

**DEVOTIONAL  
JOURNEY  
SERIES**

WALKING WITH JESUS IN  
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

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Day 1

Reading: Luke Chapter 1:1-45

In the beginning of Luke we hear that he set forth to make an accurate account of Jesus from eyewitnesses. Luke possibly traveled with the Apostle Paul from town to town, hearing from witness to witness.

Maybe he listened to a man named Peter at an evening fire, as the aging apostle shared the anguish of his memory from another evening fire, and the faithless words he spoke there.

Maybe he talked to Mary the mother of Jesus, as the children sat at her feet listening to her tell stories of her son, and his journey to the cross.

James the brother of Jesus could have shared his early disbelief, and the events that unraveled before his eyes; events that would ultimately have their place in his thoughts and heart.

John the Apostle in Jerusalem may have talked of his love for Jesus. He may have shared stories about how he used to rest his head on Jesus' chest. John experienced this Love early on and it effected his entire life.

Is there any doubt that this was an unveiling journey for Luke as he walked with Jesus through the stories of the many witnesses he interviewed? Each piece knit together to reveal the wonderful way of Jesus experienced by the lives of so many. How could Luke not be changed by these encounters and the miraculous unraveling of these wonderful tales?

These beginning verses show one thing. This is a miraculous story. So far it is a story where the old and young alike encountered a new birth. It is a story that brings the hopes and faith, of young and old alike, to new depths and new heights. It is a story of angelic messengers bringing great news. It is news that is hard to grasp for some, and news that is easily accepted by others. Ultimately it is news that God is doing something new in the world. It is something new, but something that was planned and woven together in the very fabric of time. It is the true perception of reality.

As you begin this journey what are some of things you are hoping to encounter as you walk with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke? Is it a new and miraculous birth, a new hope and faith, or an angelic message proclaiming that God is doing something new in your life? Are you looking for something God had planned and woven together into the fabric of time just for you? Maybe you don't know, or haven't really thought about it. Stop to think as you record some expectations. At the end of this thirty day devotional you will be asked to return here. See then, if God met your expectations, or if God gave you what you really needed.

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Day 2

Reading: Luke 1: 46-80

I have done it! Driving down the road, in the shower, sitting by a lake with fishing pole in hand, as the wind blew and the fresh smell of the cool fall evening rejuvenated my soul. I have broken into song and I have sung about the great things God has accomplished in my life. I have sung and wept, as I recalled God's faithfulness to me. All the while the Father was near listening to me, his adopted son, as I sang at his feet in the joy of his steadfast love and mercy.

I remember the songs I used to sing before I met him. They were songs of woe and sometimes songs of tears. I was singing to no one in particular. I was asking in song who really loves me, who cares, who will accept me for who I am, and who will never let me down. Songs that were sung to my own empty life, a life without purpose and meaning, and a life without the love I had always been searching to find. It was a search that existed in my earliest memories.

There is only one thing that makes me sing now. It is an unexplainable joy. It was this same joy that Zechariah and Mary experienced. It was Joy that made a silent mouth sing and young girl praise the God who did, was doing, and was going to do a new thing in her life. In reality it was joy for the whole world, because Zechariah's and Mary's joy was meant to be shared and experienced everywhere and with everyone. It is a joy that was meant to march into the sands of time. It was the beginning of an outpouring of joy that was meant to be poured into the future from the past and present. It was the seeds of joy planted within that would bear fruit in the hearts of many. This includes those who had not been born yet. This was the beginning of God pouring out joy into the hearts of the world absent of the divine joy it was meant to know.

What song has your heart been singing lately? Have you known the joy of God that births songs of complete bliss? Have you been singing songs of woe to your empty life? Are you ready for a new song to sing? A song birthed from an insuppressible joy through the God who has, and is, and is going to do a new thing in your life?

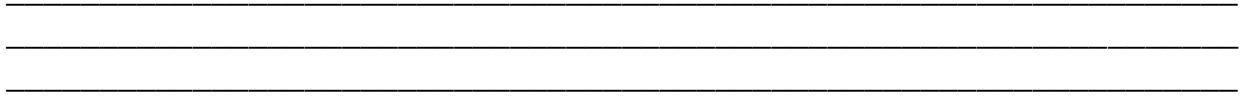
Sit at God's feet. Sing to the Lord a new song. Remember your blessings and they will be the words of your song of thanksgiving. Sing to the one who desires the divine gift of joy to be established in your heart. Write the words to your new song below and on many occasions return to add to this list. Then sing them anew in a fresh thanksgiving.

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Day 3

Reading: Luke 2: 1-51

Imagine for a moment that you and your family are prisoners. You cannot express yourselves freely, move about freely, and none of you can venture out to find your life's true purpose and live it to the fullest. Your prison guard is a harsh, cruel, and unfeeling task master. You are at the guard's whim, you are the butt of the guard's jokes, and you soon become embarrassed. Maybe you even learn to hate yourself, your life, and your very existence.

Now imagine that you receive a letter over and over again, year after year, that someone is coming to set you and your family free. This person is coming to remove the charges against you, your chains, and will imprison the very guard torments you night and day and keeps you locked up in your cell. These letters give you hope. You come to believe them. You wait expectantly as you endure your harsh imprisonment, but you wonder if freedom will ever come.

In some sense this is the story of the nation of Israel. The people Jesus was born amongst as citizen, neighbor, and redeemer. They had been waiting for such Deliverer. God had given them this promise over and over again throughout their history. It was written down in their letters. Throughout their history this people had been battered and worn, abused and trapped, wandered and strayed, and at the time of Jesus' birth were captives of the Great Roman Empire and an empty religion, but their greatest imprisonment was to sin.

These people waited anxiously wondering if freedom would ever come.

Then Jesus is born and the angels of heaven open the sky and sing a song of fulfillment. Shepherds hear the proclamation that the ancient promises have come true. After viewing the special child these shepherds run along the countryside to tell every one of the miraculous sights and sounds they had experienced in the night.

A week later the temple prophets sing songs of victory and praise at the sight of the child. God has opened their eyes to see the truth and their hearts were able to accept that God has visibly acted in human history to set God's people free.

All these things Mary treasured in her heart. She knew the one born to her was special. He was different. What twelve year old has ever said, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house and doing my Father's business?" He knew his purpose and he would fulfill it and no one needed to tell him what it was. Deep down Jesus knew!

His purpose was to set the prisoners free! Not from Rome, but from themselves and the life they were living trapped by sin. He came to set them free from the captor that had taken them prisoner, the harsh prison guard of sin. It was a burden to their souls and this task master was relentless. It made them hate

themselves, to be embarrassed of themselves, to act unloving and unkindly to each other, and especially to the God of creation.

Do you feel imprisoned? Has life lost its vitality? Has life become a harsh taskmaster? Does it keep you from finding your way and living your life's purpose? Do not blame it on your circumstances, your relationships, or your experiences. The prison you are in has always been built upon the foundation of sin.

Take some time to think about what it is in life that makes you feel imprisoned. Ask yourself why this is so important for you to be free from it? Does it make sense for you to feel this way? What's at the basis of it all? Has your life been out of your control to change?

Write some of these things down and take them to God in prayer. Ask God to reveal the truth of these things and give you a heart to accept them for what they may be. Then ask Jesus to set you free from them. This is the beginning of a life long journey if we will remain in it. Over time the more we are set free, the more prisons we are able to recognize and hand over. All of these we turn over to the one who has the key to all of our cells. He is the Deliverer of God.

