

St Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church
Rev. Ellis I. Washington, Pastor/Teacher

ADULT CHURCH SCHOOL

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL
April 2022

“DOING” LIFE With GOD

*“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this?
Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” 1 Chronicles
29:14 (NIV)*

Daily devotions from various Christian authors.



Give

Serve



Attend



Grow

Stewardship
a way of life

Stewardship
Of
Jesus

John 17:9-13 NKJV

*“LOOKING TO JESUS, THE FOUNDER AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH,
WHO FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS,
DESPISING THE SHAME, AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.”*

HEBREWS 12:2

Day 1: How Jesus Modeled Biblical Stewardship—Crosswalk

Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. **Luke 12:34**

Jesus talked a lot about **stewardship**. He used parables about handling money to teach deeper principles about discipleship, and He reminded His followers that our hearts follow our treasure. But how did His walk match His talk? It's a fair question for believers who want to **follow His example in every area of their lives**—including their stewardship. A great way to examine the question is to filter His life through the definition of biblical stewardship: managing God's blessings God's way for God's glory. By breaking each component down, we can see how Jesus integrated genuine stewardship into His own life.

God's Blessings: God owns it all, and we manage His stuff. **That's the foundation of biblical stewardship.** In the Gospels, Jesus often acknowledged God's role as **Provider**. He trusted God to provide things like a temple tax from the mouth of a fish (**Matthew 17:24–26**), and He taught His followers to rely on God as they worked and ministered (**Mark 6:8–11**). But Jesus also showed how stewardship isn't just about material possessions. It involves things like our work and our time, too. He knew His time on earth was limited, so **He intentionally set priorities**. *Ever wonder why Jesus told people to keep His identity a secret?* Partially, it was to avoid the kind of distractions that would disrupt His ministry. Jesus was all about making the most of the blessings God had provided.

God's Way: It's one thing to admit that God owns it all. It's another thing to commit yourself to using the stuff He owns His way—mostly because His ways don't always make sense to our human brains. From Eden until today, humans have wrestled with the tension between trusting God's plan and jumping in with our own plans. Jesus really never struggled with that tension. **He embraced the Father's purpose** and never wavered from making it happen. He came to “seek and save the lost” (**Luke 19:10 NIV**). Anything outside that mission was a step outside God's way of doing things. For example, when Satan tempted Him with alternative plans (**Matthew 4:1–11**), Jesus rebuked him with Scripture and refused any shortcuts. Even when God's purpose brought Jesus to the brink of the cross—complete with suffering and agony—He submitted to God's will, not His own (**Matthew 26:39**). Jesus' job wasn't finished until the Father's purpose was finished (**John 19:30**). Jesus stayed connected to God's way by connecting to God through prayer. Scripture tells us that prayer was a habit in Jesus' life (**Luke 5:15–16**), and it's a habit we can imitate as we try to figure out how God wants us to steward His blessings.

God's Glory: Jesus was all about pointing people to God. In fact, His life and ministry were tied up in God's glory (**John 13:31–32**). Whether it was the death of a friend (**John 11:4**) or teaching His disciples about prayer (**John 14:13**), Jesus looked for ways to glorify His Father. And God returned the favor. Twice, the Father spoke from heaven and told people how pleased He was with His Son (**Matthew 3:16–17; 17:4–6**). Later, the apostle Paul told the Christians in Philippi that while Jesus' obedience led to suffering, it also led to His reward (**Philippians 2:6–11**). Like Jesus, everything we do and say should be wrapped up in the glory of God (**1 Corinthians 10:31**). By definition, genuine stewardship glorifies the Father. In fact, **God's glory is a natural consequence of using God's blessings God's way.**

So, **Jesus modeled biblical stewardship** at every turn during His time on earth. Big surprise, right? Well, the challenge for us isn't just recognizing His example. **We've got to imitate His example.** To be effective stewards, we have to find ways to use God's blessings God's way for God's glory—just like Jesus did.

Day 2: Who Is Jesus? – In Touch Ministries

John 11: 1-18

On Earth, Jesus Christ was fully man and also the Son of God, our Savior, and God Himself—so He is worthy of praise. While most people are familiar with the name “Jesus,” few truly know who He is. Yet knowing Jesus' identity and mission are important because the ramifications are eternal. And the best source of information about Him is the Bible.

Scripture tells us Jesus is God. This means that He's eternal: He existed before His physical birth and even before time began. Jesus, the Creator of everything that exists is the perfect reflection of the invisible God.

*Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. **Colossians 1:15-17,***

Our Savior had the power to forgive sins and was worshipped by His followers, both of which are appropriate only for divinity

*Some people brought to him a paralyzed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven." But some of the teachers of religious law said to themselves, "That's blasphemy! Does he think he's God?" Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you have such evil thoughts in your hearts? Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk'? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!" And the man jumped up and went home! Fear swept through the crowd as they saw this happen. And they praised God for giving humans such authority. **Matthew 9:2-8***

*Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed. **Matthew 14:33.***

Think about the omnipotent, eternal Son of God coming to Earth as an infant. Imagine Him lying in a manger made from trees He created and under the stars He Himself had strewn across the sky! Scripture makes it clear that this was no ordinary baby. The Word also says there is only one way to eternal life, and that is through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." **Acts 4:12***

God has provided ample validation of His Son's identity. Weigh the evidence, and then turn to Christ for salvation.

Day 3: Jesus Born In Bethlehem – The Recipe of Life

*"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on My behalf." **Micah 5:2***

Bethlehem was not considered the most notorious place for a Messiah to be born. In fact it was a very small town, even village, yet from it, this prophetic promise rang true; The Messiah *was* truly born. A ruler of Israel *had finally* come. His origins *were* in the distant past; namely at the **beginning of time**. Jesus' birth fulfilled so many prophecies, of which this one of them. Furthermore, this small village was so full of people at the time of Jesus' birth, that there was not even a room that Jesus could be born. Instead of the majesty of a King's room, He was born in a lowly stable, and put to sleep in an animals feeding trough.

Jesus showed us one of the greatest messages through His birth; Small beginnings are not insignificant: Wealth does not dictate the plan God has for your life. Jesus, being born in a lowly stable in Bethlehem, demonstrated **complete humility** and showed us that life should not be dictated by circumstance but by the plan God has for you. For it was from a lowly stable that the King of Kings and Lords of Lords was born and through His life, we can all be saved.

Day 4: The Humble Savior – Greg Laurie

*"And you will recognize by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." . . . "They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger." **Luke 2:12-16***

Jesus, the King of the world, the creator of the universe, humbled Himself and became flesh. Not only did He leave His royal throne, not only did He give up His divine privileges but He also was born to a poor, humble family and laid to sleep in an animals feeding trough (due to the fact that there was no lodging available for them). Moreover, He was wrapped in nothing more than strips of cloth to protect Him from the cool of the night.

