



The
BELOVED
Disciple

*A Prayerful Reading
of the Gospel of John*

VOLUME 2

I am his BELOVED

Dear Friends,

Like each one of us, Jesus had concentric circles of influence and friendship. There were the generic “crowds” that followed him from place to place. Within the crowds, there were disciples—his true followers. Within the disciples, there were his chosen twelve. Within the twelve there were the three: Peter, James and John. And of the three, there is one who is called “The Beloved Disciple”—also known later as St. John the Evangelist. As the one who worked most closely with Jesus, John went on to author five New Testament books, and be a foundational leader of the early church.

In his writing to the church, John left the imprint of Jesus’ love. The Gospel according to John is certainly the warmest and most tender book in the Bible. Where did this tenderness come from? It came from John being loved first. And now, John himself calls the church he addresses “Beloved.” We are not only John’s beloved but God’s as well. He has loved us with an everlasting and unbreakable love. His love is demonstrated by Jesus’ work on the cross. His love is felt by the comforting work of the Spirit. And now, we are commanded to “keep ourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21a).

This prayer guide is designed to slow you down so that you can keep yourself in God’s love. Every weekday, there is devotional, a prayer, and a prompt to encourage you to journal your experience of God’s word. Please set aside time so that you are not rushing through this, but giving space for transformation. As you begin this journey, I encourage you to be still, focus on your breathing. As you breathe, say to your soul: “I am his beloved.”

May the peace of God which transcends all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Gray Ewing

Lead Pastor, New Valley Church (Downtown)

Meet the **WRITING TEAM**

Gray Ewing: *Project Director, Editor-in-Chief*

Carolyn Hunt: *Copy Editor, Design*

Bekah Ewing: *Content Editor*

Meagan South: *Family Worship Guides*

Writers for Volume 2:

Lauren Kutsko: Day 31, Day 43, Day 55

Katie Garcia: Day 32, Day 44, Day 56

Claire Blystra: Day 33, Day 45, Day 57

Meagan South: Day 34, Day 46, Day 58

Stephen Carradini: Day 35, Day 47, Day 59

Carlos Marquina: Day 36, Day 48, Day 60

Gray Ewing: Day 37, Day 49

Griffin and Whitney Weiss: Day 38, Day 50

Bekah Ewing: Day 39, Day 51

Justin Bellars: Day 40, Day 52

Corinne Bellars: Day 41, Day 53

Megan Bergstrom: Day 42, Day 54

Family
WORSHIP
Week 7

For family worship, please choose any day of the week that works best. Gather your family and set aside 15-20 minutes to discuss the following. Anytime will work, but often after dinner or before bed works best.

THEME: In the Father's Hands

Hold up your hand against your father or mother's hand. Who's hand is bigger? When you hold your father's or mother's hand do you feel safe? Why?

In this story, Jesus tells us that all children of God are safe because they belong to God. And through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we can never be taken out of God's powerful and loving hands.

To Memorize:

"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." John 10:29-30

Ask:

Who is the Father? Who is one with the Father? What happens to those in the Father's hand?

Take Away:

Children of God are safe in the Father's hands because of Jesus.

Family Prompt:

Have everyone in the family trace their hand on a piece of paper and cut it out. On the hand write: "_____ is safe in the hands of God." Hang the hands somewhere you can see them all week long as a reminder that God is our protector.

Pray:

God our Father,
Thank you for holding us
In the palm of your hands.
Thank you that with you
We are protected by your Holy love.
Help us to know you, and trust you,
And follow you all the days of our life.
Thank you for Jesus.
In His precious name we pray, Amen.

DAY 31
October 19

Listen and Know

Read John 10:22-42

“And they picked up stones again to stone him.” Jesus was undeniably offensive to the religious ruling class. We, like them, want to grasp what we think we understand and are often prepared to fight to defend our ways. However, Christ, in this passage, reminds us that the work of His flock is not to pick up stones but to know our shepherd’s voice.

The Scriptures invite us to be still and listen for the good shepherd’s voice. When you quiet the outer activity of defending and proving yourself, you will find the Divine’s still small voice ready to steady you. Emmanuel is already within you with arms wide open. You are precious and safe in your Father’s hand. He will leave the 99 to find you. His goodness and mercy follows you all the days of your life, and there is nothing you can do to stop it. His love is relentless.

Pray

Good Shepherd,

Reveal to us the many rocks in our hands.

Forgive our desire to fight to protect our ways.

Hold us close and comfort us as we
relax and become aware of your steady voice.

Settle our minds, bodies, and hearts and

Remind us that we are the sheep whom you protect.

You are what we truly need and long for,

Your ways need no defense from us.

Make real to us your relentless love.

Amen

Journal: What does it feel like to cease from your efforts and listen?

Love that Waits

Read John 11:1-16

Have you ever wanted the Lord to act urgently on your behalf? Have you ever begged Him to come? To heal? To rescue? To fix? Right now. Perhaps you have found yourself wondering why God did not answer. You may feel that if God really loved you, He would have moved. He would have come. Right now.

John so intentionally tells us that Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. In fact, it was because of Jesus's love that He waited. For two days. To Mary and Martha that must not have felt like love. But Jesus knew the miracle that was to come. He knew the depth of faith that would spring up in the three whom He loved. He knew the joy set before them. Even in His absence, Jesus was loving them. Even when we wait, seemingly alone, His love is present. He is loving us. Right now.

Pray

Patient Savior,

Like little children, we want things immediately.

We ask expectantly, wanting you to act urgently.

Our near-sighted eyes fail to see what we truly need.

But O how You love us; O how You are for us!

You love us enough to not give us everything we ask for.

You love us enough to wait for Your perfect timing.

O Lord, help us see the depths of Your waiting love.

Help us remember how you loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Fix our eyes on these words—Now Jesus loved them.

May those words rise in us when we feel the waiting silence.

“Now Jesus loves me”, so I will wait on Him.

Amen.

Journal: Describe a time when waiting on the Lord produced something unexpectedly good in your life.

