

Lent



Forty Days of Renewal

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2022

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The season of **Lent** begins on Ash Wednesday lasting forty days (not counting Sundays) until Resurrection Sunday. It was developed by the 4th century church to set aside time for reflection of our true, spiritual identity but also worshiping Jesus as our identity becomes more like Him. Some Christians give up or fast certain foods or activities, try to be more generous with their time and money, but regardless, our desire is to **know** God in a deeper way.

As we become more aware of our sinfulness contrasted with His holiness we easily enter into times of repentance, prayer, praise, and worship of God. *Devotional time* reminds us of what Jesus did for us and helps us express our gratefulness.

Let's walk together through John's account of Jesus' last week on earth beginning with Chapter 12 and closing our 40 days with Chapter 17. Our hearts and minds will be renewed as we readily confess our sins and receive His forgiveness preparing ourselves for that celebration of His death, resurrection, and most importantly, His Return. I've include a music selection to enhance your devotional time; they're all available on YouTube for your listening pleasure; I hope you'll give it a try.

Day 1

*Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and **anointed** the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:3*

John records Jesus having dinner with some of His best friends, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha six days before Passover or the Last Supper; everyone was given an assignment. Lazarus, whom Jesus had just raised from the dead, was intently listening to His every word, Martha was serving the meal, and Mary **anointed** His feet with an expensive, perfumed ointment. That fragrance not only filled the entire house but undoubtedly the waft of the scent strengthened Jesus all week long.

Anointing oil was used in the Old Testament as a picture of the Holy Spirit resting on a prophet, priest, or king during their ordination and each one was given an assignment from God requiring specific authority and position. Jesus willingly received that **anointing** by Mary on His *feet* knowing the *walk of suffering* that was coming. That wonderful fragrance of the Spirit's presence imparted strength as He remembered He wasn't *alone*.

His faith walk eventually led Jesus to the cross of Calvary but His **anointing** empowered Him to complete the Father's assignment. Isn't that true for us as well? 1 John 2:20 & 27 tells us we're also **anointed** since the Holy Spirit lives in believers with that same empowerment to complete any assignment. As we reflect on our life today let's take some time for confession and repentance appreciating what Jesus did for us and His ever-present Spirit.

Father, I'm reminded of some things that need Your forgiveness today and I appreciate Your Spirit's strength to walk closer with You knowing I'm not ever alone.

Music Selection: Youtube *Never Walk Alone* by Hillsong

Day 2

*So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the **King of Israel!**" John 12:13*

Jesus began His trek into Jerusalem on a donkey, not a white charger, even though He was a *King*. Since He raised Lazarus the people began flowing into the city to see Him perform another miracle. His followers knew He was the prophesied *King of Israel*; what they didn't understand was His reception would not be royal but eventually brutal.

Hosanna is a cry for help, "*please save us!*" However, it's also an exclamation of praise, "*Hooray for salvation! It's here!*" The long-expected Messiah had arrived to usher in His kingdom but it wouldn't meet their expectations: He was not the majestic *King* they anticipated.

The magi came to meet this child named Jesus, the '*King of the Jews*' and later He called Himself '*your King*'. At His death John again records (19:14-22) Pilate saying to the Jews, "*Behold your King!*", and finally the inscription above His head on the cross read, "*King of the Jews*". He was not the king they expected.

When Jesus returns all our expectations will be met but until that time I wonder if we're disappointed in Him as well; He didn't answer our prayers as we expected. Even though He's not visible He remains the enthroned King who'll exceed all expectations beyond belief, but until then, **faith** is required. Spend some time today reflecting on unmet expectations and renew your faith by declaring Him to be **Your King**.

Jesus, You are the King of my life even when I'm disappointed. Strengthen me today to remember that truth and believe in Your promises.

Music Selection: YouTube *You are my King* by Christy Nockels

Day 3

*Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever **hates** his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. John 12:25*

As we walk through John 12 we arrive at several **paradoxes**: truths that seem contradictory but are true nonetheless. Jesus said we have die to live, die to bear fruit, and hate our worldly life to gain eternal life (John 12:24-26). It seems to be all about dying.

Of course our Savior isn't referring to physical death but death to ourselves: our will, our desires, and our opinions to name a few. **Lent** is about dying in order to live in the *Kingdom of God* and yet sometimes it seems like an 'upside down' kingdom. Jesus wants us in that place of *humility* acknowledging we don't have all the answers, but He does. You may have to die to some of your perspectives, attitudes, or thinking you're right; it's hard to acknowledge **pride** but call it what it is.

The Apostle Paul admitted a daily death and wrote he was 'crucified with Christ yet he lived'. It seems ridiculous to die to live but Jesus was approaching His death when He taught these paradoxes and knew it was critical it His disciples understand **humility** if they were to bear spiritual fruit in the kingdom of God.

Consider what needs to die in your thinking today especially if your pride or self-centeredness is what drives you. Living in the *Kingdom of God* means you prefer Jesus' opinion over your own, His way above yours, and then you truly live throughout eternity.

Lord Jesus, show me where pride is driving me in my thoughts and perspectives help me understand what Kingdom living really looks like. I know I have to die to live.

Music Selection: YouTube *I Surrender All* by Michael W. Smith

Day 4

*But for this **purpose** I have come to this hour. John 12:27b*

Open your Bible to John 12:27-36 and walk with me toward understanding Jesus' **purpose** in coming to mankind. He could've asked the Father to rescue Him many times, even on the cross, but He didn't. His focus was saving those who are willing to repent of their sin and receive His forgiveness. That was the will of His Father and that's Jesus' **purpose**: to do His will and, therefore, bring Him glory.

Glorifying or honoring our Heavenly Father means following Jesus' pattern; we forgive, extend grace, thereby covering a multitude of sins. When we remember that Jesus' suffering on the cross should've been ours then we can show people who offend us the same undeserved grace He showed us. When we look back at our past and realize the extent of His forgiveness in our lives it's easier to forgive others.

What about those people who continue to sin against us in so many ways over and over again? Jesus told Peter not seven times but seventy times seven, in other words, as often as we need to. I'm not naïve thinking it's an easy task, however, Lent is a great time to come to terms with those who have sinned against us and reconcile.

Jesus encourages us to walk in the light of forgiveness and glorify Him as we seek to do His will. The Holy Spirit will give us the strength we need to restore those relationships that are fractured.

I desire to glorify you Lord God so I'm asking for Your power to forgive, extend grace, and cover those who sin against me. Since it was Your purpose then I want it to be mine as well.

Music Selection: YouTube *Run to the Father* by Cody Carnes

Day 5

*... for they loved the glory that comes from man **more** than the glory that comes from God. John 12:43*

As Jesus ended His public ministry, in this chapter John quoted the prophet Isaiah (vs. 38-40) with his interpretation. *Prophecy* is God speaking in advance about something that would eventually happen, consequently, Isaiah knew what he was talking about: it's a **heart issue**. In his vision of the Lord (Is. 6:5) Isaiah had one response, "*Woe is me; I am lost.*" God's revealed glory brought him to a place of total despair because his heart was utterly sinful and he had no hope without God.