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Day 4

Reading: Luke 3: 1-6

This reading begins with a long list of important people in the land of Israel. God could have chosen anyone of these people to proclaim the coming of the Deliverer, but instead God chose John. A man who lived in the desert, ate locusts and wild honey, and wore a garment made out of a camel's hide.

Yes, John was born to Zacharias who was a priest, but John who normally would have been nurtured and trained to step into Zacharias's shoes, chose the desert ministry instead. Who among us would go into a desert to hear anyone?

These strange, out of the ordinary and unexpected actions seem to be a pattern with God. For even the one called the Deliverer was born in a filthy stall where the animals were shuffled into at night. He wasn't born in a palace, into riches, or into status. He might as well have been born on the top of a garbage dump. What does this say about God? Could it be saying something concerning God's rejection of these things?

John came to prepare the way. I have seen many road construction projects. They have to clear away trees, houses, build bridges over valleys, and cut their way through mountains in order for others to travel safely in the direction they need to go.

John has come to clear the way for the Deliverer, but the road that needs cleared isn't on land, but in people's hearts. Doubt, lifestyle choices, upbringing, education, and self-centeredness which are all built upon sin block the way for the Deliverer. They block the way for the traveler to travel safely without any roadblocks towards God.

You might be thinking that if Jesus is the Deliverer, then why does the way need to be cleared in order for Him to set us free? The Deliverer sets us free, but the lock that keeps us imprisoned is in our own heart, and we must present our locked hearts to Him in faith, believing the Deliverer can set us free.

By using this devotional you have agreed to take a journey. It is a journey with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. This journey is ultimately a journey of freedom to love God, and love others. It is a Journey to find life, love, joy, hope, peace, and contentment, because these things flow out of God and into the traveler's life. Before you can begin to make this journey with Jesus we must hear John. We must hear John everyday of our life. He calls for us to surrender the obstacles in the way of the King. We can't reach God and God can't reach us until we surrender the obstacles to the Deliverer that is in our way. Then the journey truly begins.

What obstacles of doubt are in your way? What things do you make excuses for in your life? What are some of the things that you know hurts others, or things that if others knew, then it would devastate them? What are some of the attitudes



souring your heart towards God? If you want to really participate in this Journey, then we must hear John speak to us. He calls us to repent, or let go of these things and turn our direction to walking with God. What do you have to lose?

I do know what you stand to gain. You stand to gain freedom, life in abundance, joy, peace, happiness, contentment, love, and hope. You stand in the place to be able to see God and know God.

Write down some things that come to mind and ask God to help you believe and to forgive your unbelief. Offer God the lock on your heart, so that the Deliverer's key can set you free.

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## Day 5: Luke 3: 7-19

There are two groups of people in this story who have come to listen to John. One group consists of the financially well to do, those with power, and those with authority. The other group isn't that viewable, but be assured they are there.

These are the ones who can't afford new clothes, who are burdened by taxes exorted from them at every turn, who are taken advantage of by people who are in positions of power. They are also the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned, and homeless.

Can you imagine how they must have felt when John stood up for their rights and needs? John rebuked those who were in part responsible for their pain. He explained that if they wanted to make the road straight in their life for God, then they needed to start caring about these people they have hurt and taken advantage. They needed to stop using people as a footstool to their own prosperity. People do not exist to make our life better. They are not there to take advantage of, to use, or to cheat. They are people of value and worth. We are all people of value and worth.

Greed is one of sins ugliest taskmasters. It always leaves you unsatisfied and wanting more. There are also those who are emotionally greedy. They expect people to live up to their expectations and meet their needs. They are often offended when others expect anything from them. They suck the life out of people for their own life. These people also need to make the way straight because God cares about all people and not caring about others is at the heart of sin.

As long as a person's intentions and desires are set in wrong directions, then they will always be facing away from God. They will never be able to see God or know God.

"What must we do" is a good question to ask. What is even better is doing what we must do, when we learn we must do it. This is what John calls the fruit of repentance. It is the proof that we have indeed begun the journey with Jesus. It is proof that we are beginning to make the path straight. John helps people begin their journey with baptism which symbolizes their new birth, their new start, and their new life, but John tells of another baptism they will need. It comes from the Deliverer.

The Deliverer will baptize all; some with the Spirit of God, or the very freeing presence of God in their life, and others with an eternal fire.

That fire is a result of the presence of God being removed from their existence for eternity. It is the prison they loved on earth and in their prison they will remain. They thought, "At least I was in control of my own cell." On this earth it was their hearts desire. In eternity it will be their heart's greatest regret.

What about you? What is the fruit your life has shown? In what ways has greed and materialism taken you captive. Remember it is an ugly taskmaster that leaves you unsatisfied and always wanted something more. You can surrender this area of your heart to God. In its place God can place contentment, but it is a contentment that only God can give through His peace and indwelling Spirit.

Write down the things in your life that you think pleases God. Thank God for them and ask God to bless them even more. Then write down the things that may be considered physical or emotional greed. Ask God to replace them with God's contentment. Also ask for God's love to be imparted in your heart, so that you can treat people the way you yourself want to be treated.

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Day 6

Luke 4: 1-13

Do not be surprised when the Spirit of God that you now walk with leads you into the deserts of life. The deserts of life are the places where the heat oppresses, things grow stale, needs arise, pressures build, and your thirst for something more grows strong. It is in the desert you will face your worst enemy. How can you recognize this enemy? Go and look in a mirror. What you will see is your worst enemy.

The word Satan means “Hindrance.” It is something that has stepped in your way. It is something from within, but it can be manipulated by our outward circumstances and influences. It calls to you with all of its lies. It tries to trick you with all of its deception. But if you have been baptized and led by the Spirit to this place, know that God is near. God will make sure you escape as a more enduring and dedicated traveler.

What Jesus uses against this hindrance is what you will need to use when the hindrance appears. Jesus used the Word of God, the Worship of God, and Faith in God to remove the hindrance.

Your survival is dependent upon the Word. It is eternal, a light for any dark path, and bread of life for any hungry soul. All of hell fears the Word’s power and flees at the utterance of its sound.

The hindrance will always try to block your Worship. The time of singing, rejoicing, of loving and sharing in the lives of other travelers. God is seen in the praises of God’s people. The hindrance always attacks your direction in the Spirit and the truth that sets free.

The hindrance will attack your Faith. The hindrance will try to convince you that you don’t need this bread of life, or to twist the Word into lies and make it useless in your hands. The hindrance will try to turn you back and set your eyes upon mountains before you. Sometimes these are the very things that kept you from walking with God in the first place.

One degree off track is all the hindrance needs to get you lost. A ship that’s rudder is off one degree will end up far from its desired destination in time. The hindrance will also show you the easy path of giving up, of losing faith, and will try to make your journey of joy and life with God a trek through the desolate desert.

But if you have already been to the desert with God, then you already are aware of the way out. It foils the hindrance’s plans every time.

Take time below to schedule portions of your day to read the Word and to seek to know it and understand it. Make sure that your heart is worshipping God

and God alone. Finally reject the lies. You are loved by God. God is near to you, and you are more valuable to God than all of creation. Faith can move mountains. The mountains are only lies. This is why God cares so much. This is why God sent a Deliverer.

