadership. Even though Jesus’ teachings were radical, Nicodemus had no doubt that God was with him because of Jesus’ miracles.

Jesus cuts to the chase and tells Nicodemus that unless a person is “born again,” they will not be able to enter God’s kingdom. Nicodemus does not understand and says, “It would be impossible to enter one’s mother’s womb again!”

Jesus presses even harder by saying a person must be born of water and spirit in order to see God's kingdom. Nicodemus still does not understand and asks, "How can this be?"

Nicodemus does not understand that Jesus is talking about spiritual things, not physical.

Jesus makes this clear by saying, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, and spirit gives birth to spirit." Then as an illustration, Jesus describes a weather phenomenon called the "wind." "You can hear the sound of the wind, but we do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So is everyone born of the spirit." In other words, being born of the spirit is not something you can physically see. It's something you notice in the results of a person's changed life. We can hear and see the change in someone born of the spirit even though there is no physical evidence of how it happened.

Jesus is saying that unless we "turn around", we will not be able to get into God's kingdom. In a spiritual sense, we need to tear out everything and start over! This means that we must change our priorities, our way of thinking, and our worldview. We need to realize that spiritual things have a higher priority than physical ones. We need to be open to a whole new spiritual reality.

So how about us? Are we willing to start over? Are we willing to be born again?

It is debatable where this conversation ends between Jesus and Nicodemus, but within this chapter is the famous verse John 3:16. God makes it clear that he loves us so much that he is willing to give his Son to save us!

And for that, I am willing to start over...

Prayer

“Father, we ask by your power that we can be born again. We ask for you to change us in such a fundamental way that our entire world is turned upside down. We thank you for your love! Amen!”

Journal Day #3

JOHN 3

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 4

Thursday, January 12, 2023

JOHN 4

JOHN 4:23-24 — *“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in Spirit and in truth.”*

Devotional

Hannah Schiel

JOURNEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

When I was a child, a typical Sunday with my family looked like going to church in the morning, family time in the evening, and finishing the day by saying prayers before going to bed. For as long as I can remember this was our routine every week. Church on Sundays was amazing! I felt connected to God when I was in the building, but then I went home and didn't praise Jesus at all throughout the week. This was where my spiritual connection with the Father seemingly stopped. I thought it was only acceptable to pray and worship God in the church building or right before I went to bed.

The thought of there only being one right place to worship overwhelmed my thoughts. There was no way to grow in my relationship with God when I thought I had to be in a church. I think a lot of us get stuck in that loop of going to church on Sundays, but then not worshipping God throughout the week because we think it isn't possible.

John 4 proves that statement is wrong, because when Jesus entered the world our “place” of worship would change forever. Verse 21 brings this idea to light.

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”

God doesn’t want our place of worship to be restricted to a mountain top or an enclosed building. He wants us to be able to expand to new horizons and praise Him no matter where we are or when it is. We don’t need a live worship band, nor do we need to be surrounded by other Christians. We can worship anywhere. This is possible because Jesus came down to our broken world and said these words in verses 23 and 24:

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in Spirit and in truth.”

God seeks after us when we worship him in Spirit and in truth. I remember when I first read this. I was amazed at the fact that I didn’t have to be in a church building to worship. God just wanted my heart no matter where I was.

John 4 reminds us that God is always seeking us out no matter what we think or how far away we have fallen. I challenge you today to worship God, wherever you are and however that looks for you, and just lay everything at the Lord’s feet because He just wants you!

Prayer

“Lord, I thank you for coming down to our earth and opening new opportunities for us, like allowing us to worship you anywhere. I pray that you give me confidence to worship you no matter where I am because I know I don’t have to be in a certain place to experience your glory. Help me to seek after you during my worship time and praise you through it all. Amen.”

Journal Day #4

JOHN 4

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 5

Friday, January 13, 2023

JOHN 5

JOHN 5:24 — *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”*

Devotional

Lauren Wood

JOURNEY MEMBER

John 5 tells the story of Jesus quietly healing a man on the Sabbath who had been crippled for 38 years. Without knowing who the healer was, the religious leaders demanded to know who broke the Sabbath, never mind that a miracle was performed! Once they were alerted that it was Jesus who broke the Sabbath, they confronted him. Jesus was quick to compare himself to God, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” (5:17) As a result of two broken laws (healing on the Sabbath and blasphemy), they wished to persecute Jesus.

Jesus continues, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” (5:24) Continuing to explain who He is, Jesus reflects: “And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. ...and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. ...but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves...

when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God.” (5:38-44)

When I engage in social media, I often see clips of protests, ranting, accusations, and hatred geared toward people who do not give into the modern day influence and cultural beliefs. Persecution spews at those of us who believe in and try to live our lives in reflection of our Heavenly Father. We live in a world ruled by the descendants of Jesus’ persecutors who buff and shine their mirrored glass only to reflect their self-importance. They desire to be revered by society and thrive in their own autonomy, completely detached from God. As in John 5, these people seek to glorify the law of man defined by influences of our culture that are contrary to the Bible.

It saddens me to think this is the path being laid down for our future generations. A future that teaches us to rely on government and societal expectations instead of believing in, and whole-heartedly yearning for a relationship with Jesus. It starts within our homes, and openly, with or without fear of persecution, admitting our conviction to Christ to justify our Christian beliefs.

John 5 teaches us that those who love Jesus and believe in Him will have life everlasting. Let us offer ourselves as a model of Jesus to those who persecute us.

Prayer

“Dear Father, thank you for the favor and blessings you have so graciously shown my family. Help me daily, to live with the intention to follow and praise you and not give into social pressure. May your reflection be seen through the eyes of everyone I encounter so they too, may feel your abundant love. Amen.”