The crowds following Jesus came to see the signs and wonders He performed but many did not believe because, unlike Isaiah, their hearts were hardened and they wouldn't humble themselves before God. It's still a **heart issue**.

God loves all people but not all people love God. He desires all to come to repentance, however, not all will voluntarily bow the knee to Him. When we love what the world has to offer more than the glory or honor God gives then our heart has been hardened. During this Lenten season let's check our heart for places where we care more about our current, temporary life than our eternal life.

Are there places where you've submitted to worldly attitudes and pleasure more than pleasing our Father? Take the time today to ask the Spirit to reveal those places and renew your commitment to be a fully devoted follower of Christ, caring more about what He thinks than what the world says.

Father, I'm asking You to reveal those places in my heart that have become hardened and empower me to make the necessary changes in my devotion.

Music Selection: YouTube *Do it Again* by Elevation Worship

Day 6

*And whoever sees **Me** sees Him who sent Me. John 12:45*

As we come to the end of John 12 it's as if Jesus is giving a 'last call'. He's continually redirecting people to His Father explaining that He's God's Son and one last time shares that He didn't come to judge people but to save and rescue them. *Rejecting* Jesus brings it's own judgment because someone must pay for your sin: it's either Jesus or you. Seems like a no-brainer.

Walking in the light of the Father's love and forgiveness brings kingdom living to it's fullness and it's noticeable. People see how you handle trials and suffering wondering how you do it; what's your secret? Jesus will complete His walk to Calvary's cross continually pointing us back to His Father's love and strength giving Him the endurance He needs. The same is true for any believer who trusts God the Father to get them through hard times of suffering.

The Father's commandment for Jesus was to ransom us from eternal death and unto eternal life, a promise that can be trusted. Whatever your life circumstances look like, financial hardship, sickness, broken relationships, you name it, He has a promise for you: **eternal life**.

This life is temporary: His life is eternal. This life has suffering: His life is wholeness. This life is an emotional roller coaster: His life is spiritual and stable. Depend on Him, put your faith in Him, spend time being honest with Him, and He'll give you the peace that passes your ability to understand why you're not losing it.

Jesus, thank You for the promise of eternal life that begins right now. Help me to remember that my circumstances are only temporary and subject to Your changing them for my good.

Music Selection: YouTube *Forever* by Kari Jobe

Day 7

*... having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the **end**.
John 13:1*

It's impossible to fathom the depth of love that drove Jesus to willingly suffer through torture, mockery, and a gruesome execution in our place, but that's exactly what He did. Actually, He was born to die; that was His aim, the finish line, or the end of the road. It was the 'end' but really only the beginning.

Jesus cried out from the cross, "It is **finished!**" which has the same root as our opening verse that uses '**end**'; His love had hit it's mark and He finished His assignment. The forgiveness of sin, the gift of righteousness, and eternal kingdom living was procured: He loved us to the end, it was His finish line.

I have to wonder how much we appreciate all He did for us; that's the end-goal of this Lenten Devotional. When we take the time to renew our faith by contemplating the depth of His love for us we receive a new sense of His wonder and beauty. Yes, beauty.

The cross was gruesome but the love that drove Him to that **end** was so beautiful. The writer of Hebrews penned that paradox (12:2): '*for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross despising the shame*'. You, dear readers, are that joy and the focus of His love. Again, in our opening verse He calls us His own; we are His own children, His Bride, and we belong to Him.

Lord Jesus, forgive me for not appreciating all You went through for my salvation and freely giving me the gift of eternal life. Continue to reveal Your love and help me demonstrate it to others in Your name.

Music Selection: YouTube *The Cross* by Michael W. Smith

Day 8

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going **back to God** ... John 13:3*

The setting of the story has changed since Jesus left the crowds of people and entered the Upper Room with only His Twelve to celebrate the Passover meal we call the Last Supper. It's the beginning of the end and He has much to say.

The author of this gospel is a true **mystic** meaning he seeks intimacy with God through prayer not simply relying on theology or doctrine alone.

Mystics look at life from a spiritual perspective, not a physical one, for example, John wrote that *'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God'*. Very mystical but points us to our opening passage.

Now He clearly told His followers He came down from heaven with an assignment but He'd be returning to God where He originated. The only way back to His Father was via the cross and Jesus was willing to literally lay down His life to give us the privilege of being united with Him at our physical death. Greater love has no man than Jesus; He simply couldn't imagine eternity without you.

Stay with me during these 40 days of renewal focusing on being reunited with our Savior for this is not our home, as mystical as that sounds, heaven is. If you're going through a difficult time right now may this bring you closer to Him as you stand in faith.

Lord, help me to remember in my difficult moments that this physical world is not my home but I have an eternal home waiting for me.

Music Selection: YouTube *Just Like Heaven* by Brandon Lake

Day 9

*Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have **no share** with Me. John 13:8*

The response Jesus gave Peter seems a bit harsh until you understand the concept of the *lower* and *upper* stories. The Savior rose from supper and began to wash His disciples' feet; that wasn't unusual since it was Jewish tradition. Having your guests' dusty feet washed when they entered your home was customarily done by a servant, not a Lord. *Hmmm*. Peter must've wondered what Jesus was thinking and refused His act of service; he was rebuked with the above passage.

We call that the *lower story* because it's a real event, with real people, for a real purpose. Similar to a parable, Jesus takes a physical action and gives us the spiritual perspective: the *upper story*. Remember, yesterday I wrote that John was a mystic; he loved writing the spiritual perspective because this story isn't about foot washing but about **forgiveness**: the upper story of *washing*.

David prayed in Psalm 51, "**Wash me** thoroughly from my iniquity and **cleanse me** from my sin."

Ananias told Saul (Paul) in Acts 22:16b, "*Rise and be baptized **washing away** your sins ...*"

Jesus was using a lower story to teach the spiritual truth (upper story) that without the washing away of your sin and His forgiveness you cannot *share* in His gift of salvation. He clarified they were all saved or washed (vs. 10) except one. Judas. What about you? Do you assume you're saved since you go to church but have never taken the time to ask Him to wash and renew you?

Lord of all, I ask you today to wash away my sins and cleanse my spirit so I can share in your gift of salvation.

Music Selection: YouTube *Clean* by Natalie Grant

Day 10

*Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, not my feet **only** but also my hands and my head!” John 13:9*

Go back and read this story focusing on Peter’s response to Jesus’ rebuke. Peter was looking only at the *lower story* of foot washing, a task for a servant. It was understandable he refused Jesus’ act of service, yet Jesus wanted to teach this future leader of the Church an *upper story*.

