



# **FOLLOW.**

**Gospel of John Daily Devotional**

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## **Congratulations! You are a disciple of Jesus Christ!**

Jesus led his first disciples so that they would one day be able to lead disciples of their own who one day would be able to lead disciples of their own. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we follow Jesus' teachings and His example. Jesus is in charge. He is our teacher, mentor, commanding officer, and guide. We surrender our right to decide for ourselves. We surrender our right to be in control. From this moment on, we live our lives for Him. His purpose is our purpose. His mission is our mission. His life is our life. His heart is our heart. His mind is our mind. Jesus is not just a large part of our lives; our lives only have meaning in His. If you are new to Jesus, or if God has been, up until now, something you've done once a week on Sunday, you are in for the adventure of a lifetime! You are about to surrender everything to Jesus and find a life more meaningful than anything you have ever known!

Christian writer Bill Hull, in his book *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, gives one of the best explanations of how we become disciples by observing how Jesus taught the original twelve disciples.

1. A disciple submits to a teacher who teaches how to follow Jesus.
2. A disciple learns the words of Jesus.
3. A disciple learns Jesus' way of ministry.
4. A disciple imitates Jesus' life and character.
5. A disciple finds and teaches other disciples to follow Jesus.

As you complete this ninety day journey with Jesus through all four gospels, pay close attention to what Jesus said and did in order to imitate Him. Every day, your life will change as you decide to "FOLLOW."

## **MARCH 10: Read John Chapter 1**

John calls Jesus “The Word” as if everything God the Father wanted to say to the world is expressed through this one life. That is why we have been paying such close attention to everything Jesus said and did. Jesus revealed the heart of God through everything he said and did. His entire life is a message to us about the better life and the better world found in the Kingdom of God. As followers of Jesus, our lives communicate things about God to the people around us and our lives may be the only Bible the world will ever read. What are we communicating about the God we say we serve? What will people assume about Jesus from hanging around with us? The world did not recognize the Eternal Word in Jesus and rejected him. Do people recognize Jesus in you? Take some time thinking this over. Be ruthlessly honest with yourself. Anytime our actions fail to match our stated beliefs, people notice. If we are cruel, people may assume our God is cruel. If we are petty, people may assume our God is petty. If we are compassionate and generous, people may assume God is equally kind. We will spend the coming weeks walking with Jesus, the Word made Flesh. Pay close attention to what this special life is communicating about the Creator’s plans for us. At the same time, pay attention to what your life is communicating to those around you.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Have I given EVERYTHING in my life over to Jesus?**

**Do people recognize Jesus in me?**

**What will people assume about Jesus from watching me?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 11: Read John Chapter 2**

In the grand scheme of things, running out of wine at your wedding is no big deal, but it was embarrassing for the bride and groom. Jesus' mother Mary took pity on the two young kids starting a new life together and mentioned it to Jesus. At first, Jesus brushes her off: "Woman, my hour has not yet come." Then he instructs the wedding stewards to pour out water from the stone pitchers and "PRESTO!" Jesus made wine. I can't do that, and neither can you, so don't fret about having to imitate Jesus on this one. Instead, I want us to follow Mary's lead. As disciples, we will bring our needs to God in prayer. How many times have we laid out before God everything we wanted exactly the way we expected it? Then how many times have we churned with disappointment or worry when God didn't fill our order exactly as we placed it? Prayer is supposed to relieve us of our worry and anxiety, not create more. Who are we to give God instructions? Why would we think that we can come up with better solutions than God? Look closely at this story again. Mary did not ask Jesus to do anything. There was no request. No ask. Nothing. She simply presented Jesus with a need that she couldn't solve: "They have run out of wine." Then she walked away, trusting that whatever Jesus chose to do would be best. When we pray, give God the need and let go of the desire to control the outcome. Remember the disciples' ultimate prayer is Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane "Not my will be done, by thine."

