

IMAGGO DEI

Made in the
Image of God





Let's do this together as we start a new year.

Take a deep breath. Hold it for a count of three... Breathe out all the stress, worry, fear, anger, grief, apathy, unmet goals, unrealized dreams, lost time and heartache that was 2020. Ahhh... just let it go. I think we all can agree 2020 was a mess BUT we survived! Let's put it in the rearview mirror and pivot our attention on making the most of 2021 because I believe God has something powerful in store for you!

I have countless conversations with people who want more out of life and more from the journey with Jesus but just can't seem to find it. They're frustrated. It's not that they're not trying, it's that what they're trying just isn't working. What if the solution wasn't some grand gesture or seismic shift but a simple mindset pivot? A small shift in perspective that tweaks your definition of success, redefines your world and moves you toward the future that you desperately desire. A mindset pivot that moves you from surviving to thriving.

The good news is this... You already have everything you need to win! God has placed amazing gifts in you and designed you to succeed. When He knit you in your mother's womb, He didn't design you to fail. That life you've always wanted, that life you've thought was only for the lucky few, it's there for you and I bet it's closer than you think.

As we start 2021, I want to give you two mindset pivots that will completely transform your life. *Here they are:*

1. Imago Dei 2. Coram Deo

Two Latin words with significant meaning. "Imago Dei" is the doctrine that we have been made in the image of God. Our life's pursuit should be to remove all the things from our lives that keep His image from being declared and displayed by how we live. Understanding this mindset should replace the "can't" in our lives with a giant CAN! There's a bit of God in us, so we have to find it and let it shine. "Coram Deo" is the mindset of living our life before the face of God. Under His authority and for His glory. Once we embrace this, our objective is to live for Him daily.

Say this with me... "Father into your hands I commit my life. Mold me and make me into what you saw when you made me."

I believe in you. Your Heavenly Father believes in you. You can do this! Let's pursue God's best for our lives TOGETHER as we seek His image in us! I'm praying for you!

Pastor Jason



IMAGO DEI

2 “Go down to the potter’s shop, and I will speak to you there.” 3 So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. 4 But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so he crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over. 5 Then the Lord gave me this message: 6 “O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand. – Jeremiah 18:2-6

It’s a fascinating thought that God is molding and shaping our lives. With his very hands, He is making us into what He saw in us before we were created; He’s making and re-making us in His image. What does that even mean and what does it look like? Honestly, most of us live far beneath that statement. Most of us just settle for “it could be worse” or “this is as good as it gets”, but that’s NOT the promise of scripture. Jesus promised us abundant life. That promise isn’t waiting for us in Heaven but available to us today! It’s time to go all in, pursuing this offer that has been made to you, and this fast is where you begin.

Over the next 21 days we are going to reach for this goal together. We are going to use Peter as a case study and look at three commands Jesus gave Peter to reveal the image of God within him. It’s important to remember what the name Peter means...ROCK. Peter will become the rock solid foundation that the early church was built upon, but Jesus had to do a lot of molding and chiseling over their three years together to shape Peter into the disciple that we know.

Here are the three commands that will guide our fast.

PUT DOWN YOUR NETS. Peter had to release his past identity and security to join Jesus on the most exciting experience of his life. What are you holding on to that you need to release to join Jesus on the most exciting ride of your life?

GET OUT OF THE BOAT. Jesus invited Peter to do the unthinkable...the impossible...to walk on water, but it required faith. What is Jesus calling you to? Where is he beckoning you to walk? What step of faith do you need to take to be who God made you to be?

FOLLOW ME. Jesus told Peter that his life was not about his pleasure but about serving others. Peter became the ROCK to help others, not gain his own success. His success was the success of others. Jesus’ last words to Peter were also His first words...follow me.

This will be a powerful study and season of prayer and fasting that has the potential to completely transform your life.

Make the decision to be all in. Commit to the 21 days and invite God into the process of shaping and molding your life. Find His image in you, Imago Dei, and why He put it there. What do I need to do? Fasting involves much more than going without food. Genuine fasting requires planning and preparation and it also demands an intentional and complete commitment to seeking the Lord throughout the fast. Below are several steps you should take if you desire to fast

PLAN YOUR PRAYER TIME

Determine how much time you will spend praying and studying God's word daily. Part of the fast is replacing the time you normally would spend preparing and eating meals and filling that time with prayer and study instead. You must be intentional in this.

TAKE A SPIRITUAL INVENTORY BEFORE YOU BEGIN

When you fast and pray you are giving up food to discipline your body. Make sure you do the same with your attitudes and thoughts. You want to bring all parts of your life under the discipline of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

REPENT

Acknowledge your sin, repent, and be done with it. For God to hear your prayers you must first empty yourself of your sin. Ask for forgiveness and then live forgiven. (2 Chronicles 7:14-15)

ASK GOD TO TEACH YOU FROM HIS WORD

Remember, there is a measure of spiritual blindness in each one of us, so we must ask the Holy Spirit to teach us and take away our spiritual blindness. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

ASK GOD TO FILL YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

The more you know about the Holy Spirit, the more you can give Him control of your life. And the more you walk with the Holy Spirit, the more He can exercise His influence through you. (Ephesians 5:18)

YIELD YOURSELF FULLY TO JESUS CHRIST

Give everything to God. Once you have yielded your physical self, you must also yield your inner self. (Romans 12:1)

BE AWARE OF SPIRITUAL ATTACKS

Remember there is an enemy and he will do anything and everything to destroy your fast and wreck your faith. Be prepared to face the enemy by keeping your thoughts on God and His Word. (Jude 1:20)

PLAN YOUR FAST

What are you eliminating from your life for 21 days? Many will be eliminating food, so you need to plan ahead so that temptation and inconvenience doesn't derail your fast. Create a game plan to win!

PURCHASE IMAGO DEI KIT

We've put everything you need to succeed, and so much more, in a kit to make the most of the fast. You can pick one up at any of Christ's Church campuses.

Here's a simple fasting purpose card
to get you started...

Purpose: _____

Fasting from: _____

Start date: _____ End date: _____

What do I need for my fast: _____

What am I seeking from my fast: _____

VOW

I believe that God is the only answer to my request and that prayer without fasting is not enough to get an answer to my need. Therefore, by faith, I am fasting because I need God's power leveraged in my life.