Peter had walked for three years with Jesus watching and listening to His Lord minister to people in love, grace, and mercy. He’d watched miracles appear before His eyes and now the One he declared to be the Christ, the Son of God wanted to wash his feet? No way! However, as Jesus explained the significance of this act of service Peter’s heart was opened to the upper story and the washing away of his sin. That truth, revealed only by His Spirit, caused Peter to declare the opening verse.

Jesus must’ve been smiling with love at Peter’s words of *humility* shown so beautifully here. He would need to remain in that place of submission since he would lead this new group of believers, called a Church, through some times of joy but also suffering.

One definition of *humility* is a ‘lack of self’ meaning a *humble* heart isn’t driven by the need to exalt yourself, your ideas, or your opinions. You learn to honor others, their ideas, and perspectives without focusing on your own. Are there places where the Spirit is revealing your self-centeredness? If so, repent quickly and allow Him to bring you back to that place of *humility*.

Lord, I confess I’ve been self-centered in many ways and ask you to forgive me and help me exalt others above myself.

Music Selection: YouTube *Above All* by Michael W. Smith

Day 11

*If you know these things, blessed are you if you **do** them. John 13:17*

Jesus promised a blessing if you not only understand the *upper story* of foot washing but also if you do it. Have a foot washing ceremony? No, more than that. The Lord acknowledged that His disciples called Him **Teacher** and **Lord**, but talk is cheap, He qualified the promise of a blessing saying that proof was needed. They have to show their knowledge by acts of service: *“Do them.”*

Washing one another's feet is great *imagery* showing us the value He places on forgiveness. Do we forgive to the same extent that He forgave us? That's sobering. Jesus instructed His followers, then and today, that we should follow His example because we are not greater than He is. If He humbled Himself then we should humble ourselves as well, if He forgave us then we're ready to forgive others, and if He served us then we should be willing to serve others; there's the *blessing*.

As we walk together through the chapters of John's account (12-17) of Jesus' last week on earth let's continuously remember that it's a time of repentance, renewal, and getting to know Jesus in a deeper way. He was the Suffering Servant and yet the King of all kings desiring us to represent Him to our world. We can only do that when we follow His example as told by John. No other gospel recorded these words: only John. If you *don't* feel like you're walking in His blessing then maybe it's time to reflect on your level of forgiveness for others.

Jesus, I desire to forgive quicker and more completely when others have sinned intentionally or unintentionally against me. Thank you for that Spirit-power.

Music Selection: YouTube *All I Want is You* by Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir

Day 12

*By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** for one another. John 13:35*

After Satan entered into Judas to begin His betrayal Christ spoke mystically of His Father and the glory (vs. 31-32) causing us to scratch our heads ... what? Thankfully, His words became more understandable when He addressed them as 'little children' giving them, and us, instructions on how to live as a fully devoted follower of Christ.

It's a 'new commandment' to love one another; not new in time but in a fresh, new way. What does that look like? How do we behave in a way that sets us apart from the world? The apostle Paul helps us with that one:

Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 MSG

Maybe you're like me when you read those words. I fall so far short of those character traits that I'm ready to give up which puts the focus on me, yet again. Let's continually remember why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit: to help us be more like Him. That's when we have a chance for the world to see Christ through us.

Spirit of Christ, empower me today to reflect You in the way I treat people and truly love as You modeled for us.

Music Selection: YouTube *How He Loves Us* by David and Nicole Binion

Day 13

*Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not **follow** You now? I will lay down my life for You.” John 13:37*

You gotta love Peter. He won't let it go that Jesus is refusing to let him follow *now*. He's attended the Master for three years and *now* he can't come? Jesus clarified by telling him its about *timing*; he can't follow right *now*. We're told in other gospel accounts that Jesus explained several times what was going to happen to Him: His arrest, death sentence, mockery, torture, and deliverance to the Gentiles (Mark 10:32-34) for execution. That prophecy was now in process and it was sobering. Could it really be happening?

Peter's love and commitment was evident, in fact, he was willing to lay down his own life in place of Jesus'. The truth is Jesus would die in Peter's place as well as ours. He's our divine **substitute**, taking our punishment, and not the other way around. Peter doesn't quite get it ... but he will. Good intentions are never enough as Jesus quickly pointed out. Not only would Peter **not** follow Him now but he'd deny Him three times in one evening. How's that even possible? Good intentions rarely produce results; it takes self-discipline and the help of the Holy Spirit to fulfill your promises.

Are there areas in your life with 'good intentions' but you haven't followed through? Maybe you haven't kept some promises, you meant to, but it didn't happen. Now is the time to repent, get back on track, and keep those promises.

Lord, my good intentions are not enough, help me to fulfill my promises as You always do and follow You with a committed heart.

Music Selection: YouTube *My Revival* by Lauren Daigle

Day 14

*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will **come again** and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. John 14:3*

Can you imagine the sadness and disappointment the disciples must've felt after leaving their jobs and families to follow Him and then He leave for somewhere they can't go? Thankfully He included that little phrase, *'I will come again'* which is our only hope as well and keeps our heart from being *troubled* (John 14:1).

What's a **troubled** heart? It's when you allow fear, worry, or anxiety to rule your emotions. Zechariah, John the Baptizer's father, was 'troubled' when he saw an an angel in the Temple, King Herod was 'troubled' when he heard about the wise men looking for the One born King of the Jews, and the disciples were 'troubled' while enduring a storm on the sea. When Jesus realized His death and betrayal was near He was 'troubled', and now John records twice that He spoke to His friends, *"Don't be troubled."*

Jesus' words would ring in their ears when they observed His upcoming persecution and death; it was possibly the only thing that would get them through the harsh reality. Believe in God and believe in Me: ***I will come again.***

Are there places of disappointment in your life right now where trust and reliance on God is needed to guard against fear? He's reminding you today to keep your faith strong and remember that regardless of what happens: ***He's coming again.***

Lord Jesus, my Rescuer and Savior, give me strength to keep fear, worry, and disappointment in my circumstances far away as You give me the faith to believe Your promises once again. Thank you for Your faithfulness.

Music Selection: YouTube *Always* by Kristian Stanfill

Day 15

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through **Me**." John 14:6*

Up to this point Peter has been the spokesperson for the disciples but now we find Thomas and Philip boldly speaking up when they weren't clear on Jesus' promises. He told them they knew **the way** to where He was going. Thomas counter-argued, "No we don't." Really, Thomas? He was stuck in the lower story and Jesus was attempting to boost him into the upper story. John's gospel forces us out of our own lower story and into His upper story.

Our Savior made this famous declaration to all believers for all time: **I am the way, the truth, and the life**. He was telling us that Christianity is a one-way street with no other **ways** to God; it's only through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

He's also **the truth**, that means He's the real thing. He's proven He's God's Son with lower story signs, wonders, and miracles as evidence of His divine power and authority. Now He's convincing them of the upper story: He is full of grace and *truth*.

