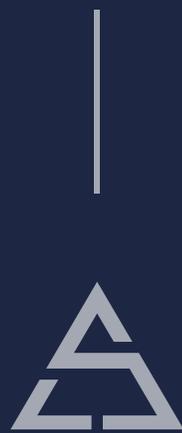


IN THE MIDST

A 30-DAY JOURNEY RESTING IN THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD



In the Midst

In the Midst

In the Midst

We can all agree that this year has been nothing like we expected. Countless plans canceled, sickness, news and numbers that we can't keep up with, and so much sadness around us. It would be easy these days to lose sight that God is good, faithful, and in control. We know from God's word that suffering will always be present on this side of heaven, but in the midst of these difficult times we must remind ourselves that God has not left us. He is faithful, active, and nothing catches Him by surprise. He has a purpose and a plan for everything even when it's hard to see.

Over the next 30 days, this devotional will use God's word to see how we can live faithfully in the midst of difficult days.

DAY ONE

They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were astonished, but those who followed him were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he began to tell them the things that would happen to him. "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles, and they will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days." Mark 10:32-34

The monster was there, right in front me. Staring at me. Daring me to approach. It took a long time for me to even get close to this beast. I approached slowly and got closer and closer. At the last second when I was almost touching it, I lost any amount of courage I had and turned back and went away. Listen, this thing was a big, scary and fast ... a roller coaster. I was a kid! Give me a break here! But I was terrified of this thing. I didn't have the courage to ride it.

Thankfully, I've become more courageous as I've grown up, but I still really struggle with fear at times. The only reason I have any kind of courage is because God is courageous and He's taught me through His example. Read Mark 10:32-34. Verse 32 says "... Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were astonished, but those who followed him were afraid....". This isn't obvious courage if you don't know the background. Jesus was headed down the road to Jerusalem ... to His impending death. Jesus knew the "beast" of death He was about to face. But through His courage, Jesus was courageously walking ahead of the group toward something that everyone else feared.

Like I said, I still have fear in my life. But knowing that Jesus walked toward His death with courage has inspired courage in me. Courage inspires courage. Just like Jesus' followers, we should be amazed and in awe of Jesus' bravery. Jesus led by example so we could stand in the midst of the storm. The rollercoasters of life are big and scary, but God is with you.

THE POINT:

In the midst of life, we can be courageous because Jesus was courageous for us in His life and death.

What do you fear? Why?

How has God already conquered this fear?

How will you practice courage?



DAY TWO

My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one. 1 John 2:1

When you were very young, you had to learn how to walk. You were so young when this was happening that you probably don't remember the process. You slowly progressed from sitting up, to crawling, to standing, and, finally, to taking your first victorious steps on your own. But, there were many falls and tears throughout this learning curve. In order to grow, you took risks, lost your balance while struggling to find it, and fell hard to the ground. It was in these moments that you cried out and someone knelt down to pick you up, comfort you, and help you try again.

When you were learning to walk, falling was part of the process. It was expected that you would trip up as you tried to figure it out. Even today, though you know how to walk and have been doing so for years, you still trip and fall sometimes. Learning how to physically walk is similar to learning how to walk as a Christ follower. In the first half of 1 John 2:1, believers are encouraged not to sin; but, in the second half, it says that sometimes believers will still fall to sin ("but if anyone does sin"). Just like you were expected to fall when you learned to walk, you are expected to fall every now and then as you struggle with sin. Enter Jesus.

Jesus is your Advocate. An advocate exists to plead someone's case—to represent someone who can't represent themselves. Jesus advocated for you when He lived a perfect life, died a death for all sin, and rose again to be with God. Jesus paid the penalty for your sin. If you turn to Him in moments of failure, He is there to pick you up when you fall and teach you how to walk.

THE POINT:

In the midst of your falling, Jesus is your Advocate and offers forgiveness.

How is your walk with Jesus going? (Do you feel like you are walking well? Or do you feel like you are constantly falling on your face?)

Is there a sin in your life that keeps tripping you up? Pray to Jesus and confess that you've been falling. Thank Him for being your Advocate.

Who is someone in your life that you can talk to about your struggles?



DAY THREE

“Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness” John 1:16

There’s something special about going to the beach in the summer. Sitting and staring out into the horizon while the sun beams down on your skin with your toes in the sand is as good as a summer day can get. It’s relaxing to listen to music, read a book, nap, and then jump in the water to cool off. You can throw a football, play Spikeball®, or walk up and down the beach until you lose sight of where you came from. When I’m on the beach, I often find myself just staring at the waves crashing ashore. One after the other, a wave crashes, and then another.

Waves washing ashore is a beautiful picture of the phrase “grace upon grace.” Just as one wave crashes, another wave comes seconds after it reaches the sand, then another wave after that. Over and over, day and night, waves never stop washing on the beach. In the same way, God’s grace washes over our lives. One wave of grace replaces another wave of grace, and that grace is renewed by another wave. Each second and every moment of our lives are washed by the grace found in the love of Jesus.

We receive this grace through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. He died to cleanse us from our sins and to extend His grace and forgiveness to us. His grace frees us from the guilt and shame of our sins, and washes us into our identity as sons and daughters of Him. Each moment’s grace reminds us that when the Father looks at us, He sees Jesus’ righteousness and perfection. This grace picks us up when we fall, empowers us to live each moment, and renews our hope in Jesus.

THE POINT:

In the midst of every moment, God is continually extending His grace to us.

Do you believe that God continually gives His grace to you moment after moment? Why or why not?

Where do you need God’s grace in your life today?

How can you show someone else Jesus’ grace through your interactions with them?



DAY FOUR

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" Genesis 3:8-9

My dad once took six-year-old me to grab some snacks from the grocery store. All was going well, until I wandered off to look at some beautiful princess cookie samples in the bakery section. They were beautiful and I longed to eat some! But when I turned around, I couldn't find my dad anywhere. It wasn't until I heard my name broadcasted over the store's loudspeakers asking me to come to the front register that I found my dad waiting for me with arms wide open and bags of groceries sitting at his feet. When we got home and unloaded the groceries, I was shocked to find the princess cookies sitting in one of the grocery bags! Apparently, he had seen me the whole time. He watched as I wandered off and watched as I realized how far I had drifted, but somehow, I never saw him. Finally, he decided it would be best to call for me so there would be no mistake of where to find him. As he told his side of the story, six-year-old me sat in front of him eating my beautiful princess cookies, happy to be back home with my dad.