Journal Day #5

JOHN 5

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 6

Saturday, January 14, 2023

JOHN 6

JOHN 6:70-71 — *Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)*

Devotional

Austin Barton

JOURNEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

We always talk about “The Twelve,” the twelve disciples of Jesus. We always talk about Matthew, the tax collector and betrayer of the Jews, his own countrymen. We always talk about Peter, the fisherman who became the “fisher of people”. But it’s rare we talk about Judas. He’s the weird one of the bunch. Chosen by Jesus, but he himself did not choose Jesus.

Let us imagine something for a second. Imagine you knew one of your best friends was going to report you to the government and inevitably get you the death sentence as a result. Also imagine that you knew, with 100% certainty, that this would happen. I don’t know about you, but I would stop being friends with them.

Well, this happened to Jesus. John 6:64 reads, “For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.” A few verses later we learn that Judas was going to betray Jesus. Yet Jesus

actively chose, in every waking moment he had with Judas, to continue loving him...even though Judas didn't love him back. Unconditional love.

A couple verses later, John 6:66 reads, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." And yet still, Jesus died on the cross for these people, even after they had turned their back on him.

I suppose this goes to show that Jesus can save us, but on the flip side, we must want to be saved. While Jesus wants everyone to come home, the choice is up to each individual.

I know almost everyone has had these thoughts: If God is infinitely powerful, why does Satan exist? Why do bad things happen? Why did Jesus allow Judas to exist if he was going to be used by the Devil? With how many people from which Jesus had driven demons, why didn't he intervene with Judas?

Let's go back to Judas. Jesus loved him, but Judas didn't want to be saved. The truth is that Jesus wants to save you, but you must want to be saved. God wants relationships, not a dictatorship. He wants you to choose him, just like how he chose you.

But if God wants to give you the choice to pick him, he also has to give you the choice to pick the other side. It's called free will. Jesus gave Judas free will to either choose him or Satan, and Jesus still loved Judas even though Judas would ultimately pick Satan.

John 6 tells us that Jesus will have some challenging messages, ones that will make us want to leave. But it also shows us that he loves us unconditionally. The story of Judas actually says less about how bad Judas is and more about how good Jesus is.

Prayer

“Dear God, thank you for choosing me. Forgive me of the times I have betrayed and backstabbed you, and help me forgive myself. Help me to see that behind your conviction is unconditional compassion. Amen.”

Journal Day #6

JOHN 6

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 7

Sunday, January 15, 2023

JOHN 7

JOHN 7:6-8 — *Therefore Jesus told them, “My time is not yet here; for you anytime will do. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.”*

Devotional

Nichole Easterling

JOURNEY MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY RESIDENT

I’m sure we’ve all heard the saying, “Actions speak louder than words.” How often do we look around us and make assumptions about others initially by what they are doing before we ever hear them speak from the heart? Do these assumptions about people ever cause you to avoid relationships with someone? How are YOUR own personal actions speaking to who you are? Are your actions matching up with your words? And how does it feel when people make assumptions about you that are incorrect?

These are questions I feel followers of Christ can find themselves struggling with. There are so many outside blanket assumptions that people make about Christians, and many of them (rightly so) are based on some Christian’s less than Christ-like actions. The result is that we are now having to battle against these assumptions in order to shine the true light of Christ.

If you connect with this struggle, you are not alone. Christ did too. In John 7, we see Jesus battling assumptions from those around him, while also being bombarded with constant questions about his actions. Some were questioning Him directly. Others were questioning behind His back. It says in verses 3-5 that Jesus' own brothers were questioning him and trying to tell Jesus what to do..."even his own brothers did not believe in him." (vs. 5) Jesus is the perfect example of what a bold faith looks like through actions and speech.

Read Jesus' response to his brothers: "Therefore Jesus told them, 'My time is not yet here; for you anytime will do. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.'" (John 7:6-8)

Christ knew who he was. He didn't let the outside assumptions of those around take away from his ministry and His goal for the Kingdom. Look to Christ's example when you're facing wrongful assumptions about who you are as a follower of Christ. React in love and continue to do what's right. Christians will always be under scrutiny, but know that God is on your side. He knows your heart. Stay faithful in those moments, just as Christ did in the midst of adversity.

Prayer

"Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for sending us the perfect example of your son. Lord, I pray that you keep my eyes and ears focused on you and not to let the lies and negative assumptions around me take away from the bigger picture inside the body of Christ. Thank you God for your faithfulness in our lives. In Jesus name, Amen."

Journal Day #7

JOHN 7

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 8

Monday, January 16, 2023

JOHN 8

JOHN 8:1-11 (NLT) — *Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ² but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. ³ As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.*

⁴ *“Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”*

⁶ *They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. ⁷ They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” ⁸ Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.*

⁹ *When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰ Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”*

¹¹ *“No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”*

Devotional

Nathan Sell

JOURNEY MIDDLE SCHOOL PASTOR

The beginning of John 8 is one of Jesus' most iconic teaching moments. The Pharisees have caught a woman in the act of adultery, and they decide to use her as a pawn in an attempt to trap Jesus in heretical teaching. As the Pharisees bring the woman to Jesus, He flips the script and shows that no one is worthy of casting judgment except for God. Certainly Jesus, being perfect, could have cast judgment, but He reserves that for the Father. Instead of judgment, Jesus offers mercy and conviction. His goal is not to shame the woman, but rather to urge her to turn from her sin and begin living the life that God desires for her.