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Day 7

Luke 4: 14-44

All of the people in the village were infected. They were all dying. The missionaries upon learning of the illness ravaging the village tried to enter to help, but their help wasn't wanted. The villagers had their own medicine and they had many gods. The healthier ones were able to chase the missionaries out from the village killing one of those who had come to care.

Feeling helpless and hurting because of their loss for a respected colleague, the missionaries buried their friend and said their mortal good-byes to their brother in the faith. They decided a different approach. They knew of a man who had left the village many years ago to live in the modern world. He spoke their language. He understood their beliefs, fears and thoughts. If he would go and explain they were there to help, then there still might be a chance to save the village from the obvious result of their disease.

The man agreed to help the missionaries and returned to his village, as the missionaries waited at a safe distance. Within a short time he too returned unsuccessful. He pleaded with the missionaries to remain and said he would try again the next day. On the next day it was the same result. Once again he begged the missionaries to remain for one more day convinced that he could get them in the village on the next day.

The man was true to his word. He returned and said the villagers will accept your help now. Upon entering the village the missionaries realized that all of the villagers were too ill to even stand. It was only when they had no more strength to fight that they accepted help.

This is the story of Jesus and his village. It is the story of God and the people of Israel. The prophets had come to these people to save them from death and they killed them or ran them off. Jesus returns to his home village offering them the truth of his identity and his help and they reject him. He would have saved some of them before it was too late, but they were too proud to accept the help. They believed instead they could do it on their own. God knew how wrong they were.

We have all heard of this Jesus we are walking with. We have heard of miracles, we may have even talked to people who claimed they were released from the evil spirits that plagued them. We may have even witnessed a miracle first hand. Someone miraculously cured, or miraculously delivered.

Our journey begins with this Jesus. He came to set the captives free, and to proclaim God's good news to the whole world. We might think we are strong enough, good enough, that we do enough, and that we try hard enough. If this were true, then God wouldn't have needed to send a Deliverer.

The sad truth may be that we really don't believe God really sent Him. By saying this we call Jesus a liar and billions of people throughout history delusional because they have believed.

Can you think of some area in your life whether it is your finances, your marriage, your job, or your family where you have doubted God's Deliverer could do any good, or where you have believed you were good enough, or smart enough? Chances are there is such a place. Chances are God's Deliverer wants to do miraculous things for us in that place if we will only trust him.

Write down some areas where you feel uncomfortable in asking for God's Deliverance. Maybe it is a fear, a relationship, an embarrassing habit, a personal belief that doesn't align with the truth that Jesus has taught concerning Himself, God, your life, or your relationships with others. Then pray and ask for His freedom today.

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Day 8

Reading: Luke 5

This chapter has some amazing stories and amazing outcomes. It begins with a tired fisherman who not only fished this lake all of his life, but whom we know positively had fished it all night long. Was Simon Peter just humoring Jesus? You can almost hear the doubt in his words. “All-right, because you’ve asked I’ll give it a shot.”

I can almost feel their excitement as they begin to pull in their nets and realize the nets are full of fish. I love the fact that Simon Peter calls all his friends to share in the spoils. I could imagine their surprise when they saw the abundance of fish was so much that their boats were beginning to sink. How can anyone walk away from this scripture and not think something out of the ordinary was happening here.

Now if I had just walked by and saw this happening I might think, “Hey these fisherman are having a lucky day.” I may not have seen anything spectacular at all. There is no doubt that this is a miracle to Simon Peter. His words reveal something about him. “Lord go away from me. I’m a sinful man.”

Jesus saw the heart of the problem. Simon Peter was afraid. What kind of man could have the power to do something like this? Not a normal man. In Simon Peter’s mind he was convinced that he was in the presence of a Holy man of God and he was unworthy to be in his presence.

How humble is this picture of Simon Peter. Worthy or not the Deliverer said to him, “Walk with me and you will be a fisher of people.”

In the same way that Simon Peter called his friends to share in the harvest of fish, there were some other men in this chapter who wanted their friend to share in the miraculous harvest. These men wanted their friend to share in the blessings of Jesus. They had heard of his miracles. They may have even witnessed the Deliverer in action.

Their friend was crippled; he couldn’t walk, use the bathroom alone, change without the help of others, and had no way of providing for his earthly needs. He had lost all strength to do something about his situation, but his friends had the strength to not only carry him to the Deliverer, whom they were sure could do something, but to remove part of the roof and lower him down.

Jesus seeing their faith and love for their friend says something we all should hear. “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” Jesus called him his friend and at the same time he said, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Did I miss the place where this crippled man asked for forgiveness? Did I miss the notion that Jesus revealed that his freedom from sin was freedom from his



infirmity? To be forgiven is to be healed and to be healed is to be forgiven. The deliver had set him free and called him friend.

What kind of friends do we have? Would our friends call us to share in the spoils? Would they carry us to the Deliverer? Better yet, what kind of friend are you to others, to the sick and those needing help? Would you be a good enough friend to lead them to Jesus.

Write below how you can be a better friend not only to others, but to Jesus. Then pray and ask God to change your heart to be a better friend. To be a friend that would share in the spoils of Christ's abundance with others, who would carry a friend to Christ, and who desires to live in a close friendship with the Deliverer of God.

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Day 9

Reading: Luke 6

Did you walk with Jesus through the grain fields and hear people judge you because you don't live up to their rules or traditions. Did you hear Jesus say the Sabbath Day was made so that people could rest and spend time with God and doing good? Did you hear Jesus say that people were more important than rules and traditions?

Did you sit with him through the night as he prayed and found guidance to choose the disciples?

Did you go with him the next day and hear him teach? What was it he taught? He seems to be teaching of a great reversal. People who suffer in this world will find relief and abundance and those who are living it up will regret their selfishness at the expense of others in need.

Did you hear him teach what love really should look like for others? He said love enemies, do good things for those who persecute you, don't expect anything back from those who borrow from you, and show mercy as God shows mercy.

Forgive as God forgives you, and don't judge others when you are guilty of the same things.

What is the picture of God painted here? It isn't the picture of the lightning bolt God who will punish all the wicked. Rather it's a picture of a God who loves and treats everyone the same, no matter what kind of person we label them.

God is true to His character no matter who God is dealing with. How unlike us God is! Many people pick and choose whom they deal with. Many treat those who treat them nice with respect and treat people roughly whom they don't get along with. I have even seen people who become a whole different person when other people are around. They are like disguise artists and actors on a stage.

The Deliverer is teaching a way of freedom. It is the freedom to love others despite who they are and what they do to or for us. It is freedom to be you whoever is around. This is the real you, but you aren't the real you unless you become like the God in whose image you were created. Sin has taken you prisoner. The Deliverer has come to set you free. He has come to restore the divine image imprinted upon you that has been marred by sin. To become once again that which you were always meant to become; the child of the living God!

Written upon your heart is the good you know you should do. It is the good you would want people to show you. To not build your life on this foundation is setting yourself up for new prisons and the strengthening of the old. It is the way of the foolish life builder.

Do you have enemies that haunt your conscience? People you can't stand to be around? Do they live next door or work at your side in the office? Maybe they

go to church with you or are members of your own family? Unless the Deliverer rescues you from this hate, then you will be unable to forgive or show any kindness.