Sometimes, I think that's how it must be with God. To me, I am in the middle of a messy situation feeling scared and confused. To Him, He sees his daughter wandering around aimlessly, so He comes to me and guides me. Unfortunately, sometimes I get so caught up in the messiness of my situation that I can't see Him. That's when He calls me. Whether through Scripture, or worship, or a friend, He calls me loudly and clearly so I can find Him again and be brought back into His presence.

The beauty of the Lord is that He does not need to pursue us. He does it because He loves us and wants us to be in a relationship with us. From the beginning of time, He has sought after us and our hearts, even when we sin against Him. With forgiveness and love, our Father fights through our shame, our walls, and our own mess to find us and bring us back into His presence so we can be fully loved by Him.

THE POINT:

In the midst of everything, God still pursues us.

What are some ways you've seen God pursue you recently?

What circumstances in your life keep you from seeing God clearly?

How should we respond to Him as He calls us?



DAY FIVE

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

Have you ever seen the movie Moana? One of the important plot developments in this movie revolves around the Ocean, an actual character. It joins Moana and her group of random companions in battles across the seas to save her people. Throughout the movie, the Ocean pops up and helps Moana. It acts almost like a guiding presence despite facing pirates, crazy crabs, and volcanos. The Ocean faithfully remains with Moana to the end, helping her reach her destination and achieve her goal.

No combination of coconut pirates or singing crabs, or travels across the seas could keep the Ocean from reaching Moana. In the same way, there is nothing and no place where Jesus' love cannot reach us. The beautiful promise we are given in the verse is that God is a constant presence with us through anything. He is faithful to be with us always, through loss, hurt, or isolation. Paul in Romans 8 illustrates how faithful the love of God truly is, and that not even time or distance can "separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

You are not alone. The Spirit of God is with you through anything and everything! Think about that for a moment. We serve a God who loves us enough to faithfully and completely love us! There is no situation where He can be delayed, and no power strong enough to hold Him back. He loves you and He will be with you always. What a great comfort this promise brings! In the midst of any storm, distance, or battle you may experience, you can find solace in the fact that God will be with you. Even when we feel alone, we are never without God's protecting and guiding hand. Paul's list is rather absolute, spanning time, space, direction, and creation. Nothing can pull us apart from the love of God. We are called to lean on Him, to rely on His faithful love, and to trust that He is with us.

THE POINT:

In the midst of trials, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Have you ever felt alone? What was that experience like?

What are some things that have made you feel separated from God's love?

Knowing that Jesus is with you always, how does that change your perspective on troubles?



DAY SIX

“When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and said, ‘Certainly the LORD’S anointed one is here before him.’ but the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him. Humans do not see what the LORD sees, for humans see what is visible, but the LORD sees the heart.’”
1 Samuel 16:6-7

It’s that time of the day again, deciding what to eat for dinner when you’ve only got an hour before you need to be somewhere. I open my fridge, see the variety of veggies and meat. Then, I open the freezer, eye the frozen pizza, and what do I choose for my well-rounded meal? The frozen pizza, of course. It’s tasty, doesn’t require a lot of prep work or clean up, and it’s ready to eat in 20 minutes.

Does this decision-making process sound familiar? We compare our options, and instinctively choose the option that seems most ideal and makes the most sense at that time. But why do we often make decisions based on surface-level comparisons? There’s no debating, grilled chicken and asparagus would have been a MUCH healthier choice, but because of the circumstance I was in, I decided to go with the quicker, less healthy option. In 1 Samuel, we see Samuel compare the sons of Jesse and respond with a confident, “One of these will surely do.” Yet, how did God respond? With an assertive, “You are looking at this the wrong way Samuel; don’t be so hasty.” God sees His children with eyes that look straight past the outward appearance and go right to the heart.

More often than not, we are too concerned with what we can see than what we cannot see. God makes it extremely clear to Samuel what God sees as valuable—the heart of His children. God anointed David, and that anointing is all he needed to be qualified to do mighty works for the Lord. We must remember that we don’t have to “qualify” with our looks, minds, personalities, or finances to be used by God. The Lord looks upon our hearts, the garden from which good fruit is produced and given freely to the world.

THE POINT:

In the midst of comparison, God sees you only through His eyes.

What do you think qualifies a person to be used by God?

What are some instances in which you compared a person according to what you saw on the outside rather than looking at their heart?

How can you combat this comparison in your life?



DAY SEVEN

“He counts the number of the stars; he gives names to all of them. Our Lord is great, vast in power; his understanding is infinite.” Psalms 147:4-5

The only Avenger© who knew how to defeat Thanos© was Dr. Strange©. With the Time Stone, Dr. Strange looked into the future and saw that there was only 1 chance of 14,000,605 (yes, that's 14 million!) to defeat him. Without Dr. Strange knowing every possible scenario, odds are Thanos would've won. It's incredible what Dr. Strange could do with his magical abilities. But God is that much more incredible because 1: He's actually real, and 2: It says here that He can name every single star in the universe! Astronomers estimate that there are around 10,000,000,000,000,000,000 (that's 22 zeros) stars in the universe, but no one truly knows if there are more galaxies we haven't discovered yet. And yet, God can call each star by name. To put that in perspective, if you tried to name one star per second it would take almost 32 trillion years to complete.

The same God who knows every star in the universe and knows each grain of sand is also the same God who knows you by name and who knows every strand of hair on your head. He knows everything about you. He knows our words before we speak, He knows our hearts, and He knows our concerns. He knows everything. Because God is all-knowing, we don't have to pretend with Him or try and clean up our thoughts or emotions before approaching Him. He knows our insecurities and needs. He can handle our doubts and our fears. He can guide us into peace and healing. He knows and loves everything about you. Everything.

We can never escape God's attention. So how should we respond? Should we live in constant fear? No! We rest knowing that the God who knows everything is the same God who is leading us. When His ways don't make sense to our limited understanding, we can trust His infinite wisdom. We can approach God with all of our troubles and concerns and find the grace and help we need. In the midst of uncertainty, we trust in an all-knowing God.

THE POINT:

In the midst of uncertainty, we have an all-knowing God who loves us and is with us.