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Do I trust God enough to solve my problems?**

**What other ways do I try to control God rather than letting God control me?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

### **MARCH 12: Read John Chapter 3**

You must be born again. Period. At some point in your life there needs to be a “before” and an “after.” It can be easy to see the change in a drug addict or prostitute who met Jesus and turned their lives around. But what about you? Who were you before you met Jesus? Have you changed? Are you now living a second, brand new life in Christ? An even harder question is posed to those of us who grew up in the church as infants and never strayed. Maybe you never left God to sow your wild oats as a young person. Maybe you never doubted. Maybe you feel you are the same person you have always been. Is that necessarily a good thing? Be honest with yourself: Are you still worshipping God because your parents told you to, or have you at some point made a decision for yourself? God has no grandchildren. The disciples were called, invited to follow Jesus. They chose to leave their nets behind and follow Him. To be a follower of Jesus, we must surrender our lives to the authority of Jesus. One moment we are living for our own hopes and plans. A moment later, we are living for His. We begin a brand-new life. We are “born again.” Salvation comes in here, the forgiveness of our sins. But the new life is not just a spiritual reality that we will enjoy when we die. It is the way of life that we choose to live right here and right now. Have you chosen? Whose purposes are you living for, yours or God’s?

#### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Whose purposes am I living for, mine or God’s?**

**Am I born again?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

### **MARCH 13: Read John Chapter 4**

Jesus was speaking with someone he wasn't supposed to. This woman was a hated Samaritan. (Jews did not spend time with Samaritans) She was also a woman. (Men of standing did not speak with women in public in those days.) She was also messed up. She came to the well alone when no one else was around. Nobody wanted to be seen with her and she had no one to blame for it but herself. She made bad choices. She lived hard. She was getting by the best she can. I speak with people like that all time in my town. Most of them have been hardened by life and are cynical about hypocritical "Jesus people." Jesus spoke to her. Why? Because he had come to offer a better life in a better world and if anyone needed a better life it was her. It is appalling to think how much good is left undone because followers of Jesus are unwilling to be seen in "unseemly" places. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote that Christian faith is less concerned with cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously doing the Lord's will. ISNT GOD'S WILL A BETTER LIFE AND A BETTER WORLD FOR EVERYONE IN YOUR TOWN? Of course it is. Where are the people in your town if not in church? In a bar? In a tattoo parlor? At the emergency room? At the laundromat? At the shelter? Behind the convenience store at 4:00 in the morning. Is there anything keeping you out of those places? Would Jesus stay away? I didn't think so. As followers of Jesus, we go where he goes. We meet who he meets. Prepare to be uncomfortable.

#### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Where am I uncomfortable going? Who am I uncomfortable talking to?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 14: Read John Chapter 5**

*<sup>25</sup> “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live... <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”*

We are all dead without Jesus. I know that sounds morbid, but it is true. Even we who get up and go to work and walk around town everyday are as good as dead. From the moment we are born, we are counting down the days of our lives. Why do I bring this up? Jesus speaks to the dead and those who hear His voice are lifted out of their graves and live. We don't have the power to bring the dead back to life, but we know the Words of Jesus and can speak to those around us with His Voice. Jesus offers a better life in a better world but what good is any of that to those who do not survive to enjoy it? The mission of Jesus is ultimately the struggle between life and death. Jesus brings life by defeating death, but that story must be heard. That invitation must be given. If you alone had the secret to cure cancer, would you keep it to yourself or would you bang on every door in town and shout it from the rooftops? You would shout it out because by doing so you would be saving lives. When is the last time you banged on the doors of your neighborhood to offer life eternal?