Write down those whom you consider enemies. Write down those who you think owe you. Now write down something nice that you could do for these persons; something you would appreciate if this was done for you. Now pray over these things. Pray that God would remove the hate, or that you can let go of the debt, and that you can have enough strength to show the kindness that your heavenly Father desires for you show? Then you can truly say that today you have walked with Jesus.

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Day 10

Reading: Luke 7

We follow Jesus as he heals a Roman Soldier's servant, and as he raises a widow's son from the dead. We then come to a time of teaching and we hear again of the man John who came to help people clear the way in their hearts for the Deliverer.

John's disciples bring a message, but not really a message, but a question. "Are you the one, or should we expect someone else?" We might ask how John who seemed so sure that Jesus was the Deliverer came to doubt his great assurance.

John is now in prison. He has been there some time. We believe that John expected, like all the other Jewish people, that the Deliverer would set up an earthly kingdom and begin the process of restoring the entire earth back to its original form and purpose. A form and purpose that was marred along with the sin that entered in and took humanity captive.

I liken his imprisonment to the feeling children have before Christmas. They know the day is coming, but they are overcome with anxiousness as the day approaches. The feeling is much worse the day before Christmas. For John it was the day before.

"Tell John that the blind see, the lame can walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." Tell John that something out of the ordinary is happening. Things men and women could never do on their own or in their own strength are being done. God has surely entered into human time and space and the kingdom of God is near.

We then move to a story that describes what the freedom the deliverer brings looks like. Can you see her? Can you picture the look of disgust on the Pharisee's face? Can you see the compassion of God in Jesus' eyes? Can you hear it in his voice? Can you see her tears, hear her sobs, as she uses her hair to clean his feet. Do you see the expensive perfume she is pouring upon them?

What has brought her to this place? What has happened in her life? What does she believe that Jesus can do for her? Jesus knows and because she had been forgiven much, she loved much. Her sins were forgiven and her faith had saved her. She was free to go in peace.

If people only knew the weight of sin on their soul, then they too would be found at Jesus' feet. He is the only one who has ever offered such forgiveness, such healing, and such a salvation. If people only knew the ways sin has chained their hearts, imprisoned their life, and crippled their minds, then they too would come and find forgiveness, healing, and peace.

Like John we may doubt if Jesus is the one and if we should look for another. Jesus answers the question. Just look and see. Just walk with him and see.

Are you anxious about anything today? Do you doubt God's Deliverer? Is there a burden upon your soul weighing you down? Is it paralyzing you? Do you need peace? Go to the feet of the Deliverer and know that when he is looking upon you it is with compassion and not judgment.

Write a note to God. Tell him your troubles. Let the tears flow. Let the love enter in. Hear the words, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

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Day 11  
Luke 8

Our heart is a field for the Word of God to be planted in. It never surprises me how easily some wander away from the goodness and salvation they experience after hearing and knowing the Word.

The hindrance arrives on the scene and works on their hearts and thoughts until a change in their direction occurs. He fills their life full of worry and brings trouble near and they return to struggling with their problems alone. They become wrapped up and imprisoned in the pursuit of the things of the world to only find that they have strayed away from the Deliverer.

If they had only listened well enough to remember they need the Word, the Worship, and Faith for continuing faithfully in the free life. They need to hear the words of John everyday to turn to God and remove the obstacles of the day. They forget they need a Deliverer every day. They simply forget.

Those who not only hear, but respond to what they hear in action are the only ones who can lay claim to God's household. They are those who bear a harvest in their life towards God and neighbor despite the hindrance's numerous attempts.

Oh how easy it is to forget when the storms of life assail us. How quickly we realize how weak our foundations are. How quickly the hindrance shows us the chinks in our armor. We let fear enter into our situations, even when we know Jesus is at the helm unafraid and at peace. We say we are walking with the Deliverer, but act like we going down with the ship with a God who is asleep.

And Jesus asks us, "Where is your faith?"

It is despite their faith that Jesus calms the storms and settles the sea. The disciples begin to ask themselves who can do things like this? What man or woman has ever had such power? They have heard old stories of the servants of God who had accomplished miraculous things, but they did it only through the power of God. Surely Jesus has at His control the power of God!

To follow him from here we find Jesus with power to command a legion of demons destroying a man's life. The man is set free. Jesus walks down a road and a woman touches him. She has suffered for years and His power heals her. Jesus speaks and a girl rises from the dead and the power of God is displayed and is glorious to behold.

How silly we are to let little storms and the worries of this life get in the way of our freedom. The power of God is always present in the one who has been set free by the deliverer.

What storms have assailed your life? What things have stolen your joy and peace? It is time to walk with Jesus and let the power of God work in these

situations. Write all of them down and spend time with God in prayer. Let them go and trust in the power of the Deliverer. It is the power of God.

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Day 12

Reading: Luke 9

Jesus sends the disciples out, but they are going without him. What we should see is that they are also going out in power. To each one he gave authority over demons and disease. To each one he gave the power to set people free and to show them that something unusual was happening in the realm of human beings. They were sent to preach the Good News that God has sent a Deliverer and the world that has been lost to God because of sin is being rescued. This process of restoration began with the appearance of Jesus, the One sent by God.

Jesus tells them to expect rejection in the face of all that they would do in God's power. Not everyone wants freedom. Not everyone wants to leave their prison cage. This is especially true if they have found great earthly pleasure in a relationship with their captor. To them the oppression of their guard is lessened when they give in to their captors will. It is hard to believe you are a captive if you can learn to find comfort in the cage you're in.

It is also hard to believe you are a captive when you believe the cage is all there is and there is no Deliverer and certainly no God. Jesus says, "Shake the dust off your feet, as a witness to their rejection."

It isn't hard to realize now why so many showed up to hear the One who had sent these witnesses out. Over five thousand men alone were present. This didn't include their wives and children.

The disciples showing concern for them ask Jesus to send them away so that they might find something to eat before nightfall. I can just see Jesus smile and say, "You give them something to eat?" I could also imagine the surprise of the disciples. "Do you want us to go and buy food for all these people?!!!"

Again, Jesus could have said, "Where is your faith?" Had they forgotten the power they had already witnessed. Their human minds couldn't apply the concept of God's power to such a thing as feeding thousands of people with just a few fish and loaves.

I have seen this principle at work in God's people. Use what you have and God will supply your need and even bless you with more than when you started.

When we see things like this still happening today how can we keep from saying like Peter, "You are the Christ of God!" You are the Deliverer, the comforter, the prince of peace, and mighty counselor. You are the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God given for the sin of the whole world.

It is then we see Jesus as He really is, as He becomes transfigured in our minds and hearts. He is changed from the appearance of a mere man to an agent of God. It is then we can hear the voice of God from heaven that says, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."



But alas, the hindrance is still at work in the world. The final end has not yet come. Jesus the Deliverer must again return from this place of exaltation to the place where he must be about the business of God. He must be about the deliverance of humanity one soul, and one life at a time.

Is there a place in your life where you can recognize that you need God's law of multiplication? Is there something you need to place in his hands so that God can remake it, use it and bless others? Are you ready to give of yourself and to go out in the power of God? Do you still need to see the Christ transfigured? Have you forgotten what you have witnessed in the Christ at work? Write down what it is you need God to touch or God to give you, so that your life can be the blessing it was meant to be.