What is something that you wish God didn't know about you?

God knows this and still loves you. How does it make you feel that God loves you while knowing every detail of your life?

Knowing that God knows everything about your heart, how does that change the way you live for Him?



DAY EIGHT

But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. Therefore don’t be afraid. I will take care of you and your children.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Genesis 50:19-21

Have you ever been in a situation that turned out far better than you imagined? Something that was doomed for utter failure and you were really surprised by the result? For example, maybe you thought the youth group was going to be lame. But when you arrived, there was pizza, games, and a (somewhat) cool leader talking about the Bible in a way you could relate? So now you look forward to Wednesday nights! Or maybe you got your class schedule and none of your friends have English with you? But not having friends in that class forced you to meet someone new and now they are your best friend!

This is the story of Joseph’s life. He was sold into slavery by his brothers and was taken to Egypt. His dad thought he was dead. But God used Joseph’s situation of being sold into slavery to lead Pharaoh to make Joseph a ruler over all the land of Egypt. Then, Joseph was so wise in storing up food during the season of excess, that when famine came, there was plenty to go around. Without Joseph, many people would have died of starvation. And it’s all because he was sold into slavery. God used Joseph’s worst moment in life to do some really incredible things for others.

When Joseph faced his darkest moments, God was in the midst, preserving his life and providing for his needs and the needs of others. We don’t have to be afraid of uncertainty, or even situations that seem bleak. God is working His plan and He will always provide for and preserve us. We can trust God’s ultimate plan for our good and His glory, even when it seems impossible.

THE POINT:

God is always working to preserve and provide for His children.

What are you facing that seems daunting and you need to trust that God is at work to take care of you?

Reread Genesis 50:19-21. What promises from God can you cling to from this passage?

How can you be proactive in trusting God with your future, knowing that He is for you?



DAY NINE

I will thank the LORD with all my heart; I will declare all your wondrous works. I will rejoice and boast about you; I will sing about your name, Most High. Psalm 9:1-2

My biggest hype man is a five-year-old boy who I babysit. He is always running to the door so excited to say hello and quickly pull me into the game he is playing. To him, every joke I tell is hilarious and every book I read is the most captivating story he's ever heard. When I babysit, we watch our favorite TV shows, play our favorite games, and eat our favorite snacks. It's the best! He even lets me be the good guy in all of the superhero games we play, which to him is the peak of being cool. Of course, there are moments where I have to discipline him to keep him safe, but still, he remains my biggest hype man and my smallest friend.

I often think of God as my Father, but sometimes I miss what it means to be the child. I miss the joy of being delightfully childlike in His presence. I think of all God has done for me and I am thankful, but I forget to be joyful in the midst of hard situations or circumstances. I let worldly restrictions inhibit me from worshipping freely and creatively with Him. Sometimes it is easy to forget that God is genuinely fun and joyful and that He wants us to join Him in that. I mean, He, Himself, created it! Just as I take care of my little friend, God takes care of me, but it's not out of obligation that we delight in one another—it's by choice and by design.

God loves you and wants you to feel the freedom to delight in Him. You are made in His image and your design is reflective of His heart. When we see the depths of who He is, we find Him as the greatest thing we could ever have. The world may try to persuade you to remain silent or distant from God, but persevere knowing God wants you to be with Him in joy and delight.

THE POINT:

In the midst of every circumstance, we can choose to delight in God.

What does it mean to delight yourself in the Lord?

What is something you absolutely enjoy doing or talking about in your life?

How can you find ways to delight yourself in Jesus in a similar way?



DAY TEN

He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved that he asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” “Feed my sheep,” Jesus said. John 21:17

One of the worst feelings is having to face someone you look up to after a huge mistake. In high school, I was in the school band and had to play a solo. Incredibly nervous and scared, I practiced a lot so I could be ready. My dad helped me prepare for my big moment. When the time came, I flubbed it. Afterward, I felt so much shame and was scared to face my dad, afraid he would be disappointed in me. Yet, when we saw each other, he was beaming from ear-to-ear. He embraced me and said, “It’s OK this is how we grow. I love you and I am proud of you.” My dad rewrote that memory in my life. What could have been a moment of disgrace became a moment of embrace.

Christ embraces us in the midst of our shame. Shame is the moment when we feel we are wrong, internalize a mistake, and begin to see ourselves as broken and messed up. This is different from guilt, which tells us “I have done wrong.” Read John 21:15-19. In verse 17, Jesus’ three questions remind us of Peter denying Him three times by asking the same question three times. Imagine the pain and the shame Peter must have felt remembering his failure. Yet, in this moment on the beach, Jesus doesn’t reject Peter. In an incredibly personal way, He rewrote Peter’s moment of shame into a moment of embrace.

Each moment that Christ asked Peter if he loved Him, Jesus rewrote a moment of that denial in Peter’s heart. Forgiving Peter, embracing Peter, and showing him that those moments no longer need to define him—the love of Christ does. In the same way, Jesus embraces us in our shame. He lovingly forgives us and opens His arms to us the same way He did with Peter. Not pushing you away in condemnation or rejection, but embracing you in forgiveness and acceptance.

THE POINT:

God embraces us in the midst of our shame.

Have you ever had a moment of pain or shame? What did it feel like to walk through that?

What do you feel when you hear that Christ wants to embrace you in those moments?

How can we show Jesus’ love to someone else in their shame?



DAY ELEVEN

“Be strong and courageous; don’t be terrified or afraid of them. For the Lord your God is the one who will go with you; he will not leave you or abandon you.” Deuteronomy 31:6

It’s dark and you are walking through a nearby park. Light is flickering from the only streetlight above and you cannot see your house from this vantage point. You just finished watching a horror movie with friends, and you can’t help but think that someone is watching you. Your heart rate rises and your palms are sweaty. You start to pick up your pace as you walk home. Within a few minutes, you are at your front door. Safe, steady, and relaxed.

Fear is part of our everyday life. Yes, we will all experience fear and it will be more real than the feeling of walking home after watching a scary movie. We will face the fear of losing things we hold dear, the fear of having to make decisions that will change our lives, as well as the fear of things happening all around us that we can’t control. But, what does Deuteronomy 31:6 tell us? “Do not be afraid ... for the Lord your God is with you.”