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**What is keeping me from telling everyone about new life in Jesus?**

**Do I truly believe that everyone needs what Jesus offers?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 15: Read John Chapter 6**

Sometimes, when Jesus speaks of heavenly things, we get confused because we only really understand earthly things in our everyday life. When Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again, the man scratched his head, bewildered at the idea of climbing back into his mother's womb after being born the first time. We are still guilty of taking the words of Jesus literally in earthly ways, when he is speaking of spiritual things. Then Jesus commanded us to eat his flesh and drink his blood which is a horrifying idea in every generation. It is the stuff of Halloween nightmares. It is also the foundation for our understanding of salvation that is celebrated in holy communion. We eat and drink to stay alive. Stop eating and we will starve to death. Stop drinking and we die of dehydration. As we've discussed many times before, Jesus offered his life to give us life. We are nourished by this gift physically and spiritually. Let your imagine run a little here. When we eat, we fill ourselves with good things that keep us strong, healthy, and happy. When we are full, we are content, peaceful, and lacking for nothing. What does it mean to "fill yourself with Jesus?" How does Jesus keep us strong, healthy, and happy? Are we content? Peaceful? Lacking for anything? That does not mean that we are all now millionaires who have anything we want. It means we are satisfied.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Am I satisfied in life?**

**Am I filled with Jesus? If not, how can I do that?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 16: Read John Chapter 7**

Do you ever struggle with doubts about Jesus? I think we all do at one time or another. We've spent so much time lately listening to what Jesus has said and done, maybe you've wondered if it really is true? Some people want to know whether it is true before they will even give Jesus a listen. The crowd was filled with people like that. They didn't know if Jesus was worth listening to and wanted to some proof first to make sure they weren't being tricked or deceived. Jesus replied: "*Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.*"<sup>18</sup> *Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him.*" Did you hear that? Those who resolve to do the will of God will know whether someone's teaching is from God or if it is just somebody making stuff up to gather a crowd. Do you know what the will of God is for you? It's not hard if you've been reading the Bible at all. You know the commandments. By now you understand faith. You are beginning to understand discipleship. Your life is already moving in a God-chosen direction. Do these words keep you moving in that direction or do they get in your way? Not sure if the person preaching to you in the break room can be trusted? Simple: Are they, by their teaching, bringing glory to God or attention to themselves? If it is from God, you will recognize it.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Do I know God's will for my life? Am I sure?**

**Is there anyone who seems to be calling you away from that?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 17: Read John Chapter 8**

Like a pitcher ready to strike out the batter, the men of the village had their arms back ready to throw the rocks that would maim and kill the woman cowering in the street before them. They had wound up and were ready, when Jesus was asked his opinion. The Law of Moses required the death penalty for anyone caught in adultery, a clear violation of the commandment. (Funny that there was only one person being punished though, isn't it? It takes two people to commit adultery.) They were testing Jesus. They wanted to make sure he knew the Law and commandments and would back them up. His response still echoes through the ages: "Let anyone among you who is without sin throw the first stone." Bam. But we protest. Her sin is so much worse than mine. Newsflash friends: sin is sin. If we lie, cheat on our taxes, or steal some songs by illegally downloading them off the internet we are just as guilty of breaking the commandments as if we murdered someone. There are no degrees of sin. That is so important, I think we need to hear it again, but this time in all capital letters: **THERE ARE NO DEGREES OF SIN!** As followers of Jesus this requires two things from us: first, we need to take our own sin and disobedience seriously. Second, we have not been appointed the accusers and punishers of the world. Jesus is willing to give to others the pass that we always justify for ourselves. Forgiveness, mercy, and repentance are the way of Christ. God cares more about where we are going than where we've been. Time to live to obey another day.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Who am I unable to tolerate because of their lifestyle of sin?**

**Am I without sin?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 18: Read John Chapter 9**

The Pharisees refused to believe that the man was healed by Jesus. They pumped him with a hundred different questions about whether or not Jesus was a sinner. I love his response: *“I don’t know whether or not this man is a sinner. What I do know is that I was blind and now I can see.”* People often get nervous about sharing their faith with others. What if they ask me a question I don’t know how to answer? What if I make a mistake? The man born blind was not an expert in the Bible or theology. He didn’t really know Jesus at all. But he knew what he himself had experienced. He could tell his story of gaining his sight. No one could tell it better than the person involved. You do not have to be a Biblical scholar who can quote not only the chapter and verse of every great idea in the scriptures but also the opinions of learned people throughout the ages. You are, however, expected to be the world’s foremost expert on your story. If you are asked about Jesus, all you can really say is what you yourself have experienced. What has Jesus taught you? What has Jesus done in your life? How are you a different person because of him? That is why we call sharing our faith “witnessing.” In a court of law, a witness is not allowed to talk about anything they want. They must restrict their testimony to only what they themselves have seen, heard, or experience. So, what have you experienced firsthand of Jesus?