This passage becomes incredibly relatable to me when I place myself within it. When I sin, I am often the chief pharisee — casting shame and judgment upon myself. However, I also recognize that I am guilty of being a pharisee towards others — trying to hold them accountable to their sins. In both situations, I must remind myself that Jesus brings life. He brings mercy, grace, and forgiveness. He looks through my sin, to my heart, and knows who I truly am. Jesus does this for you too. He does not define you by your sin, but rather defines you through His love for you. When I am tempted to judge myself or others, I must remind myself of the truth that only God has the right to judge.

A temptation can be to stop at the forgiveness that Jesus offers. However, we see through John 8 that, while Jesus offers forgiveness, He calls us to a higher standard. His forgiveness is not complacency with sin, but rather a clean slate that challenges us out of our sin. In our moments of sin and failure, Jesus looks at us, forgives us, and says “Go and

sin no more.” Jesus believes we are better than our sins. Jesus communicates hope for a better future through His forgiveness. His merciful conviction is an invitation to step into the fullness of life that He desires for us.

Prayer

“Father, I am so thankful for your mercy and grace. I am thankful that, when you look at me, you see through my sin and define me through the love that Jesus has for me. Lord, I am guilty of trying to be the judge. Help me to be a reflection of your mercy and grace to others. Amen.”

Journal Day #8

JOHN 8

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 9

Tuesday, January 17, 2023

JOHN 9

JOHN 9:1-4 — *As Jesus passed by, He saw a man who had been blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must carry out the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day...”*

Devotional

Larissa Lee

HOST TEAM LEAD

Human beings like reasons for things. Reasons make life tidy. In fact, we like reasons so much that we will actually ignore certain information in order to form patterns out of an otherwise random set of data. This need for reasons was part of what drove the assumption the disciples had that, when bad stuff happens, someone must have done something wrong to deserve it. And our search for reasons can lead us to some erroneous conclusions.

Don't get me wrong, I like reasons as well, and I've spent a lot of time asking, "Why?" My son was born with a rare genetic disorder that causes issues like global developmental delays, a sensory processing disorder, autism, one functioning kidney, and a small trachea that can turn a common cold into a severe breathing problem.

As a mom, I've wrestled within myself. I've also listened to others talk about what they think is God's purpose in this. There has to be a reason, right? But as far as I can tell, there isn't. It's a genetic mutation. It's just a hard, broken, random part of life...like a man being born blind.

Now, at a glance in the text it can look like Jesus does give a reason, but we must read carefully. In English, we read, "he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed." It makes it seem like God made this man blind **so that** later he could heal him. That would be kind of a jerk move. But God isn't a jerk, so that can't be the correct understanding.

The original language used here is much closer to, "*he was born blind **but let** the works of God be displayed.*"⁽¹⁾ Basically, Jesus says, "This wasn't God's plan; he didn't want it or cause it but he can use it for good." Jesus is opposed to the idea that this situation happened because of **anyone's** choice, and he tells us that the important thing is not WHY it happened but HOW we respond. Jesus invites us to respond by joining him in carrying out God's work as he confronts our world's brokenness with compassion and healing.

The bad stuff in life is not part of God's plan, nor is it something we deserve, but God is always at work planting gardens of life in the valleys of death. And we have an opportunity in this world to join him in getting down in the dirt — the painful, unfair, messy stuff of life - and doing the work of compassion and healing.

1. Boyd, Gregory A. *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict*. Intersity Press, 1997

Prayer

“Father, help me to trust that you are always working for good, even in the things in life that don’t seem to have any reason. Fill me with compassion so that I can join you in bringing healing to the world around me. Amen.”

Journal Day #9

JOHN 9

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 10

Wednesday, January 18, 2023

JOHN 10

JOHN 10:9-10 — *“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*
(The words of Jesus)

Devotional

Joe Beckler

JOURNEY HOST TEAM MEMBER

What makes your life meaningful? And, what specifically threatens your ability to live life to the fullest?

Jesus wanted his followers to understand what it meant to experience a full life. In John 10:9-10, Jesus compared himself to the gate of a sheep pen. The gate was a means of security and salvation. Sheep, in their vulnerable state, counted on the regular routine of moving in and out of the secure gate.

This movement, in and out of the gate, is intriguing. Jesus was calling out the inherent risk associated with daily movement from the pen to the pastures. There were threats like thieves and robbers that sought to harm the sheep. They came to kill, steal, and destroy.

The parallel meaning is clear for Jesus' followers. What are the things that rob us of life, freedom, hope, and eternal

peace? When you think about it, our daily movement is about being aware of the things that bring life, as well as the things that rob us of life. We've all felt both.

In comparing his followers to sheep, Jesus spoke of being the gate that ensured salvation, his secure presence, and guidance in life. Think about what this means as we trust God with our daily movement. Jesus' mission was clear. He wanted his children to experience life in all its fullness. So, his role as the gate is all about providing a full and meaningful life. He does the work of guiding us from place to place and directing us towards a better way of life. Also, he does this in the midst of all the threats and challenges we face daily. All we must do is stay focused on him, our gate.

As you think about John 10:9-10, consider what is robbing you from experiencing a full and meaningful life. How might Jesus help you experience more of the fullness he promises to all his followers?

Prayer

“Jesus, you are the gate. Through you, in the midst of a world full of threats, we can experience fullness of life. Help me experience this fullness today as I move from place to place. Show me how to trust you with the challenges that threaten to steal, kill, and destroy in my life. Amen.”