One thing to notice about this passage is that Joshua was about to take the leadership position for Israel after they had been wandering in the wilderness. Fear was definitely something he may have been feeling! Nothing is wrong with fear, but something is wrong if the fear holds us back from following God. When Joshua faces fear, what does God tell him? “I will go with you.” We move forward while feeling fear, and trust that God is going with us. In the midst of fear, remember that God is with you and choose to step out in the confidence that comes with knowing that truth.

THE POINT:

In the midst of fear, but God is with us.

What is something that makes you afraid right now?

How does fear hold you back from following God?

Have you seen fear turn into faith in your life? A friend or family member’s life?



DAY TWELVE

The LORD is King forever and ever; the nations will perish from his land. LORD, you have heard the desire of the humble; you will strengthen their hearts. Psalm 10:16-17a

Imagine yourself in a no good, terrible, very bad day. You wake up late, someone left an empty cereal box in the cabinet, you get to school, realize you forgot your homework, and find out, to your surprise, that you bombed your last test. You finally make it to lunch, then spill a cup of water on the lunch tray. Wouldn't you want to go home and sleep until tomorrow? You would have no hope that anything could improve your no good, terrible, very bad day.

We see a similar situation building in Psalm 10. This passage is known as a lament (an expression of grief and sorrow) and is used to show us some important things about tough days or seasons of life. David starts out by asking God two very bold questions: "Lord, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide in times of trouble?" (v.1) He shares that wicked people are hurting others and preying on helpless people. Ok ... so way worse than your empty cereal box. David does not shy away from these bold questions to God, or remind Him of the pain people are experiencing.

In verse 16 we see a shift where David begins to praise God, "The LORD is king forever and ever." Then verses 17 and 18 point out that God will strengthen their hearts, He will listen carefully and do justice for the oppressed. Do you think David just magically went from weeping and feeling alone to such confident words? Nope! That confidence was built up through praying to the Father. We need to remember that God is not afraid of our difficult questions and fears. He wants to hear from us in prayer. The difficulties will always exist because the world is broken by sin. Ask God for the big and difficult things of life. He cares and will always remind us that He is in control and that we have hope in Jesus.

THE POINT:

In the midst of a world broken by sin, we will be reminded that our hope is firm in Jesus through prayer.

What are some of the things that make you feel the most hopeless about the world?

What are some things you can pray for the next time you begin to feel discouraged or overwhelmed about the condition of the world?

How can we remember that our hope is found in Jesus alone?



DAY THIRTEEN

Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life.” John 4:13-14

Have you ever been caught doing something wrong? You know that sick feeling you get in your stomach when you’ve been caught? I definitely do. When I was a kid, I was a rule follower. I hated getting in trouble, so I did everything I could to avoid it. One time, when I wanted ice cream and my parents said I couldn’t have it, I decided that I would get ice cream no matter the cost. I went to get the ice cream and broke a shelf inside of our freezer. My mom heard what happened and immediately sent me to my room. As I sat in my room, I felt guilty and ashamed of what I had done. My mom came in to discipline me and explain why what I did was wrong. She got eye level with me and said she loved me. Even though I messed up, my mom showed me the love she had for me.

In John 4, Jesus approaches this woman and already knows everything about her. Knowing Jesus knew all about her life, her sins, and her mistakes, I imagine this woman was feeling the same way that I did. She had to have been filled with shame and guilt in her heart from what she had done. She expected Jesus to be angry with her, but instead, Jesus was the opposite. He was gracious and He offered her living water. He tells her that this living water will never make her thirst again. He offered her a life in the kingdom of God. After Jesus spoke to her, she left and told everyone about this living water. Instead of Jesus using her past as a way to punish her, He used it as a way to send her to tell everyone about Himself and the kingdom of God.

God sees you. He knows your past, all the things you have done, and everything about you. Despite all of those things, God values you. He values a personal relationship with you and chose to die in your place to prove His love. He wants you and wants to use all of your talents and abilities for His kingdom. In the midst of our brokenness, God wants us to be part of His kingdom.

THE POINT:

In the midst of life, we can be courageous because Jesus was courageous for us in His life and death.

Have you ever done something you feel you cannot be forgiven for? Take some time to think about it. Bring it before God and ask Him for forgiveness. Ask Him to remind you of the living water He gives, despite your sin. Thank Him for loving you!

How can you remind yourself that you’re valued by God?

What verse can you cling to when you feel like you aren’t valued?



DAY FOURTEEN

Consider it great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-4

Have you ever heard the phrase, “no pain, no gain?” This phrase can be applied to a lot of things in life, but especially in the terms of working out. The moments where you need to finish the race when you don’t have the strength to keep running, or when you’re trying to get one more rep on the bench press. In order to prove yourself physically, you have to mentally push through the pain to gain results. The stronger you get, the more you build up endurance.

That’s exactly what James is telling us in this passage. More often than not, God uses the hard times to mature our faith in Him. Suffering is never for nothing. In order for us to gain maturity in our faith, we have to faithfully push through trials and hardships. God uses everything for our own good, including our suffering, to help us mature our faith in Him. When trouble comes, we need to remain hopeful in God and be willing to endure.

The secret to staying joyful in the midst of pain is right here in the passage when it says to “let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.” We can see the good God has for us in our suffering when we start to become more in love with who God is and what He has done. In the midst of suffering, our confidence and hope remains in Jesus.

THE POINT:

In the midst of your falling, Jesus is your Advocate and offers forgiveness.

How is God using suffering in your life to draw you closer to Him?

How are you leaning into others for love and support during suffering?

How are you being a source of encouragement for others?



DAY FIFTEEN

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

Imagine you are attending the Olympics one summer and you get to see a variety of your favorite sports. Can you feel the tears well up in your eyes when you hear the national anthem being played? Do you sense the pride for America when you wave flags and banners for the athletes and wear red, white, and blue every day? You chant, "U-S-A! U-S-A!" and smile from ear to ear as you cheer on your country and your people. It's surreal to think how simple it is for strangers to unify in the name of sports.

How would it look if we did that as Christ followers? In 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter reminds us of who we are in Christ—"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for his possession." As the people of God, we are all under the banner of Christ. We need to stand unified as a body of believers, "so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." With this verse in mind our anthem could be, "Jesus Redeems!"