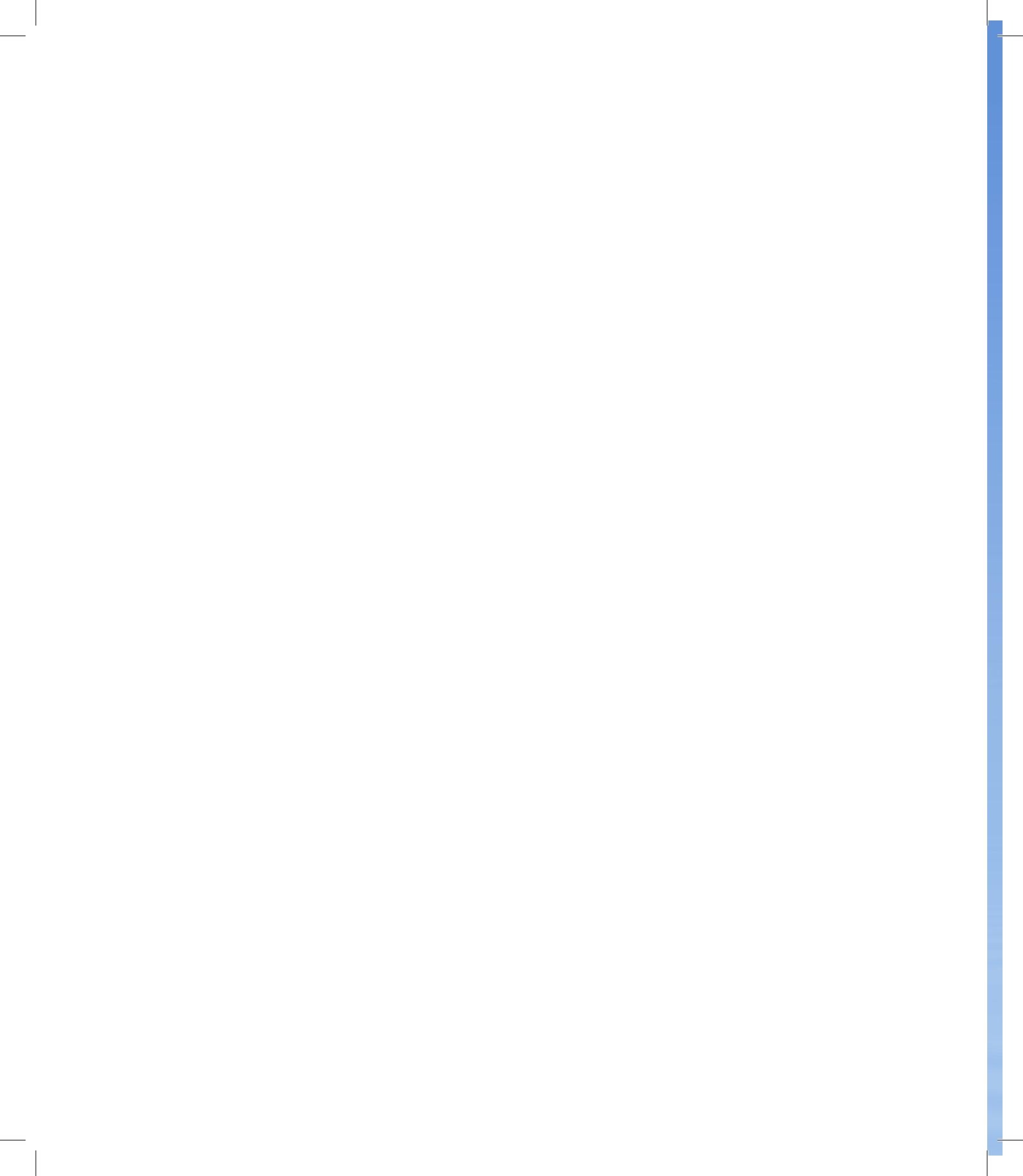
Abba Father, being my all and all, I commit myself to the above fast.

Signature

“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. “Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call, the Lord will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply. “Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!

Isaiah 58:6-9

*Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT) version of the Bible.



FOLLOW ME

WEEK ONE • IMAGO DEI



JANUARY 3

WEEK ONE LUKE 5:1-11

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. 2 He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish."

5 "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." 6 And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! 7 A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

8 When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." 9 For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. 10 His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" 11 And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

WEEK ONE LUKE 5:1-11

LOOK BACK

- As we embark on this journey through our fast and 1st and 2nd Peter what are you hoping to gain from this study?
- This study was designed to be in community with others. Are you in a disciple group currently? If not, what's holding you back from joining one?
- If you'd like to join a group throughout this fast and study, go to our group finder page at <https://my.christs.church/groupfinder> to find a men's, women's or mixed disciple group to maximize the full potential of this study in your life.