This same Jesus was the One who *allowed Himself* to be **sacrificed** on the cross and give Himself as a **ransom** for the very people He created, to free them from the chains of sin that they themselves bound themselves with, when Adam and Eve rebelled against God. The baby Jesus, that is so famously acted-out in nativity stories across the world, is the same Jesus that made a way for you to have eternal life and life free from the chains of sin, a life forgiven and an identity restored. It is in Jesus that we can have life and life in all its fullness.

Next time you see a nativity play, remember that Jesus humbly allowed Himself to be found in the form an innocent baby, so that years later, He could restore the relationship between humanity and God; that includes YOU!

Day 5: Jesus: The Door – Life Daily Devotional

*"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. **John 10:9-10 (NASB)***

It is **through** Jesus that anyone can enter heaven. It is **through** Jesus that anyone can go into heaven and out from the "old life" to find food, water and rest. Jesus gives all of this to **anyone** who enters through Jesus.

What does a thief do? A thief steals, kills and destroys.

What does Jesus do? Jesus came to give you life, abundant life.

What can you and I do? We can enter that Door and be given eternal life.

What is the condition? We must enter through Jesus, and that mean we need to believe Jesus and what He said?

Jesus does not steal anyone's life, nor kills nor destroys anyone who comes to Him. Jesus is not a thief, He is the Savior who came to save His people from their sins

And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

Did the enemies of Jesus understand this as they arrested Him, illegally tried Him and sentenced Him to death on a cross? They previously had the opportunity to believe and they had rejected His words for the past three years. Irrefutable evidence that Jesus is the only way (the Door) anyone must enter to be saved was in Jesus' death and resurrection. His resurrection is proof of His words holding true.

What is eternal life? It is life after we die and then to live in the very presence of Almighty God!

To live in that eternal day...the day which is forever and ever. And the only (yes, the only) access to that eternal day is through Jesus, the Door.

Day 6: Jesus Is the Bread of Life – Reformed Bible Studies

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval" . . . Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:26-27, 35

There is a park in Arkansas called Crater of Diamonds State Park. Inside is a 37.5-acre field in which anyone can go and look for diamonds, and you get to keep any diamonds you find. A few years ago, a woman found a 3.69-carat diamond. The diamond was worth about \$20,000. The year before, someone found a 6-carat diamond. The largest diamond ever found was a 40-carat gem called the "Uncle Sam" diamond—worth over \$50 million. But these are the exceptions. Most people who look for diamonds in this large field don't find anything, no matter how hard they look, no matter how long they stay. Everyone hopes to find the very best diamonds. But the vast majority end up disappointed.

The group to whom Jesus was speaking in John chapter 6 never wanted to feel disappointed again. One day earlier, Jesus used five loaves of bread and two small fish to miraculously satisfy the hunger of thousands. But do you know what happened the next day? The same thing that does the day after we eat even the most satisfying meal. Their bellies were hungry again. So they came to Jesus, who then promised them a food that would never fail to satisfy them. But he wasn't talking about food for their bellies. He was talking about nourishment that would never fail to feed their hurting hearts and sinful souls. He was talking about himself—the one who would feed their souls with forgiveness by his sacrificial death and fill their hearts with hope by his resurrection. He was pointing them and us to the Bread of Life, who will never disappoint us.

Prayer: Father in heaven, as I listen to your Word, feed me with the living bread that will never fail to satisfy. Amen.

Day 7: Fasting From Food: Feasting On Jesus – The Recipe of Life

"Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.....So Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you cannot have eternal life within you." John 6:35, 53

For many, fasting has the connotation that you are depriving yourself of food or other comforts to almost twist God's arm into giving you what you want or to answer your prayers. Of course this is not the case, but it is an important spiritual discipline. So why do we do it and what is the significance? Well first of all, it is mentioned as a spiritual discipline throughout the Bible, and also goes hand in hand with Jesus' teaching about prayer, just after He taught us the 'Lord's Prayer' in **Matthew 6**. Notice that Jesus says, and "**when you fast...**" almost implying that it is normality and is expected of a believer. Yet what is the significance of fasting?

Well, fasting is a discipline not to get *God's attention*, but to put *your attention* back to God. We already have God's attention. We are His children. Fasting is for us. It helps us to re-focus and re-align our thoughts and put Jesus back at the center of our prayers. Yet fasting was never meant to be just giving up something and carrying on with our lives.

Fasting is feasting on Jesus; Giving up food or other comforts and replacing that 'time' or 'meal' with feasting on Jesus by spending time with Him.

Jesus said of Himself that He is the **'Bread of Life'**! In order to aid our spiritual growth, we must feast on Him. Of course Jesus "isn't endorsing cannibalism..," but rather "...using 'eating' and 'drinking' as a metaphor – as symbolism – for believing in Him – for faith in Him." *"Feasting on Jesus means turning to Him, trusting Him, hoping in Him, following Him, and loving Him. Feasting on Jesus means NOT feasting on alternatives to Jesus to satisfy the eternal hunger of our souls."* Just as we need to feed ourselves with physical food to survive, so we need to feast on Jesus for spiritual lives to grow and prosper. As you fast, remember to feast on Jesus!!

Day 8: The Life of Jesus. A Journey of Discovery – Christine Wyrzten

Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. John 21:25

There is so much more to be learned about Jesus. Let me be clear though. The **Bible** is complete and no more can ever be added to it. However, God is still the revealer of mysteries within the multi-faceted, multi-layered pages of His Word. There is much the **Holy Spirit** wants to show us about Jesus. There will be spellbinding discoveries and His glory will be on full display.

Consider this with me. What if there was a new book release entitled, 'One Thousand New Discoveries on the Life of Jesus?' It would be a worldwide bestseller. Wouldn't you agree? But for what reason would it fly off the shelves? I'm convinced that many unbelievers would study the life of Jesus Christ for pure historical value. He is the most influential person ever to have lived. But I'm also convinced that many believers study the life of Christ so that they can learn interesting tidbits to share at their next Bible Study. They are disciples who thrive on being reporters.

Famous people suffer from loneliness and struggle to know whom they can trust. Many of those who seem genuinely interested in them end up betraying them. They draw close, invade their privacy, and then boast to their own circle of friends about what they've learned. They feast on the failures of their famous person and those discoveries give them significance as they whisper their secrets. For those in the limelight, it's very difficult to discern the motives of all who profess love and loyalty.