Those who have been changed by the blood of the cross are all part of the people of God. In the midst of what is happening in our culture today, we need to come together as one, having the joy of Jesus in our hearts, and being eternally grateful that our value and our identity is found in Christ alone. Division doesn't have a place in the body of Christ. Instead of looking at the differences among us in a negative light, we need to view our differences in His marvelous light. The people of God were all created in His image and for His glory.

THE POINT:

In the midst of a disunified culture, we must remember that all people are created in the image of God.

What reasons do you have "to proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness?"

Is there anyone you need to ask for forgiveness for excluding them or keeping them on the fringes instead of allowing them to feel valued? Find time to take action this week.

What are some ways you can grow in seeing people the way God sees them? Pray and ask God to help you to see others from His perspective.



DAY SIXTEEN

“For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:40

The monster was there, right in front me. Staring at me. Daring me to approach. It took a long time for me. When I graduated high school, I regularly asked myself, “What is God’s will for my life?” This question runs rampant not only when we graduate high school, but also when we make any decision about our life and future. The problem, however, is that we assume that one day we will wake up and fully realize what God’s plan is for our life. Sadly, that is never going to happen. If God told us what we would be doing in five years, we would all become crippled with anxiety about how we could ever bear such a load. Simply, we are not ready to know the plan.

However, the question remains. What is God’s will for our life? In John 6:40 it says, “For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life” At first glance, Jesus’ answer doesn’t seem very satisfactory because it doesn’t tell us what college to go to or who we should date. In reality, though, these simple words outline the very motivation for everything we do as Christians. We can be disappointed by that or we can have faith because we have seen Jesus do amazing things in our lives. His faithfulness in our past and present inspires our belief in the future. This belief leads to the daily decision to live according to God’s Word.

Therefore, in moments where we feel uncertain as to what decision to make about our lives, let us first make sure that our daily life is an act of trusting our whole lives to Jesus. We have been given fullness of joy and life through His death and resurrection, and this gives us confidence to trust God’s plan.

THE POINT:

In the midst of decision making, we can trust Jesus with all of our lives.

What decisions in your life have you let get in the way of your obedience to Christ?

What does God desire for your life?

What is one step you can take to actively trust Jesus with the decisions in your life?



DAY SEVENTEEN

“I have asked one thing from the LORD; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, gazing on the beauty of the LORD and seeking him in his temple.” Psalm 27:4

Have you ever seen a cute toddler who sees their parent’s snack and all of a sudden screams their head off until they get some? Of course, to appease their child, the parent hands a few crackers to the toddler. Sneakily, the toddler eats one, but then sets the rest aside to beg for more. The parent gives in and the toddler, once again, eats one, then adds to their growing pile of crackers. Soon, the parent catches onto the toddler’s clever hoarding scheme.

What motivated the toddler to continually ask for more though they had what they needed? Were they starving? No. Were they fascinated with the shape? Maybe, but probably not. The toddler had a desire for a sweet snack and knew how much it satisfied them, so they stocked up to ensure their desire for crackers would continue to be satisfied. Often, we are just like the toddler, spending way too much time trying to stock up on things that are bound to run out. However, in Psalm 27, David reflects on the one thing he will never get enough of—the presence of God. On repeat, David seeks, asks, and desires to dwell in the house of God.

Even with the door wide open, David continually yearns to be in the Father’s house, gazing upon His beauty. Why is that? Because God is the perfection of all things: peace, comfort, hope, mercy, and justice. David longs to sit in the presence of God’s beauty, because he knows that God’s presence is the only thing that can satisfy his inner desire day after day. Not power, wealth, companionship, or safety can satisfy the desire of David’s soul, but he knew one thing would—the presence of the Lord. Because when our heart, mind, and soul aches to dwell in the presence of the Almighty, we are enlightened to the One who truly satisfies everything we could ever need.

THE POINT:

In the midst life’s temptations, may your one thing be Christ.

What do you tend to long for instead of God?

Why do you think you tend to long for the things of this world more than longing for the presence of God?

How is the presence of Jesus the most satisfying thing you could have?



DAY EIGHTEEN

He took a child, had him stand among them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one little child such as this in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but him who sent me.” Mark 9:36-37

Have you ever been picked last in a sport or a game when forming teams? Speaking from experience, I have to say, it felt awful. It would bring up all kinds of insecurities. It made me feel worthless and embarrassed. My embarrassment would turn into shame for not feeling good enough. This is just a small story compared to what others have experienced. Maybe you’ve felt this from peers, teachers, or worse, family.

When I feel unworthy, I read Mark 9:36-37. Reading these words makes me feel cared for and loved by Jesus. Read Mark 9:36-37. The disciples had been arguing among themselves about who was the greatest. Jesus, of course, turned their prideful bickering into an incredible lesson and show of love. He takes a child, places the child in the middle of them and then picks the child up in His arms and makes a life-changing statement. That’s it? That’s all He did? Yes, and it was profound.

Children in that time and culture were often looked down upon and not seen as significant in society. In other words, they just weren’t that important. But in just one act, Jesus drew attention to the child and honored him by picking up the child and using him to teach a difficult truth about childlike faith. Jesus is showing the disciples that they should be willing to serve those they feel are insignificant or looked down upon. Christ did this for us. We are cared for by God.

THE POINT:

In the midst of feeling lowly, Jesus cares for us.

In what ways have you seen Jesus care for you?

How do you care for others in need?

What is the truth in verse 37 that we should live out?



DAY NINETEEN

“As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. “ have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.” John 15:9-11

From the outside, I appeared like any other high school guy. I played sports, had okay grades, and even led worship in my youth group. However, I would get home night after night and find little motivation to keep on living. This led me to being admitted into a youth mental hospital, and when I was there, the only thing I could keep was my Bible. After spending significant time reading it, I came across the passage we just read in John 15.

When I read these verses, I came to realize that I was never going to be fulfilled because of my athletic, social, or academic achievements. Those things would always leave me wanting more and feeling sadness and depression. But if I lived a life pursuing Jesus, I could endure anything this world throws at me. This is true for all of us. The joy Jesus is talking about can be understood as a confidence and hope in His love for us. How do we attain this confidence? Jesus simply says to obey His commands, to love and follow Him. A life lived according to God’s Word is a life lived abundantly.