DAY 33
October 21

Hoping in the Midst of Pain

Read John 11:17-27

Jesus is fearless. There's no path He won't tread to bring new life, as shown in this passage in which he steps into the wilderness of deep personal loss. He enters confidently into this uncomfortable and painful space and in doing so reminds us that He is never absent from any painful scenario or season we may find ourselves in. And not only is He present in our pain, He gives us the hope of eventual redemption, providing us with strength against succumbing to the pain.

Jesus doesn't tell Martha here that he will raise Lazarus from the dead in mere moments. And maybe our painful seasons will not be solved with an instant miracle. But through Jesus' death and resurrection, He promises us more than a temporary balm for our problems—he promises us a bodily resurrection and an eternity with him free of pain and suffering. With this promise, we can hope in the midst of any circumstance.

Pray

Oh Great Healer,
You know our wounds, our fears, and our insecurities
More intimately than we can imagine.
Thank you for loving us in the midst
Of our distrust of you.
Our disappointment often reflects our lack of trust,
Not your lack of goodness.
Your love is a pathway to peace
And lights even the darkest way ahead.
Thank you for finding us in the wilderness
And for your presence in all seasons of our lives.
Amen.

Journal: Name one particular challenge of this season. How does the promise of Jesus meet you in the challenge?

DAY 34
October 22

Sorrow that Moves a Savior

Read John 11:28-44

Jesus knew the coming joy for His dear friends, yet He stopped and entered into the sorrow. When they asked Him why He had not come sooner and where He had been, He did not answer. He wept. Packed into these two words are some of the greatest truths about our beloved Savior.

Jesus knows of the coming joy- that we too will be raised. Yet He listens to our grieving hearts and offers us the comfort of His Holy presence. He enters into our hardest pains with us. He was so moved by our deepest sorrows that he took them to the cross with Him. He gives beauty for ashes, light for darkness, and the promise of future glory where sorrow will be forgotten. Death has no place where Jesus is. He is life. He is the life.

Pray

Jesus, Lamb of God,

We worship you for your compassion.

You don't shy away from lingering in the lament.

You enter into our deepest sorrows with us

Offering your loving presence and comfort.

You keep track of all our sorrow, collecting each tear.

Where the world offers sorrow for sorrow-

You offer a coming joy.

A promise that offers a new life

Where there will be no sickness, sorrow or sin.

Comfort our hearts with this hope of coming joy, we pray.

Amen.

Journal: What sorrow would you like Jesus to weep over with you? Where would you like Him to share in your tears?

DAY 35
October 23

Authority in Context

Read John 11:45-57

The Pharisees want to kill Jesus to maintain their worldly power. Little do they know that God is using their plan to demonstrate His sovereign authority over all creation.

All earthly authority exists in the context of the eternal kingdom. Any earthly authority we have comes from God and should be used for the practical and spiritual good of those under us—the same way Jesus used his authority. Yet we must live wisely under authority as we work toward the eternal kingdom—just as Jesus did when he avoided the officials seeking his life before his time. We can take comfort that Jesus lived our struggles; He knows the challenge of both holding authority and living under authority.

Jesus' focus on his eternal goals led him to live rightly in relation to authority. How we respond to authority reflects our view of this world, the coming world, and Jesus himself.

Pray

All-Powerful God,

We are but stewards of the authority we have.

You give us wisdom to live under authority.

You lend us all that we temporarily control
and lend temporary control to those over us.

Help us to use our influence in love.

Help us live under influence with humility.

Help us to be wise and kind and strong and brave,
knowing all authority comes from you.

Amen.

Journal: What are the areas you have the most influence? How is God inviting you to exercise godly authority there?

Family
WORSHIP
Week 8

For family worship, please choose any day of the week that works best. Gather your family and set aside 15-20 minutes to discuss the following. Anytime will work, but often after dinner or before bed works best.

THEME: Welcome the King!

Have you ever been to a parade, maybe an Easter parade? It's fun and loud and exciting. You can't wait to see what is coming next, with your eyes you are watching and waiting.

In this passage we see that when Jesus came to town the people were excited and yelling out, "Hosanna!" They were praising Jesus and welcoming Him like they would a king!

To Memorize:

"So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." John 12:13

Ask:

What did the people wave when they saw Jesus?

Who is blessed?

Who came in the name of the Lord?

Take Away:

Jesus is the King of Kings.

Family Prompt:

Have a family parade. See if you can find palm branches that are safe to bring inside, or make some out of construction paper. Make or find noise makers (pots and cups work great!) Put on your favorite worship music and have a parade right in your house- singing and dancing and praising Jesus together as a family!

Pray:

Jesus, our Savior

Thank you for the life you lived.

Thank you for riding into town on a donkey

So that we can live with you forever.

We shout, "Hosanna!"

To you and only you.

Help us to worship you

As the King and Lord of our lives.

In your name we pray,

Amen

DAY 36
October 26

Quality and Quantity

Read John 12:1-11

There seems to be a widespread dichotomy around quantity versus quality, especially when discussing giving. There's the strong biblical precedent of tithing, and yet it's seemingly overshadowed by stories such as the widow who gave two mites. The "quality" theme is further supported by the meager offering that Jesus multiplied to feed 5,000. Just when one has completely written off the concept of quantity, Mary gives an entire year's wages, her very dowry, and Jesus calls it a beautiful thing that will be told in memory of her to the world.

The challenge here is to consider both quality and quantity as the fruit of both the condition of our hearts and our view of eternity. God asks us for more than simply a quantity or even quality. He asks for our unbridled hearts and trust that we may give authentically and generously—not only of our assets, but our whole lives.

Pray

Father God our Provider,
Everything we have is Yours.
You have created this complex and beautiful world
For our good and Your glory,
And yet, whom have we in heaven but You?
Precious God help us to learn to love You
Without reluctance, doubt, or fear.
We believe in a heavenly economy
that surpasses all that we ask or think
but dear God, help our unbelief.
Bring this good work you began to completion
In the name of Your Son who gave everything for us.
Amen

Journal: What are some obstacles that can prevent you from more authentic generosity?