Journal Day #10

JOHN 10

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 11

Thursday, January 19, 2023

JOHN 11

JOHN 11:25 — *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”*

Devotional

Alex Mueller

JOURNEY HOST TEAM MEMBER & HIGH SCHOOL LEADER

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is a common story heard in Christian households. I learned the story as a child, and as Tim Mackie from The Bible Project often says, “Sometimes we need to undo the Veggie Tale effect.” In other words, we become so familiar with the story that the moral gets lost.

Your children’s book version of this story may have read something like this: Lazarus became sick and died. Jesus traveled to meet Mary and Martha, who were angry at Jesus for not coming to cure Lazarus. Then Jesus called Lazarus out of the grave, raising him back to life. How miraculous! Moral of the story: Jesus worked another miracle. Time to undo the Veggie Tale effect.

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were close friends of Jesus. You may know Mary as the lady who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. (John 12:3) We know Jesus could have easily healed Lazarus, but his response points to the moral of the miracle, “This sickness will not

end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." (11:4)

Sometimes in life's hardest moments, I struggle to see how God's hand is in the pain, hurt, anxiety, and even death. But over and over, God turns the pain into an opportunity to shape us for His glory.

In a 2019 'viral' interview, Stephen Colbert summarizes why we should be grateful for the death of a loved one. He lost 2 brothers and his dad in a plane crash when he was 10. He quotes J.R.R. Tolkien, "What of God's punishments is not a gift?"

Colbert goes on to say, "It is a gift to have life, and life comes with suffering... I wish this had not happened. But if you are grateful for your life, then you have to be grateful for all of your life. I suffered something at a young age, so that later in life, I could realize that in some way everyone is suffering. I, however imperfectly, have the gift to go down with that person into their suffering. To be able to share that moment with them is THE gift. So I am grateful that I suffered because it allows me to connect and share wisdom with other people about my experience."

Mary and Martha don't initially see a gift in Lazarus' death. The pain and grief has clouded their belief that through it, God would be glorified.

When Jesus arrives, he tells Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." (11:25) Mary meets Jesus and exclaims, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (11:33)

Jesus' response is profound. "Jesus wept." (11:35) He has compassion for the pain and hurt of Mary and Martha, becoming a perfect example for comforting those who

grieve. Because God comes to earth as a human and experiences all human emotions, Jesus knows suffering. Not unsurprisingly, in the next chapter of John, Jesus is arrested and enters the passion.

“That if you believe, you will see the glory of God...that they may believe that you sent me.” (11:40, 42)

This year, how might you use your pain, hurt, anger, anxiety, or experience with the death of a loved one as a gift to show someone God’s grace? How might you glorify God in your suffering?

Prayer

“God, thank you for giving me life, both the mountains and valleys. Help me praise you in my suffering and recognize the gift you are giving me to connect with your suffering and your people. Amen.”

Journal Day #11

JOHN 11

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 12

Friday, January 20, 2023

JOHN 12

JOHN 12:1-8 — *“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”*

Devotional

Ellie Boudreau

SMALL GROUP LEADER

There can be surreal moments when the tattered pages of timeless stories throughout this Book come alive again, and it's as though you're literally standing there, watching the scene unfold before your eyes. That's where our text takes us today.

With time closing in, there was a palatable heaviness in the air. It was six days before Passover, and Jesus was invited to the home of his faithful companions as the honored guest. Away from the crowds, the evening hush was illuminated by well-traveled lanterns; the centerpiece on a table carefully set for five. Known for her gift of service, Martha served dinner with the confidence of a seasoned homemaker. Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, comfortably basked in the opportunity to just be in the presence of Jesus.

Then a moment took place that no one could have imagined, making time stand still. Unannounced, Mary bent

down and lavishly poured a pint (some translations say, “a pound”) of fine perfume on Jesus’ feet. The aroma was known to permeate skin and hair, lasting for a long time. Draping her hair over his feet, she brushed the expensive fragrance on him, engulfing the room. A simple, but powerful act of worship took place. This was the perfume intended to be used for Jesus’ burial, but Mary didn’t care about what others may have thought at the moment. Instead, perhaps the aroma would linger for days on his skin as a precious reminder while he was living, that his imminent death would be worth it all.

Known as a selfish thief, Judas Iscariot piously scolded Mary saying that she could have sold the perfume for a year’s wage and given the money to the poor. Jesus quickly rebuked his criticism, seeing through his intent to line his own pockets. True to his past, Judas missed the entire picture.

Jesus deeply desires that our walk with him would be an intentional commitment of our heart. Mary sacrificed her best for Jesus. It was valuable and worth every drop applied to his feet. What is my best to lay at his feet? What could I tangibly re-prioritize in my life that would help me take a step toward a deeper commitment in my walk with God?

Prayer

“God, thank you for your unwavering commitment to me. Teach me to welcome you in all aspects of my life. Amen.”

Journal Day #12

JOHN 12

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 13

Saturday, January 21, 2023

JOHN 13

JOHN 13:14 — *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.” (The words of Jesus)*

Devotional

Chris Boudreau

SMALL GROUP LEADER

In John 13, Jesus is gathered with his disciples in the Upper Room, sharing the Last Supper and final commissioning instructions. Earlier, the disciples had been arguing among themselves as to which one of them was greatest. Although there is no record of the seating chart we can only imagine there was a pecking order at the table of who is next to Jesus. We’re told that just before the meal Jesus rose from the table and began to wash the feet of his disciples. At first, they were all familiar with the custom, that for those walking in sandals on the filthy roads of Israel needed to have their feet washed before a communal meal, especially since people reclined at a low table where feet were in plain sight. It must have stunned them that Jesus, their Lord and master, wanted to wash their feet when they should have offered to wash His. It’s now Peter’s turn. The washing of his feet made him profoundly uncomfortable and, never being at a loss for words, protested, “You shall never wash my feet!”