Lastly, Jesus is **the life**; not only the lower story life but eternal life or immortality and His promises are everlasting.

When we come to the Father through Jesus we no longer have to view life from the physical realm but now we see the spiritual side: the *upper story*. As we walk through these chapters allow the Holy Spirit to guide you into the upper story of your life believing He has a destiny specifically planned for you.

Father, help me to see my life through Your spiritual eyes and not get bogged down in the lower story.

Music Selection: YouTube *The Way* by Pat Barrett

Day 16

*Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is **in Me**?*
John 14:10a

Theologians have tried for generations to explain the Trinity but most of them use a *lower story* which can't adequately do the job. Picturing the Trinity as an egg with three parts, a person with three life-roles, or three parts of water simply bring God down from His upper story and into our lower story. Why not just admit we can't explain it and simply take it by faith?

Philip was stuck in the lower story when he asked Jesus to 'show us the Father' but Jesus responded that if you've seen Him then you've seen the Father; it's about *belief*. However, Philip isn't ready for the upper story so Jesus descended to his level and told him to believe in the unity of the Father and the Son but if you can't ... at least believe in the work He's done.

Jesus performed many healings, deliverances from demons, and miracles to prove His identity as God, the Son. Now He's asking His disciples to believe what they've seen even when He's gone. That's the kind of faith necessary to stand in the midst of opposition.

40 days of renewal causes us to remember what He's done in our life as well. Believing in the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to our faith but reminding ourselves of His faithfulness to personally show us mercy, grace, and truth builds that faith. Reflect on several times in your life when God has shown Himself true to His Word and things just 'worked out' for you. He loves you; always has and always will.

Lord, remind me of Your grace and faithfulness in my life as I reflect on Your goodness today.

Music Selection: YouTube *Goodness of God* by Jenn Johnson

Day 17

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and **greater works** than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. John 14:12*

Whenever you see a 'double truly' you can be sure what's next is crucial. It's like saying, "Pay attention; don't miss this!" Jesus wants His disciples, and us, to know that faith in Him will lead to good works and good works lead people to Jesus. But what's considered '*greater works*'?

First of all, since Jesus won't be around anymore He wants His followers to know they'll be re-presenting Him to the world. His ministry was limited to Israel but ours goes to the end of the earth (Act 1:8): a ***world impact***.

How's it possible that we can do anything close to *greater works* than He did? Undoubtedly because we're promised the same Holy Spirit power to help as many people as we can by using our spiritual gifts to point them to Him.

What can top declaring to people the promise of forgiveness of their sins, payment for their ransom, and a victorious life in Christ? Nothing, there's nothing better than the promise of Kingdom living now **and** for eternity. There are no *greater works* than these and they're empowered by the Holy Spirit not by your intelligence, talents, or winning smile. He chooses, He equips, and He transforms people; shockingly, it's not about you. Be ready for opportunities to point people to Jesus and cooperate with His Spirit in humility.

Holy Spirit, I recognize it's You that changes people and if You give me an open door I'll step through it for Your glory and watch people be transformed from death to life.

Music Selection: YouTube *Fullness* by Elevation Worship

Day 18

*And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another **Helper**, to be with you forever, John 14:16*

It's time for the third person of the Trinity to be explained since it's just what the disciples need as the truth sinks in; Jesus is returning to heaven. The thought of His absence must've seemed incomprehensible and overwhelming since they'd been walking by His side for three years but the Father has a plan, and they must trust Him.

Another Helper means 'exactly the same kind', in other words, the Father will send someone to be present with them the same way Jesus was; He helped them, comforted them, counseled them, and even defended them. Those words all describe the role of the Spirit in your life and yet there's more: He'll be with you forever, eternally.

The gift of the Holy Spirit, also called the **Spirit of Truth** (vs. 17), will walk alongside you in life, always telling you the truth, as He dwells in your heart. There's the *upper story*: the Spirit lives *in you*. You'll get to know Him as you walk through life aware that He's by your side and you'll become familiar with how He speaks to your heart. He loves you exactly like Jesus, He desires your fellowship, exactly like Jesus, and He makes promises in His Word to you, exactly like Jesus. He is the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9) who will never leave you or forsake you but will be with you to the ends of the earth. That's a promise you can count on.

Father, thank you for recognizing my need for fellowship with You and the gift of the Spirit to meet those needs. Help me to develop my relationship with Your Holy Spirit.

Music Selection: YouTube *Holy Spirit* by Francesca Battestelli

Day 19

*Because I **live**, you also will **live**. John 14:19b*

Remember Jesus' declaration that He's the way, the truth, and the life? He confirms that truth by reminding them not to look at their outward circumstances, the lower story, but remember the upper story: He will appear to be dead but in reality, in truth, He's alive. And with that truth He promises believers of all time that eventually they will appear to be dead as well but, in reality, they're alive.

You've undoubtedly stood before a casket gazing at the dead body of someone you cared about; they are very dead, however, if they're a believer in Jesus Christ they're truly alive. There's that *paradox* again. There's only one way to guarantee eternal life and that's through the blood of Jesus that paid the price of your sin. Without His sacrifice in your place you will go the way of the unrepentant world who refuses to bow their knee to Him. It's a grim thought.

Jesus qualified His message by telling us that if we know the commandments and do them we are proving we love Him, like giving evidence of our faith, and the Father returns that love as well. We're not orphans, our Father didn't abandon us, He's right there with us: He's ***Immanuel***, God with us. This promise is not to the world of unbelievers, they have their own destiny, this promise is to those who prove their love by following His teachings and experiencing the overcoming victory He guaranteed for us. Now that's really living!

Lord Jesus, thank You for the ultimate sacrifice You willingly offered on my behalf; help me never forget the price You paid or take it lightly. I know Your grace wasn't cheap.

Music Selection: YouTube *Because He Lives* by Matt Maher

Day 20

Peace I leave with you; My **peace** I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. John 14:27a

Did you ever wonder how the four gospels writers remembered all the detail given in each of their accounts? I can't remember what I had for dinner last night! Three years of following Jesus and watching Him do *ministry*; who could possibly remember everything? And by the way, Mark and Luke probably never met Him!

And yet that's what we have, the memories of people who knew Him and we're willing to share what they saw. Jesus tells us that one of the purposes of the Holy Spirit is to teach us 'all things' which is undoubtedly why we need to hear, read, and study His Word. Being a disciple means you're a 'learner' but how can we learn to live and walk in victory being a fully devoted follower of Christ if there's no one will teach us?

The Spirit of God is given to assure us of the right way to live and bring honor to His Name; the world certainly won't teach us those principles, they live for themselves, therefore, the Spirit reminds us of what Jesus taught and helps us remember why He taught it. He desires us to walk in victory. There's great comfort knowing the **shalom**, peace of God, which comes from the Spirit, because it's unlike anything the world has to offer and they can't understand it. It's a precious gift of the Father we need every day ... maybe every hour, sometimes.