DAY 37
October 27

Misunderstanding Jesus

Read John 12:12-19

What's striking in this passage is that everyone is reacting to Jesus, and no one is actually understanding him. The disciples are bewildered by his actions of coming into the city as a King (vs. 16). This is unlike any behavior they have seen from him. The crowd is only there to see a magic show (vs. 18). The Pharisees' only concern is to keep the crowd's attention on them and away from Jesus (vs.19).

Meanwhile, Jesus is fulfilling Scripture (Zech 9:9) in a pivotal moment in history. He shows that he is a powerful king and a humble king at the same time! He is worthy of every "Hosannah" (which means, Save us, we pray!). The salvation that he offers is not a promise of popularity, a delivery from boredom, or the guarantee of earthly safety. His salvation is that all of his good creation (including all those who call upon his name) will be restored in his Kingdom.

Pray

King of Israel,

Blessed are you who comes in the name of the Lord!

We thank you for your humble entrance

Into the flesh, adding to your divinity.

As we sit at the crossroads of time (the already and not yet),

We remember your first coming.

We wait for your second coming.

We enjoy the coming of the Spirit even now.

Teach us to put aside our own kingdoms.

Help us ignore the ever-present pull to make you

Into the faux-gold image of our imaginations;

And to see you as you are: Our beautiful and blessed Savior!

Amen

Journal: How have you misunderstood Jesus as only a way to meet your immediate needs?

DAY 38
October 28

Life from Death

Read John 12:20-36

An extraordinary paradox of Scripture is summarized in the idiom: life from death. As Jesus suffered, was crucified, and rose victoriously from the grave, his death granted us life everlasting. The Son of Man is the grain of wheat that dies, purposed to bear much fruit. Yet, despite the great reward waiting on the other side of the cross, dying is costly. It is troubling, even for our Lord.

However, just as Jesus faithfully fulfilled His calling, we have been called to join Christ in death, and by doing so, to join Him in His resurrection (Rom. 6:5). Dying to the world means living no longer for ourselves, but offering our whole being to God. It is costly and at times it will be quite troublesome. However, death today, the denial of self, means life forever with Christ. And this life is made possible through the death and glorification of Jesus.

Pray

Gracious Lord,

We long to be where you are.

To see your face and rejoice in your presence.

You died so that we could have true life.

Grant us hearts that are obedient to your call.

Strengthen us with power by Your Spirit.

That our hearts would be filled with Your love.

Help us to die to ourselves and bear fruit,

Following the pattern of our great God and Savior,

Jesus Christ.

Amen

Journal: What is the Spirit of God asking you to deny in order to believe the gospel and follow Christ?

DAY 39
October 29

Ordering Our Priorities

Read John 12:37-43

It is natural to think faith would be easier if we lived when Jesus did and saw Him firsthand. Yet, here we see that many never believed, while others believed but let their fear of other people's opinions and the desire for earthly acclaim overrule their faith. It's easy to scoff at these hardhearted folks who refused to believe something that should have been so obvious.

But aren't we more like them than we'd like to admit? Our God has revealed His glory and love in innumerable ways. We have the whole canon of Scripture to point us toward Him, the Holy Spirit indwells us, even creation itself testifies to His glory. Yet, how often our fears speak louder than our faith, and we value the good opinion of others at the cost of faithful living.

Pray

Lord of Glory,

You have shown Yourself to us in Your Word.

You have sacrificed Your Son for our salvation.

You have given us Your Holy Spirit.

You have proven Yourself faithful in our stories.

Your eternal power and divine nature are evident in creation itself. Your glory is all around us, but

We confess our fears often speak louder than our faith.

Open our eyes. Soften our hearts.

We believe. Help our unbelief.

Amen.

Journal: Whose opinion do you value more than God's? Why does that person or platform have that kind of sway over you?

DAY 40
October 30

Jesus Gives the Father's Word

Read John 12:44-50

Jesus uses agricultural metaphors and common cultural practices to unpack some deep truths about the Kingdom and the hereafter to make them more approachable, knowable, or relatable. There's a sense that despite their profundity, the parables are mere whispers of the reality being described.

In this passage, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob— the God who is One, is represented by the person of Jesus— a living parable. His words become Scripture as they are spoken. Willfully dismissing His words and His person is equivalent to rejecting Yahweh, who is the only God they think they know. There's a warning here to not pridefully play fast and loose with our relationship with God. There is a final word that will judge us (v. 49), but Jesus came not to judge, but to save us.

Pray

Father God,

You sent Your own Son to redeem Your creation,

You offered up Your most beloved Son for our salvation,

Let us not handle lightly

The embarrassment of riches we possess in Your Word.

Let us always be ready to present Your Truth and Love

To any who doubt or disparage Your Word

In words of grace and peace

In prayers of petition and praise

To point our neighbors and our loved ones

Away from death to the Author of Life,

To the glory of the Only One who can save.

Amen.

Journal: Imagine yourself in a conversation with someone who says they, “believe in God, but don't believe in Jesus.” How could you use this passage to minister to or to plead with them?

Family
WORSHIP
Week 9

For family worship, please choose any day of the week that works best. Gather your family and set aside 15-20 minutes to discuss the following. Anytime will work, but often after dinner or before bed works best.

THEME: Love One Another

Whom do you love? Do you love your mom and dad? Your sister or brother? Do you have a friend that you love? When you love someone you treat them the best and you believe the best about that person.

Jesus loves us. He loves us so much He lived a perfect, sinless life and died on the cross for all of our sins. Jesus showed us how to love one another with kindness, gentleness, and generosity. Jesus tells us in the Bible that He wants us to love one another as He has loved us. That's a lot! We can honor and show our love for Jesus by how we love one another.

To Memorize:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12

Ask:

What is a commandment? How are we to love one another? How did Jesus show His love for us?

Take Away:

We show the world God's love when we love one another.

Family Prompt:

As a family, write a prayer of thanksgiving that thanks God for His love and thanks Him for all the people you love. You can list names or write specific prayers for each person. Hang the prayer somewhere everyone can see it in your home.