Jesus was, and is, famous. Oh, that all Bible Study would be for the purpose of loving Him more, not to report what was learned. He waits for true seekers to draw close. He waits to participate in the journey of any who desires to know Him better. He opens blind eyes to His glory. He unveils spiritual food where we least expect it. He is fully engaged. He's eager to speak, confirm, nudge, convict, embrace, and breathe His very life into every life-changing discovery ahead of us. *Are you on the edge of Your seat, Jesus? I am. Amen*

Day 9: THE PRAYER LIFE OF JESUS - OSWALD CHAMBERS

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. Mark 1:35

This incident occurred after our Lord experienced a tremendous spiritual victory over Satan. He had endured the fierce onslaught of Satan in the wilderness. But after this ordeal *the angels ministered unto Him.*

... Where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him. Mark 1:13

There is a peril in assuming that we are strong after a victory, and Jesus realized this fact. I wonder, what was the subject of the Lord's early dawn experience in prayer? Jesus went with such easy power through life; what did He do in those solitary moments with God?

The fame of the Lord Jesus Christ grew steadily; people brought all the diseased and the demon-possessed to Him, and He delivered them. Yet, in the midst of such a marvelous career of relieving and blessing people in need, He spent practically the whole night in prayer.

Do you realize that after eminent success in God's work, there is more need for prayer than when we are at the foothills of a struggle for survival? The moments of victory and success are more dangerous than moments of darkness and depression.

Prayer: *Dear Father, may the spiritual success I experience be fortified with seasons of earnest prayer.*

Day 10: Second Chance Jesus – The Recipe of Life

"For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sins, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." 2 Corinthians 5:21

Today's message is very simple, but contains a truth that if accepted, could transform your life. They are not my words but God's words through the Apostle Paul written to the church in Corinth and applicable for our lives too. The truth is this...

God sent Jesus to this world, to be an offering for our sins, so that we could be made right with God....THROUGH CHRIST.

How incredible. That blessing includes you and me. It includes all who believe in it. Friends that is why Jesus came. He came to give us another chance, and to redeem and restore our relationship with God. He wants us to succeed. If He didn't, He wouldn't have sent His Only Begotten Son to suffer at the hands of the very people He created. Moreover, it is not a second chance He gives, but a third, fourth, fifth.... In fact His grace is unlimited for all those who call upon it. Jesus radically stepped into this world for us for our sakes.

Even more amazing, is that He didn't wait for us to become good before He became an offering for us. He died while we were still sinners. He rose again victorious and patiently waits for us to accept His love, grace and forgiveness through the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit. And even after we accept it and still stumble into sin (or sometimes even purposefully sin), He still is waiting patiently to forgive and restore us until we call on His Name and ask for forgiveness. This is the nature of the man (and God!), Jesus Christ, who came to this earth over 2000 years ago. And if He had to do it just for you, He would have!!

Day 11: What Does Jesus Mean By Serving Others? – Touching Lives

“But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:43-45

In the church where I pastor, as in every mainstream church, we talk often about serving others. Often we make a list of serving roles on Sundays, from being an usher and collecting the offering, to being a greeter, helping on the parking team, or leading a preschool classroom. Each of these roles is important, and helps our church function and be an engaging and welcoming place to come to know God and grow in His Word. But don't let that hour on Sunday be the totality of your service.

As a Christ follower, Jesus instructs us specifically in the area of serving others. What it looks like, He says in **Mark 10**, is that each of us in daily life put our own interests behind the interests and needs of others. So far behind, in fact, that our desire should be that we are consistently meeting the needs of everyone else. Jesus reminds us that He did not come to be served, but to serve. This is an astounding statement. The Son of God—if anyone should expect to be served it is Jesus. Yet His life on earth was filled with examples of serving others. And His specific instructions to us follow along with His example.

To follow Jesus is to live a life where we are always looking for ways to meet the needs of others, through our talents, gifts, and abilities. It is a lifestyle of putting others first, thinking not about ourselves and our own desires, but also about what others lack that we can provide. Certainly opening doors and handing out bulletins on Sundays is a way we can serve. But don't let your Sunday service keep you from a lifestyle of service. What are you doing Monday through Saturday to impact your community, your school, your family, or your business through your service? Is your life, as Jesus commands, one in which you are not first, but last, following the example of Jesus and using what you know and what you have to lift up and help everyone around you?

PRAYER: *God, Your Son Jesus gave me the ultimate example of what it means to be a servant. Not only did He serve in practical ways, but He also served me to the point of giving His own life for my sin. Reveal to me ways in which I can serve others every day. Broaden my horizon when it comes to serving, and help me to not only look for practical ways to serve others every day, but also to grow in my service by acting as a servant in every facet of life. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 12: Jesus and His Mother - CNA

“When Jesus saw His mother standing there beside the disciple He loved, He said to her, “Dear woman, here is your son.” And He said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from then on this disciple took her into his home.” John 19:26-27

Jesus had much on His mind as He hung dying on the cross. The pain was killing Him – literally. He no doubt yearned to rejoin His Heavenly Father. He knew His job on earth was finished; He had accomplished everything His Heavenly Father had ordained. Yet He was also aware of His disciples' shock. He was probably stung with grief over Peter's denial and

Judas' betrayal. Only God knows everything that went through His mind. But one topic is clearly recorded. As Jesus looked down from the cross, He saw the need to do something about His grieving mother.

Referring to John, His beloved disciple, He said to His mother, "Dear woman, here is your son." He then made a similar statement to John: "Here is your mother." (Bible scholars assume that Mary's husband, Joseph, must have passed away by this time, and thus needed assistance.) Early in His ministry (**Mark 3:31-35**), Jesus had said His true family members were "anyone who does God's will." But here, near the end of His earthly life, His love and concern for His birth mother are apparent as well.

Sometimes, we get so caught up in the important work we are doing that we neglect our commitments to our loved ones. If anyone could have claimed that His ministry was the top priority, it would have been Jesus. But even in the middle of His most important act of ministry, even while enduring unspeakable physical and spiritual agony, Jesus cared enough about His mother to ensure she would not be left vulnerable and alone. He charged His closest disciple with her care.

May we, too, remember to care for our loved ones even while we carry out the other work God has given us to do. May we never forget the importance of 'mothers' in our lives. Jesus didn't, neither should we!

Day 13: Jesus Understands – Touching Lives

"Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.'" John 19:28

Often times, I do not think it is truly understood or appreciated how much Jesus suffered on the cross, dying for our sins. Not only did He endure the most torturous death ever invented, but He had already been through 12 hours of torture and beatings before they ever nailed Him to the cross. His naked body was exposed to the heat, he lost a tremendous amount of blood, and was completely exhausted and dehydrated.

Scientists tell us the most agonizing pain the human body can experience is thirst. There hung Jesus, the holy Son of God, with cracked lips and a swollen tongue, literally dying for a drink of water. "I am thirsty," He said. Those three words can be a huge encouragement to us in our own suffering. It's amazing that He even spoke those words. If He was thirsty, why didn't He do something about it? If He could turn water into wine and feed more than 5,000 people with two fish and five loaves, couldn't He have made it rain water right into His parched mouth? Couldn't He have commanded legions of angels to bring Him water right there on that cross? Of course He could have. So why didn't He? Why did Jesus go through the physical suffering, emotional heartache, and even spiritual helplessness? Why did He go through being crucified by His foes, deserted by His friends and family, and forsaken by His Father? Because in regards to suffering, Jesus wanted us to know that what we feel, He has felt...what we experience, He has experienced. When we hurt, we can know He has hurt, too.