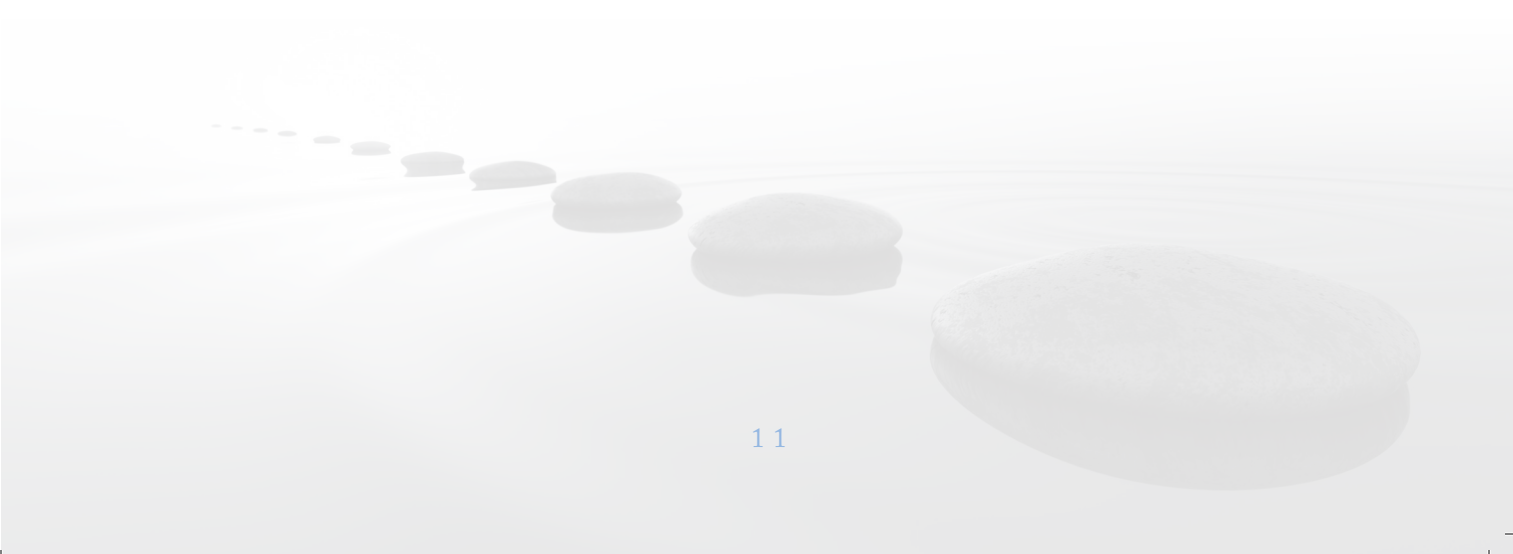
LOOK UP

- Read Luke 5:1-11 together.
- Should every Christian have the purpose of reaching the lost or is this only the job of some? Use scripture to defend your answer.
- Does Jesus require ALL of his disciples to leave everything? If not, why not? If so, in what sense?
- How would you respond if you thought that God was asking you to do something that does not make sense or seems impossible?
- How do you define a disciple? What does discipleship look like in your life? Are you "fishing for men?"
- What is your current purpose in life? How is it different from what Jesus' purpose for your life is? How can you change areas of your life to become a "fisher of men" for God?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- Write down one "net" that you've been holding on to and pray for the release of that "net" each day this week that God would help you release it.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

The lesson here is not about human accomplishment but rather what God can do through us. This is not about working harder, praying more earnestly, or giving more sacrificially. This lesson tells us what God can do when we surrender ourselves to Him. Luke wants us to see that when Jesus appeared, He fell in love with these fishermen, and because of that love, their lives would never be the same again.

FAST DEVOTIONALS



DAY 1 • JAN. 4

READ

LUKE 5:1-11 Drop Your Nets

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. 2 He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, [b] its owner, to push it out into the water. So, He sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish."

5 "Master," Simon replied, "We worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." 6 And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! 7 A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

8 When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." 9 For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. 10 His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on, you'll be fishing for people!" 11 And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

REFLECT

From cities and suburbs, miraculous accounts of healing the sick and casting of demons drew oceans of onlookers to the shore of Galilee. Although "Great crowds pressed in on Jesus," right there, in the middle of multitudes, He "noticed two empty boats at the water's edge." Bypassing the fans, Jesus b-lined toward the boats, stepped inside and invited everyday fisherman to come along for the catch of a lifetime.

Just as Peter was ready to call it a day, Jesus called Peter to push out, go deeper, and let down His guard along with his net. Because of his willingness to respond, Jesus revealed His power to provide more than his boat could handle and "On the verge of sinking," Peter was "awestruck" by the size of the catch and overcome by his revelation of Jesus. Declaring himself average and unworthy, Peter never imagined he would enter into the supernatural stories he'd

WEEK ONE FAST DEVOTIONALS

heard, but Jesus has a way of turning empty boats into available instruments and ordinary fishermen into “fishers of men.”

Jesus saw an available opportunity. Peter kept an open mind. Before they knew it, a not-so-great day on the job quickly turned into the best business day of their lives. Peter, James and John realized this was only a glimpse of greater things to come, so they quickly headed back to shore. “. . .And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.”

RESPOND

- Welcome to DAY ONE of our fast. Do you consider yourself part of the crowd, pressing for a miracle, or an empty boat that’s open and available?
- If you’re pressing for a miracle, what is it?
- If your boat is empty, how do you think God wants to fill it?
- If you’re willing to become a “fisher of men,” where are you called to fish?

PRAY

Imagine starting your fast on the edge of the shore. As you empty your stomach of food and your life of clutter, you’ll be called to push further and go deeper over the next twenty-one days. Like Peter, you’ll be asked to “let down your net” in places you might not expect it could be filled. No two nets will bring the same kind of catch, but all are called to leave everything behind and follow Jesus. When you find yourself tempted to push back the process, ask The Holy Spirit to help you go deeper until you get to the place God is leading you and let down your net where He tells you.



DAY 2 • JAN. 5

READ

ACTS 2:1-47 Repentance

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. 2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. 3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. 4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

5 At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. 6 When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

7 They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, 8 and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! 9 Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, 10 Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” 12 They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.

13 But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

Peter Preaches to the Crowd

14 Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. 15 These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. 16 No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

17 ‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. 18 In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy. 19 And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below— blood and fire and clouds of smoke. 20 The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives. 21 But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.’

22 “People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. 23 But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried

WEEK ONE FAST DEVOTIONALS

out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. 24 But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip. 25 King David said this about him:

'I see that the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me. 26 No wonder my heart is glad, and my tongue shouts his praises! My body rests in hope. 27 For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave. 28 You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with the joy of your presence.'

29 "Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn't referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. 30 But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David's own descendants would sit on his throne. 31 David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah's resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

32 "God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. 33 Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. 34 For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit in the place of honor at my right hand 35 until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet."' 36 "So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"

37 Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." 40 Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

The Believers Form a Community

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity[jj]— 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

REFLECT

The arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost came in like a “sound from heaven.” The sound of the Spirit that settled on the disciples and called Jews to the Gospel is the very same sound calling you to this fast. God is ready to pour Himself out on a new generation of sons and daughters, young and old, and men and women who will prophesy, dream, and speak His Word in such ways that everyone we encounter can understand (Acts 2:11-21). Early believers gathered in expectation of what Jesus promised to come, and over these twenty-one days, we gather in anticipation of God’s next big move.

“At the time, there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running” (Acts 2:5-6a). Peter preached to the crowd and his “words pierced their hearts,” moving them to ask, “What shall we do?” As you enter day 2 of your fast, repent as Peter instructed. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you thoroughly examine your heart, mind, attitude, motives, allegiances, etc. Is there an issue of sin, unforgiveness or disobedience you need to address? Have you publicly declared your faith in Jesus Christ through water baptism? If you’re desperate for a breakthrough and desire to experience God’s power, you must embrace the process of repentance. God is ready to pour out hope, healing, freedom and blessing in your life, but it’s necessary to remove stumbling blocks and let go of sin BEFORE you’re able to take hold of God’s promises.

The more you lean into your fast, the more you’ll hear God speak. Just as international witnesses in Jerusalem could recognize the Gospel in their language, you’ll begin to recognize His voice in your heart. Take note that scripture reveals two different responses to the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and in some ways, you can expect to encounter the same. When you find yourself amazed by hearing God speak, don’t be surprised to be accused of being out of your mind. A Word from God to you will sound like gibberish to another. Similar to those who accused the disciples of being drunk, prepare for co-workers, friends and family who cannot comprehend your call to fast.