Father, I need to receive Your shalom today. Holy Spirit, remind me of Your love, care, and mercy that's always available to me when I call upon you.

Music Selection: YouTube *Be Unto Your Name* by Robin Mark

Day 21

*“I am the **true grapevine**, and My Father is the gardener.” John 15:1*

The Bible is a grand collection of literary geniuses who give us clear word pictures; I’ve been calling them the ‘*lower and upper story*’. John quoted Jesus, the Master Storyteller, using the language of a vineyard the people were undoubtedly familiar with. If you’ve never been to a vineyard then let me give you some *lower story* insights.

The world’s best vineyards range from Germany and France down to South America where there’s a good balance of soil and climate. The grapevines require a watchful eye and tender care from the gardener to render the best wine. Jesus picked up on this familiar image in the *upper story* when He called **Himself** the True Vine and His **Father** the Gardener. He draws our attention to the branches, that’s believers, and how crucial it is the fruit grows or the branch is cut off or pruned. When the fruitless branch is removed it makes way for other, healthier branches to take its place, however, the goal is the *fruit-filled vine*.

This metaphor of the vine, **The True Vine**, gives us a clear picture of how vital it is the Father prune the branches that aren’t producing fruit, fruits of repentance and righteousness, so more fruit may grow. What a beautiful picture He paints for us as we meditate on this visual image of a grape vineyard ready for harvest.

Do you recognize places in your life where there’s little or no fruit whatsoever? Maybe it’s time to ask the Father to get out His pruning shears and help you grow sweet, tender grapes like repentance and humility.

Father, I trust you to expose and remove any dead branches in my life today.

Music Selection: YouTube *Alive in You* by Jesus Culture

Day 22

*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.*
John 15:5

The disciples were declared clean by Jesus earlier in the evening so it wasn't about initial forgiveness and salvation; it was about abiding or *remaining in relationship* with Him. As we experience a deeper and more intimate walk with Christ it's as if we're receiving His divine nourishment so our branch bears more and more **fruit**. A branch that's broken off the vine cannot live and that's the image Jesus is giving us; we can't do life *alone*. We need Him.

Every time you spend a few quiet, uninterrupted minutes with Him you receive His strength for your day, but conversely, when you spend no quality time with Jesus you're out there alone and that's never good.

When Jesus preached His longest and most famous message, called the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matt. 5-7), He told the people they'll recognize His followers by their good fruit. The obvious question is, "What's the **good fruit** in the upper story people will recognize?"

The Apostle Paul teaches us that as we're led by the Holy Spirit **He'll** produce good fruit in our life (Gal. 5:16-25) and people will notice: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control to name a few. Is that how your life re-presents Jesus to the world? If not, spend a few moments in His presence asking Him to forgive you and get you back in step with the Spirit.

Spirit of Christ, please forgive me for not producing more good fruit in Your sight and help me live a fruit-filled life.

Music Selection: YouTube *Just Be* by Kim Walker-Smith

Day 23

*But if you **remain** in Me and My words **remain** in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! John 15:7*

Everyone born into the world has the same number of minutes in a day, however, it's individual choice how you spend them. Jesus is talking to His disciples, you and me, about spending some of those precious minutes a day with Him. All relationships begin with **time** spent together and Jesus is no different.

We're told that if we 'remain' or 'abide' in Him and His Word then prayer takes on new meaning. We choose to set apart a few minutes each day to be in fellowship with God. *Remaining* with Him means we've prioritized our day, and **time** with Him stays at the top. *Remaining* in His Word means that you've decided to read it, pray it, study it, listen to it, memorize it, or speak it into your heart. He promises that when you commit to that discipline He'll answer all your prayers.

Here's the clincher; you may find that your prayers change from a list of what you want or need to simply enjoying His Presence. When that happens all of your needs are already met; you've connected with God and He shows you what's most important to your life. This divine connection brings glory to the Father and you've begun to learn what 'fullness of joy' truly is.

When you turn to John 15 read it slowly, carefully, and introspectively with a desire to grow deeper in your relationship with God.

Lord, give me the desire and power to make You a priority in my day and the confidence in knowing You desire me to experience the fullness of joy.

Music Selection: YouTube *You Raise Me Up* by Selah

Day 24

*You are My **friends** if you do what I command. John 15:14*

Is Jesus talking about obeying the Ten Commandments? No, I think He's reminding them of the 'greatest commandment':

And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these. Mark 12:30-31

Love is the greatest commandment and when you put God and others before yourself you're experiencing it's fulfillment. He goes on telling them that He'll lay down His life for them: **His friends**. Now he expects them to do the same thing, follow His pattern, and love others with His kind of love.

Does that mean that I stand in front of a train for someone? Jump in freezing water or run into a fire to rescue someone? I think Jesus is more practical than that; remember, these are His last words before He's arrested and executed and He wants them to also have a mindset of sacrifice for others. Laying down your *will*, your *opinion*, your *perspective*, your *pride*, your *desires* ... I think you get the picture. This works well in marriage but it's the truth for all relationships that when you don't think more highly of yourself than others you're showing God's kind of love and He's pleased to call you His **friend**. Jesus only told His friends what His Father expected from Him and now we're given the same mandate: treat one another with the same self-sacrificing love He showed us and He'll call you His **friend**.

Lord, I want to be Your friend so empower me to follow Your command to love others by dying to myself and my pride every day.

Music Selection: YouTube *You Call Me Friend* by London Gatch and Brandon Lake

Day 25

*You didn't choose Me. I **chose** you. John 15:16*

What a comforting thought! God chose you; He wanted you on His team. He called you, justified you, and will eventually glorify you in the process. Be assured that 'all things will work together for good' in your life even if it doesn't look like it right now.

We all began at the same low place of *sinner*; it was our nature we were born into. You didn't sin to become a sinner; you were born a sinner who needed saving. The good news is that God the Father chose to not let you remain there but had a plan to redeem you, buy you back, with His own blood. That's why Good Friday is so good. God Himself became man with one purpose: to die in our place. That's something to shout about! The penalty for sin is death, therefore, someone must die. It's either you or Jesus. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ then He's purchased your salvation and you are rescued.

What's your response? In this season of Lent our *focus* is remembering back to the beginning of our faith. When we realized our sinfulness and Jesus called us to get to know Him and see ourselves as we really are. We are chosen by Him with purpose or destiny.

So, keep your eyes off your lower story or your present circumstances and onto His upper story: He's appointed you to bear fruit in your life that remains forever (John 15:16b-17). When that happens the world will see and know you're different and wonder why.

Heavenly Father, I am eternally grateful for the knowledge that You chose me and now, in response, I want to show my love to others in Your Name.