Jesus knew firsthand what we would face in this world, because He faced it as well. Perhaps you are hurting physically because of disease or disability. Maybe you are hurting emotionally because you have been deserted or disappointed. Are you discouraged or disillusioned? Take heart! Jesus has felt all of this and more; and He understands. He has been where you are, felt what you feel, and knows what you know. In your hurt, you can always admit your pain to a Savior who knows exactly how you feel.

PRAYER: *Dear God, it is so comforting to know that Jesus has suffered in all the ways that I do. Help me to remember to bring my pain to Him when I am hurting. Thank You for sending Your Son to suffer so that I can have comfort. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Day 14: The Preeminence of Jesus Is for Everyday Life – John Parnell

I recently spent a whole day tucked away at a local library. It was a golden spot. Quiet. Secluded. I sat beneath a shower of grace: an open Bible, a hungry soul, a copy of Owen's The Glory of Christ. I spent several good hours there reading and praying and preparing for a sermon about Jesus and his glory. It was easy to walk close with Jesus alone in the library. I left that spot and within an hour found myself quickly ushered back into the mess of everyday life in the form of my defiant 3-year-old and her younger sister who really needed a diaper change. I longed to be back at that library, tucked away from the mess and headache of real life — that is, until it dawned on me that in the middle of such a mess is where I really live, and that Jesus wants it that way. This is where most everyone lives, and if the supremacy of Jesus doesn't land on us here, in the mess of the everyday, then we'll spend our days oblivious to its wonder. I didn't need to escape back to the library. I needed Jesus right then and there.

TALK ABOUT JESUS, A LOT: Our lives are not polished and shiny and set up on a mantle. They are cluttered and complicated. We get tired. And frustrated. But the preeminence (supremacy) of Jesus can't be an "out there" sort of thing that we save for special days at the library. We must bring this home to the everyday. And one of the simplest ways to do that is to talk about Jesus, a lot. We should talk about Jesus often and be clear about his identity, resisting every temptation to make him peripheral, secondary, or assumed. And we may find that talking about Jesus often brings his preeminence to have a deeper bearing on our lives. It helps to remind us of his role in two things we deeply care about — the gospel and the glory of God.

THE GOSPEL: The gospel is not a mantra we repeat over and over again to power up spiritually. It's not merely some divine mechanism that primes us for loving others. But the gospel is, first and foremost, about *a Person*. A person, Jesus Christ, is the one who suffered in our place under Pontius Pilate. He died and was buried, and on the third day, the person, Jesus Christ, was raised. The events in **1 Corinthians 15:3-5** that Paul summarizes as that which is of first importance are further summarized by this one word: Jesus. We can speak of the "person of Christ" and the "work of Christ," but rightly understood, they cannot be separated. The gospel is about a person and that person is Jesus.

THE GLORY OF GOD: The glory of God is not an abstract idea or motivation that we aspire to live for. God's glory is the radiance of the fullness of who he is, and that radiance is *a Person*. A person, Jesus Christ, is the one in whom all the fullness of deity was pleased to dwell **Colossians 2:9**. Jesus, the Person, is the Word of God made flesh as the ultimate revelation of the triune God (**John 1:18; Hebrews 1:1-3**). **THE GLORY OF GOD IS A PERSON AND THAT PERSON IS JESUS:** We want to feel the supremacy of Jesus in our everyday, not just alone at the library. We love the gospel and the glory of God and we want the small and apparently menial moments of our lives to connect these massive realities. And at their heart is a person named Jesus. So seek to stay conscious of him. Talk about him. The preeminence of Jesus is about our everyday lives.

"Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." **Luke 22:42**
As Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, his first request is for his father to "take this cup of suffering away from me" (22:42). Our translation supplies a bit of explanation that is not present in the original language. More literally, Jesus asks, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me." The New Living Translation seeks to help the reader to understand the nature of the cup. The cup of Jesus will involve suffering, to be sure. Yet "*cup of suffering*" doesn't quite get what Jesus meant when he referred to a cup. If we look in the Old Testament, we find that the metaphor of the cup stands for our lives, which can be filled with a variety of things. Our "*cup*" can be filled with **blessing and salvation (Psalm 23:5; 116:13)**, or it can be filled with **wrath and horror (Isaiah 51:17; Ezekiel 23:33)**. Frequently, the cup stands for God's judgment and wrath. Consider, for example, **Isaiah 51:17: "Wake up, wake up, O Jerusalem! You have drunk the cup of the LORD's fury. You have drunk the cup of terror, tipping out its last drops."** Many other Old Testament passages use the metaphor of the cup as a reference to God's fierce judgment. Thus, when Jesus prays about avoiding the cup, he is alluding to these images from the Scriptures. By going to the cross, he will drink the cup of God's wrath, all the way to the bottom. He will bear divine judgment, that which rightly falls upon Israel and, indeed, upon all humanity. In this process, he will suffer horribly, both in the physical realm and especially in the spiritual realm as he enters the Hell of separation from his Father.

Many Christians are troubled by Jesus' request to have the cup taken from him. **Didn't he come to die, after all? Wasn't this his mission? Didn't he prophesy about this? How is it possible for Jesus to have asked for another way?** I can't begin to answer these questions in a satisfying way. But what I see in Jesus' prayer is a genuine human being, one who is fully human as well as fully divine. I catch a glimpse of the unspeakable horror that awaits him. I see a Jesus to whom I can relate, one who is much more like me than the superman Jesus who goes to the cross without a second thought and tiny hesitation. I would invite you to consider what the gut-wrenching honesty of Jesus says to you.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION: If Jesus had prophesied that he would suffer and die, why do you think he prayed for the cup to be taken from him? What does this say about Jesus? What does this say about prayer?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, though I have read the accounts of your prayer in Gethsemane a hundred times, I am once again startled by your prayer to have the cup taken from you. I am reminded of your humanness, that you were not some automaton that had no feelings. No, you were fully human even as you were truly God in the flesh. I'm also reminded, Jesus, of the true horror of the cross for you. Yes, it would involve unbearable physical suffering. Yet what you experienced in your flesh was only a mere glimpse of the spiritual suffering as you bore the weight of sin. Your prayer in the garden helps me to grasp the scandal as well as the majesty of the cross. Finally, I thank you, Lord, for modeling such openness in prayer. Your example gives me freedom to speak truly and openly as I pray, to pour out my heart without hesitation. Thank you for this priceless gift. *Amen.*

Day 15: Nailing Sinful Passions to the Cross – The Recipe of Life

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross and crucified them there.” Galatians 5:24

The cross forever stands as a reminder of the pain and suffering that our Lord Jesus went through when He took humanities sin on His shoulders and took our punishment for us. However, when looking at the cross, we should only see our place in God’s eyes. FORGIVEN!