Some will likely question the change in your daily habits. As your body adjusts to the symptoms of detox, you may even question yourself. When you become discouraged, know this: Heaven has taken notice of your desire to hear God’s voice through His Word. So, when you feel like giving up, ask God to help you keep your heart tuned to the sound that first called you to this fast.

As you empty your stomach of food, invite God to fill you with His presence. As detox pierces your body, let the process of repentance pierce your heart. As you pray and wait, believe God will do everything His Word has promised. As you hear God speak, trust the Holy Spirit to translate His power in ways you never expected. “Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, your children, and those who are far away” (Acts 2:38b-39a)

RESPOND

- The Holy Spirit came in like a “sound from Heaven” and “everyone came running”. Describe the “sound” in your Spirit that led you to this fast. In other words, what brought you here?
- Everyone was bewildered, amazed, and perplexed at hearing “the wonderful things God has done” (Acts 2:11) What kind of wonderful things are you asking God to do for you?

WEEK ONE FAST DEVOTIONALS

- Read and meditate on Acts 2:17-21 and 2:33. In our day, what would it look like for sons and daughters, old and young, men and women, to prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams?
- Peter's words pierced the hearts of his listeners, compelling them to ask, "What shall we Do?" Read his response in verses 2:37-40 and examine yourself in the statements below:
 - Allow the Holy Spirit to pierce your heart over the next twenty-one days.
 - Be intentional to identify and confront your sin through the process of repentance.
 - Turn away from sinful influence and temptation by turning to God and His Word. Find a community of believers or join a small group to help strengthen and teach you how to walk with God.
 - If you haven't been baptized, reach out to a pastor who can help you understand the importance of water baptism.

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you ears to hear God's voice, a mind to understand His Word, a heart to obey His commands, a desire for His outpouring in your life, and the faith to declare, "this promise, to you, your children, and those who are far away" (2:39a).



DAY 3 • JAN. 6

READ

Matthew 16:21-28 Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me

21 From then on Jesus[a] began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

22 But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him[b] for saying such things. “Heaven forbid, Lord,” he said. “This will never happen to you!”

23 Jesus turned to Peter and said, “Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. 25 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 26 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?[c] Is anything worth more than your soul? 27 For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. 28 And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.”

REFLECT

Jesus told His disciples “that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem, and that He would suffer many terrible things” (16:21). The forecast forced His followers to make a difficult decision: hold on to their hopes and dreams of power, position, and revolution, or leave it all behind to follow Jesus to Jerusalem. After all they’d been through together, it’s easy to understand why Peter vehemently rejected the notion that everything they worked for would be wasted and even more unthinkable, that his best friend would suffer and die at the hands of corruption.

Peter argued with Jesus in the same way we often argue with God when the unexpected, unthinkable, unjust, and unbearable disrupts our best life plans, but in His mercy, Jesus responded with a harsh rebuke to transform Peter’s human point of view to a heavenly perspective. Soon, Peter and the rest of the disciples, would understand that they needed to let go of living their best life with their best friend to live a redeemed life with their Lord and Savior.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we too are challenged with daily decisions to either cling to earthly plans and earthly ideas with an earthly mindset or voluntarily “take up our cross” regardless of where it leads. The finished work of

WEEK ONE FAST DEVOTIONALS

the cross is only the beginning of what Jesus started. God sees aspects of your so-called best life that He wants to redeem into something even greater to bring glory to His name. You can respond to life's struggles, disruptions, circumstances and consequences by choosing your way to control the outcome, or you can trust God's greater plan to redeem it.

Your decision to fast is symbolic of taking up the cross. Although many have volunteered to "give their your life" for twenty-one days for the sake of following Jesus, there will be those who are willing to "suffer" the distance and those who will give up after three days. For some, headaches, fatigue, dry mouth and body aches will be too much to carry, but "some standing here right now will not die before they see the son of man coming in His Kingdom" and His power and glory that come with Him.

RESPOND

- How do you tend to respond when things don't go as planned?
- In this season, what would it look like for you to deny yourself and give up your way to follow Jesus? • Bearing your cross has nothing to do with hardships in life. It has to do with voluntarily surrendering your will to accomplish God's will. Have you truly ever "taken up your cross" to follow God into hard places to do hard things for His glory and not your own?
- "For the Son of Man will come with His angels in the glory of His Father and will judge all the People according to their deeds"(Matthew 16:27). If you were to stand before God today, how would He judge you according to your deeds?

PRAY

As you pray, be honest with God and confess the things you are having a hard time letting go. Get real about the places He wants to lead you. Ask for the courage to pick up your cross and endurance to carry it the distance.



DAY 4 • JAN. 7

READ

Mark 10:17-31 Money, Status, Title

17 As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good. 19 But to answer your question, you know the commandments: ‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.’[a]”

20 “Teacher,” the man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young.”

21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. “There is still one thing you haven’t done,” he told him. “Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

22 At this the man’s face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!” 24 This amazed them. But Jesus said again, “Dear children, it is very hard[b] to enter the Kingdom of God. 25 In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”

26 The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked.

27 Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God.”

28 Then Peter began to speak up. “We’ve given up everything to follow you,” he said.

29 “Yes,” Jesus replied, “and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, 30 will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life. 31 But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.[c]”

WEEK ONE FAST DEVOTIONALS

REFLECT

The “Rich Young Ruler” or man is one of those stories you’ve heard in just about any place setting relating to money. Whether that be for a capital campaign the local church is involved in or a Dave Ramsey study, you might have stumbled upon this story. If we are all being honest, we probably have looked at this story and said to ourselves, “That’s not me, I’m not rich!” Though that may be true in your life, you may be surprised that this isn’t just relating to money, but anything that would distract us from our Heavenly Father; anything that would replace Christ at the throne of your heart.

In the first few verses we see that the young man was good at following “rules” but forgot his first love entirely. Jesus questioned him when the young man called Jesus good. In which Jesus replied, “Why do you call me good, only God is good.” Right after Jesus says these things the young man still calls him teacher, which wouldn’t have been correct. Jesus declared himself God in that moment and the young man still couldn’t see.

When He responded to the young man, Jesus also pointed out, in verse 19, the back half of the commandments in relationship to how we ought to treat others. The young man’s response was that he kept all of them, but he really didn’t. He was forgetting the very first commandment and the three after that. The first four commandments have to do with our relationship with God. His relationship with God was so severed that he didn’t even recognize that Jesus was in fact God. It was all based on his own ability and works more than it was about submission and his relationship with God. His horizontal relationship was missing and instead he was just playing religion.