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Day 13

Reading: Luke 10

Once again Jesus sends out the disciples. Could you imagine what this could have looked like? Deciding who will go with who, which direction they will travel, the worries and fears, and concerns. Again they were to go without money or extra articles of clothing. They were to not stop and get involved in the customary greeting ceremonies while they travelled on the road. They were to go into each town trusting in God. They were like lambs amongst wolves. They were the ones sent by Jesus on a mission.

If the healing and miracles and proclamation of the good news of the kingdom were not enough for these villages to believe, then their destiny would be one of doom. Again they were instructed to shake the dust off their feet.

What a sharp contrast this is to the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this story the religious people who were supposed to be the shepherds of the people, the ones who cared for God's flock, passed on by the injured man. It is a Samaritan, a person racially hated by the Jews, possibly even hated by the man who had been beaten, that stops and shows mercy and kindness. He is the good neighbor. He helps whoever is in need despite location, danger, or race.

The sad thing is that these who were sent by Jesus to these villages and towns were showing God's mercy, grace and love for them in powerful ways. If they rejected this great kindness, then the Lord states their future is grim. If you are in a prison cell and have found comfort there, and refuse to recognize and let those bearing the kindness of God free you, then remember you will one day receive the recompense for your crime. It is the eternal death penalty for your sins that you will receive.

There is a message for us here. If we are called to go out and share the Lord to the world, then they are not rejecting us. They are rejecting Christ. One of the great fears in witnessing is being rejected. Why do we make it so personal? Maybe it is because we feel that when they reject Christ, they are also rejecting us. Christ is in us, but Christ never feared rejection. His love for people would never let a fear of rejection stop him. His mission to deliver people would not hinder his reaching out to them. He knew he was going to be rejected. He expected it, but to Him it was worth it.

Jesus once told his followers to not fear what people could do to them, but fear the one who has the power to destroy the soul.

This attitude cannot be formed in us unless we sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from him. We need the Word to change us. We need to hear the truth, be convinced by the truth, and sanctified by the truth in order to live by the truth. It is the only way the people of God can be salt and light to the world.

Walking with Jesus means being ready to share your faith and follow Him in the completion of His mission. But if we have not spent time at the feet of the master there isn't much we will be able to share. It is at the feet of the Deliverer we are delivered and set free. If we have never been set free it's hard to share or even desire to share this good news of the kingdom with anyone.

When it comes to continuing the mission of Christ in your life what is your greatest fear? Write them down. Then write down steps you can take to help alleviate those fears. Also come up with innovative ways to share your faith with at least one person every day. You're not there to convince anyone. You are there to share. They accept or reject the gift of your witness. All you do is plant and water. God is the one who makes it grow.

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Day 14

Reading: Luke 11: 1-28

What was it about the prayer life of Jesus that the disciples would say teach us how to pray? One could learn how to pray from listening to Him, unless Jesus always prayed alone. This couldn't be, because we have already heard him pray to God openly. Could it be that when he prayed they recognized something different about him or in them? What was it that made them ask, "Teach us how to pray?"

May your name be holy in the earth, may your kingdom come, provide for us, forgive us, deliver us. Some manuscripts say "protect us from the evil Hindrance."

As we sit at his feet on this journey Jesus tells and shows us something of the character of God. God is good and desires to give to us. Ask, seek, knock could mean desire the things of God to the point that you ask for them, seek them as a valuable treasure of limitless worth. It could mean knocking on the door of God's providence and character with patience and endurance, until God opens the door for us.

There is one thing that Jesus is teaching hear as he teaches the disciples concerning prayer. He is teaching that a relationship with God and prayer go hand in hand.

I think Jesus knew what the disciples were seeking when they asked the question, "Teach us to pray?" I believe that what they saw in him and experienced when he prayed was the movement of the Spirit of God. I believe they saw the intimate relationship Jesus revealed was possible with God.

Otherwise this seems like such an odd interjection to their request. They wanted the Holy Spirit. They wanted to be connected to God in the way Jesus was. They wanted to know and receive from God in the intimate way that Jesus had revealed to them was possible.

It seems logical then from Luke's perspective to consider that those who rejected Jesus, rejected that it was the Spirit of God at work in him, but the spirit of the Hindrance.

Jesus instructs that Satan isn't so stupid as to pull the rug out from under his own feet. It would be stupid for the Hindrance to work against himself, by driving himself out of others? So the opposite must be true. It must be the Spirit of God and if it is the Spirit of God, then the kingdom must be near them.

Jesus is stronger than the Hindrance. He can cast him out. But watch out if that person does not replace that space with the Holy Spirit. The Hindrance may return finding the soul open and ready to receive him once again. Next time the hindrance will bring others of his kind with him.

Have you ever prayed for the Holy Spirit? Read Galatians five and see the things the Holy Spirit brings into a person' life. Watch that you remain full of the Spirit, or your life may become imprisoned in more ways than you were at first. Write down the day and time that you prayed for the Spirit to enter within. Spend time in prayer until the Father who is good gives you what he desires to give you. Believe in the promise, ask, and seek. When it has come upon you write down your experience and thank God for this gift if limitless value.

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Day 15

Reading: Luke 11: 29-53

It's amazing even after all they had seen and experienced that they would still want more signs. They wanted more proof. If in all their reasoning and experience they still couldn't grasp the truth of what they had seen and heard, then those who had seen and heard less in the past and believed will be able to stand up and accuse them on the Day of Judgment. There were even those who didn't have this special relationship with God as part of the Jewish nation, but who were able to recognize the truth and wisdom of God when they saw it.

When we only desire to see things in a negative attitude then we will never see the truth and darkness will be in us. I knew a person who hated his fiancé's son. He saw him as not his own, but a trouble maker, a burden on his finances and time. His light was not positive. He couldn't see him as a son in need of a dad, a chance to help a youth find his way in life, and a worthy investment of love and energy. It made this man an ugly person. His darkness was great. It was the same with these religious rulers. They couldn't see the truth no matter how truth they heard no matter how many signs they had seen.

It makes sense then for Jesus to begin talking about their heart. They were so focused on the outside. How they dressed, how they followed traditions, how others saw them, and how the outside of their life matched up to a cultural norm they created. Their light was dark. Jesus told them they needed deliverance. They needed to be free from the prisons of their heart and the prisons of their religion.

If we really hear Jesus, then we hear him say their religion is worthless before God. It doesn't mean anything to Him. It's worthless and valueless. It has done more harm than good. They have turned from character formation to rule following and from love of God and neighbor to love of self and status. Their darkness was great indeed.

The Hindrance specializes in such deception. Outwardly it appears right before people, but it leads to destruction. The Church today has become more about appearances, entertainment, personalities, and selfish need meeting, than transformation, sanctification, character, and service. Our religion and acts of worship mean nothing to God if our life is void of love for God and neighbor, faith, hope, and transformation into the image of Christ. Our life must reflect the One who was perfect as representing the true image of God that we were all meant to reflect.

Has your relationship with God become a "to do list?" Beware that we initially go to God out of love and a desire to be in God's presence, but the Hindrance turns it into a burden, and task, and a chore.

Neither should our witness and our love for others become a burden and a chore. When it does we can be certain that we have been duped by the Hindrance and need to be free this prison. Go to the deliverer immediately. Pray for forgiveness and the Spirit and find your way back on the journey with Christ.

Has your time with God become a chore? Write down those things and pray about them. If you feel that things are as they should be, then write down some things you think might be helpful in keeping the hindrance from getting in the way of your love for God and neighbor?