Suddenly, Peter's response quiets the room. Shocked, but they know his reputation of being loud, rugged, self-confident, and the most demonstrative disciple. Peter is looking for every excuse for Jesus to skip him. His mind is spinning, body language has changed, sweat forming on his brow, and now carefully pointing his finger to others and not himself. As Jesus approaches him, Peter raises his hand saying "Jesus, no need here, I got this! You don't need to wash my feet, I'm good Jesus. You know me...we've been down this road before." Peter gives the eye that it's the other disciples who really need Jesus' attention and washing.

How easily is it for us to identify with Peter? Raising up our hands saying, "Jesus, I've got this! No need to help me, I'm good." Peter was thinking about hygiene, not holiness. Jesus is teaching that He has made us spiritually clean the moment we put our faith and trust in Him with our salvation. At the same time, it is a lifelong process of daily keeping short accounts with Him through the confessing of our sins. 1 John 1:9 says that when we "confess our sins he cleanses us from all unrighteousness." When we do, we point our finger at ourselves and not others.

Finally, the disciples had every opportunity to wash each other's feet. Instead, Jesus "rose" to the occasion taking initiative to wash their feet. In doing so, he was pointing out the obvious, laying out a pattern of serving others. Very simply, Jesus is teaching us that if you truly "got this" then act like it – and you will have a blessed life.

Prayer

Ask God to search your heart ,revealing the areas where you've had your hands up to him saying "I've got this!" Be open to whom and to where you can serve others.

Journal Day #13

JOHN 13

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 14

Sunday, January 22, 2023

JOHN 14

JOHN 14:27 — *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (The words of Jesus)*

Devotional

Angela Gaffney

SMALL GROUP LEADER

There have been times in my life where I’ve wished I could have the play by play before the game even begins. This way, I would know the obstacles ahead of time, be prepared for what I need to do, and know that the outcome will be great.

I would wish for these things because of the nervousness and fear of the unknown.

When I played college basketball, a teammate of mine went to our coach and told her that I could sing. Thereafter, my coach shared that she wanted me to sing the National Anthem acapella in center court before every game. While I felt honored that she would make such a request, I was overcome by nerves, doubt and fear.

What if I messed up? What if I couldn’t hit the high note? What if my teammates or spectators thought it was horrible? What if I looked like a fool out there? What if I didn’t live up

to the expectations of my coach?

We've all had situations where our nerves have taken over. We've lacked trust in ourselves. Lacked trust in the process. And we focus our attention on ourselves and all the "what ifs".

When, instead, we should be focusing on Him.

In this scripture, Jesus is calming the hearts and minds of his disciples. They've questioned about where he is going, and why they can't just follow him. They want to have the game plan ahead of time. They want to know the way. He assures them by saying *"I am the way and the truth and the life." (14:6) "Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." (14:19-20)*

I wish I had the sense to know this at 18 years old, and truly understand the truth that Jesus lives in me, and the Father lives in him. He will provide all I need, to see me through, in everything he calls me to do.

My coach asked me to serve in a way that honored a gift God had given me.

We are called to trust in our Father as we serve and do His good work. This trust takes effort on our part. We must build our relationship with Him, live in His word, apply His word to our everyday lives, and count it a privilege and blessing to do His work, even when it may feel challenging to do so.

I remember standing center court one game, palms filled with sweat, my heart beating out of my chest, and my nervousness sitting right in my throat waiting to interrupt my voice at any moment. Let's just say it wasn't a great performance. I cracked at the high note and felt like a complete failure.

Many years later, I learned about putting my trust in God when I was asked to sing at a family member's funeral. I was singing a song I'd never performed, and the nerves were taking over, as always. But this time, I prayed and turned it over to God, asking Him to guide my way. I performed well because of Him, and because my focus was on serving Him instead of it being about me.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (14:27)

God shows up in our big moments, and in every small moment too. He calls us to trust in Him, to know that He lives in us, and that we are provided His peace, guidance, and love through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

"God, I am grateful you call me to do your good work. Please speak to me, help me to know what it is you need me to do today and provide me the tools to do it well. I promise to continue trusting in you, studying your word and living the life you call me to live. In your name I pray, Amen."

Journal Day #14

JOHN 14

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 15

Monday, January 23, 2023

JOHN 15

JOHN 15:1-8 — *“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.”*

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.” (The words of Jesus)

Devotional

Preston Canter

JOURNEY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT

In these verses, we find Jesus teaching. He uses a figure of speech in which He identifies Himself as a vine and people as branches. Through the metaphor, Jesus is explaining the

importance of being connected to the Source so that we can produce “fruit” and be effective disciples.

When we are connected to Jesus, we produce “fruit” that characterizes our faith and us as disciples. This “fruit” that Jesus is referring to is the “Fruit of the Spirit” - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. (Galatians 5:22-23) However, when we are connected to the world, we see that we produce fruit that resembles the world. (Galatians 5:19-21) The world produces selfishness, while Jesus produces generosity. The world produces harshness, while Jesus produces gentleness. The world produces impatience, while Jesus produces patience.

These verses in John 15 challenge me to devote myself to living daily for Jesus so I produce the Fruit of the Spirit. Just as a branch depends on a vine for its source of life, I must depend on Christ as my Source for life and salvation. This passage reminds me that I am incapable of living for Christ and producing the Fruit of the Spirit if I am not connected to Christ.

Prayer

“God, I want to have a life that produces the Fruit of the Spirit and not the fruit of the world. Please help me to remain connected to you as my Source even when life tries to distract me away from you. Amen.”