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**What have you experienced firsthand of Jesus?**

**Who can I tell my Jesus story to today?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 19: Read John Chapter 10**

Shepherds spent most of their time outside keeping an eye on their flocks. They were not grazing on fenced in pastures, but out in the open wilderness where sheep could wander off at any moment. Sheep could be stolen or eaten by predators. The shepherd would protect the sheep by staying between the flock and an oncoming lion or bear. It was not always a pleasant job or a safe one. Believers are just as vulnerable as sheep in the wilderness. We get distracted and wander off. We face attacks from people hostile to our faith and from the Spiritual Enemy of God. It is easier now more than ever before in history to abandon our faith. We need to be protected and to protect one another. This is one of the many reasons why Jesus created the Church. We need to be grouped together to look out for one another lest we wander off and get lost again. We need support through the trials and stresses of everyday life. We need to stick together when the attacks come. Maybe you have never experienced a true attack in your congregation, but they happen every day around the world. Whether it be government forces who are trying to shut down the church to better control the village or a deranged person with an automatic weapon shooting in the sanctuary, these attacks are real. Any congregation that has been split down the middle by anger and conflict has experienced the sabotage of Satan. As followers of Jesus, we are not only protected by Jesus the Good Shepherd, but we do likewise, closing ranks, circling our wagons and protecting our own.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**How have I been protected by Jesus?**

**How can I protect my brothers and sister in Christ?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 20: Read John Chapter 11**

John 11:35 is the favorite verse of anyone who has been given the task of memorizing scripture. “*Jesus wept.*” Why is it the favorite? Easy. It is the shortest verse in the Bible and the simplest to remember, but let’s not overlook the ground shaking reality it teaches. Jesus, after hearing that his close friend Lazarus is ill, delays for several days before going to visit. By the time he arrives, Lazarus is dead. The house is filled with mourners, and Lazarus’ sisters Mary and Martha are beside themselves with grief. No big deal, right? Jesus is the Son of God. He can simply raise him from the dead, which he does, but not before he pauses before the tomb of his friend and weeps. Despite the holy power of Jesus about to be revealed by this healing...Despite how easy the miracle will be to accomplish for Jesus, he pauses first to weep over the suffering and death of his friend. Why? It is callous to assume that just because the disease can be healed that the suffering does not matter. It does. Just because Lazarus’ death can be reversed, his suffering and loss still matter to Jesus because he is the epitome of compassion, the ability to feel and share in the experiences and pain of others. Seasons of struggle and suffering open us up for some of the best blessings God can give. As disciples who offer a better life in a better world through Jesus, we can see the suffering of others as an opportunity to grow the Kingdom of God. But never forget that kingdom work comes second. Compassion always come first.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**How has God worked miracles in your life through suffering?**

**Whose pain is moving your heart right now?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 21: Read John Chapter 12**

We've spoken many times about the cost of discipleship. It is an undeniable truth of life that everything costs something. You can't have your cake and eat it too. Jesus speaks of the necessity of his own death on the cross, but also the necessity of his followers abandoning their own lives and plans to follow him. Like a grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies, we all give up something important when we choose Jesus. The Apostle Paul will later write that we die to our old selves and begin a new life in Christ. (Remember Nicodemus being born again?). We don't grieve the death and burial of a seed because we know it will grow into a plant that bears a fruitful harvest. The death of one seed seems such a small price to pay for a bushel full of fruits and vegetables. Likewise, the surrendered lives we leave behind seem a small price to pay for the incredible beauty of the better world that is coming. This is about sacrifice, the willingness to lose so that others might gain. It is the highest form of kindness, and it is the price that must be paid for being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We balk at the cost when we are unclear about the payoff. When we grumble about how long the worship service was today, or how the church is cutting into our personal time we are blissfully unaware of what is at stake. We are serving nothing less than the renewal of this current world by something better, holier, and eternal. What would you be willing to lose if you could erase cancer from the planet? What would you be willing to lose to literally save the entire planet?