The rich man did not know his Father. He wasn’t ready to give up the comforts of this world to follow Jesus. He wasn’t ready to suffer for Jesus. It’s not only about the money, it’s about everything and anything that draws us away from Him. We were not called to be comfortable. Our source of comfort comes from Jesus because we will need it! The question should be, are we willing to lay everything down? Our husband/wives? Our children? Our jobs? Are we willing to suffer with Jesus Christ? Grace is easy. Suffering, not so much.

RESPOND

- Did the reflection change the way you view this passage? How?
- Have you considered the impacts of following God? Has suffering been something that you ever considered could be a possibility in your walk with Christ? Why or why not?
- What is God asking you to give up? What nets is he asking you to cast aside?

PRAY

Father, thank you for who you are and that despite my continuous efforts to put other things in my life that you continue to pursue me. Continue to do a great work in me so that others will know you fully. Amen.



DAY 5 • JAN. 8

READ

Acts 3:1-11 Adversity

Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. 2 As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

4 Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" 5 The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. 6 But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, [a] get up and [b] walk!"

7 Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. 8 He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

9 All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. 10 When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate; they were absolutely astounded! 11 They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John.

REFLECT

What an incredible time to be alive! So much has happened leading up to this moment. Jesus death, burial, resurrection and ascension have occurred. With the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the one Jesus called greater than He, The Church is born. It must have really felt like Jesus was coming back soon, right after He left!

Even after all that, we get a story of a man who was lame at birth, meaning he has no use of his legs at all. Every day this man was carried by others to the gate, which was named Beautiful. What incredible irony that must have been. Man is great in creating many beautiful and wonderful things but has no ability to impact there outside or inside appearance, no matter the efforts we might try to beautify ourselves. Yet here is a man, who would not be considered beautiful, placed by the Beautiful gate and begging for money while everyone is praying.

Now the lame man went to the temple everyday thinking the outcome was going to be the same. Same adversities and same circumstances that he has always "walked" with. God, however, had other plans.

WEEK ONE FAST DEVOTIONALS

Peter and John come to the lame man and recite the words that most people in the service industry loath, and should because it is grossly misused. In verse 6, Peter tells him he has no money (which would be true considering the Man they have been following for 3 years) but instead he has something better to give him, which was the ability to walk, not for his glory but for the glory and honor to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Bible says the man leapt up and continue to do so and the people were amazed. Not only was he walking but also praising God, the true miracle. (see also, Isaiah 35:6)

We will experience the ugliness of life to the point that it brings us to where this lame man was, powerless. Now, this man could have stayed home and sat on his mat, doing nothing but feeling sorrow for himself. Yet he went to work doing the only thing he could do to survive, surrounding himself with people who pray and sitting at the gate of the temple facing many adversities. That day he learned it wasn't by his own power that he could make it another day. It was by God's power that not only was he able to make it but that he would be able to do something unimaginable. In Christ, all things are possible!

RESPOND

- What is your daily routine when you wake up in the morning? Is it prayer? Is it a quiet time? Has it been this study? Is it hit the snooze button five times and go, go, go?
- What are you struggling with and have you made it known to your Heavenly Father? What area of life do you need to "Rise up and walk?"

PRAY

Father thank you for this day, my daily bread. Lord I rest in you and thank you for carrying me through yet another day. May you continue to receive the glory through this walk you have given me. May others be blessed because of You. In Jesus name, amen.



DAY 6 • JAN. 9

READ

Matthew 18:21-35 Unforgiveness

21 Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone[a] who sins against me? Seven times?”

22 “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven![b]

23 “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. 24 In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars.[c] 25 He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

26 “But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ 27 Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

28 “But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars.[d] He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

29 “His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. 30 But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

31 “When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. 32 Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

35 “That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters[e] from your heart.”

REFLECT

Peter asks a question that we still ask today. How often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Peter gives Jesus a number of seven times. As humans we are limited in patience and in scope, as well as understanding. Thank God we don’t live by any one human’s standard of forgiveness or we are all doomed! It also shows the limit for our

WEEK ONE FAST DEVOTIONALS

ability to love one another as Christ has loved us and shows a need for Jesus even more, and especially, in the realm of forgiveness.

Jesus is showing us not only how deep (debt) our depravity is He also shows us at what great lengths or cost He will endure so that we can even have a chance at redemption. This parable is showing us that without Jesus, it is impossible to repay back a lifetime worth of debt. As Jesus pointed out, the 10 talents represented here are about 20 years per talent worth of wages, which would be in the millions of dollars in today's standards! It is believed that Jesus said it this way to show how far off we are on the scales by which God measures our sin and the amount needed to pay it. The only way to repay it is through debt forgiveness. It's an impossible number and shows us the need for a savior. Jesus showed us the measure by which the debt must be paid, and it was through His death on a cross.

Jesus continues the story in verse 28 and shows us that a man without Christ hasn't the ability to even forgive a sin (debt) past a simple cost of a lunch. We see the gap or measure by which God has forgiven us through His son. Our own ability to forgive, or to even pay one talent back, is impossible without Jesus.

A lot of us are still carrying nets of unforgiveness. Even as you are reading this study today, it is time to release those nets so the torture going on inside of you will. Allow peace to take its place. Let us have mercy on our fellow brothers and sisters and extend the same measure of forgiveness that Christ has extended to those who love Him.

RESPOND

- What have been your standards for forgiveness been ? What are God's standards and how are they different?
- Are you still tangled in these nets of unforgiveness towards others? What are they?
- Is there one person that needs a debt canceled that you may be holding over their head?
- Who do you need to seek forgiveness from?

PRAY

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

GET OUT OF WEEK TWO • IMAGO DEI THE BOAT



JANUARY 10

WEEK TWO MATTHEW 14:22-33

22 Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. 23 After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

24 Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. 25 About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

27 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"

28 Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

29 "Yes, come," Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

32 When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. 33 Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

WEEK TWO MATTHEW 14:22-33

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of Luke 5:1-11 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- As you read Matthew 14:22-33 think about this. If we are going to follow Jesus, we must, by faith, be willing to step out of the safety of our comfort zone (boat).
- Have you ever wondered why Jesus did not instantly rescue the disciples during the storm? Did they get mad at God? Did they blame God? Did they talk to God?
- What are your boats? What are the things that we assume keep us safe?
- Where is your space between your boat and Jesus?
- Can you trust when you don't understand? Have the courage to get out of the boat.
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- Write down the boat that you are in. Pray over it each day this week and ask God to give you the courage to get out of it and walk faithfully with Him.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

Don't give all your energy to your eyes just because you don't like what you see. Faith or fear. Where are you in your walk with Jesus? Faith requires persistence but it also requires trust and focus. As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water. As soon as he no longer focused on Jesus but on the waves, he began to sink. He didn't have to be asked twice to walk on water but as soon as he forgot to look at the One that got him there in the first place, he plunged. Don't lose your focus. Keep your eyes on Jesus. His hand will always be there to pull you up from the water.