Journal Day #15

JOHN 15

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 16

Tuesday, January 24, 2023

JOHN 16

JOHN 16:22 — *“Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.” (The words of Jesus)*

Devotional

Lexi Brooke

KIDS MINISTRY SERVE TEAM MEMBER

Tears streamed down my face as I waved goodbye. I stood in front of my new college dorm and watched my mom drive away. She was leaving me... alone... for months. It took everything in me to not break down completely on the sidewalk. I stumbled up to my dorm room, fell on my bed, and just sobbed. I knew I would see my mom again. But as I laid on my bed, I felt taken over by grief. How was I going to do this?

My reaction to being at college may seem extreme or unwarranted, but what you have to understand is that the years leading up to college were less than great. I almost lost both my parents to health issues. I lost three of my grandparents. My mental health was a disaster. Things at home weren't great. I had basically no control over any of the hardships going on in my life, except that I was able to be present with my family through it all. Then I had to go to college, and I lost that one piece of control. I was a mess.

What does that have to do with anything? Well, as I look back on this season of hardship, trouble, and fear, I think of John 16. Specifically, when Jesus tells the disciples He is leaving. Hearing that news brought panic to the disciples, and they weren't sure what he meant. As Jesus told them more plainly what He meant, they began to grieve deeply on top of their fear.

Though the situation is different, I think back to that time when my mom left me. I can feel the sadness, the grief, and most notably, the fear. In that moment, I imagine I felt a little bit like the disciples did hearing Jesus' news of leaving. There had to be such uncertainty for them with what was going to happen.

The truth is that my mom wasn't leaving me forever. I knew that. Jesus wasn't leaving the disciples forever either. He told them that. But fear is real...so real that it led the disciples to grieve deeply. The uncertainty of where Jesus was going, when He would return, and why He had to leave...this all crept into the disciples minds and filled them with worry. What did that mean for them? Who was going to lead them now? In a sense, their comfort was leaving them. That is what I felt.

As I read John 16, I picture my mom saying this to me...*"Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."* (16:22)

Jesus said those words to his disciples. At the time it did not take away their pain or grief, but they were left with a promise. A promise they could hold onto. Jesus would see them again, and they would be filled with joy.

For me, the love my mom has for me is as close to Jesus' love for us. She loves me deeply. She knew I was grieving, but she also knew I needed this season of change. I needed this season to grow, to have new opportunities, and

to meet new people. She knew I would see her again and that joy would come on the other side of this season.

Jesus promises that for us. We will see Him again. And though today might look dark and scary, we can cling to the promise that Jesus is coming back, and there will be great joy then.

Prayer

“Jesus, I thank you for the promise you made to us. The promise that You are coming back and that we will rejoice. Jesus I pray even in this season of trouble, that I would take heart and remember this promise. Help me to turn to you in my deepest grief and rejoice with you in my greatest joys.”

Journal Day #16

JOHN 16

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 17

Wednesday, January 25, 2023

JOHN 17

JOHN 17:22 — *“I have given them the glory you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.”(The words of Jesus)*

Devotional

Molly Carr

KIDS MINISTRY ASSISTANT

I was eighteen years old when I moved to Colorado for Bible school. I waited for this day for years. I couldn't wait to meet the legendary “Mrs.T”, who started the Torchbearers ministry with her husband in England. She had been a friend of my Nana, and I was desperate to have a cup of tea with her.

We had spent quite some time talking when she brought out two feathers. She said, “Molly, hold these feathers. Do you notice the difference between them?” I noticed one was smooth and crisp. Everything was exactly in its place. The other was ruffled, discolored, and worn.

“This feather feels new, and this feather feels old.” Me, entirely missing her point. “No, no, no!” she exclaimed in her Northern Irish accent.

“This one,” she clutched her fragile hand over the crisp one, “This one is not real.” She took the ruffled, worn feather from my hand and held it up, “This one, however, is real. It's traveled the world. It's lived. It's beautiful. This is Christ in you, the hope of glory!”

How gracious is it that we get to see how Jesus prays? He spends these moments praying to be glorified in His death (v. 5) and to be glorified through us (v. 10). Often, we think of glory as something achieved through fame. The glory of an athlete winning a gold medal or a battle won in war. The irony is that Christ's glory was achieved in His death on the cross. His glory manifested in conquering death on the cross, rising from the grave, and ultimately, we are called to allow His glory to manifest through us!

Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27), reaches into the depths of our hearts and presents us with who we are and why we were created. The feather that was ruffled and worn was not appealing to look at. You could tell beyond a shadow of a doubt that it struggled. But it was real, and it told a story. I believe the manifestation of Christ's glory in us comes through a life lived full and well for the Lord. It is not easy or magical, but life with Christ is full and rich. What a privilege it is to even call Him friend! Our stories bring Him glory, and He prayed for this (v. 22).

If Christ could ask the Father to glorify Him, even in death, how do you think He will glorify Himself in your life? Are you living and breathing everyday in hope that Christ is glorified through you? The best in all of this is that we just have to invite him to be glorified in our lives. Whether you're washing dishes, leading a company of hundreds, reading a story to your children, driving home from work... whatever you do, ask Him to be glorified in it (1 Corinthians 10:31). Let your life be a worn feather telling the story of Christ's love for you.

Prayer

“Lord, please be glorified in every part of my life. I want you to be a part of every decision, every breath, and every thought I have. Thank you for guarding me and allowing me to live a rich, full life, steeped in your grace and protection. You know me and you love me. Use my story to tell others of your love for me! Amen.”