If we are forgiven (continually forgiven) then our lifestyles should reflect the inward change and the regenerative work of salvation. So often we can slip up and go back to old habits, old lifestyles and even begin to think as you did before Christ lived in you. However, Paul’s encouragement for us today, is to nail our old habits, passions and desires to the cross. We no longer have to be slaves to sin. What Jesus did on the cross was eternal, for everyone and can never run out. We can start again today.

Grace, hope and love are not restricted to a once in a lifetime decision. You can have as much of Jesus’ grace, hope and love, as you want all the time. If we confess our sins (nailing them to the cross) then He will forgive us. It’s a promise. Today if you have wondered from God’s best for you, nail your sins to the cross, and have faith they are crucified with Christ and that because of His love for you, YOU ARE FORGIVEN...HOW AMAZING IS THAT!!

Go and Sin no more!!

Day 16: Why Didn’t Jesus Defend Himself? – Rick Warren

“But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’” (Mark 14:61 NIV)

WHAT’S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT EASTER? It’s important because it proved that Jesus was who he claimed to be. He was God in the flesh, and he came to Earth to save us. Three events occurred in dramatic succession on that Easter weekend: the trial of Jesus, then the death of Jesus, and finally the **Resurrection** of Jesus.

JESUS ACTUALLY WENT THROUGH SIX TRIALS. In that one night, he was brought before Annas (the father-in-law of Caiaphas), Caiaphas (the high priest), the Sanhedrin (the religious Supreme Court), Pilate (the governor of Jerusalem), Herod (the governor of Galilee), and then Pilate again. At the end of those six trials, what did they find to accuse him of? Nothing. He had done nothing wrong. They brought in people to make up phony charges, but those didn’t stick. Finally they convicted him on one count: claiming to be the Son of God. That’s the sole reason Jesus went to **the cross**.

EVERYONE WHO HAS EVER BEEN INTRODUCED TO JESUS HAS ALREADY MADE SOME KIND OF DECISION ABOUT WHO HE IS. You either believe he’s a liar or you believe he’s a lunatic or you believe he’s the Lord. It can’t just be, *“I believe he was a good teacher.”* He couldn’t be just a good teacher, because a good teacher would not say, *“I’m God, and I’m the only way to Heaven.”* A good person would not say that unless it was the truth.

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD. In **John 12:47**, he is recorded as saying: *“I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world”* (NIV). He allowed himself to be put on trial so there would be no doubt about who he was. He could have stopped the trial at any moment; he knew he would be proven guilty and put on the cross. But he allowed it to happen. It was all part of the plan.

TALK IT OVER

- Why do you think God allowed Jesus to be put to death, even though he was innocent? What does it say about God’s character?
- What was your reaction when you were first introduced to Jesus?
- What do you believe about Jesus now?

Day 17: The Life Changing Power of the Cross and the Resurrection – Debbie McDaniel

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

The cross is empty and so is the tomb. You can try to bury Power, but it won't stay there. You can try to bury Truth, but it is not dead. You can try to bury Love, but it cannot be contained. Jesus is alive, He won the victory of sin and death. And He’s still the same, even in all the days after the **Easter** weekend. He never changes. He made a way for us to live free. No other truth in history has the ability to change our lives and affect our future like this. Yet so many still choose to reject Christ’s sacrifice and love. He offers us a choice today, and it’s the best decision you could ever make.

What Christ's Death on the Cross and the Power of His Resurrection Offers:

- **It provides a bridge, a way, to God.** It gives us an opportunity to have a personal relationship with the very God who made us and loves us more than we could imagine. Without the cross, there is no way to cross over to the other side of relationship with him. Any attempt will fail. He is the Only Way.
- **It provides opportunity for forgiveness of sin.** Through the price that Jesus paid on Calvary, we have the chance to be forgiven of our own sin. He took our sin and shame upon his very shoulders. He took the blows on our behalf so we wouldn't have to suffer. Such incredible love. Such amazing sacrifice.
- **It provides freedom to all those who believe.** Freedom from the shackles of sin. Freedom from shame. Freedom from fear. Freedom from worry. Freedom from hopelessness. Freedom from despair. Freedom from addiction. Freedom from guilt. Freedom from darkness and eternal separation from God.
- **It provides new life.** We are not only forgiven and set free, but we have a whole new life and destiny through Christ. We are changed, from the inside. He renews our minds. He changes our hearts and desires. He gives us fresh purpose for every day set before us.
- **It provides power for us to live today.** When Jesus died on the cross, and was buried, it didn't stop there. The final picture of all that the cross provides lies in the powerful Resurrection of our Lord. He won. He didn't stay dead. His power broke through, and that same power is alive within us today. As believers, God gives us the power of the Holy Spirit, living and moving through us each day.
- **It provides the way to have victory over the enemy.** We don't have to fear him or his attacks. As we live aware of his traps, the power of Christ over our lives gives us a covering and protection from his evil schemes. We're not left to fend for ourselves. We don't fight in our own strength. We can stand strong in the Mighty Name of Jesus Christ.
- **It provides for us an eternal heavenly home.** We never need to fear about what will happen when we die. In Christ we have been given the gift of eternal life. This earth is only our temporary home. God is preparing a place for us, with him, to live forever. And you can be assured it will be far greater than we could ever imagine.

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor.15:57

PRAYER: Dear God, thank you for your great gift of love and sacrifice, so that we can live free. Thank you for the power of the cross and the Resurrection. We ask that the truth of it all sinks deeply into our hearts and changes us forever. Fill us fresh with your Spirit today. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Day 18: Victory Over Sin And Death – The Recipe of Life

"But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless." 1 Corinthians 15:57-58

Today's devotion is a simple reminder that Jesus has overcome sin and death. We do not need to be a people and body who live in the darkness. We are children of light. We are children who have the resurrected Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. It is in Him that victory is found. Moreover, it is because of Jesus' victory that our lives are transformed.

It is no wonder that Paul encourages us to *'be strong and immovable'*! We live the power of Jesus' victory. May God, today, grant us all an understanding of what it means to live in that power. May we understand how we can live strong and immovable lives for Christ and in Christ. May we fully understand that we don't need to give into sin, but we can stand firm in Jesus!

PRAYER: Lord, may You fill our lives with a deeper understanding of Your power and victory over sin and death. Lord, guard our hearts and minds to be strong and immovable in You. Amen

Day 19: The Man Jesus – Our Atoning Sacrifice – The Recipe of Life

"This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and understand the truth. For, there is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity – the man Christ Jesus. He gave His life to purchase freedom for everyone." 1 Timothy 2:3-5a

God's heart is that all men might be saved and have a knowledge of who Jesus is. After all, when Jesus left the earth after His bodily resurrection, He commissioned not only the disciples but all believers, *"to be My witnesses telling people about Me everywhere..."* God wants all men to be saved; yet there are so many who reject His free gift of love and mercy.