So then, what are we to learn from this? When we are going through seasons of suffering, depression, or doubt, do not turn to the world for comfort. There we will only find hopelessness and frustration. Instead, when we turn to Jesus we will find joy abundantly, even in the midst of sadness.

THE POINT:

In the midst of sadness we find joy securely in Jesus’ love.

In the past, what have you tried to find relief and comfort in instead of Jesus?

What is an area of life in which you consistently struggle to obey Christ’s commands?

What is one practical step you can take in this area to begin living in obedience?



DAY TWENTY

The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41-42

What was your biggest fear as a kid? Maybe you were afraid of thunder, or the monsters that were for sure under your bed, or maybe you were terrified of the dark. Whenever you were overcome with fear and you ran, or called out to your parents for comfort, they were always there. They would hold you, let you know you were safe, and reassure you that nothing was going to hurt you. There was no need to fear.

In Luke 10:38-42, we see Martha so concerned with serving everyone well. She was anxious about having so much work to do and her sister doing nothing to help. Imagine the pressure and anger she felt at having so much to do all by herself. She was afraid of what people might think of her house and family; she was terrified they might run out of food or the house wouldn't be clean enough to host Jesus. Luke says Martha was “distracted” with everything she felt she had to do. She was so upset, she actually went to Jesus to ask Him to make her sister pull her weight and help out rather than just sit around. However, Jesus told her, in love and kindness, “Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary.” Martha allowed her fear to distract her from seeing that the most important thing was sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to Him speak.

We have a tendency to feel anxious or afraid. Whenever we start to feel anxious, we should remember that we have a loving Father who wants to cast away our fears. He never condemns us for having fear, rather He's empathetic and knows that anxieties will come. Yet, He lovingly reminds us not to fear. He is with us and has promised us an eternal peace that surpasses understanding.

THE POINT:

In the midst of this world's anxieties, choose to sit at Jesus' feet and experience His peace.

What's something in your life right now that has left you feeling anxious or fearful?

We know God is faithful in our troubles. What is a promise He's made that you can cling to during your fears?

What “one thing” do you need to be reminded to do in the midst of your fears?



DAY TWENTY ONE

He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.” Luke 10:27

Do you remember videos from elementary school about bullying? The videos usually show a big kid finding the smallest kid in the class to pick on. For some reason, the bully always wants the kid’s lunch money. The rest of the kids around them are bystanders watching it happen. They either walk away, pretending it’s not a big deal, or they think about whether they should step in and help. Then, there’s one brave kid who steps up to do what is right. Have you ever had to make a decision to help someone?

Read Luke 10:25-37. Later in Luke 10:39, a lawyer asks Jesus, “who is my neighbor?” Jesus tells the story of a man who was robbed and left on the street nearly dead. Jesus gives them examples of two people who should’ve helped this man. They were people who knew the Bible and did everything “right,” yet, they didn’t help the man. When Jesus mentions the Samaritan, we can imagine the crowd would’ve gasped because Samaritans were the crowd’s enemies. But this Good Samaritan went above and beyond to help this man. He bandaged his wounds, brought him to an inn, and paid for all the care he needed.

The Samaritan probably had somewhere to be. He could’ve easily ignored the man like everyone else, and his life would’ve been just fine. Following Jesus calls us to help the hurting no matter the cost. Loving your neighbor is not a one-time act. You can’t just check it off your list that you gave money to someone or helped someone out. It is a lifestyle that you live through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ story reveals to us that everyone is your neighbor. We’re called to love everyone as Jesus loves us—selflessly and sacrificially.

THE POINT:

In the midst of a world focused on self, we are to love everyone as Jesus loves us.

Have you ever avoided helping someone because it was inconvenient? If so, ask and receive forgiveness from God.

Who is a “neighbor” in your life that you need to show love to?

What are some ways you can specifically love your neighbor the way Jesus loves you?



DAY TWENTY TWO

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him. If we say, “We have fellowship with him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing truth. If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:5-7

Have you ever had a friend ask you to keep a secret? Have you ever asked one of your friends to keep your secret? Having something that you want to tell people but have been told not to is a difficult thing. You're constantly worrying that your friend is going to tell your secret or you're going to accidentally tell theirs. This is similar to how people handle sin. We worry that someone will find out, and we keep it hidden from our friends and Jesus. Sin likes darkness because no one can see it—except God.

Sin can be secretive without us even realizing. We hide sin so deep that sometimes we don't see it until it becomes a big part of our lives. That's why it's important to bring our sin to the light. God has placed us in Christian community to help us fight our sin. When we share our sin, we bring it into the light and walk through it with our brothers and sisters. Jesus already knows our heart and our sin, but He gives us the opportunity to learn and grow from it!

Read 1 John 1:5-7. John tells us that if we are walking in the light with Jesus, then the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. When we keep our sin in the dark, we can't have freedom to walk in the light. If we say we are walking with Jesus, who is the Light, but still have sin and darkness within us, then we aren't truly walking in the light. We are human and imperfect, therefore, we will always fall short of the glory of God because of sin. When we bring our sin to the feet of Jesus and those we trust, and ask for forgiveness, we will continue to walk in the light. Thankfully, in the midst of our darkness, we can turn to the light.

THE POINT:

In the midst of darkness, we turn to the source of light, Jesus.

Do you have sin that you need to bring into the light? If so, take some time to pray and bring it before God, asking for forgiveness.

Is there someone in your life you can be completely honest with and open about your sin? Can you be that person for someone else?

Practically, how can you make sure that your close friends and people you trust help you walk in the light?



DAY TWENTY THREE

“But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.” Ephesians 4:15-16

Have you ever been really frustrated at someone? I mean really frustrated, like on the “I can’t look at your right now” level? When someone drops the ball, shows up late, mixes up the order, or just doesn’t listen, our natural tendency is to get angry. The anger leads to frustration toward that person. Now think about this: You can be the type of person that frustrates your friends and family as well.

We all frustrate each other. Being human means that you are going to let people down as much as others will let you down. The truth is, we are all “in process.” None of us are perfect. Because of that, we all need to season our lives with truth and love. Paul tells us in Ephesians to speak the truth in love. When we harbor frustration and resentment toward one another, we disrupt the unity that Christians should exemplify.

God knew that we would get frustrated with each other. That is why He gives us this command through Paul. We are to speak the truth in love because it helps all of us grow. Being “in process” is part of being human. We get to see true growth in one another if, instead of being bitter, we build each other up “in love.”