Journal Day #17

JOHN 17

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 18

Thursday, January 26, 2023

JOHN 18

JOHN 18:15-17, 25-27 — *Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?" "No," he said, "I am not."*

Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "No, I am not." But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

Devotional

Maren Cecil

JOURNEY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT

As we read John 18, we see that Jesus has been arrested and been put on trial before the religious leaders. As Jesus is standing trial, Peter is standing outside. He is asked if he is one of Jesus' disciples. Peter quickly denies that he is associated with Jesus. Throughout this chapter, Peter has multiple chances to not deny Jesus and to tell others that he knows and follows him. All together, Peter denies Jesus

three times. After the third time, Peter realizes what he has done and begins to feel ashamed. Why? Because Peter had assured Jesus that he would never deny him.

We all have moments in our life where we are confronted with acknowledging our relationship with Christ, or denying him through our words and actions. While we may not verbally deny Jesus, like Peter did, our actions can tell a different story.

Most of us have grown up hearing the saying, “Actions speak louder than words.” Our actions say a lot about our commitment to Jesus, and how we can have God live through us. Peter was clearly afraid of associating himself with Jesus due to what he believed the people might do to him as a result.

How often do we distance ourselves from Jesus due to fear of what we believe others might do to us? Personally, the fear of judgment at school can cause me to not be fully committed at the moment when having a chance to talk about religion. It can be scary to live publicly for Christ due to the various labels that other students or people will quickly label me with. I have to ask myself, though, “Am I willing to be set-apart and viewed differently if it means being fully committed to Christ?” While I won’t be perfect at it, I should strive to live unashamed of Christ.

Sometimes, though, we are like Peter, and find ourselves denying Christ. In these moments, I begin to feel ashamed. I can only imagine that this must have been how Peter felt as well. Although I feel ashamed of my denial of Christ, I am reminded that Christ has forgiven me through His grace and mercy. I also realize the significance of what I have done and recommit myself to fully living for Christ.

As you read John 18 today, I would encourage you to live fully committed to Jesus. If you find yourself denying Christ, realize the significance of your mistakes and don't be too hard on yourself. Remember that Christ has already forgiven you!

how do you think He will glorify Himself in your life? Are you living and breathing everyday in hope that Christ is glorified through you? The best in all of this is that we just have to invite him to be glorified in our lives. Whether you're washing dishes, leading a company of hundreds, reading a story to your children, driving home from work... whatever you do, ask Him to be glorified in it (1 Corinthians 10:31). Let your life be a worn feather telling the story of Christ's love for you.

Prayer

“Lord, please be glorified in every part of my life. I want you to be a part of every decision, every breath, and every thought I have. Thank you for guarding me and allowing me to live a rich, full life, steeped in your grace and protection. You know me and you love me. Use my story to tell others of your love for me! Amen.”

Journal Day #18

JOHN 18

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 19

Friday, January 27, 2023

JOHN 19

JOHN 19:30 — *“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished’. With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”*

Devotional

Zach Porter

JOURNEY CRASH COURSE GUIDE

This chapter takes place on the “day of Preparation of the Passover” (19:14). Jesus is on trial in front of Pilate, Roman soldiers, and the Jewish people. He is being accused of “claiming” to be a King and the Son of God.

The “day of Preparation of the Passover” refers to the Jewish tradition surrounding the Passover referenced in Exodus 12. There was a festival set up to commemorate the time when God led His people out of captivity from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. During the festival, the Israelites would sacrifice a lamb for each family and spread the blood over the doorways of their homes. This observance signified the time during the exodus when the Lord passed over the homes whose door frames were outlined with lamb’s blood, but brought judgment and death to those homes that weren’t covered by blood.

The Jewish people were to eat the lamb, fully dressed for travel, as a sign of their faith in God, who led them out of

Egypt. It was a symbol of preparedness, readiness, and expectedness.

This same attitude of preparedness and expectedness can be found in our verses today. This is the climax of all creation. All of the Old Testament sacrifices, prophecies, waiting and longing led to this moment in John 19. Was the world prepared and ready for their King? Many, if not all, were not ready. Only a few were ready (John, Jesus's mother Mary and her sister, Mary of Magdalene and Mary the wife of Clopas), but perhaps they still did not quite fully understand. But Jesus did. He knew his time and purpose had come to this point.

As He spoke His last words while hanging on the cross, "It is finished", all of His preparation was complete. The Greek word for "finished" is *tetelestai*, which as Charles Spurgeon (an influential preacher in the 1800s) described, "was a Conqueror's cry; it was uttered with a loud voice. There is nothing of anguish about it, there is no wailing in it. It is the cry of One who has completed a tremendous labor." God's preparation for our reconciliation was made complete in Jesus. One final, perfect sacrifice for all.

Done. Complete. Finished. Fulfilled.

As we read these verses, letting the weight of what happened sink in, we can ask ourselves the same questions. Have I prepared my heart to accept Christ, His once and final sacrifice? Am I ready for His reign and rule in my life as King and Lord? Am I expectant to see God's continued fulfillment of the promises He's made to me? Promises which include the truths that He is for me, He is always with me, and He will never forsake or abandon me.

May we always have this posture of preparedness,

expectant to see God actively moving in our hearts and in our world.

“Has he finished his work for me? Then I must get to work for him, and I must persevere until I finish my work, too; not to save myself, for that is all done, but because I am saved.” (Charles Spurgeon)

Prayer

“Father, thank you for your perfect sacrifice in Jesus. That you loved me that much to sacrifice your only Son, who knew no sin, to take on my sin that it may be put to death. Thank you for your gift of grace and new life that is found in you. I accept all of this that You have done for me as a gift, knowing there is nothing I could do to possibly earn it. Amen.”