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**What do you value more than the Kingdom of God?**

**What have you given up already to serve Jesus?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 22: Read John Chapter 13**

Have you ever washed someone else's feet? It can be a strange experience because feet kind of stink after being cooped up inside shoes all day. There is also something oddly personal and even intimate about washing, rinsing, and drying someone else's feet. In Jesus' day, it was customary to wash feet when you entered a home as a guest. Clean, cooled, dried feet probably felt good after a day in the dust and sun. Because it was a dirty job, it was often left to the servant of the household, which is why everyone was shocked to see Jesus on his hands and knees around the table washing the feet of his disciples. Jesus was not too good to wash Peter's feet. Peter was not too good to wash John's feet, and so on and so on. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are not too good to wash feet. We are not too good to scrub toilets. We are not too good to change adult diapers. We are not too good to take on the worst job that needs to be done simply because someone needs help. In the Kingdom of God, titles mean very little. I once was hollered at after worship by a man who thought it was undignified to wear my shirt sleeves rolled up to the elbow while preaching. I should have worn a proper robe and stole by his opinion. That was more "fitting" of a "proper man of God." I think a proper man of God cares less about fashion, privilege, and reputation and more about getting things done for people in need. Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve. Let's get over ourselves. If Jesus can serve on the floor so can we.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**What job is beneath me at my church?**

**What can I do today to serve someone else?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 23: Read John Chapter 14**

Disciples are disciplined people who make the choice to live according to the directions and expectations of their master. Throughout this series, we have focused on choices we make to live more faithfully as a disciple of Jesus Christ. We run the danger, though, of leaving the impression that discipleship is all about us. It is not. There are things that we cannot do. Besides, if we can adequately serve the Kingdom of God in our power and abilities, who needs God? Jesus promises us the constant presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that helped create the world, powered every miracle of Jesus, and would raise Jesus from the dead is given to us to help us get the job done too. We can try to imitate Jesus, but only the Spirit can change our inner character to become more like Jesus. If salvation is everything God does for us through Jesus on the cross and through the resurrection, sanctification is everything God does in us through the Holy Spirit. To sanctify means to make holy, just as the sanctuary is a holy place because of the presence of God found there. We are made holy by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit within us. The Spirit helps us to pray, understand the scriptures, and discern the will of God in difficult situations. We are never alone and never on our own. We have constant help, limitless power, and endless encouragement. Disciples live in the Spirit, which means we are constantly aware of the presence of God within us and around us. You are not alone.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**How have I experienced the Holy Spirit in my life?**

**How do I feel knowing that I am never alone?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 24: Read John Chapter 15**

We are back to the cost of discipleship again. This time Jesus is speaking about being hated and rejected by the world. Most people have never really experienced this. Sure, we may be light heartedly teased now and then for our faith, but the world does not hate us. We are not harassed on the streets. We are not beaten by police. We are not arrested or executed for our faith. Many of us have grown up in a culture that tolerates if not embraces faith. We think we can be a good citizen of our country and a citizen of heaven because we often think the two are practically the same thing. They are not. When we choose Jesus, we choose the coming Kingdom of God which is replacing every nation, government, ruler, and way of life. Make no mistake, the nation we live in will disappear and will be replaced with the Kingdom of God. That is threatening to a lot of people who have much invested in the current order. Jesus died because the world pushed back against his kingdom. Servants are not greater than their masters. If our master was rejected and executed, what makes us think that we will not be? I hope it doesn't happen, but don't be shocked if it does. By choosing Jesus, you have taken a public stand in favor of the better life and better world that Jesus is providing. That also means you have taken a stance against the status quo. You are working for change and sometimes the world refuses to change. Stay strong. The Holy Spirit is with you. Know where you stand.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**How have I been mistreated for my faith in Jesus Christ?**