FAST DEVOTIONALS



DAY 8 • JAN. 11

READ

Matthew 14:22-36 Why Do You Have Little Faith?

22 Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. 23 After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone. 24 Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. 25 About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!" 27 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!" 28 Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." 29 "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. 31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" 32 When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. 33 Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed. 34 After they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. 35 When the people recognized Jesus, the news of his arrival spread quickly throughout the whole area, and soon people were bringing all their sick to be healed. 36 They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

REFLECT

It was a long day of ministry. Huge crowds had gathered, big miracles were accomplished. People were healed. Thousands were fed. Emotionally and physically worn out, the disciples are ready to call it a night. Jesus urges them to go ahead and set up camp for the evening. He would join them later. What should have been a sleepy boat ride and a wind down from an exhausting day turned into a night of terror followed by one of sheer awe and wonder. Jesus would command the storms and he would invite Peter to trust Him and step out to another level of followership. Welcome to following Jesus 101.

Peter took a dramatic step from listening and witnessing the teachings and miracles of Jesus to applying them into his life. He spent three years hearing words like, "Let not your heart be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me" (John

WEEK TWO FAST DEVOTIONALS

14:1) but now trust required more than an academic understanding. It would require an obedient exit off the relative safety of the boat.

In one dramatic moment, Peter transitioned from a simple follower to a true disciple. It required trust. It required faith to step out. It required not getting distracted by the storm around him and keeping his eyes focused squarely on Jesus. It was at once terrifying and then exhilarating and then life transforming. Following Jesus will fundamentally change you from the inside out, but it does require stepping out of your boat.

RESPOND

- Welcome to WEEK TWO of our fast. This week, we take an important turn from following Jesus, to stepping up, stepping out and trusting Jesus - regardless of the storms churning around us.
- In what areas of your life is God calling you step out and go? What does the next step of following Him look like? Take a moment and jot those thoughts down.
- What fears keep you from stepping out of the boat and trusting Jesus? What do you need to leave behind?
- What or who do you stand to lose if you choose to “play it safe” and stay in the boat?

PRAY

Imagine your feet dangling over the edge of the boat. Take stock of the fears that want to keep you in the boat and intimidated by the troubled water. Confess those concerns today. Then squarely place your gaze on Jesus. Look at His extended hand extended out to you. See His face affirming you. Don't let a little turbulence stop you. Step out and go after Him!



DAY 9 • JAN. 12

READ

Matthew 15:1-20 Jesus Teaches Inner Purity

Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked him, 2 “Why do your disciples disobey our age-old tradition? For they ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat.” 3 Jesus replied, “And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? 4 For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death. 5 But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ 6 In this way, you say they don’t need to honor their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 8 These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 9 Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.” 10 Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “Listen,” he said, “and try to understand. 11 It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.” 12 Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you realize you offended the Pharisees by what you just said?” 13 Jesus replied, “Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be uprooted, 14 so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch.” 15 Then Peter said to Jesus, “Explain to us the parable that says people aren’t defiled by what they eat.” 16 “Don’t you understand yet?” Jesus asked. 17 “Anything you eat passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer. 18 But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you. 19 For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. 20 These are what defile you. Eating with unwashed hands will never defile you.”

REFLECT

Jesus seemed to save the sharpest rebukes for those who put on the veneer of a godly life. They do all the right things. They say all the right things. On the surface they appear to have it all together but on the inside their souls are rotting corpses. One of the more cutting descriptions Jesus used to describe those sorts of hypocrites was “whitewashed tombs.” In reality, nobody is fooled for long by a fraud. Jesus has no problem calling out those who pretend they have a form of godliness but are deficit of its true power.

Peter was fascinated by Jesus’ harsh criticism and he pressed in to understand further. Jesus explained to Peter that true righteousness comes not from what we choose to do or not to do, but what we allow to fill our heart and

WEEK TWO FAST DEVOTIONALS

consume our thoughts. When our passions become corrupt, the soul is lost. You become empty of the power of God regardless of the front you put up. You can't pretend godliness. It comes from a right heart that seeks only after Him.

Peter never wasted an opportunity to pry deeper into the teachings of Jesus. He wanted to get to the heart of true godliness, even begging for more clarity. Why? Most likely because of his own personal desire to have a heart that looked more like his Master.

RESPOND

- Today is going to be a tough day. Jesus isn't fooled by our hypocrisy and no one likes to confront their own hypocrisy; but for real transformational life change to occur, we have to stand before Christ and ask Him to examine not just our behavior but the roots of our life, thoughts, and passions.
- What are the areas of your life where you feel like a hypocrite?
- What areas would you like to look more like Christ? What would hungering and thirsting after Him look like?
- What sort of internal work do you need to do? What secret thoughts need to cease? Who can you invite in your life to help you find victory in these areas?

PRAY

Today could be one of the most important days of your fast. Set aside time to honestly assess your sin - the bitter ugly business of it all. Get beyond the hypocrisy of what you only let others see and stare it straight in the eye. Take a long hard look at what sort of corruption (ungodly thoughts and behaviors) you have allowed in your life and how it manifests in your words, thoughts and behaviors. No need to whitewash this conversation today. This is just between you and Jesus. Bring it all out in the open and as you do, know that if we confess our sin, Jesus is faithful and will forgive us. He will wash us white as snow - as clean on the inside as people see on the outside.



DAY 10 • JAN. 13

READ

Matthew 16:13-20 On This Rock, The Keys to the Kingdom

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”¹⁴ “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”¹⁵ Then he asked them, “But who do you say I am?”¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”¹⁷ Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.¹⁸ Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.”²⁰ Then he sternly warned the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

REFLECT

Jesus’ ministry was at a crossroads. He managed to draw a significant crowd, people were curious and they were more than willing to travel around the countryside to watch the show, like groupies following their favorite rock band. However, the miracles and the teaching were about to separate the interested onlooker from the true disciples. Jesus draws the line in the sand by asking the questions, “Who do the people say I am? Who do You think I am?”

It is easy to answer what others think about Jesus but it takes transformational, step out of the boat courage to stand before others and declare Jesus as the Christ, The Son of God.