Pray:

God of love,

We thank you for loving us.

Thank you for sending your one and only son

To live a perfect, sinless life

And die on the cross for all of our sin.

Help us to love one another.

Help us to believe the best about each other.

And help us to show the world your love

By the way we live.

In Jesus name,

Amen

Wearing a Towel

Read John 13:1-30

Christ knows that the hour of his suffering and death has come. He is starting down the ultimate injustice. He has the power to stop it all and demand that everything bow down to Him. Instead, we see Jesus bending low to wash dusty feet. He freely takes the position of a vulnerable slave. He sets aside all he is rightfully due, and showers love on those who will betray and deny Him.

What kind of God is this? We do not understand this love. It runs so counter to anything in our usual desires or experiences. Still, Christ commands us to do as He did. The ability to humbly serve those who deeply hurt us is a work of God. It is not possible apart from knowing Him and knowing ourselves in relation to Him.

Pray

Teacher and Lord,

Who is God like You?

Your love carries earth-shattering weight.

We confess our pride and our demand to be served.

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, so we may mirror Your light.

Open our eyes to see and receive you by faith,

Even when so much remains a mystery to us.

Help us to abide in You,

so that Your radical love may pour out of us too.

We pray for our enemies,

for those who have wounded us,

may You draw them to Yourself and set all things aright.

May Your will be done always.

Amen.

Journal: What does it mean to “wash one another’s feet” in our current context? Write down the name of someone you can serve and care for in this way this week.

What's New?

Read John 13:31-38

With betrayal at hand and His face set toward the cross, our Lord brings to us a new command. The disciples lean in, what could it be? “Love one another,” He says. This mandate harkens back to Leviticus 19:18 and is later emphasized by Jesus as the second greatest of all commandments (Matt 22:37-39). So what makes this new? “As I have loved you.” A new light now shines upon this age old command that has been lived out perfectly in Christ. And though they do not yet know it, the disciples will soon bear witness to Love’s greatest act.

Imagine the moment the disciples remembered these words after witnessing Christ’s humiliating death. This new commandment is undeniably a costly one. Yet our Lord is clear that sacrificial love is the distinguishing mark of true discipleship (v.35). And this is precisely what His saving work transforms us to do. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

Pray

Loving God,

We praise You as the Author of love,
Manifested perfectly in the Person of Christ.

We thank You for Your loving sacrifice,
That has pardoned our sin,
And given life to our deadened hearts.

Help us this day to love others
With Christ-like extravagance.

Keep us from selfish aspirations,
Giving us greater regard for the needs of others.

May our love reveal us to be Your true disciples,
That the world may see it and give You the glory.

Amen

Journal: How does the costly love of Christ inform the way you personally love others?

DAY 43
November 4

An Uncomfortable Love

Read John 14:1-14

“Let your hearts not be troubled,” Jesus says this just after informing Peter he will deny Him three times before the rooster crows. Jesus knows the fragility of our shallow egos and calls us to something more profound. It is no surprise to him that we second guess our identity and hide behind lies. We’ve been hiding and trying to protect ourselves since the garden, and that is precisely why he came. He patiently invites us to “Let your hearts not be troubled and believe in God.”

Is this an invitation to a love and security deeper than our doubts? Unconditional love feels uncomfortable. To be accepted entirely is vulnerable and exposing, even though it’s what we genuinely need and long for. If Jesus tells us not to be troubled, it must be the case that we already have access to all that is needed for our hearts to relax.

Pray

Accepting Love,

Your mercy is too great to know.

Your love is too deep to explore fully.

Your grace extends past all of our horizons.

We thank you for your patience as we slowly learn

That we no longer need to hide or be ashamed.

Meet us quickly as we uncomfortably come out of hiding.

Be a balm to our exposed wounds and heal us.

You are what we need to be free.

Amen

Journal: Where is your heart troubled, and how would exposing yourself to a compassionate and healing God change your heart’s response?

Help Me!

Read John 14:15-31

“God, help me!” How many times have you whispered these words? Or yelled them? Or begged the God of the universe for tangible help? What would that help look like? Would it look like rescue? The end of suffering?

When we ask God for help, we are really asking Him to change our circumstances. We are asking for an easier road or a lighter load. But perhaps we have the definition wrong. After all, Jesus promises to give us a Helper. When we ask for help, the truth is, it already dwells within us.

The help He brings is peace, but it’s not the peace the world gives. He helps bring the Word of God to mind, encouraging us with truth. The Helper assures us that our hearts aren’t in trouble, even if our bodies are. He delivers us from fear, reminding us who stands with us. Our Helper is with us, in us, forever.

Pray

Emmanuel, God with us,

Thank You for not leaving us here alone.

Thank You that in the hardest moments You are with us.

Holy Spirit, help us to see the peace You provide.

Protect us from buying into cheap, worldly peace.

Remind us of the promises hidden in God’s word.

May we come to love Your presence and depend on it.

Guide us toward obedient hearts that keep Your commandments.

When we suffer, fix our eyes on Jesus.

When we cry out for help, remind us You are here.

Help us to, like Jesus, entrust our souls to the Father.

May the comfort of Your presence be our source of joy.

Amen.

Journal: Describe a time you asked God for help. How did He help you?

Remain in Me

Read John 15:1-17

God's word is riddled with examples to remind us that He is always with us. From his companionship with the Israelites as the pillar of fire to his appearance at the wedding feast, he shows us that He is present in both difficult and joyous seasons. The image of God shown here is one of intense closeness and kinship—we are a branch physically, intimately attached to Him, the life-giving vine. Through His sustenance we grow, develop, and bring Him glory and beauty. He says, “No branch can bear fruit by itself” (John 15:4); being unable to bear fruit alone is not a sign that we are defective, it's a sign of intimacy—we were designed to live a life dependent on God.

God promises that if we remain in Him, in His word and His love, He will remain in us. He will hear our prayers. He will call us friends. And He will love us more passionately than we can imagine.