Music Selection: YouTube *Broken Vessels* by Hillsong Worship

Day 26

*If the world **hates** you, remember that it hated Me first. John 15:18*

Why did Jesus spend so much time in John 15 discussing **hatred**? His message is usually so encouraging and positive talking about love and mercy but now, since He's leaving them, they need to understand the contrast of believers to the *world* of unbelievers.

Reflecting back to Gen. 3:15 we're reminded of the encounter between Satan and God after Adam sinned. God declared **hatred** between the devil and woman's offspring: the **Messiah**. It was the first prophecy of the coming One who would crush his head and now he's been watching for generations to determine who He is.

Jesus called Satan the 'prince or ruler of this world' in John 12 and 14 to show us why the world *hates* us. When we become a Christ-follower the contrast between how we think and act should be strikingly different than the world's because we've become a new person in Christ. That difference causes unbelievers, driven by Satan, to hate us and the Name we represent. It's all because of the **Name of Jesus Christ**.

The glaring question is, therefore, "Do you think and act more like Satan's or Jesus' worldview? Where do your opinions land when confronted with hot topics like sexuality, abortion, or politics? Are your perspectives in alignment with the Word of God or the ways of the world driven by our enemy? Take some time to think about what you believe and if the world **hates** you for it? Jesus said it's ok to be hated by the world because it hated Him first so we're in good company.

Jesus, reveal to Me the perspectives I have that aren't in line with Your teachings and help me make those necessary changes.

Music Selection: YouTube *Sing to the King* by Justin Unger

Day 27

*But I will send you the **Advocate** —the Spirit of Truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about Me. John 15:26*

Yesterday I encouraged you to think honestly about your worldviews and whether they align with God's Word. You may have wondered how to do that; let's discuss it.

Jesus told His followers He would ask the Father to give them another **Helper** or Advocate, a mirror-image of Himself, to be with them forever. Another name for the Holy Spirit is **Advocate** (NLT) leaning more toward the characteristics of a defense attorney. Why would the disciples and believers today need an **Advocate**?

There are many times in our life when we need someone to be on our side, to represent us, and to tell the truth about us. It's the role of the indwelling Spirit to explain Jesus to us. Whether we're studying His Word, listening to a message, or praying; it's the Spirit who *testifies*, another legal word, to who Jesus is.

In a courtroom when you take the stand and place your hand on the Bible you swear to 'tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God'. The Holy Spirit, as your attorney, tells you the truth about your thinking and where it needs to change. He'll testify to how Jesus thinks and empower you to tweak some of your opinions and viewpoints. The Savior knew the disciples living within the Greek pagan culture would need help and so do we; our culture is not that different.

Holy Spirit, thank you for being my Helper and Advocate with the Father. I want my viewpoints to be the same as Jesus' so help me grow closer to Him.

Music Selection: YouTube *You Alone* by North Point Worship

Day 28

*I have told you **these things** so that you won't abandon your faith.*
John 16:1

When God released the plagues in Egypt He said repeatedly, "... so you will know I am the LORD." Those miraculous plagues were evidence of God's power so that Pharaoh and Moses would *know* Him. Jesus speaks now to His followers on the eve of His passion because not everyone will *know* and recognize Him as God. He's preparing them.

John's gospel is full of declarations that Jesus is God's only Son who left His Father's side to come to earth, now He's going back to the Father since His assignment will be completed. The disciples know and believe it. Jesus said in John 8 that He *knows* the Father and keeps His Word; He's our Great Example of *knowing* God and doing what He says. Jesus wants us to remember: ***you can know God.***

As we've walked through these chapters in John our purpose has been to get to *know* God more deeply and intimately. *Knowing* Him means we've come to recognize Jesus as God's Son, the Savior of the world, and progressively walk through life with Him. *Knowing* Him is acknowledging His presence in your life, personally experiencing Him, and giving Him the honor He deserves as He demonstrates His love to you. That effort of honoring Him prepares you for anything life throws at you; ***you know God.***

Today, be intentional in giving Him glory when things go right but also when things go wrong; see it as an opportunity to watch Him work as you experience His love and mercy.

Father, thank you for the grace to know You and Your Son. Empower me to keep Your Word and look more like Jesus every day.

Music Selection: YouTube *Glory in the Highest* Chris Tomlin

Day 29

*But because I have said these things to you, **sorrow** has filled your heart.
John 16:6*

Religion was the center of Jewish life and the men Jesus chose were undoubtedly raised in faith-filled homes waiting for the Messiah to come and deliver them from the Romans. Consequently, as He continued to remind them of His departure they were filled with *grief*. Where was the King who would set them free and set up His Kingdom?

Even though that scenario is still coming at His Return they failed to remember the times in synagogue when the sermon was based on Isaiah 53: the **Suffering Servant**. Jesus' description of His next few days were a definite repeat of Isaiah's prophecy. He would be *despised, rejected and humiliated* by men, a **Man of Sorrows**, and acquainted with *grief*; that's not what they expected.

The Messiah will be *pierced and wounded* for our transgressions, *crushed* for our iniquities, and His Father would lay the sin of humanity on Him. That's a description of the first coming of Messiah, the **Christ**, and it should fill your heart with grief to know He did it for you. Our hearts *need* to be broken as we reflect on our sinful lives with the knowledge that His love drove Him to the cross. We need to *experience* a broken heart before we come to Resurrection Sunday. Good Friday will never be the same when you allow 'sorrow to fill your heart' knowing He paid the price for your sin and rose from the dead for your eternal life.

*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me and reveal the sinfulness of my heart as I come before You today in an attitude of humility and repentance.
Thank You for Your death in my place.*

Music Selection: YouTube *O Sacred Head Now Wounded* by Selah

Day 30

*But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the **Advocate** won't come. If I do go away, then I will send Him to you.*
John 16:7

Our God is a trinity meaning He's three *persons*, for lack of a better description, yet one God. We believe all three persons are fully God: co-equal, co-powerful, and co-eternal. Subsequently when Jesus told his disciples He must go in order for the Spirit to come they were encouraged and yet clueless. I feel their pain.

I'm so thankful Jesus explained Himself in the following verses; open your Bible and turn there with me. The role of the Holy Spirit is to bring a legal *indictment*: conviction or exposure of sin, our lack of righteousness, and finally the judgment or verdict. However, He doesn't stop there because He's also our Defense Attorney. He stands before the Judge making our case: We've repented of our sin, been forgiven, receive the righteousness of Christ, and now our final judgment is paid by Him.

The world of unbelievers refuse to humble themselves, depend on their own righteousness, and follow the ways of the ruler of the world: Satan. Which camp are you a part of?

The ***Spirit of Truth*** stands beside us in this courtroom scene, pleading our case to the Father: the ***Judge***. The prosecutor, Satan, brings his case of accusations against us but the Spirit let's the blood of Jesus speak the truth in our defense and the Judge gives His final verdict: not guilty.