THE POINT:

In the midst of being “in process” we should give grace and practice love.

When do you get the most frustrated with people?

How does knowing that you let people down change your perspective?

Is there anyone you need to show grace to today, knowing that they too are “in process?”



DAY TWENTY FOUR

They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many warned him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!” Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called the blind man and said to him, “Have courage! Get up; he’s calling for you.” He threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus. Then Jesus answered him, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Rabboni,” the blind man said to him, “I want to see.” Jesus said to him, “Go, your faith has saved you.” Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road. Mark 10:46-52

Have you ever felt out of place? Imagine being at a Royal Wedding with the Queen of England in your gym clothes. It would be pretty clear that you don’t belong and would likely be asked to leave. But let’s pretend that someone comes by and says, “Follow me.” They take you to a closet full of all the finest things to wear to a Royal Wedding (what a dream, right?!). You suddenly feel a part of the crowd because one person was full of compassion, welcomed you, and cleared a path for you to stay at the party.

We see in Scripture many times where Jesus heals. There are times where the person doesn’t ask for help, moments when they come to Him in need, and a few instances where Jesus doesn’t even have to meet with the person for them to be healed! In this story, we see Jesus ask His disciples to, “Call him.” These same men just moments before were telling the beggar to keep quiet and stay away. Jesus tells Bartimaeus, “Go, your faith has saved you.” Immediately, he could see and began following Jesus on the road!

Jesus wanted to be clear that He is not the only one supposed to have compassion and show mercy on those different from us. He got His disciples involved by having them relay His message to Bartemaus. Jesus wanted the disciples to see the beauty of welcoming in someone different and following Jesus together. God’s kingdom is intended to be built with people who speak different, look different, and come from different places. His people will have different interests, abilities, and life experiences. Do you find yourself trying to quiet people who are different from you (even if that just means avoiding them)? Or are you like the disciples, calling out to people who are different from you saying, “Have courage! Get up; He’s calling for you!”?

THE POINT:

In the midst of life, welcome all types of people into God’s kingdom like Jesus has.

Who are the people in your life that you look down on?

How can remembering that everyone is created in God’s image change the way you treat others?

Who in your life do you need to show love and compassion to?



DAY TWENTY FIVE

Let each one live his life in the situation the Lord assigned when God called him. 1 Corinthians 7:17a

When you hear the name “Aslan,” you likely think of a lion in the story of The Chronicles of Narnia or possibly in the movie or book, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. C.S. Lewis portrays the king of Narnia as a magnificent lion. Over the course of these chronicles, Aslan develops a friendship with a young girl named Lucy. Throughout many magical adventures, Lucy learns to trust and know Aslan’s voice. But as she gets older and her character grows, a theme begins to emerge: Lucy compares herself to everyone around her. She compares herself to her siblings and other characters, instead of focusing on who Aslan has said she is. She’s not alone in desiring to be where others are.

Anytime Lucy wanted to know what Aslan had in store for another, she was gently rebuked. One time when Lucy wanted to know more than her share, Aslan simply asked, “Do you really need to know that?” Often, we too find ourselves jealous of others’ opportunities, gifts, or place in life. In a similar way to Aslan reminding Lucy that he cares for her and has plans for her, God wants us to rest in the purpose He has for us rather than focusing on others.

In 1 Corinthians 7:17, Paul is reminding the church in Corinth to be on guard. The Lord has something in store for each of us, something unique and specific for us to be a part of building His Kingdom. Since He has created us uniquely, our paths certainly won’t be the same. God has gifted us with different talents that we are to use for His glory. We must be on guard against comparison before it steals our attention away from our calling! If our eyes are fixed on others, we may miss opportunities to serve Jesus. Instead, we should keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, knowing that He has good plans for us.

THE POINT:

In the midst of comparison, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and His good plans for you.

Where are you tempted to compare yourself to others?

What are aspects that God uniquely created in you that you can be proud of?

How can you remind yourself to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus?



DAY TWENTY SIX

“While Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, but whenever he put his hand down, Amalek prevailed.” Exodus 17:11

Imagine watching a football game where one person is competing against a professional team of huge, strong football players. The outcome is obvious. The single person would be destroyed by the team! They simply wouldn't have enough strength or skill to be able to hold off an entire team. Sometimes we try to put our head down and push through life on our own. We think we're strong enough or smart enough that we don't need others to help us fight through life. Ultimately, God created us to be a part of a team, a team with many players all working together in different positions and using different skills.

Read Exodus 17:8-16. Here we see that whenever Moses' hands were held up, Israel would start winning in the battle. And when his arms would get tired and lower, they would start to lose. Moses' companions saw this too, so they reached out and helped Moses by giving him a place to rest and by helping him hold up his arms “until the sun went down.” If Moses had tried to stand there alone, Israel would've lost. Instead, he let others lift his arms when he was weak, so Israel could win the battle. They were so successful in defeating Amalek that the Lord told them to write a book about the conquest, to build an altar, and to call it “Jehovah-nissi” which means “the LORD is my banner.” When we're facing struggles and battles of our own (against our flesh, our fears, or our own mind), we should surround ourselves with the church to help us hold our hands high toward the Lord. It is in the midst of the Lord's community that we are able to be truly courageous and conquer our battles.

God knows we need to encourage one another, help each other, teach one another, mourn and love with one another, as well as remind each other of the incredible God we serve. This was never a journey we were supposed to take alone. We were designed to work together to draw closer to Him.

THE POINT:

It is in the midst of the Lord's community that we are able to be truly courageous and conquer our battles.

What's one way you've seen your community help you this year?

What are some battles in your life that community could help you fight?

Who are some people you can be honest and vulnerable with so they can help you fight for the Lord?



DAY TWENTY SEVEN

And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

Have you ever been a part of the student section at a football game? This is the portion of the crowd where people are up on their feet chanting, cheering, and losing their minds for their team. These fans are decked out in their team's colors and some have even painted themselves all in the name of team spirit. They are invested in every play – calling players by name and using their voices to push their team to victory. They feel the joy of winning and the weight of losing right alongside the players on the field.