Pray

Loving Father,
You are a pillar of strength,
A gracious presence,
And a faithful friend.
Thank you for designing us to crave community,
To enjoy your beauty,
And to need you as desperately as a tree needs streams of water.
Daily we find ourselves turning back to you,
And you accept us with love and grace.
Help us this day to remain in your Word and your love.
Amen.

Journal: Write about barriers that make intimacy with God difficult in your life.

Family
WORSHIP
Week 10

For family worship, please choose any day of the week that works best. Gather your family and set aside 15-20 minutes to discuss the following. Anytime will work, but often after dinner or before bed works best.

THEME: The Helper

If you were going on vacation and your parents told you that you were going to guide the car and decide which streets and freeways to take, do you think you would make it to your destination? Of course not! You need help from someone who knows the way!

In this passage we see that Jesus tells His friends that when He dies on the cross He will send a helper. This helper is the Holy Spirit! As a believer, you have the Holy Spirit inside of you helping you, guiding you, showing you the way and helping you love God and live for God!

To Memorize:

“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears he will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come.” John 16:13

Ask:

Who is the Spirit of Truth? How will He guide you?

Take Away:

We have the Holy Spirit to help guide us.

Family Prompt:

Do a trust walk in your living room. (Adjust for ages of your kids.) Blindfold one member of the family and choose one person as the guide. Make a starting point and ending point and make sure the guide gets the family member there safely.

Pray:

God, thank you for sending us your Holy help

Through the Holy Spirit.

Even though we can't see you

We trust you.

Thank you for helping us

And guiding us in God's truth.

We are amazed at the ways you love us

And lead us every single day.

Help us to trust you more and more.

In Jesus name, Amen

DAY 46
November 9

Trouble Is Coming

Read John 15:18-26

It is so foolish to think, living in a broken, sin-filled world, that we will not encounter trouble. Jesus, the Son of God, walked this earth and encountered every trouble imaginable. He was hated, mocked, publicly scorned, tortured and crucified on a cross.

Jesus was hated by the world He created, loved and came to save. His message unearths sin and offers righteousness. His message is our message. We bear witness to a world that goes against Him and does not want their sins exposed to a Holy and righteous God; they do not have eyes to see and ears to hear the invitation of God's mercy, justice and affection.

We will be mocked and hated just as Jesus was. But we are never alone. We follow and belong to our Savior, who walked the path before us and is walking with us still.

Pray

O Suffering Servant,

We worship you as the one that was hated

By the world, you created, loved and came to save.

We know that we too will be despised for speaking your name

To those who so desperately need to hear your Gospel.

Remind us that there are still depths of our hearts

That need to be brought into your Holy light

and exposed for repentance and for restoration.

Humble us, heal us and help us, O Lord.

We pray in your precious and powerful Son's name,

Amen

Journal: Name a time the world hated you for loving Jesus. How did you sense Jesus with you?

Plan A

Read John 16:1-15

Jesus says it is better for Him to go away and send the Helper. Why? Jesus's return to the Father allows us to experience the fullness of the Spirit. Jesus promised to be with us always, but he is present now through the Helper, who speaks the message of Jesus to the world by guiding the daily actions of Christians.

The Helper assures us that Jesus is still working in the world despite leaving the world. Even when Jesus' disciples experience persecution and suffering, the presence of the Helper testifies that God has not abandoned them.

The Helper is not a backup plan. He is part of Plan A to continue Jesus' ministry through the disciples, even in the most difficult of situations. So it is with us. The helper guides us daily through our major and minor troubles as we work toward the Kingdom. The Helper points us to the abundant life Jesus offers through the Father, day by day.

Pray

Helper,

Make us more aware of your work in our lives.

Cause us to heed your Word to us,

So that we can bring your Word to the world.

Help us to live abundantly in your light
and testify to your glory.

Convict the world of sin, judgment and righteousness.

Help us be a part of that work,

even when persecutions both small and great arrive.

Comfort us when we despair,

and lead us in the way everlasting.

Amen.

Journal: How could you rely on the Spirit for a need in your life right now?

We Will See Him Again

Read John 16:16-24

The short time the disciples knew Jesus was enough to sustain them through immense pain and suffering. Think about this: they KNEW Him. They knew what He looked like, how it felt to be embraced by Him, and what His voice sounded like. Think how amazing Jesus must be for his disciples to later endure so much. They must have truly believed Him when He said, "I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice."

Though this may be hard to believe, the Bible says our encounter with Christ is a better one than what the disciples experienced (20:29). However, we so often need reminding. Times of hardship, like many of us are experiencing right now, bring suffering and may cause us to doubt. Yet this scripture calls us to remember Christ and believe He is enough, even now. May we be encouraged today to believe that we will see Him, and no one will take our joy from us.

Pray

Our Beloved Friend,

We know that the mighty sun you created

Burns radiantly behind the clouds and storms.

Just as the Son of God sits at Your right hand in radiance,

Interceding for us, Your children.

But regardless, doubts, fears, infirmities, and solitude

Are our constant, unwelcome companions.

These days it's hard to sense You are close

And to hear Your voice, and know Your love.

Grow in us, Lord, the strength and desire to take up our cross,

And grow in us a longing for the Great Lover of our soul.

This we pray in the mighty name of Jesus the Christ,

Amen.

Journal: What are you currently enduring? How will the hope of seeing Jesus bring comfort today?

Take Heart

Read John 16:25-33

Here's a question many of us aren't used to asking: Are we able to receive comfort from Jesus? We know that faith comforts some people. We believe, in the abstract, that the message of Jesus is "good news." But when is the last time we really felt Jesus removing the weight of a sin, the burden of a grief, or the confusion of a circumstance?

Here Jesus speaks plainly to his disciples so that they would take heart. What gives them comfort? First, that they themselves have access to the Father through Jesus. Secondly, that even in their failures they will find him victorious. They will soon abandon him, but he will not abandon them. In his sacrifice, he will overcome the world. And, as John will write later in his life, Jesus will give us the power to overcome the world with our faith as well (1 John 5:4-5).