Holy Spirit, I recognize Your role in my salvation. Please shed light on the places where I need to change as I learn to depend on Your strength and power each day and not my own.

Music Selection: YouTube *Spirit Fall* by Chris Tomlin

Day 31

*He will bring Me glory by **telling you** whatever He receives from Me.
John 16:14*

What's the first thing you do when you walk into a dark room? You turn on the *light*. That's part of the role of the **Spirit of Truth**; He turns on the light when we're in darkness. The idea of *light* is often described as illumination, enlightenment, or revelation therefore when you're confused or unsure about something He turns on the **light of truth**.

It brings Jesus glory when the Spirit helps us understand God's Word. He uncovers areas in our thinking that aren't aligned with His Word or helps us think more clearly; He *enlightens* us.

*For You will light my lamp; The Lord my God will **enlighten** my darkness.
Psalms 18:28*

The *revelation* of the Spirit into our hearts removes the veil over our minds that shades our thinking and discloses God's perspective. We can choose to walk in that light or stay in the darkness, however, there are no gray areas. Paul instinctively prayed for believers:

*... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of **revelation** in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts **enlightened**, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints ... Ephesians 1:17-18*

In order to grow deeper in our faith-walk we need the Spirit's guidance and revelation of Jesus and His Word so that whatever may come in our life we're prepared.

Spirit of Truth, I admit I need your revelation of truth in my mind in some areas. I'm asking for enlightenment so my thinking aligns with Jesus'.

Music Selection: YouTube *Running to the Light* by Brandon Lake

Day 32

*So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your **joy** from you. John 16:22*

The love Jesus had for His disciples was apparent as He continued to prepare them for His death but also His resurrection. Like a loving parent assuring their child about to get an injection; it'll just hurt for 'a little while', and then you'll feel so much better.

He was telling them His death will be painful but in just 'a little while' they'll experience joy again; He'll rise from the dead. Jesus continued His assurance by giving them a metaphor or parable; it's like the painful birth of a baby which brings much joy when it's over. Many of us can identify with that word-picture.

Our sorrow is also turned to joy as we walk through these chapters together experiencing the last days of Jesus' life on earth. We know what's coming, Good Friday, but we also know Resurrection Sunday is right around the corner. It's important that we identify with these disciples in their *sorrow* in order to identify with the *joy* no one can diminish. It's the joy of the resurrection.

Many of us have experienced weeping, grief, and sorrow in the circumstances surrounding our life and with good reason, however, Jesus reassures us of the joy awaiting us as well. We're encouraged to ask the Father regarding our needs in **Jesus' Name** and we'll receive answers so our joy is complete. Bring your needs to Him in faith and experience His inexpressible joy in your life.

Father, I come to You in Jesus' Name with my requests believing You hear me and will answer so I can experience Your joy.

Music Selection: YouTube *What a Beautiful Name* by Hillsong Worship

Day 33

*I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have **overcome** the world. John 16:33*

I think everyone wants to believe that when suffering comes, and it will, we'll stand firmly in faith. The disciples declared their belief that Jesus came from the heavenly Father as He taught but Jesus prophesied that in just a short while they'll abandon Him. Just wanting something to be true doesn't make it true.

These are the last words Jesus taught His disciples and His point was clear: I have **overcome** the world. He repeated His earlier encouragement to not worry or be troubled about the future because when the suffering is over He'll be the triumphant, resurrected **Christ**. The Greek word *overcome* means to be victorious, a conqueror, prevailing over an enemy. He's the triumphant, victorious, conquering **King**.

You're undoubtedly familiar with the athletic brand NIKE but did you know it's the same word as **overcomer**? And more than that, out of the twenty-eight times it's used in the Bible John chose it twenty-one times! Throughout his three letters (1st, 2nd, and 3rd John) and Revelation he continuously reminds us that we are **overcomers**, NIKE believers, because of Jesus' finished work on the cross. That closing statement is intended to bring us peace and wholeness with reassurance that we can stand firmly in faith when suffering arrives. We're already conquerors empowered by the Spirit and will prevail over the enemy in all circumstances. Be encouraged by His words today.

Lord Jesus, thank You for enduring the cross in my place, overcoming death and the devil, and rising again for my benefit. I receive your strength to overcome anything.

Music Selection: YouTube *Champion* by Bethel Music

Day 34

*And this is eternal life, that they **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. John 17:3*

It's not often in Scripture we're allowed a glimpse into our Savior's prayer life but John 17 is the pinnacle of that intimate time. He began by declaring the truth that He's been given *authority* over all flesh. That means the Father gave Him the assignment, along with the heavenly authorization, to promise those who were given to Him the gift of eternal life. That *authority* was legally delegated to Him by the only true God before the world began and now He's completing His assignment.

Knowing God in a deeper and more intimate way has been the goal of this devotional and we've walked together through Jesus' intimate moments with His disciples and now with His Father. There's no greater privilege than knowing God and His Son through the Holy Spirit. You are a gift to Christ given by the Father with the expressed purpose of bringing Them glory through the many opportunities He gives you every day.

Since Jesus allowed you into His prayer-time I wonder if you should evaluate your own. How much time do you spend speaking words of praise and worship to your heavenly Father, thanking Him for what He did for you, and the love He shows you every day? Do you simply ask Him for things or show your appreciation for what you already have? As you grow more intimate with the Father and the Son consider how your time with Him can go deeper.

God, forgive me for only asking You for things and forgetting to spend more time appreciating what You've already given me. I want to grow closer to You every day.

Music Selection: YouTube *Gratitude* by Brandon Lake

Day 35

*For I gave them the **words** You gave Me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me. John 17:8*

Before the world existed the Father knew He'd have to redeem it; fortunately for us His Plan included sending His Son with His message of love and mercy. Over a hundred years ago the *Red Letter Edition* of the Bible was published highlighting Jesus' **words** in red ink to help us identify them but if you don't have that edition then I've done some of the work for you.

I found in Matthew 3 that after Jesus' baptism He was filled with the Spirit and immediately went into a 40 day wilderness temptation by the devil (Matt. 4). Immediately following that event the Father decided He was ready to minister to people with preaching and teaching (Matt. 5-8) which was focused on the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' message from the Father shows us how kingdom living looks while we're in the world, but not part of it. Truths like the value of humility, mercy, and reconciliation with others, encouragement to maintain a pure heart, a desire for righteousness, and doing good works. We not only receive His forgiveness but forgive others including our enemies. If you're like me it all seems a little overwhelming but during this season of Lent we revisit those areas by reevaluating our life. He doesn't leave us helpless to change but sent the Spirit to give us the desire and the power to obey His Word.

Jesus, I know my life doesn't measure up to Your Word but I ask for the Spirit's power to continuously become a fully devoted follower of Christ regardless of how long it takes.