Yet that shouldn't stop our willingness to share God's goodness with others. So great is God's love for humanity that Jesus gave up His own life "to purchase freedom" for us. All of us were separated from God by sin until we surrendered our lives to Christ. He became the Mediator between God and us, so we no longer were separated from God but reconciled to Him. **That is good news.** No matter how bad we have been to others, to ourselves and to God, we all can have an opportunity to come freely to God because of Jesus Christ. Sin separates and builds a divide between us and God, but Christ's sacrifice is the bridge back to Him.

This is a message that the world needs to hear. The promise that we can be saved from our sin, we are loved by God and that because of Jesus, we can be reconciled back to God. Let pray and action walk hand in hand, as we look to share Jesus with the nations.

Day 20: Mary: I Call You by Name – The Recipe of Life

*"She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize Him. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought He was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will go and get Him." "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to Him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (Hebrew for "Teacher")." **John 20:14-16***

One of the first people Jesus appeared to in His resurrected body was Mary Magdalene. We don't know a lot about Mary, other than the fact she had been delivered from seven demons by Jesus. Some say she was a prostitute or a 'loose woman' before she met Jesus, yet those claims are not supported by Biblical references. What we do know about her, is that after her healing, she never left Jesus' side. She was present throughout Jesus' ministry, at the cross and most importantly at the tomb after Jesus' resurrection. Mary Magdalene's encounter with the resurrected Jesus is recorded in the Gospel of John and is especially significant for Jesus' words when speaking with Mary.

After questioning the angels to see where Jesus' body was, noticing that the tomb had been opened and Jesus' body was not in the tomb, Mary encountered a Man whom she thought was the gardener. Yet in actual fact the 'gardener' was indeed the resurrected Jesus. However, it was Jesus' response to Mary's desperate questions that promoted her to recognize who Jesus really was. As soon as Jesus said "Mary", she knew it was her Lord and Savior. The love that could be heard through Jesus' affirming words moved Mary to call out 'Teacher' or 'Rabboni'. She knew the voice of her Good Shepherd calling her. She knew the comfort His voice brought. She knew the value of Jesus' words. She knew that she was God's child and that God Himself was calling her. One can only imagine the joy that Mary must have felt when Jesus called her by name.

Today, Jesus calls us too by name. He calls us as His bride. He calls us as His chosen ones. His voice is as re-assuring, affirming and loving as it was when He called out Mary's name. His voice gives us the assurance that we are His. Heed Jesus' loving voice. We are His beloved.

Day 21: What Does Jesus' Sacrifice Mean For Me? Being Born-Again – The Recipe of Life

*"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by His great mercy we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead..." **1 Peter 1:3a***

Over the last few weeks we have been looking at all of the benefits we can participate and rejoice in, due to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today we continue with this theme as we celebrate our lives, as **born-again** children of God. Put plainly, being **born again** is not a physical re-entry into the mother's womb to be born again, but it is *an inward death of your old lifestyle and a new beginning in Christ.*

When Jesus enters our lives, we are given a new life. This new life is in tune with God's heart, aware of right and wrong and free to live fully in the freedom that God has always desired for us His children. We are created to worship, to rejoice, and to live life in all of its fullness. Being born again is like you have come alive again.

Because Jesus was raised again on the third day, we can rejoice in His resurrection and we too can be resurrected with Christ. Our sinful lives put to death when Christ breathed His last breath and our new lives resurrected with Him. So rejoice, we have been born again.

Day 22: Jesus at the Center of Your Life – Rick Warren

*"Seek first God's kingdom and what God wants. Then all your other needs will be met as well" **(Matthew 6:33 NCV).***

If you want to live a truly balanced life, you can only look at one person in all of history as a model: Jesus. If you put him at the center of your life, your life will be more balanced.

Think of your life like a wheel. The center of the wheel is a hub. All of the spokes of your life (which represent your relationships, your family, your career, your goals, etc.) come from that hub. We all build our lives around some sort of hub. The question is, what will be your hub? Will it be your family? Will it be your career? Will it be money? Or will it be Jesus? How do you know what you're building your life around? Take a look at whatever you think about the most. That's what is driving you.

The center of your life is critical to developing a balanced life. A solid center leads to a solid life. A weak, flimsy center leads to a weak life. When I hear people tell me that their lives are coming unglued, it usually means one thing: They have a faulty center. Something other than God has taken priority in their lives.

Not only does the hub create stability, but it also controls and influences everything else about your life. Whatever you put at the center of your life will also be your source of power. The power of a wheel always emanates from the center outward — never the other way around.

Make Jesus the center of your life, and he'll provide the stability, control, and power you need for your life. The Bible says, *"Seek first God's kingdom and what God wants. Then all your other needs will be met as well"* (**Matthew 6:33 NCV**). Don't worry about making Jesus first in your life. Put him in the center of your life. Let him direct your life, influence it, empower it, and give it stability. Do that, and all the other areas of your life — from your family to your career to your goals — will find balance in Jesus.

Talk It Over

- If you looked at your life as a wheel, what would be in the center?
- What are the biggest distractions for you to having a balanced life?
- What do you think is the biggest obstacle to putting Jesus at the center of your life?

Day 23: Jesus is the Center – Experiencing God

All of eternity centers around the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." **Colossians 1:15**

"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." **Hebrews 1:3**

And at the time of his return,

"On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords." **Revelation 19:16**

He is the all-important, eternity-changing, and humanity-redeeming Son of the living God. To center our lives around meeting with God is to build our foundation on the unshakable center of all eternity. To build our lives around encounters with Jesus is to place the anchor of our hope in the King of kings and Lord of lords. Only Jesus is faithful to his word. Only Jesus will accomplish that which he has promised us.

"And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." **1 John 2:17**

The will of God is to center our lives around his loving presence. God's greatest commandment is that we would simply love him with all we do. To live differently than the world around you by centering your life around encountering Jesus is to chart a new path that leads to the fullness of life. It may appear foolish to the world to place your hope solely in the person of Jesus, but nothing could be more important. It may look different to cast aside the pursuits of society such as comfort, status, and acclaim, but no greater decision could be made. You serve a God who was, is, and is to come. You belong to a King who laid down his life that you might truly live. You'll find no greater joy, peace, or purpose than in serving Jesus alone. There is no greater life than one lived in full devotion to the King of all the earth.

Take time today to recommit yourself fully to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Step away from the limited perspective and think about the divine, eternal kingdom of God. Allow the truth of God's word and love to fill you with the courage to choose devotion to him over service to yourself and the world around you. May your day today be filled with the abiding presence of King Jesus.