Imagine what it would be like if everyone in the student section just sat there in silence as they watched the game. Their team wouldn't feel supported and wouldn't play as well as they could. Here's the crazy thing—We tend to do this very thing as we live in community with other believers. Instead of cheering our brothers and sisters on like we could, we disengage from the game and expect them to do their best on their own. Have you ever felt like no one was in your corner? Think about how great it would feel to hear someone cheer you on in a moment like that.

Hebrews 10:24-25 encourages believers to think about how we can push each other to love people and do good. We gather together, just like a student section, and encourage each other to play hard. We pray for each other by name, speak encouragement when we notice someone serving Jesus, and push each other to get back up when we fall down. Each of us need to be cheered on like this because the game we're playing—serving Jesus and loving others—is hard.

THE POINT:

In the midst of every season, we must cheer each other on to serve Jesus and love one another.

Who is someone you can spend time cheering on into a deeper relationship with Jesus in the next week?

What are some specific things you can do to cheer them on?

Do you need some encouragement in your walk with Jesus? Who is someone in your life that you can reach out to for encouragement?



DAY TWENTY EIGHT

But Thomas (called “Twin”), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were telling him, “We’ve seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “If I don’t see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.” ... Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don’t be faithless, but believe.” Thomas responded to him, “My Lord and my God!”
John 20:24-25,27-28

Have you ever doubted yourself? This can come in many forms, like comparing yourself to a friend, doubting your identity, or wondering if you’re doing the right thing with your life. Doubt can be scary, but it is necessary to work through the things we believe in. You will always wrestle with doubt at different seasons in life, but God can bring a firm foundation when things seem shaky. We want to have all of the answers so we can wholeheartedly believe, yet life rarely brings certainty. So, as humans, we doubt.

Thomas was one of the twelve disciples who walked with Jesus for three years. He did ministry with Jesus and saw Him perform miracles. Read John 10:24-29. Isn’t it crazy that Thomas doubted Jesus when he walked with Him for three years? Wouldn’t you think that Thomas, being one of Jesus’ disciples and seeing firsthand His signs, wonders, and miracles, would never lose faith again? This displays the disciples’ flawed humanity. As human beings, we tend to doubt things we can’t see and forget the things Jesus has done.

Whenever we doubt, it doesn’t make us a bad Christian, it makes us human. If we never had doubts, then we wouldn’t need a Savior, because we would be perfect. When doubts come, don’t run away from them, run toward them. Ask yourself where they come from, why they are there, and how to overcome them. After you ask yourself the hard questions, run toward Jesus. Press on in this race called life. Turn toward Scripture and fight the drift. Have your community hold you accountable and be honest with the people who love and pray for you when you are fighting against doubts.

THE POINT:

In the midst of doubting, God is present.

When is a time that you remember doubting God? Or what is a current doubt you have?

How did you fight that doubt?

What Scripture verse can you memorize to speak truth into doubts that sneak into your mind?



DAY TWENTY NINE

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! Ephesians 2:4-5

Think back to a moment when you were lost. Maybe it was in a city you were unfamiliar with, or a store when you were separated from your mother, or it could be when you were going to someone's house for the first time. The feeling of being lost causes your stomach to sink as you realize that you have no idea where you are or how to get where you need to be. It's one of the worst feelings of helplessness. You have no sense of direction, streets are confusing, and somehow as you try to find your way, you end up being more lost than when you started. But having a GPS to help navigate is a game changer.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3. This is part of all of our stories. We were lost and following our own desires. We thought we knew where we were going, but were completely and utterly lost. Then verse 4 flips the script just like when a GPS begins to lead us. God, in His loving kindness, has shown us the way. Jesus' love for us, proven by His death on the cross, keeps us from wandering through life hopelessly. He guides us to forgiveness, grace, and freedom. No longer are we lost, but we are found, living in the love Jesus offers us.

However, others are still lost in darkness, sin, and following a path that only leads to dissatisfaction, destruction, and death. Since we know Jesus and the full joy found in Him, we should tell others about what we have found, or rather, who we have found. A life with Jesus is a life of walking in confidence, knowing that He is guiding you. He guides us in the ways we should walk. He guides us to continual repentance of sins and remembrance of God's love for us. And He guides us to share the love of Jesus with others.

THE POINT:

In the midst of a lost world, we can point others to Jesus.

What is your story of how God saved you? Thank Him for your salvation and His great love!

How has your life changed since your decision to follow Jesus?

Who is someone you know that is lost and needs someone to lovingly share the gospel with them?



DAY THIRTY

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.” Romans 12:15

On YouTube© and TikTok© there is a series of videos circulating where families trick a little kid into thinking that the kid is invisible. Someone places a blanket over the kid to hide them and says a phrase like “abra-cadabra.” Afterward, they take the blanket off and the family reacts as though they cannot see the kid anymore. Asking questions like, “Where did you go?” and “Why can’t I see you?,” the kid begins to believe that he is invisible. Some of the better actors begin crying, which further sets fear in the mind of the kid. Many of the kids start yelling, “I’m right here!” But each kid eventually reaches a breaking point, full of the fear that they’ll never be visible again. Crying and screaming, they simply just want to be seen. So the family finally places the blanket back over the kid, reverses the spell, and celebrates his return to the visible world.

As a viewer, while chuckling and finding the video amusing, there’s also a deep empathy knowing exactly what the kid must be going through. We’ve all been there, in a situation where all we desire is simply to be seen. All we want is for others to see the hurt and pain we feel and to sit with us. Or for our parents to see our accomplishments and for that to be enough for them to be proud of us. Instead, we are left feeling unsatisfied and pushing for more. In life, there is a power to feeling seen.

This is the underlying motivation for Paul’s encouragement in Romans 12:15 because Jesus does exactly that. He sees us and meets us where we are. Jesus walks with us both in our highs and lows of life. He empathizes with us and cares about what is going on in our lives; therefore, we should do the same for others in return. We should rejoice and be happy with friends and family when times are good, rather than being jealous. And weep with them in the times where no word will bring comfort to their pain. Simply, we should be present with others in the midst of life.

THE POINT:

In the midst of life, we should be there for others in their joys and sorrows.

Who is someone you can spend time cheering on into a deeper relationship with Jesus in the next week? When has someone been there for you in a moment that meant a lot? How did it feel?

Do you think you’re good at sitting in highs and lows of life with others? Why or why not?

Who is someone that comes to mind that needs your presence?