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Day 16

Reading: Luke 12: 1-11

What are you afraid to lose? Are you afraid to lose money, your retirement, the things in your house, your job, your car, your dignity, friends, your spouse or families love? Are you afraid of death? Are you afraid to witness about what the Lord has accomplished in your life?

Many Christians are ready to believe the right things, but not ready to live them. The Pharisees taught the word of God and expected others to live up their expectations, but Jesus teaches their leaven, the thing which secretly is at work defiling their good confession, is that they themselves didn't live or practice what they say they believed.

We are living a lie if we have compartmentalized our Christianity in any area of our life. Some people are good at being Christians at church, but not in their home. These are suffering from the secret defiling agent at work in their heart. It is the agent of hypocrisy.

Don't be fooled because our Lord says what is in the dark will come out into the light. It can come out in one of three ways.

First it can come out by our looking intently into our life to see where we have closed the Lord and His truth out from our heart. Many of us will compromise the teaching of the scriptures so that we can make excuses for the things we love, or the way we have chosen to live. The Word of God shines light into our darkness and gives us eyes to see. The living Word can wash us clean.

Second, it can come out at the hands of our loved ones who will speak to us honestly. We are so prideful at times that we refuse to hear God speaking through them to us. Those closest to us know our hypocrisies the best. But are we willing to receive the truth in love from them?

The third way is in front of the judgment seat of Christ where we may find that we have been denied before God and the angels, because we denied Christ the rightful place of our Lord and His mission in our life. It is our denial of Him that refuses to open our hearts and mouths to make a good confession.

A heart that hasn't encountered the love of God fears greatly, but let us fear the only One who is worthy to fear. It is the one who can destroy our soul.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to show you the areas of your life where you have closed the doors to Christ. It could be relationships, things, hobbies, or habits that refuse to speak any glory to the name of Christ. List them and pray over them continually for the Spirit to guide you into truth, and for the resurrection power of Christ to break your bonds and set you free.



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Day 17

Reading: Luke 12: 13-34

Watch...be on your guard...the world's treasures and thoughts towards wealth are deceitful. They lead to a spiritual trap that imprisons your heart away from God. The important lesson here is that the treasures of the world are not the aim of life and financial security is not life's primary mission.

In fact a life's mission is to seek God and come to the understanding that it is God's good pleasure to supply the needs of the entire world. God is all a person or a people should ever want, because in Him are eternal treasures received daily that will last into eternity.

If we seek peace, joy, happiness and financial security through things and wealth, then we will not easily see that it is a trap. We are deceived into believing these outward things can make our spiritual condition well and at ease. It may work for a short while, but then it returns and we are off on our pursuit again to fix us and our situations. This is how we become a prisoner to the system. We are molded to the lie that says life is about working hard, earning big, and enjoying a lot. What we fail to see is if this is our life's aim, then this will leave us spiritually bankrupt before God into eternity.

Jesus tells us that the true path for life is to seek God's kingdom. It has eternal treasures that never fade away or fail. This is life's one true goal. The storehouse of God's provision is limitless. It has all a man or woman will ever need and it is God's good pleasure to give.

This is the lesson. Life is not a matter of money, but a matter of the heart. Life begins and consists from the inside out (the heart) and not from the outside in (money).

Take time to meditate upon your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart for the places you have failed to "seek from" God and "trust in" God. Pray about these things. Ask the Lord to set you free and give you faith to believe where you have not believed. Ask the Lord to shine the light of His wisdom into your understanding so that you can see the reason behind why God and God's ways are the source for all you will ever need and why the world's ways are not God's ways.

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Day 18

Reading: Luke 12:35-57

Are you ready? Have you followed Christ? Have you served Him and His church in love? Have you loved Him to the point that you have chosen Him above all things including your closest relationships? Be aware of the grace you have been shown, the mission you have been included in, and the calling to which you were called?

This is where seeking God's kingdom will lead you. If you are not in this place, then you can be assured that you have nestled yourself in a dangerous place. You have not yet surrendered your life. You have not yet fully trusted, believed, comprehended, or understood the One who loved you above all.

Wake up Oh Christian! The thief is robbing your house!

There is only one thing to do. Turn and run! Run to God! Bow down before Him and settle your account. If you desire to settle your account before God, then you will find out you have nothing to settle with. You must ask for mercy and grace.

Jesus says try hard to be reconciled with the One you owe on the way to the judgment. How hard have you been trying? Here is where I connect the Apostle's words that say, "Work out your salvation in fear and trembling."

The world distracts us. It says here is your joy, and here is your comfort. The world says spend your time here and focus here and you will find rest. The world says go into debt to make your dreams come true. If you listen then you will see that going into to debt to make your dreams come true is a prison in and of itself. Possessions possess.

Jesus says settle with your debtor, not the worldly ones, but the eternal One. The only one who can pay the debt in full is Christ. Out of love and grace the Eternal Father has made a way to settle your sin debt.

Are you ready? Look at your life. If Jesus showed up today what would you have a hard time explaining? What would you not want Him to know? What would you be ashamed of? The next thing to do is pray over these things. One at a time through the power and victory of Jesus Christ turn away from them, and try hard lest you return like the dog to the vomit you have spewed out of your life.

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Day 19

Reading: Luke 13

We often wonder why some people seem to suffer more than others. Life is so unfair at times. Those who lack understanding call it bad luck, karma, and look everywhere else, but themselves for the cause of their plight.

The Jews of Jesus' day thought it had everything to do with sin. They blamed it on a sinful act of the person or the person's family. They saw suffering as God's punishment.

Jesus, in part, denies this claim. We are all sinners. The world is not a perfect place. Sin indeed has made it this way. Many think of sin as an act against a law of God, but the Bible presents sin as a disease much like cancer. All creation is infected. All creation needs a cure. No wonder the bible says we are born into it.

All of creation is sick and astray from the life, will and knowledge of God.

God is like a gardener. God will provide all that the tree needs to survive the disease and become fruitful. God is patient as He waits for the healing, but one day he will choose to end the opportunity for us to engage in His patience. The trees that respond to God's care will be saved. The trees that fail and prove good for nothing will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Even the Good trees that are saved will have parts of the trees that have been utterly destroyed. The diseased parts must be removed so that life can flourish once again.

Some people fail to understand that the tree that has grown from a small seed and in whose branches the birds (Satan) of the air nest must be trimmed of the dead branches. The bread that has been secretly infected with yeast must be dealt with.

The straight and narrow way must be travelled for the healing to occur and for eternal life to flourish. It is the only way. Every other way leads to the disease of sin and death. Jesus weeps for God's garden to be cleansed.

Place yourself before the heavenly gardener today and ask him to show you the diseased parts of your Spirit. Ask for forgiveness and receive your healing today. Let it go and never return to that place again. Know that if you do, God makes *onramps* where we make *off ramps* on the straight and narrow road. He will forgive you.

Write down off ramps you are prone to take. Pray for God to heal you from this diseased part of your spirit through Jesus Christ the Lord.

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Day 20

Reading: Luke 14:

Seeking and demanding honor and respect from others, along with any pride of religiosity will be the downfall of many. They will hear the One who is humble and lowly in heart calling and instead choose to follow their own paths that lead to their own exaltation. They will miss the true and eternal banquet that God has prepared for all the earth.

It breaks my heart to think of all the Christians who have answered the Kings call and do not respond to the consequences of that call. It is the call to get dressed and come and enjoy your King's provision and care.