Prayer

1. Meditate on Scripture about the person of Jesus. Remember that Jesus is alive and near. He is the living God and Scripture says your life is wrapped up in him.

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." **Galatians 2:20**

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." **Isaiah 9:6**

"Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." **Hebrews 12:2**

2. In what ways is your life not centered around Jesus? In what ways are you living for the earth rather than eternity?

3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you center your life around who Jesus was and is. Ask him to fill you with the knowledge of his nearness and love for you. Open your heart and receive the presence of Jesus. Ask him to show you ways that you can center your life around him today.

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." **Colossians 3:1**

Day 24: THE LIFE OF JESUS IS IN YOU - Joseph Prince Daily

...I [Jesus] have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. **John 10:10**

Though Jesus is completely God, He was born completely human. He went through temptation after temptation and conquered every one of them (**Hebrews 4:15**). And all that overcoming power is found in His life. And He put that life in you—the life of Christ is in you! During Jesus' ministry on earth, He conquered sickness, the winds and waves, the powers of darkness and death. It is His life that brings victory over the devil and all his works. And He put that life in you—the life of Christ is in you!

Finally, Jesus went to the cross. And that life in Him put an end to everything that was natural of the Adamic race—sickness, poverty, failures, pains, curses and death. All that was natural ceased to be in that life of His. But all that was supernatural remained in Him. And He put that life in you—the life of Christ is in you!

Then, Jesus rose from the dead. And in that life of His was added the power of resurrection. And He put that life in you—the life of Christ is in you!

After His resurrection, Jesus went back to heaven to His Father. Today, He is seated at the right hand of God, resting in His finished work, occupying a place of the highest authority. And He put that life in you—the life of Christ is in you! And because Jesus went back to the Father, the Holy Spirit came to indwell you (**John 16:7**), so that you will live life with His anointing in you and walk in His overcoming power.

All that Jesus is, God meant for you to be. All that He has, God meant for you to have. All the exciting things that you read in the Bible about Jesus, all the treasures of Him hidden in the Old Testament and the unsearchable riches in Him that you find in the New Testament, all of that life of His, is not out there somewhere. God has deposited all of it in you, so that you can live the abundant life that Jesus came to give you!

Day 25: The Power in the Name of Jesus! – Rick Warren

"While you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." **Acts 4:30**

Have you invoked the name of Jesus in faith and truth? Brethren, there is power in the name of Jesus. There is so much power in Jesus' name that no one can stand against it anywhere, either in heaven, on earth, or under the earth. It is a powerful name that many people have used throughout history to bring about great change in their lives. Power in that name of Jesus is just as great today as it was two thousand years ago and will be forever. Therefore, power in that name is an important attribute of God and a mighty name for bringing about great change in our lives. The name of Jesus carries amazing powers that can perform signs and wonders. So likewise, set captives free from darkness, oppression, or persecution.

When you are faced with any temptation, call the name of Jesus in truth and Spirit, you will surely overcome it. The power in the name of Jesus is still available to us today, too. We just need to pray and ask him to help us. For *"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* **Romans 10:13**. *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous people run into it and are safe."* **Proverbs 18:10**

When Jesus walked the earth, he demonstrated his power over sickness, death, and overall, the forces of evil. He even demonstrated his power by calming a stormy sea. And He further explained to us in **John 14:14**, saying, *“If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”* So why not ask Jesus for help today? He is always willing and able to help you. All you need to do is call on his name. Remember, *“God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).”*

Although some may question the power in the name of Jesus when you are about to call Him, I encourage you don't let them stop you from calling the mighty name that saves. You just believe and invoke the name with faith, invoke it in truth and Spirit with all your heart, you will be set free to the highest heights of your soul. Because through faith in Jesus, all believers have access to this power which allows them to be victorious over sin and death. Call Him Now. **Colossians 1:16** says, *“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him.”*

Prayer: In the name of Jesus, anything that is not of God in my life, be uprooted now. Amen.

Day 26: How to Live in the Light of Jesus – Kennedy Lane

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” **Romans 5:8**

You may be going through a season of life where you feel stuck, you do not know where you are going or what you are doing with your life. Maybe you are just living through the routine day in and day out. If you feel stuck in darkness, and need to find the light of Jesus, here are some things that you can do.

Stop Living in Routine: Stop doing the same thing every single day. Get out of your routine and do something new, whether it is going to a pottery class, or studying at a different coffee shop. Try doing something to shake up your normal routine. Get outside of your daily routine and do something that brings you more joy. Go out and spend time doing what you like and doing something for yourself and something that brings more light into your life.

“For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” – 1 Corinthians 6:20

Spend More Time with Others: Make an effort to spend more time with the people in your life that are important to you. Ask a good friend to meet up for coffee or call your mom on the phone and ask her how her day is. Surround yourself with the people that mean the most to you. These people will help bring you more joy and happiness. They will remind you of why they are important to you and bring light to your life.

“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.” – Exodus 20:12

Spend More Time with God: If you are feeling down, in darkness and stuck in routine, spend time with the one who brings light. Spend time with God. You can do this in many different ways. One way is you can read your Bible, or start a devotional. Dive into God's word directly and listen to what he has to say and be reminded of what God has planned for you. Another way you can do this is through worship. Put on some music and be still and praise God for the things he has given you and trust him in what he will do in the future. Lastly, pray. Pour your heart out to God. Give him everything that is on your mind and in your heart. He hears you and will listen to everything you have to say.

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” – Matthew 6:6

He Wants You to Be Happy: Choose to start every day with happiness. Try to look on the bright side of things and choose that you will be happy when you wake up in the morning. Look on the bright side of things and think of the little things that you are thankful for. God only wants good things for your life and wants you to be happy. Think of the things that God has given you that you are thankful for.

“But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.” – 1 Peter 4:13

Live Life Like God Intended: The Lord created you in his image. He wants you to live a happy life and spread his light and joy to those around you and that is hard to do when you are stuck in darkness. Be a light to those around you and be happy with the life that God has given you. Live like God would want you to live and live for his glory.

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” – Psalm 16:11

Day 27: The Name Above All Names – Ayelbire Joshua

“You can ask for anything in My Name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask Me for anything in My Name, and I will do it!” John 14:14

Jesus Saves – it’s in His Name. There is no coincidence why there is power in the Name of Jesus. It was a divine name given to Joseph by an angel when Mary fell pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. The angel appeared to Joseph in a dream bringing comfort to him, as his fiancé, Mary, had become pregnant. He knew that the child was not from him, so as an honorable man, he decided to separate with Mary quietly. The angel reassured Joseph that this baby was God’s plan to save the world from their sins and that Mary had fallen pregnant by the power of God. He appropriately pronounced that the baby should be called Jesus – which means **‘the Lord saves’!**

Fast forward a few years and we find Peter and John standing on trial before the council, after praying in the Name of Jesus for a crippled man to walk again and being arrested by the religious leaders for their actions. Peter’s defense of his actions continue to stand as a testimony to the greatness of Jesus’ Name throughout the generations...