**What about my current world do I hope never disappears?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 25: Read John Chapter 16**

“Be patient. The best is yet to come.” That should be a rallying cry for us as disciples. Our lives are dedicated to a future that is getting closer every day. Every struggle, every trial, every heartache, every pain is a down payment on that better life in a better world that Jesus has promised. Jesus’ disciples were upset to hear of his impending death. “Be patient. The best is yet to come.” Everything costs something. The labor pains of childbirth are excruciating yet are mostly forgotten after the baby arrives. The baby is infinitely greater than the pain required to bring it into the world. Jesus’ death then is not a tragedy but an investment in the future. Our service, our sacrifice, and even our suffering as disciples are not a tragedy. They are an investment in the future. “Be patient. The best is yet to come.” This is an important reminder that gives us an eternal perspective. We, as followers of Jesus, do not complain about our circumstances. We endure them for the sake of the kingdom. We do not whine, cry, or wallow in self-pity. Why? Because we are involved with childbirth. It’s supposed to hurt. “Be patient. The best is yet to come.”

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**What is the hardest thing I must endure?**

**How real is the Kingdom of God to me?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 26: Read John Chapter 17**

Today is a great day in reading the Bible. Why? Because today, I saw my name mentioned by Jesus. Did you catch yours? I heard it clear as day. Jesus is praying for his disciples, asking that the scriptures may be fulfilled, and the Father's will may be done. Then he mentions you and me. This is verse 20: "*I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they all may be one.*" Jesus prays specifically for people who will come to believe in Jesus in the future, many of whom were not even born yet. THAT'S US!! As disciples, we are constantly strengthening the bond between us as followers of Jesus and adding to our numbers. That's the simple formula for the Kingdom of God. It takes a growing number of people who receive the better life in Christ to make a better world. We know we need a better world. It is the one thing we can all agree on. Folks on the Right want to "Make America Great Again" and yearn for a simpler, more wholesome time of morality, faith, and responsibility. Folks on the Left ache for greater justice, compassion, and equality. Neither side will achieve the better world through political parties. It is found in Jesus Christ, which is why Jesus is praying for us and for those who will come to believe through our word. The growth of the kingdom is far from over. The Church may be struggling in our time. That may be because we have forgotten the simple kingdom formula: We are constantly strengthening the bond between us as followers of Jesus and adding to our numbers. Who are you praying for?

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**What is the hardest thing I must endure?**

**How real is the Kingdom of God to me?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 27: Read John Chapter 18**

Ever since Jesus was baptized, he was getting ready to die for us. It was always on his mind, weaved into everything he ever taught. He knew his purpose. But while it is one thing to know our purpose, it is quite another to take the plunge and live it out. The moment he allowed himself to be arrested, there was no turning back. The cross was now real. How about you? You've been spending a lot of time thinking about your purpose. You've studied, reflected, prayed, even agonized over it. There is a temptation in the Church to spend more time in quiet sanctuaries thinking about our purpose in life than actually living it out. In our minds, we can plan it all out exactly the way we want it to go. But once we take the plunge, we lose that complete control as things unfold around us. No plan ever survives contact with the real world. We wouldn't choose suffering, rejection, humiliation, failure, or pain, but these were all parts of Jesus' path. Don't be afraid. Remember, everything costs something. The pain and struggle to come are only the pains of childbirth. Something infinitely greater is coming! Does your service to Jesus look anything like what we've been reading together in the gospels? Are you holding back? Do you like the idea of abandoning everything to serve him but you are afraid? It's OK. Peter was afraid too. That's why he denied Jesus three times. He panicked. But like Peter, it's time to leave the kiddie pool and take the plunge into the deep end. "Be patient. The best is yet to come!"