Music Selection: YouTube *Word of God Speak* by Mercy Me

Day 36

*They are not of the **world**, just as I am not of the **world**. John 17:16*

A true Christ-follower doesn't think or act like the world. God's Word is his plumb line and when he drifts away the Spirit convinces him to get back in His will. Even though we're in the world Jesus reminds us we're not part of it. How does that look?

God's Word says all life is valuable, we're made in His image, with destiny, therefore, we protect it. The world says it's perfectly fine to end life in the womb since the timing isn't convenient, and besides, it's a woman's right to choose, but God's Word says *choose life*.

The world tells you to decide if you're male or female, to enter into any kind of sexual relationship you choose; it's your right. God's Word, on the other hand, teaches that sexual intimacy is reserved for one man and one woman in marriage with *no rights* outside that union.

The world tells you to keep advancing in your job regardless of who you hurt or lie about to get ahead. God's Word tells you to obey Him and pray for His will to be done. The world encourages self-determination and Jesus encourages trusting faith. What good does faith *do* for you? He prayed that you'd experience His *joy* in your life (vs. 13) as you stay separate from the world. That means no pressure, no finagling or deception, no stress or fear, but total trust in Him. Sounds like a better way to live to live; what do you think?

Lord Jesus, give me the wisdom and strength to stay separate from the world's way of thinking. I want to be Your image-bearer and experience Your joy in life.

Music Selection: YouTube *Already Done* by Free Worship

Day 37

*I have given them the glory You gave Me, so they may be **one** as We are **one**. John 17:22*

There's an aspect of the glory of God that brings 'oneness', unity, or a united purpose. The Father gave glory to the Son, the Son gives glory to His followers, and we *share the glory* in our realm of influence. Jesus is praying for us (vs. 14-19), asking that as long as we're in the world, whose ruler is the evil one, we'll be in personal *union* with Him having a *united* purpose: **oneness**. The enemy hates that.

Division, the opposite of unity, is a glory-thief we need to be on guard against. Our pride raises its ugly head and we begin to exalt ourselves and our perspectives above others; even in the church. Paul teaches the dangers of thinking more highly of ourselves than others, to complain or murmur, and to be critical of others when they're not in agreement. Jesus prayed that we'll get a heavenly glimpse of how to look differently than the world in *unity* with our spiritual family.

The world says you're not a doormat, stand up for yourself, or speak your mind, on the other hand, Jesus says humble yourself, listen to others, and die to your opinions and comments that don't build others up. Having that mindset is called '*sanctification*' or being set you apart from the world's ways and unto God's ways. They are usually polar-opposites.

As each believer listens humbly to others and doesn't boastfully lift himself up God sees **oneness** and **unity** and He's pleased to bless us.

Lord of Revival, forgive me for my prideful attitudes which bring division and help me to humble myself and dwell in unity with other believers.

Music Selection: YouTube *God of Revival* by Bethel Music

Day 38

I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in Me through their message. John 17:20

That's you and me. Moments before He was arrested and transported to His mock-trial Jesus prayed for us. Knowing the world wouldn't believe in Him due to its refusal to humble themselves and repent He limited His prayer to future believers. Does that mean we don't pray for the world to come to know Jesus? No, it does mean that we don't know who will believe so we pray, speak the truth in love, and show the world what a Christian looks and sounds like.

Paul wrote that we should all work like a **evangelist** (2 Tim. 4:5) fulfilling our ministry. When the Body of Christ, the church, works in unity, all going in the same direction, the gospel is preached loud and clear. Sometimes without saying a word. When Christians show their love to others, extend grace when needed, and give help to those in need they're preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ as they re-present the Savior to the community.

'So the world may know and believe' that the Father of all creation sent His Son into the world to rescue it; that's good news, that's the **gospel**. Along with our rescue from sin and death comes the promise of eternal life with God. That's good news: that's the **gospel**.

When our lives in and out of church reflect Jesus then our message is loud and clear and the world has a chance to experience God by putting their trust in Him.

Jesus, I want to continually grow stronger in my faith walk so the world may know You and therefore know the Father.

Music Selection: YouTube *All Around the World* by Phil Driscoll

Day 39

*Father, I want these whom You have given Me to be with Me **where I am**. Then they can see all the glory You gave Me because You loved Me even before the world began! John 17:24*

The climax of the Jesus story begins at the conclusion of His prayer. A brutal death, descent into hell, and resurrection will all follow in just three days. Even though He described this event several times the disciples didn't 'get it'. Let's see if we can 'get it' now that we're looking back and enjoying the benefits.

When Jesus died on that cross His blood was supernaturally presented to the Father; the picture is blood being poured out on the mercy seat in the Temple. We became forgiven, washed, and promised eternal life with Him. That's the purpose of the **resurrection**. He didn't stay dead but conquered it when He rose again and now assures us that we'll *share* in His resurrection, joining Him where He is.

Paul teaches in Rom. 6:5-11 that by faith we're united with Him in death and resurrection when we crucify our 'old, sinful self' then we're set free to live in resurrection life: co-crucifixion and co-resurrection. He wrote to the Philippian Church (3:8-10) that he'd give up everything, his will, his opinions, his self-centeredness, his pride, just to know Christ and experience His resurrection. That's the attitude I'm hoping you've gained through these chapters in John. There's **power** in His resurrection for eternity but also now; we live right now in the Kingdom of God in victory. We are NIKE believers: overcomers through His finished work.

Jesus, there are few words that communicate my gratefulness for Your resurrection and the truth that I'll spend eternity with You.

Music Selection: YouTube *Resurrecting* by Elevation Worship

Day 40

*I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the **love** with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them. John 17:26*

From the very beginning of time it was the desire for **love and fellowship** that drove God to create mankind and subsequently to re-create us back into His image. It's now our love and desire for fellowship with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit driving us into times of reflection, renewal, and humility growing 'in Him' in a deeper way. Your *spiritual identity*, becoming more like Him in your faith walk, is renewed as you've become more aware of your sinfulness, repented, prayed, praised and worshipped the One and Only True God.

If you began this devotional with good intentions but didn't follow through to the end don't get discouraged and give up completely, go back and pick up where you left off. This attitude of Lent isn't limited to the 40 days before Resurrection Sunday, but it's a mindset throughout life.

Always remember, we're not left alone to make changes in our lives through self-determination, but we've been given the Holy Spirit to walk alongside us, dwell in us, and lead us to Jesus every step of the way. He'll speak eternal words to us through the Scriptures empowering a Kingdom Life that is incomparable to anything the world has to offer.

*... these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have **life** in His name. John 20:31*

*Lord Jesus, thank you for the awareness of who I am **in You** and Your life, death, and resurrection that empowers me to reach my destiny.*

Music Selection: YouTube *Who Am I?* By Casting Crowns