*“Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by **the powerful Name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene**, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead... There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:10 – 12)*

Let us also be reminded that that same Name is as powerful and real today as it was when the angel first gave Jesus His Name in Joseph’s dream. Let us boldly call on the Name of Jesus, for it is at His Name every knee shall bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus saves, He heals, He delivers, He comforts and He rules!

Let us boldly proclaim His Name! Jesus Saves!

Day 28: The Power Of Jesus’ Prophetic Words – The Recipe of Life

“Go and get your husband,” Jesus told her. “I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied. Jesus said, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband – for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now...”” John 4:16-18b

Today’s wonderful story is taken from the book of John where he wonderfully describes the encounter with Jesus and a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob in Samaria. In Jewish customs, it was forbidden for a man and woman to talk openly in public. Furthermore, a Jew and Samaritan were prohibited to even speak to each other. Yet here **Jesus goes against all traditions for the sake of love.**

However, the highlight of this passage is when Jesus speaks a profound and prophetic word to the Samaritan woman, as the consequences change not only her life but the lives of many in Samaria. Jesus, lovingly addresses the woman’s sinful condition by highlighting she was living together with a man without being married. It is clear Jesus had hit a nerve. She immediately perceived that Jesus was someone greater than just an ordinary man. Yet Jesus wasn’t finished. He continued to reveal more of Himself to the woman, highlighting that not only can He fill her empty heart with His everlasting water but that through Him, people can worship God freely. Stunned at Jesus’ words she ran back to the village and shared her news with them..... *“Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could He possibly be the Messiah? So the people came streaming from the village to see Him.”*

The power of the revelation of who Jesus is changes lives. Remember this was a Samaritan woman who traditionally should have had nothing to do with Jesus. Yet here she is running back to Jesus with hordes of her people from the village she was living in. Let us freely and boldly **share Jesus with people**. Let us not be afraid of embarrassment, cultural barriers or even deep rooted traditions. For we know that when people encounter the revelation of who Jesus was and is, lives are radically changed.

Day 29: The Power Of Jesus’ Prophetic Words: Part 2– The Recipe of Life

*“Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!” When they came out to see Him, they begged Him to stay in their village. So He did for two more days. . . . They said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of **what you told us**, but **because we have heard Him ourselves.**”” John 4:39-42*

Yesterday we learnt of Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. We learnt how Jesus met her where she was at in her life and ministered His love and grace to her. We learned how He spoke a prophetic word to the woman revealing her sinful lifestyle, yet He did so in a loving and kind way, not in a condemning and judgmental way. So great was this word from Jesus that the woman ran back to the village with joy telling her fellow villagers about Jesus.

We then pick up the story again in verse 39. Amazingly, because of the prophetic words of Jesus to the woman, many believed. Even more amazing, was that Samaritan people were begging Jesus to stay in Samaria to continue to teach and share His message with them. **So great were Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman that not only did it radically change her life but the lives of so many others.**

Yet the key passage in this whole story is found in verse 42. *"Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard Him ourselves. Now we know He is indeed the Savior of the world."* How incredible that Jesus' few words to the Samaritan woman had such a big impact. Furthermore, Jesus' own words to them, revealed His true identity as the Savior of the world. However, the power of a testimony and the power of a prophetic word can only lead people to Jesus. It is when they meet Him and hear Him for themselves that their lives are completely changed. The Samaritan's woman's words only led the people to Jesus, moreover, it was Jesus' own words that radically changed their lives, **'because we have heard Him ourselves.'**

When we encounter Jesus' love for ourselves, we become a beacon of His grace and His love. It is then our privilege is to lead other people to Christ and *let the Holy Spirit* fully reveal the character and person of Jesus to them **personally.**

Day 30: THE LIFE OF JESUS IN MORTAL BODIES – Ray Steadman

For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. 2 Corinthians 4:11

What we want, of course, is to be like Him. But the power of God is the miracle of others seeing in us, in the midst of our pressures and trials, the character and the life of Jesus. I have always been amused and challenged by the verse in Colossians 1, where Paul prays that his friends in Colosse may be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might (**Colossians 1:11a**). **What are they going to use all this power for?** It sounds as though Paul ought to say, So that you can go about doing great miracles; so that you can astonish people with the tremendous magnetism of your preaching and teaching and be followed by great crowds. But that is not what he says. He says, *I pray that you may be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience (Colossians 1:11)*. That is what takes power; that is where the life and the power of God is manifest. That is the life of Jesus.

As you read through the gospels, the Spirit of God brings to your mind's eye a far more beautiful and wonderful picture, perhaps, of Jesus' character and life. You see His **compassion** of heart, His **moral beauty** that attracted people everywhere He went. You see the **serenity of His spirit**, how He moves through every scene of anger and unrest with **calmness** and **quietness**. You see His **disciplined will** and His obvious **joy in living**. That is the life of Jesus, and that is what we want, isn't it?

How do you get it? The secret, Paul says, is our consent to **share in the dying of Jesus**. What does he mean by the dying of Jesus? You know he does not mean that we have to get ourselves nailed to a cross. But that cross is a symbol of something very real in our experience. **What was Jesus like on the cross?** He was not powerful and impressive and significant; He was not being applauded by the multitudes that listened to His every word. No. The cross was a place of *physical weakness*, of *rejection* by the proud and arrogant world around Him. It was a place of *obscurity*, a place where He was *willing to lose everything* He had built and to trust God to bring it back and make it significant.

Have you been in those circumstances recently, where no matter what you do you cannot seem to get any glory or credit for yourself? That is exactly where God wants you, because out of those times of inordinate pressure, times of hurt and despair and heartache and a sense of being wasted and not used, **God is working His will**. Others, perhaps, are being given life because of the death you are going through.

PRAYER: Lord, there are times when I go through trials. How my heart longs to cry out to You to deliver me from them. May I rather learn instead, Lord, that wonderful attitude of the Lord Jesus, if it be possible, may this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.

Life Application

Are we being so changed by our relationship with Christ that others who are in our lives see the glory of His character? How can we share in the dying of Jesus?

12 WAYS JESUS CHRIST SET THE EXAMPLE FOR US TO FOLLOW

1. He served others (John 2:1-11).
2. He ministered to the sick (Luke 5:12-15).
3. He prayed to Heavenly Father (John 17).
4. He stood up for what's right (John 2:14-17).
5. He showed compassion (Matthew 14:16-21).
6. He studied, learned, and taught from the scriptures (Luke 4:16-21).
7. He was humble (Matthew 27:27-31).
8. He shared the gospel with others (Matthew 5-7).
9. He resisted temptation (Matthew 4:1-11).
10. He was obedient (Matthew 26:39).
11. He forgave others (Luke 23:34).
12. He inspired hope (John 14:15-17).