Peter most likely became the first true disciple when he declared Jesus to be the Son of God, the Savior of the world. It was a bold statement that was rewarded with a promise. Those who truly believe, would be a part of a kingdom unlike any other. They would experience transformation in ways they could have never dreamed. They would have

WEEK TWO FAST DEVOTIONALS

victory over sin; nothing in this world, nor hell itself, would ever separate them from the love of Christ. Peter is credited with being the first to say these words but he wouldn't be the last. The foundation of our faith is built around this simple statement of belief. For all who believe Jesus gives the right to be co-heirs in His kingdom. It does separate the crowd from the true disciples.

RESPOND

- The question is simple enough but the response will set you apart from being just a casual onlooker to a true follower. Who do you believe Jesus to be?
- What are the implications of calling Jesus the Son of God?
- What are the implications of calling Him Lord and Savior?
- What has to change in your world to be a true follower?
- With whom should you share your story? God's Story?

PRAY

In a quiet place, imagine yourself on a hillside with Jesus. Visualize Him looking you squarely in the eyes and asking, "Who do you believe I am?" Boldly declare your faith to Him. Invite Him to take you to the next place of personal transformation and then ask Him to place a boldness in you to share this truth with others.



DAY 11 • JAN. 14

READ

Matthew 25:31-140 The Least of These

31“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. 32All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

34“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. 35For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. 36I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

37“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? 39When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

40“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’

REFLECT

When you close your eyes and envision God’s mission for someone’s life, what do you see? Is it like Moses parting the Red Sea, or Peter speaking on the day of Pentecost, or perhaps you see Paul speaking before kings about Jesus? Maybe you picture a missionary traveling to a faraway land or someone who starts a global movement to provide shoes to African children. Discovering the cure for cancer or saving whales are also God-sized endeavors. Big can be impressive but most of the time God is not looking for grand acts that change the entire world. God also inspires us to accomplish small acts that impact the life of an individual and changes their world.

It is good to support organizations that are helping those in need, but our first calling is to help those right before our eyes. For example, bringing an extra lunch to share with a co-worker who has fallen on hard times, babysitting for a single parent so they can have a break, cutting the grass for a neighbor, stopping to help someone change a tire, writing encouraging cards to prisoners seeking Christ or inviting someone into your home for a meal or to join a

WEEK TWO FAST DEVOTIONALS

group. These life-impacting actions are examples of what Jesus is referring to when He said, “when you did it to one of the least these – you were doing it to me!”

Our lives are busy and we can easily get distracted from noticing the needs of others. Even the fear of rejection or the fear of offending someone can hold us back from serving others. Every day there are opportunities to help family members, co-workers, friends, neighbors or strangers, if we choose to pause and notice them. Take time today to reflect on how God provided opportunities to use you and thank Him for how He equipped you to make an impact in someone’s life today.

When He responded to the young man, Jesus also pointed out, in verse 19, the back half of the commandments in relationship to how we ought to treat others. The young man’s response was that he kept all of them, but he really didn’t. He was forgetting the very first commandment and the three after that. The first four commandments have to do with our relationship with God. His relationship with God was so severed that he didn’t even recognize that Jesus was in fact God. It was all based on his own ability and works more than it was about submission and his relationship with God. His horizontal relationship was missing and instead he was just playing religion.

The rich man did not know his Father. He wasn’t ready to give up the comforts of this world to follow Jesus. He wasn’t ready to suffer for Jesus. It’s not only about the money, it’s about everything and anything that draws us away from Him. We were not called to be comfortable. Our source of comfort comes from Jesus because we will need it! The question should be, are we willing to lay everything down? Our husband/wives? Our children? Our jobs? Are we willing to suffer with Jesus Christ? Grace is easy. Suffering, not so much.

RESPOND

- What kind of fears or distractions hinder you from serving others?
- What is one way you can encourage someone else today?
- What is God calling you to do?

PRAY

Lord, open my eyes that I may see the opportunities to be your hands and feet in the world. Remove the blinders of distraction and judgement so I may feel your love for everyone I encounter. Help me make the most of every opportunity to use the gifts and talents you have given me to serve others in a way that will have a positive impact in their lives and draw them closer to you. In Jesus Name, Amen.



DAY 12 • JAN. 15

READ

Hebrews 11:1-16 Roll Call to Faith

1Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

3By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

4It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

5It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying— "he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. 6And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

7It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

8It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. 9And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. 10Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

11It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. 12And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

13All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15If they had

WEEK TWO FAST DEVOTIONALS

longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

REFLECT

Do you have faith like Noah, to build a boat when there is no rain? Do you have faith like Abraham, to pick up and find a new home without much direction? Do you have faith like Sarah, who was promised a child in her old age? What do we have in common with these faithful characters in the Bible? If you have accepted a new job, started your own business or jumped into a new relationship, you probably did it by faith. We have all taken faith steps, big and small, throughout our lives, with the hope that God would see us through. Placing our faith in Jesus Christ is the most important step of faith we can make.

When we take steps of faith throughout our lives, we continually witness God's faithfulness and trustworthiness. Our dependency on Him grows stronger with every challenge we face. Hebrews 11:16 says, "they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland." The foundation of our Christian faith is trusting and believing in the promise of eternal life, the hope of our salvation. The faithful leaders we find highlighted in Hebrews were all eternally minded. They knew their final destination in Heaven, with God, was the ultimate faith step.

RESPOND

- How has God helped you through the faith steps you have taken in the past? How has that strengthened your faith in God now?
- What is God calling you to, that requires you to take a step of faith?
- Is there something holding you back from taking the first step?

PRAY

Lord, thank you for the examples of others who have walked by faith into their promised land. Help me see beyond my day-to-day challenges so that I can accomplish what you have called me to do. Give me the strength and courage to walk by faith that I may stay focused on eternity. I pray you increase my faith and deliver me from any doubt or unbelief. In Jesus Name, Amen.



DAY 13 • JAN. 16

READ

Hebrews 13:1-25 Concluding Words. Pay Attention to What I Have Written

Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. 2Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! 3Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.

4Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

5Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said,

"I will never fail you.

I will never abandon you."

6So we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper,

so I will have no fear.

What can mere people do to me?"

7Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God's grace, not from rules about food, which don't help those who follow them.

10We have an altar from which the priests in the Tabernacle have no right to eat. 11Under the old system, the high priest brought the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, and the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp. 12So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates to make his people holy by means of his own blood. 13So let us go out to him, outside the camp, and bear the disgrace he bore. 14For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.

15Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name.

16And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.

17Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are account-

WEEK TWO FAST DEVOTIONALS

able to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

18 Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do. 19 And especially pray that I will be able to come back to you soon.

20 Now may the God of peace—

who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great Shepherd of the sheep,
and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—

21 may he equip you with all you need
for doing his will.

May he produce in you,
through the power of Jesus Christ,
every good thing that is pleasing to him.