Pray

Jesus,

You are gentle and lowly in heart.

Our souls need rest—help us rest in you!

We come heavy from doing wrong,

We come weary from doing good.

Help us trade our yokes with yours—

Believing that you have taken our burdens

And have given us things that are joyful and light.

Show us that the world is not on our shoulders,

But that it was carried by you on the cross.

Give us the joy of your victory,

And the comfort of your Spirit

Amen

Journal: What burdens are you carrying right now? What could Jesus say to you right now to lift those burdens off of you?

DAY 50
November 13

The Prayer of Love

Read John 17

By listening to Jesus pray, we get to see and behold the heart of our Lord for us. Facing imminent betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion, Jesus prays. Despite the anguish he was anticipating, our Lord's chief concern is for His disciples, including us. He prays not that God would guide them, use them, teach them, or strengthen them, but that God would keep them.

Our intimate connection to God was the subject of Christ's prayer. He knew that when we are kept by God, all the rest of our needs would be satisfied. Who we are, our identity as children of God, is far more important to Jesus than what we are able to do for Him. Not only does this prayer of love for God and for His people let us see the heart of the Messiah transparently, but in it, Jesus demonstrates a divine and remarkable practice of prayer rooted and grounded in unmistakable love.

Pray

Our Great High Priest,

We praise You for Your selfless, unrelenting love.

Encourage our hearts as we read the words you voiced.

Remind us that we are kept by and for You Lord.

When troubles come, You are present there.

When doubts arise, You are the comforter of our souls.

We see that you have been faithful to your Word,

And we trust that you will be faithful again.

Your mercies are new every morning,

All glory and honor and praise belong to You.

Amen

Journal: Picture Jesus reaffirming your identity in Him. What are some true things that he says to you?

Family
WORSHIP
Week 11

For family worship, please choose any day of the week that works best. Gather your family and set aside 15-20 minutes to discuss the following. Anytime will work, but often after dinner or before bed works best.

THEME: Jesus the King

What do you think of when you picture a king? A shiny crown? A long, soft, colorful robe? A king's throne? Your favorite king from a Disney movie that everyone loves and cheers for? Name some kings from some of your favorite movies.

King Jesus is not like the kings in the movies you love, He is even better. Our King, King Jesus didn't rule from a castle, but came to earth to walk among His people. He lived with us and then paid the ultimate price to save us from sin. He is the best King!

To Memorize:

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." John 18:36

Ask:

Is Jesus' kingdom of this world? How do we know Jesus' kingdom is not of this world?

Take Away:

Jesus is the one true King.

Family Prompt:

Make a crown out of construction paper and let your kids decorate it however they want. On the crown write, or have your kids write: Jesus is the one true King!

Pray:

Jesus, you are the one true King.

Thank you for coming to live with us

And take our sins away

Through your death on the cross.

Help us to remember that you are our only King.

And that your kingdom is not of this world.

You are so big, so strong, and so mighty.

There's nothing that you cannot do!

You are worthy to be praised.

So we praise you Jesus,

Amen

DAY 51
November 16

Stepping Forward into God's Calling

Read John 18:1-14

Pause to consider that Jesus knew all of what was about to unfold. He did not go ignorantly, and, we see here, that He did not go to the cross unwillingly. Jesus doesn't attempt to hide from his accusers; rather, He intentionally goes to a place where He knows they will find Him. Despite the turmoil of his heart and mind, despite knowing all the terrible things that would happen to Him, Jesus does not resist them; Jesus comes forward.

Imagine the scene: Judas enters the peaceful garden with torchlight, weapons and soldiers. But instead of meeting resistance, his Friend moves toward him. Jesus comes forward, asks him a question, and gives the answer Judas seeks. Out of perfect obedience to His calling and great love for His people, Jesus did not let the full range of His human emotions deter Him from following His perfect plan of redemption. There is no greater love than this.

Pray

Sacrificial Lamb of God,
Though you knew what awaited you at Calvary,
You did not shrink from obedience, stepping forward
In obedience to the Father, out of love for us,
Into unimaginable pain and separation.
Thank you for your sacrificial love.
May our hearts be moved by the enormity of your obedience,
And the love for ourselves and for the Father that compelled it.
Teach us how to step forward into our callings.
Make us willing to do hard things for love of You.
Amen

Journal: Identify areas of your life that God may be calling you into faithful, but difficult, obedience.

Fear versus Faithfulness

Read John 18:15-32

Peter is too scared to admit his connection to Jesus, but too loyal to flee the scene of His interrogation. He awkwardly loafs about outside the proceedings, warming himself at the same fires the temple guards do. No sooner has Peter denied his association with Jesus, than the doors swing wide and torchlight pours into the courtyard. Peter makes eye-contact with his fettered Master being dragged out Caiphas' front gates bound for sentencing by Pilate.

This isn't how Peter dreamt the events of this night would go, especially after his hours-earlier declaration of unwavering allegiance to Christ. Many of us muse about what level of endurance and courage we would display if placed in harm's way because of our faith. Like Peter, when we are frightened we may need to reassess whether it is our faithfulness or God's faithfulness that is required to bring about His sovereign plan.

Pray

Almighty and most merciful Father,
You have seen fit to redeem those who have erred
You have chosen to build Your church using those who are frail and weak
You have chosen foolish things to bear witness to Your glory.
Let us call upon Your Name in our times of trial,
Let us trust Your Spirit to do in us and through us
That which we cannot do in our own strength.
Let us lean on Your perfect design
To make all things right in the end.
May we be always ready for Your imminent return.
Be our rock and our fortress
Be our ever-present help in all distress.
Amen.

Journal: Reflect on a time when God proved Himself faithful to you despite your failings.

DAY 53
November 18

A Different Kingdom

Read John 18:33-40

Worldly kingdoms are built on self-interest, pride, and force. Jesus' kingdom is entirely distinct. He does not need any creature to affirm his right to reign, yet His purpose on Earth is to manifest the reality of His heavenly kingdom and invite us into it. He claims to speak truth and indeed be Truth personified (Jn 14:6).