So many have heard the call and said yes I will follow, but they become distracted by the cares and worries of this world and miss the true rewards that God had in store for them. They think life is all about marrying and selling and buying. They will find out life is all about faith, hope, and love. They will find out the hard way that that love for God and neighbor was the way to find all they were really seeking.

Count the cost of answering the call. Don't make this decision lightly to follow the King's commands lightly.

Others believe that Jesus is the One who will count the cost. That Jesus looks into the heart of all people who come before Him and He is the One who can see if they will finish the course of their faith, or fail. They believe Jesus is saying He will not invest anything in a person if He can look into the future and see their failure.

It isn't until you have grasped the cost of following Jesus and are willing to endure the consequences that Jesus is willing to invest salvation and the mission's blessings upon your life.

Make your choice today. Take time to write down what the Bible says is the cost of following Jesus. Search the scriptures if you have too. Then compare your life with the call that says, "If you love me, then you will obey me," and "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do the things I say?"

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Day 21

Reading: Luke 15

I am convinced that loving Christ begins with understanding the Love of God that loves us through Him and the cross. The Bible says “We love Him, because He first loved us.”

Everything Jesus did and said reflected a message from God that proclaimed, “I love you, I haven’t forgotten you, I care, I want to show you, come to me.”

From a lost sheep, to a lost coin, to a lost son, we should hear the words from God that say, “You are important to me. I am seeking you out. I Love You.”

From God’s law, to God’s correction and to God’s blessings we should hear God say, “I Love You.”

It is when Jesus finds a lost sheep, when the valuable coin is found, and when the son or daughter comes to their senses and realizes the love and care of the Father that they run home, they ask for forgiveness and are loved and restored. The angels in heaven rejoice every time.

“I surrender all” is our aim, but it is rare to find someone who has. We say I surrender some and hold onto my improper relationship, my affair, my stealing, my cheating, or my lusting. It is then we use our Father’s love as an excuse for our acts of sin. We become our own enablers as we take advantage of God’s grace.

We think God’s love is like that of a mother who enables her son to continue in drug addiction by making excuses for him and giving him money. Meanwhile she is helping him to slowly end his life.

God knows tough love. He will not promote anything that leads to death and sin leads to death. He promotes that which leads to life. The Father didn’t accept the son’s lifestyle choices. He waited patiently for him to come to his senses. In the end he was there waiting with open arms. The son had to hit rock bottom before that happened and the Father accepted that.

Are you at a rock bottom moment in your life? If not, then don’t think you have to reach this point to come to your senses. What has God established in the Word for you that you have rejected as truth? Are you failing to see the consequences of your actions? Think about why you are where you are, or take time today to see if Satan has deceived you about areas in your life. They are things that will eventually bring you to rock bottom.

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Day 22

Reading: Luke 16

What if someone gave you a million dollars and said, “Use it for all that is good and one day I will come back and review your records to see if you have used it wisely.”

You might ask, “What do you mean by good?” What if that person then said, “If it glorifies God by adhering to all that God says is true and right, if it clothes the naked, if it feeds the hungry, if it cares for the sick, and comforts the prisoners, if it shelters the homeless, if it does not hurt your neighbor, but leads them to witness and accept the love of God in Jesus Christ, then it is good.”

The unjust manager misused his master’s wealth. It is a wealth that he was called to care for and use properly for the master’s gain.

From mistreating your spouse and divorce, to caring for the neighbor sick at your gate, people will be held accountable for their lack of concern, care, compassion, and mercy. We all have been given an account of compassion in Christ to care.

We don’t often think that we will be held accountable for salvation gifts, our life, and all that we have, all that we are, and all that we can be. We will!

Yes we will be forgiven, but the consequences of our sins will still have worldly and sometimes eternal consequences. Paul describes some who will be saved, but in the end will look like as if they barely escaped the flames. It will be an eternal witness to their lack of stewardship and care of God’s property in the life they were given.

What kind of steward have you been with your life before God? What about your finances? What about your passions? What about your heart, mind, and soul?

Inspect your life and list things that need work when it comes to stewardship. Then make a plan and begin to manage wisely the life God has given to you. Pray for strength and wisdom to do this, because outside of the provision of God we will all fail, but if we walk by God’s Spirit we will be more than conquerors.

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Day 23

Reading: Luke 17

Yes things will come into our life that will tempt us to sin. I pray that it will never be me. For me to know the truth and follow a lie and then teach others the lie is serious mistake with consequences before God. Jesus describes punishment for those who fail to recognize this sin, but forgiveness to those who do. Let's not forget how often he also calls us to forgive those who have mistreated or misled us. Let's not get into the numbers game with this formula described in Luke. The forgiveness he expressed that we should have for others is unlimited.

The disciples hearing this truth cry out, "Give us faith!" We're they crying for faith to believe in this teaching?!

Whatever they were asking Jesus replies with, "Believe with the strength that you have and just do it. You'll be surprised at what will come about." Then Jesus says, "Don't expect any special pat on the back. When you do this, then you will be doing what you are supposed to do."

We ought to be thankful for the path and healing that Jesus gives, but for many of us we forget to return and fall on our knees and show it, and too many lives fail to show it in daily living.

Of course people will live as they always have. Buying and selling, sleeping around and holding the things of life up instead of the one who created and gave them life. This is how the world will be when the Kingdom comes in full display. This is how it is now.

It is a good reason to be ready for Christ to return and put an end to the mess and establish His kingdom.

We may never do all the good that God has enabled us to do, but we should never use this as excuse to do nothing. We won't get any special pats on the back for the few good deeds we accomplish, but what we gain in Christ through the shedding of His blood is accredited to us and our account becomes settled with God.

Write down all the things you pat yourself on the back for doing or believing. Write down all the things you seek praise from others for? Now offer them to God and say, "These are nothing, but what I am supposed to be doing. I don't deserve the praise, or the glory, but You do in all things. Thank you for Your grace in Jesus that settles my account before You. Help me enter Your Kingdom."

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Day 24  
Reading Luke 18

I will pray to God concerning justice and the God of Heaven will bring justice quickly for all who love Him. Do we believe this? Jesus reveals that when the end of the world comes that He won't find many who will have this kind of faith.

Maybe it will be because many will trust in their own efforts to see justice accomplished. The Pharisee praying as he exalted himself didn't understand biblical justice when he put down his fellow brother before God.

The tax collector knew that he was in need of justice. He deserved to have justice accounted against him, so he begged for mercy. He deserved God's sentence upon him. We all do, but he lived in that knowledge of his need. He knew where to take this need. It was before the throne of God in Heaven.

The Pharisee measured himself and thought more highly of himself than he should have. He too is deserving of God's justice, but he won't ask for mercy. The Pharisee can't see his sin. His sin was that he accused the tax collector instead of trying to help him up and deliver him from his oppression. The very oppression that made him cry out to God for mercy.

We fail in the arena of biblical justice when avoid the cry of the spiritual and physically needy.

How hard it is for the Pharisee to turn from his high minded opinion of himself. His good life apparently was his measure of God's acceptance of Him, but to whom much is given much is required.

Instead of justice the Pharisee became the oppressor. His indifference to the poor was his indifference towards God and God's justice for the poor.

Like the rich man's, possessions, wealth, and status were signs of God's acceptance of his life and pillows of safety, but only true faith trusts God completely in everything when everything is gone.