Journal Day #19

JOHN 19

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 20

Saturday, January 28, 2023

JOHN 20

JOHN 20:29 — *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (The words of Jesus)*

Devotional

Micah Priest

JOURNEY HIGH SCHOOL PASTOR

This chapter includes 3 stories of Jesus’ followers discovering that he has risen from the dead. All 3 stories are very different, but uniquely powerful.

In the first story, we have Peter and John hearing from Mary Magdalene that the tomb is empty. In a foot race to the tomb that John clearly states he won, they discover that Jesus’ body is no longer there. John 20:8 says, “Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.” This is important. They did not know Jesus’ full plan, or I should say understood it, because Jesus spoke clearly what the Father’s plan was. Yet, they believed fully without even seeing Jesus with their own eyes.

In the second story, we have Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb crying because she does not know where Jesus’ body has gone. Jesus came and began to speak with her, but she did not recognize him until he spoke her name... “Mary”. That is when she knew and believed that Jesus

was who he said he was and did what he said he was going to do. She had seen the Lord.

In the last story, we hear the disciple Thomas say, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Jesus gave him that exact opportunity by meeting with Thomas, allowing him to see and feel what he needed to in order to believe.

The point is that Jesus meets us exactly where we are and helps us in the exact way we need. Maybe we are able to believe in what God is doing without seeing it with our own eyes. Maybe we are so focused on something else that we need Jesus to come to us and speak our name to get our attention. And maybe, because of our doubts, we need to see and feel evidence of him in order to believe.

The one thing I want to remind you of today is that God will meet you where you are and give you what you need. Yet Jesus also says, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (20:29) Let us remember that even when we don’t see it or feel it, he is working. He never stops working. He is a way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, and a light in the darkness. That is who our God is. So let’s continue to believe and be blessed.

Prayer

“Jesus, thank you for meeting me where I am. Help me in those times where I am struggling to understand how you are working, where you are working, and when you are moving. Remind me of your faithfulness, and give me the courage to know without a doubt that you will come through. Amen.”

Journal Day #20

JOHN 20

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

DAY 21

Sunday, January 29, 2023

JOHN 21

JOHN 21:2-3 — *“Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ‘I’m going out to fish,’ Simon Peter told them, and they said, ‘We’ll go with you.’ So they went out and got in the boat, but that night they caught nothing.”*

Devotional

Cory Bragg

JOURNEY CONNECTIONS PASTOR

The scene is set after Jesus’ resurrection. Peter, Jesus’ lead disciple, is spending time with some of the other disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Around 3 years prior, this is the same location that Jesus had originally called Peter to become his apprentice. Now Peter, after all that he had experienced following Jesus, finds himself going back to what he did before he met Jesus...fishing. And not only does Peter go back to what he did before he followed Jesus...he fails.

Why would Peter go back to his former way of life after Jesus trained him for something greater...from fishing for fish to “fishing for people” (Matthew 4:19)? Maybe it’s because he is going back to what is familiar? Maybe what’s easier? Maybe what he feels he is better at? Maybe it’s out of habit? Or could it be because Peter is still feeling guilty for denying Jesus 3 times before Jesus’ crucifixion?

No matter the reason, what I love is that **even though Peter might have given up on Jesus' purpose for his life, Jesus hadn't given up on Peter.** Jesus shows up at the shore, extends grace, and reminds Peter of the greater life he has called him to.

I find it easy to connect with Peter in this story. I can sure mess up when it comes to following Jesus too. These past 21 days have been so good though...reading about Jesus' life and ministry while he was here on earth. It's been a powerful way to kick off 2023...spending time with Jesus, praying, journaling, and being challenged by Christ in so many ways to grow in my faith. I pray you've also been encouraged and challenged by this person we believe is God in flesh.

As the rest of the year lies ahead, may we not forget the things that God has taught us during these 21 days. The ways He has challenged and invited you and I to greater things! May we desire not to want to go back to our "former ways"...but for 2023 to be a year where we grow closer to Jesus and live with more purpose for Him.

Prayer

"Heavenly Father, thank you for the past 21 days. Thank you for the ways you have challenged and called me to a greater way of living for you and your purposes on this earth. As the rest of the year unfolds, please give me the courage and strength to not go back to any 'former ways' of life you have encouraged me to leave behind. I commit the rest of 2023 to grow in my relationship with you and to trust in the plans you have for my life. Amen!"

Journal Day #21

JOHN 21

Highlight

Explain

Apply

Respond

Congratulations on making it through the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting!

Thank you for doing the best you can to dive into the Bible, pray, and fast throughout the experience. We hope it's been a great way to start off 2023!

Now that the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting is over, you might be wondering...**"What can I do next?"** This is a great question, and I wanted to offer **3 next steps you can take** heading into February.

1. Keep Spiritual Habits Going

We have some great tools available for you to keep spending time with God everyday. Learn more by visiting our Spiritual Habits webpage.

JourneyColorado.com/SpiritualHabits

2. Jump Into Crash Course

Crash Course is a series of 3 steps designed to help you connect to Journey, discover your purpose, and make a difference with your life. You can take your next step by registering for the first step in the Crash Course series today (Membership Class).

[JourneyColorado.com/Crash Course](https://JourneyColorado.com/Crash%20Course)

3. Join a Small Group

Finally, if you haven't yet, try a Journey small group! We have a ton of groups for different life situations and hobbies. Click on the link to access our online Groups Directory to view all available groups to join.

JourneyColorado.com/Groups



JourneyColorado.com