We can choose to believe and follow Him as the Way to His kingdom. But so often we invest our energy into building our own version of an ideal world. The problem is that despite our best efforts, our man-made kingdoms seem prone to melt like chocolates in the hot summer sun. His kingdom on the other hand, has no end. Moreover, there are reasons Jesus sidesteps the question of his title. He is not only King of the Jews but King of Kings and Lord of all. All other rulers will one day bow to Him.

Pray

King of the Universe,
You emptied Yourself and came down to show us Truth.
We praise You for doing what no other human could do.
Though You were found innocent,
You went to the cross so we might enter Your kingdom.
We thank You for preparing a place there for us.
Awaken our hunger for the truth of Your Word.
Help us to cast aside our idolatrous kingdoms,
and set our hearts fully on You.
Soon we will stand before Your throne,
and declare Your Name above all other Names.
To You be glory and dominion forever.
Amen.

Journal: Spend several minutes quietly listening to the Holy Spirit's voice of Truth. If we belong to a kingdom that is not of this world, how should we engage with the world where we currently reside?

Behold the Man

Read John 19:1-16

Between the relentless cries of the Jews and Christ's unsettling claims of divinity, Pilate was reluctantly forced to contend with the ultimate question. Who is Jesus? Although he sought to avoid this uncomfortable dilemma (v.12), the Jews appealed to Caesar's authority, and Pilate's god was finally revealed. The approval of Rome was Pilate's higher power. And despite any internal tugs of conscience, Jesus became a mere man in his eyes, condemnable to death.

Pilate's moral dilemma urges us to examine our own beliefs about Jesus, and causes us to ask this question: whom do we fear above Him? Does His Lordship compel us to live obediently despite the displeasure of others? Or are we willing to lessen His authority in our minds that we may maintain man's approval? While there is grace for our weakness, let us not allow the fear of man to cloud our conscience. For in so doing, we, like Pilate, may abandon Jesus altogether.

Pray

O Great I AM,
You are the "true, eternal, and almighty God,
Whom we invoke, worship, and serve."
We surrender our hearts before you as Lord of Lords.
Yet we confess there are times we fear man above You.
Preserve us from the entanglement of man-pleasing.
Remind us that we are safe when we trust You above all else.
Embolden our often feeble hearts,
To live in confident obedience to Your commands.
May every fear we possess melt before You
As we behold Your majesty.
Amen

Journal: Where does the fear of man have a hold in your life? Ask Jesus to help you overcome.

DAY 55
November 20

Misunderstood

Read John 19:17-27

Reputation is crucial to the religious. The chief priest interrupts the soldiers crucifying Christ to suggest a correction on the sign above Jesus's head. Pilate shuts him down like a strict father, "What I have written I have written." Perception, reputation, other people's opinions of our behavior are massively important when we believe we are accepted by our efforts.

The juxtaposition of the Chief Priest's deep need for a correct sign next to Jesus, who is dying to free us from needing to be right, is stark. Christ, the creator of the world, could have corrected a good many things to be more accurate. Instead, he humbles himself and gives up his right to be understood to heal us all. Unfortunately, he is still misunderstood and will continue to be for generations to come. Are we able to follow his example and sit in profound misunderstanding without demanding to be right?

Pray

Christ,

You are the correct Word,

Heap your mercy upon us and forgive us.

Forgive us for caring more for perception than actual healing.

Forgive us for locking away parts of our hearts
that don't play well for our reputations.

Holy Wisdom, give us the courage to expose our

Fragmented hearts and surrender all we are to you.

Help us embrace your humbleness and accept it as our own.

You do not misunderstand who we are

even when we so often misunderstand ourselves.

Amen.

Journal: If you felt the freedom to be misunderstood, how would your daily life change?

Family
WORSHIP
Week 12

For family worship, please choose any day of the week that works best. Gather your family and set aside 15-20 minutes to discuss the following. Anytime will work, but often after dinner or before bed works best.

THEME: Believing when you can't see

Have you ever felt a really strong wind? The kind that makes your hair fly all over and you want to go inside for cover? Ever put your arm out of the car window when you're driving fast? Can you see the wind? No! You can't see the wind, but you can see what it is doing.

In this passage Jesus' friend Thomas can't believe that Jesus has been raised from the dead. He says he will never believe it unless he can see it. Jesus comes to His friend Thomas and shows him his hands. He is so kind to show Thomas, and to help him believe. This kind Jesus helps us too! He sent us His Spirit to help us see!

To Memorize:

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. John 20:29

Ask:

Who does Jesus say are blessed? Who is helping us believe?

Take Away:

We can believe in Jesus by seeing Him through Scripture (the Bible)!

Family Prompt:

Help your kids make a "I believe in Jesus" poster. You can get a posterboard, use the side of an amazon box or just use a piece of paper. Have them write "I believe in Jesus" at the top and write, color, decorate it however they want. Remind them that this visual will help them on days when they doubt. Make your own poster and an example and encouragement!

Pray:

Jesus, you are so kind.

When your friend, Thomas, couldn't believe

That you were raised from the dead-

You came to him and showed him

What he needed to see.

Thank you for the ways you help us to believe.

Through your Spirit we can know you more and more.

Help us to see you in Scripture.

We pray in your beautiful name, Amen

DAY 56
November 23

That You May Believe

Read John 19:28-42

It is often difficult to discern what is true. Which source do we trust? Which scientific study is credible? Perhaps we search for evidence that supports our already established point of view. No matter how we decide what to believe, we place a great deal of importance on what we see. After all, seeing is believing.

John wants his readers to understand that His account of Jesus' death is true. He is an eyewitness to each excruciating detail. His testimony of the blood and the water, the thirst and the anguish, is a firsthand account of the truth. He holds up God's Word, prophecies of old, and assures his audience, this is being fulfilled. John pleads with his readers—watch Jesus attend to every detail. From the hyssop to the piercing to the unbroken legs, Jesus fulfilled them all. These things are trustworthy; John's word can be believed. Jesus has done the unbelievable, and John saw it all, so that we may believe.