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**What is holding me back from committing everything to Jesus?**

**What crazy leap of faith am I ready to take for Jesus?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 28: Read John Chapter 19**

I am in awe of what Jesus has done. Complete. Humble. Awe. It is one thing to suffer for the sake of another. It is quite another to be completely destroyed, dissected, and disappear for the sake of others. Sacrifice is attending to the needs of others INSTEAD OF your own. It is being willing to lose so that others might win. It is choosing to struggle so that others might thrive. It is choosing to lose so that others might gain. It is a true gift. We see this most clearly in Jesus' agony upon the cross. Jesus did not agree to the cross because it was going to be good for him. No soldier ever dove onto a live hand grenade asking, "what's in it for me?" "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." What about someone who lays down their life for complete strangers? I often remember the winter day in 1982 when an Air Florida passenger jet with ice on its wings lost altitude, crashed onto a bridge, then sank in the Potomac River. What I remember most was the one man swimming strongest in the freezing river helping other, more wounded, passengers into the harness to be lifted by helicopter to safety. Time after time he would grab someone else and shove them into the harness to save their lives. Before he could be rescued, he slipped under the water and drowned. He was one of the strongest swimmers out there after the crash. If anyone had the strength to survive it was he. He chose to give that last ounce of strength to save others. That is love. That is sacrifice. That man's name is Arland D. Williams, Jr. and I have remembered his sacrifice all these years. That is love with teeth. That is Christ-like love.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Do I hate to lose?**

**Am I really willing to suffer, lose, even die for others? For Jesus?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 29: Read John Chapter 20**

After all the discomfort and labor pains, the baby is finally born. I remember the day my oldest child was born. It was a day of quiet marvel after so much action and excitement. No more cramps and discomfort. No more painful pushing. No more bearing down and yelling out. The baby is here and is beautiful and peaceful and new. We just sat together holding her in the hospital room the entire next day. I think that is how resurrection must feel. After all the shouting, anger, and threats of the mob... After the punishment, and torture, and suffering of Jesus, there is just love, relief, gratitude, and peace. Jesus is the “first born of the new creation” a unique combination of restored earth and spiritual heaven. He appears and disappears like a spiritual ghost but eats and can be touched and has scars like the Jesus we’ve come to know among us. This day is the first moment of the eternity that is to come. I look back to holding my newborn daughter in my arms. I had no idea what was yet to come but it was coming because she was here. The disciples had no idea what was yet to come with the risen Jesus. But it was coming just the same because he was alive. We live in the resurrection world. It is not perfect yet, but it is getting better all the time. Expect it to get better. Help it get better. Thank God loudly when you see it get better. Anything is possible now because Christ is alive and well and with us. At risk of sounding like a broken record the last few days, but the amazing thing is: “The best is yet to come.”

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**Where do I see the old becoming new??**

**How can I thank God for the healing and improvement in the world around me?**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

## **MARCH 30: Read John Chapter 21**

*“The end is always the beginning.”*

Our gospel story comes to an end today, but the end of one story is always the beginning of another. The torch is passed from Jesus to his disciples. He has given the Good News of the Kingdom to them. They will give it to the rest of the world. Now its our turn. Over the last ninety days, you have received the Good News of Jesus Christ. Have you been changed by it? Have you answered the reflection questions by quickly filling in the blanks to move on with your day, or have you truly wrestled with them? How much time have you spent looking at yourself in the mirror deciding what kind of person you are and what kind of person God would like you to become? How much time have you spent in deep prayer asking impossibly big questions and waiting patiently for divine answers? Have you taken the plunge? Are you helping God work out that kingdom formula of constantly strengthening the bond between us as followers of Jesus and adding to our numbers daily? Are you living that better life in Christ Jesus and are you passing it on to someone else? Are you willing to struggle and suffer as the better world is born into our midst? Are you ready to lose so that others might gain? If the answers to these questions is “yes,” then congratulations. You are a disciple of Jesus Christ! Follow him. His life is your life. His heart is your heart. His mission is your mission. It will not always be easy, but it most certainly will be worth it. And remember: Be patient. The best is yet to come.

### **TODAY'S REFLECTION:**

**What did Jesus say today that changes the way I live?**

**What did Jesus do today that changes the way I live?**

**What's next?**