These Pharisees are going to murder Jesus. They do not like their ways questioned. They do not like their relationship with God called into question. Jesus would have given them sight if they really wanted to see, but instead they chose to remain blind.

How about you? Where are you relying on God's justice? How is your life lived in response to God's call for justice to be practiced in our lives towards and for others? How is your having mercy towards others an extension of God's justice?

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Day 25

Reading: Luke 19

Zacchaeus responds with action. His life has changed after an encounter with the Lord. He will repay, he will give, and he is a new man.

Zacchaeus was lost and Jesus was sent to restore him to the family of God. It is a mission the Pharisees never understood. It was a mission of love that we are called to be engaged in.

Oh to be faithful with all that Christ has given us to fulfill this mission. It is hard to think that there might be a person who ignores what the master has given and buries it somewhere in the ground.

Zacchaeus represents those who encounter Christ and are changed. The man or woman whose life remains unchanged after an encounter to the point that they do nothing with what they received is deserving of death as Jesus describes.

It is like humans to receive Jesus with hallelujahs, but when He comes and overturns their apple carts, when He inspects their temples and questions their motives, they easily reject His words. They end up crying, “crucify Him” with the rest of the unmoved and unchanged crowd.

We become robbers when we fail to do rightly with all that the Lord gives us to complete His mission. We have all yelled crucify Him with our indifference to the mission of the church and our indifference to the call in our life.

Then when Jesus is out of sight and mind we can be free to do what we want, as we have always done it, as we have always desired.

How has your life changed since you have known Christ? How do you carry out the mission in tangible ways and acts? How have you repaid and how have you forgiven, or does your life cry out, “Crucify him?”

Consider how your life reflects a life changing encounter with Jesus Christ? What is it you need? What is it you lack? Write them down and pray to God concerning these things.

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Day 26

Reading: Luke 20

It's amazing the things people come up with when it comes to the knowledge and revealed ways of God. In their own logic and wisdom they try to disprove the realities of God's truth.

We often do the same thing. We justify our alternative beliefs and perceptions by our own weak little ponderings. We try to place "buts" where God places "periods."

In the end God and the Word will be proven true and we will be proved false.

This entire chapter is full of groups of people questioning the authority of Jesus. They have different ideas about who Jesus is and what right He has to say the things He says and do the things He does.

Questioning Christ will prove fatal for many. May this not be true of us. There is no sin God is O.K. with. Jesus says He is the only way to God, so there is no other way. It is not by being good that we will see God. It is only through the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Spirit that we can truly know God and not just know something about God.

Jesus again points to human pride tarnished by sin as the cause of the religious leaders rejecting Him. It's our own human sinful pride that keeps us from hearing and responding to Christ daily.

It's true that we don't understand everything in the Bible, but do we believe that God will show us the truth if we seek, ask, and knock. Do we even want to seek, ask, and knock? If we did, then we would accept God's truth, start living it, and then seek, ask, and knock to understand it.

Is there anything that you have been struggling with in the Word to understand? Write it down and begin searching and praying for God to lead you into all truth. Seek a called teacher and maybe God will finally help you put your doubt to rest.

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Day 27

Reading: Luke 21

I love the story of the widow. Her giving shows us that it's about the condition of the heart in giving and not the amount that's important.

The widow gave all she had. This displays a trust in God's provision that would put many of us to shame. She obviously believes and she has obviously found God to be true to His word.

Her actions stand in stark contrast to those who at the end of the age who will be distracted by the cares, worries, and the wasting of life.

I wonder how many of us pray that we will be able to stand before the Son of Man. Will we have the dependence upon God at the end of life that will help us live an approved life before God?

This world will one day end. It will be a time of distress and trouble like the world has never known. Where will we go to find help, to whom shall we turn. We will find little help from the world and the greediness within it. We need to learn like the widow to depend entirely upon God. It is the kingdom life and it is kingdom living. It witnesses to God sometimes more than we could ever say. It witnesses to others that our words are more than words, they are actual beliefs founded on faith in Christ.

What is it that you depend on for security, self worth, and needs? Do these things fail you? When was the last time you depended upon God alone for anything? Did Christ trust in God for everything? If we are to be transformed into the image of Christ who utterly depended upon God in love, then is this the aim of Christian maturity? If not then what is that aim?

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Day 28

Reading: Luke 22

It is the Lord's last supper on earth, but how He desires for us to dine with Him at the eternal banquet. Some believe that when we have Holy Communion we are doing just that.

We do it in remembrance of him and proclaim the reason for His death until His return. He calls His followers to serve others in love is the same as serving Him. To treat others as equals and not lording ourselves over them is the way of Christ. It is the way of God.

He warns them of the dangers ahead since He is leaving. He tells them it will be wise now to take money with them wherever they go and it will be wise to take a sword for their protection. We can spiritualize this or we can see it as a physical prerequisite. The disciples say, "Here are two swords Jesus!" What do we say to this Jesus?

Why do the disciples have swords? Why does Jesus say the two swords are enough? What does this say about us having faith in God's provision? I won't answer this for you. I want you to struggle with these questions.

He calls the disciples to pray. Pray that temptation won't overcome you. Yet Jesus is betrayed, handed over, denied by the disciples who scatter in fear, denied by Peter in deed and word, He is accused, beaten, mocked and remains silent. He is drug from a cell and led to the cross.

The women weep, but he says, "Don't weep for me. Weep for yourselves. At the end He is crucified, bleeding, and He who gave life is dying as life is seeping out of His fleshly body.

He utters, "Forgive them for they don't know what they are doing?" It is a phrase of mercy and immeasurable grace offered to them even as they cast lots for his clothes.

Next to Him is a thief. A thief who refuses to admit guilt and a thief who refuses to acknowledge the goodness and injustice applied to the One the people called the Christ. Next to him is another thief. One who recognizes his sin, and the greatness of the One that has a sign over his head that reads, "The king of the Jews."

We are all thieves. We have all stolen from God what rightly belongs to Him; All honor and glory and hearts devotion.

Which thief are you today? What about yesterday? What have you stolen from God today and given to another? What have you failed to render unto God that which is God's? Can you hear Jesus say, "Today you will be with me in paradise?"

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Day 29

Reading: Luke 23

He is dead and the disciples have fled. The rich man has begged for the body that bled. He is buried in a tomb as the Sabbath approaches soon. Three days of gloom wondering about what looms.

Three days of doubt and wonder. Lives that saw miracles and heard words of great truth and wisdom have now seen the One they had believed in die a horrible death. Had he lied? Were they deceived? What now? What next? In light of all He said, "What do we do now?"

These questions are still asked even today. We enter many times in these dark periods where all we have seen and believed is turned upside down. We feel as if Jesus has left us and all we have are these bags of money and swords to protect ourselves. Is this how we are to spend the rest of our life? Or is there something else that is going to change even this?

When times like these come it is good to remember and think upon what we have seen and heard in the past. Has the Lord ever really left you? Doesn't God love you? Hasn't God always rescued you?

Take the time to write down some of the times when you may have felt as if God abandoned you and what God did to show you that He loved you and had not forgotten you. Then pray and give God thanks for these times and the next time you enter one of these dark periods return to this place and read your list and remember you are not alone or forsaken. Weeping may endure for the night, but as we will soon see, Joy comes on resurrection morning.

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