Pray

Suffering Savior,

Thank You for Your attention to every detail.

Thank You for knowing God's word and fulfilling it.

Thank you for the certainty of Your witnesses.

There are so many moments when we doubt.

We doubt that such magnificent love would come for us.

We doubt that such lavish mercy should cover our sin.

We doubt that You are working all things for our good.

But even in our doubt, we can turn to what is true.

You have given us Your word, full of Your promises.

Fix our eyes on what is pure, lovely, and true.

We believe, help us in our unbelief.

Amen.

Journal: What pieces of God's story are unbelievable to you? What do you do with that doubt?

DAY 57
November 24

Peace Be With You

Read John 20:1-23

In this passage Jesus is many things—He is powerful, He is mysterious, He is electrifying, and he is tender to his friends in their fear. When Mary grows overwhelmed, his presence brings joy. While the disciples are hiding in fear from the Jews, his presence brings the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though his resurrection was foretold, Jesus doesn't berate Mary or the disciples for their lack of understanding or fear. Instead, he comes with words of comfort, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). Jesus has been beaten, mocked, and murdered. He understands fear, yet He triumphs over it.

What could this perspective do when it comes to our fears? In this strange and overwhelming season, it's easy to feel afraid. The comfort and stability of our ordinary lives feels, at times, like it has been snatched away from us. Can we hear the comforting words of Jesus spoken over us: Peace be with you?

Pray

Prince of Peace,

Our hearts ache for the suffering

You have endured at the hands of others

And from the daily lack of trust in our own hearts.

With so much out of our control,

We often succumb to fear and doubt.

Yet, looking at you, we see a new way

As you model a heart of peace and a presence of joy

In the midst of even the most trying circumstances.

Thank you for your perfect love

That casts out fear and doubt.

We place our trust in you again today.

Amen.

Journal: Can you hand over your fears into God's capable hands in this season? What makes this difficult for you?

DAY 58
November 25

Locked Doors and a Doubting Disciple

Read John 20:24-31

Thomas was one of the twelve. He was among the men closest with Jesus during his earthly ministry. He walked side by side with Jesus. He knew Jesus and sat under his teaching. He was there at that beautiful meal where Jesus told his friends he was going to be leaving soon. Thomas had every reason to believe. When his friends told him they'd seen that Jesus was alive he had the honest accounts of his faithful friends. And yet he couldn't believe it.

Jesus could have left Thomas to his doubt. He could have scolded or shamed. But instead Jesus showed Thomas what he needed to see in order to believe. That's who Jesus is. It's what He does. He draws near and reveals Himself, binding our hearts to His. Jesus comes close, blesses us in our belief and helps us in our unbelief.

The world shames. Jesus shows. He can handle our doubt. Not even locked doors can keep him away.

Pray

Abba Father,

Thank you for drawing near to us when we doubt.

For showing us, not shaming us,

For leading us, not leaving us.

We were created to know you, To love you, and to live for you.

We confess that Thomas' words have been uttered from our lips,

In some way, shape, or form-

"Unless I see it I will never believe it".

Help us in our unbelief.

Bind our wandering hearts to Thee,

Amen.

Journal: What is something about your faith you have been told to believe but wish you could see, hear or feel? How can your lack of sight be a blessing?

DAY 59
November 26

Daily Abundance

Read John 21:1-14

When was the last time you saw a coincidence too unusual to ignore? The disciples see one here. After a fruitless night of fishing, a man on the beach suggests trying the other side of the boat. When the disciples catch an enormous number of fish, they know that man to be Jesus. The disciples recognize divine power, not coincidental circumstances.

By demonstrating his power in their circumstances, Jesus shows that he cares about the practical details of the disciples' lives. Jesus could have said "Don't worry about the bad night of fishing! I have overcome the world!" Instead, he gives them a miraculous catch of fish and cooks them breakfast. Jesus cares about the disciples' daily needs and provides abundantly. They were able to see this abundance as a hallmark of Jesus and knew it must be him. Jesus is generous, and the disciples recognize the fingerprints of God in their lives. Do you recognize His fingerprints?

Pray

Gracious Provider,

You care about our jobs, our breakfasts, and our souls.

Help us to see past our vocation and daily needs to you.

We are your beloved; you clothe and feed us.

You give us good work and call us to do it well.

Help us give our daily concerns to you.

Help us trust you with them, deeply and eternally.

Please point us outward into abundant life
through our own vocations and stations.

Let us recognize you when you act.

Cause us to celebrate, testify, and love

With the abundance you give!

Amen.

Journal: How has God demonstrated to you recently that He cares about your daily concerns?

DAY 60
November 27

Loved First, Then Commissioned

Read John 21:15-25

The obvious (and true) application we get from Jesus and Peter's discourse is that to love Jesus, is to serve Him. We know we are adopted into a new family that's on mission to baptize the nations, and we all play a part in the Church fulfilling the Great Commission. But a more subtle (and equally true) application is that we cannot faithfully feed Jesus' sheep unless our hearts are steeped in His love. That is, our love for Jesus is the main objective, not a prerequisite, and serving the church is a direct outcome of this love.

Jesus, with one question, teaches Peter that his actions and zeal had failed him. Rather God wanted his love more than anything else. So while we serve God in feeding his sheep, may we be fueled by our first love above all else.

Pray

Our Lord and Redeemer,
We were dead in our sins and trespasses
And now made alive in Christ.
And like our brother Peter,
Our zeal gets misplaced within our own strength and ambitions.
We often get distracted with much serving
Anxious and troubled about many things.
Dear Lord, forgive us for being distracted from Your immense love.
Grant us grace today, precious Lord, to see Your church,
Though fellow sinners, as gentle lambs to feed.
May it be love that makes us long for each other
With the affection of Jesus. In Christ's name,
Amen.

Journal: Make a list of ways that you are serving (in church or any setting).
How can you lean into loving Jesus more while serving?



NEW VALLEY
D O W N T O W N