All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

22 I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, to pay attention to what I have written in this brief exhortation.

23 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released from jail. If he comes here soon, I will bring him with me to see you.

24 Greet all your leaders and all the believers there. The believers from Italy send you their greetings.

25 May God's grace be with you all.

REFLECT

Have you ever watched a movie where there's a dramatic death scene and the person dying is whispering their last words? These moments captivate us as we cling on the edge of our seats, straining to hear the words. These powerful scenes are often burned into our memory. We quote them, share them, make memes with them. Paul is writing such words in these verses.

We are being called to action. Paul uses words and phrases like: keep on, don't forget, remember, remain faithful, be satisfied, think, follow, obey, give and pray. These words ignite our hearts with passion for God's Kingdom work yet to be done. The work God calls us to may not be easy as He challenges us to move beyond our comfort zone. The impact on our lives and those we encounter is world changing when we act on our faith.

God continually gives us opportunities. His Spirit prompts us to act but God's involvement does not stop there because He equips us for our calling. You may have heard the phrase, "God doesn't call the equipped — he equips the

WEEK TWO FAST DEVOTIONALS

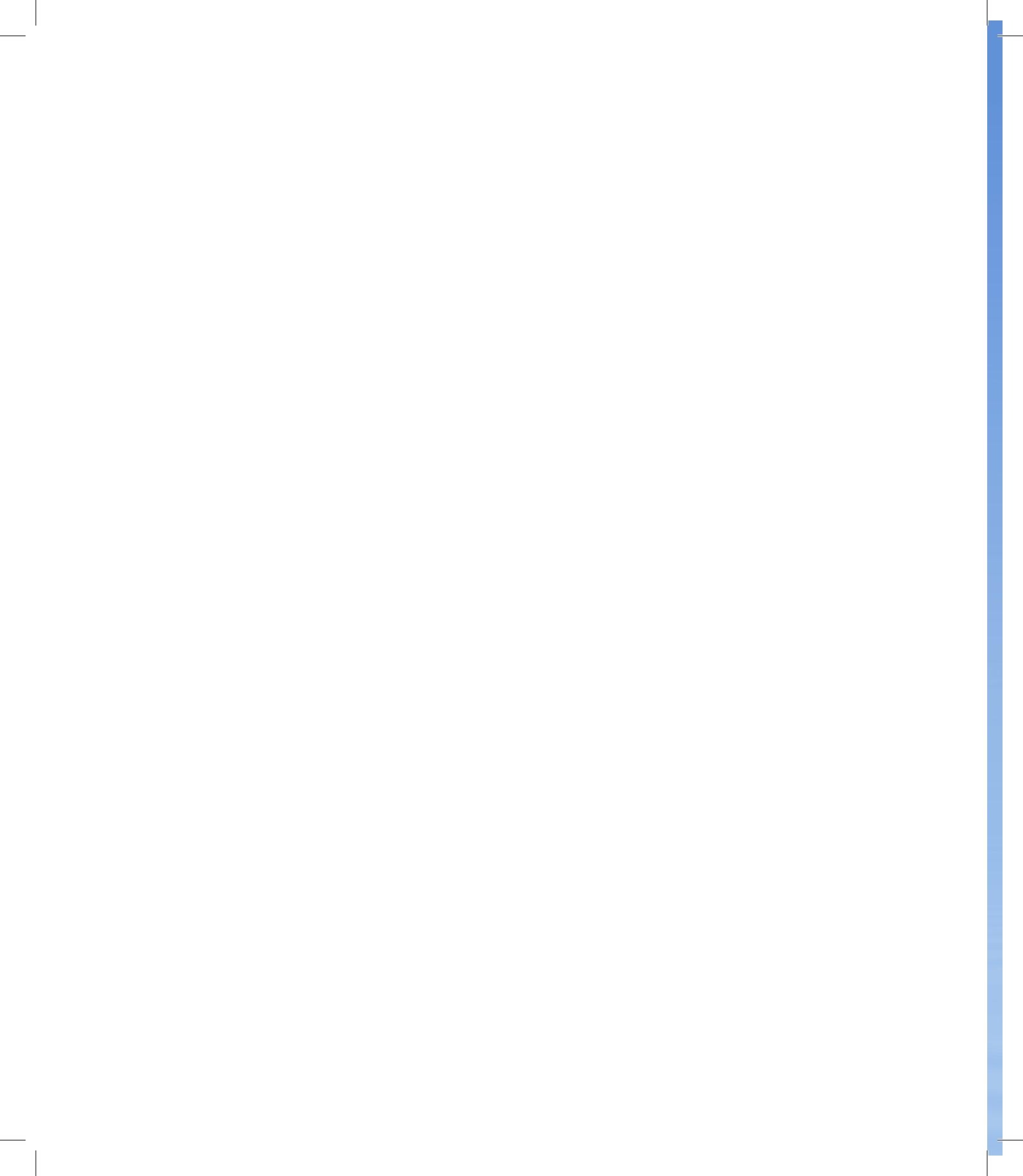
called.” This truth encourages us when we may feel inadequate to face challenges or when God assigns us something that’s overwhelming. When this happens, we can rest assured that God promises to prepare us to accomplish every good work He purposed for us to do.

RESPOND

- How does Paul’s call to action in these verses challenge you?
- How has God equipped you to do something you did not think you could do?
- Which of these verses can you commit to memory today?

PRAY

Lord, my strength and confidence are completely in you, not myself. I am dependent upon you, Lord, moment-by-moment, to give me what I need. Thank you for equipping me to do what you call me to do. Let your words not be far from my thoughts and may they be the compass that guides my actions and words today. In Jesus Name. Amen.



FEED MY

FAST WEEK THREE • IMAGO DEI

SHEEP



JANUARY 17

WEEK THREE JOHN 21

Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. 2 Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

3 Simon Peter said, “I’m going fishing.”

“We’ll come, too,” they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

4 At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn’t see who he was. 5 He called out, “Fellows, have you caught any fish?”

“No,” they replied.

6 Then he said, “Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you’ll get some!” So they did, and they couldn’t haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

7 Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. 8 The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. 9 When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

10 “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said. 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.

12 “Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 13 Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. 14 This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

15 After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

16 Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

17 A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

18 “I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.” 19 Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, “Follow me.”

20 Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, “Lord, who will betray you?” 21 Peter asked Jesus, “What about him, Lord?”

22 Jesus replied, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me.” 23 So the rumor spread among the community of believers that this disciple wouldn’t die. But that isn’t what Jesus said at all. He only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

24 This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate.

25 Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

WEEK THREE JOHN 21

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of Matthew 14:22-33 made the biggest impact on your week?

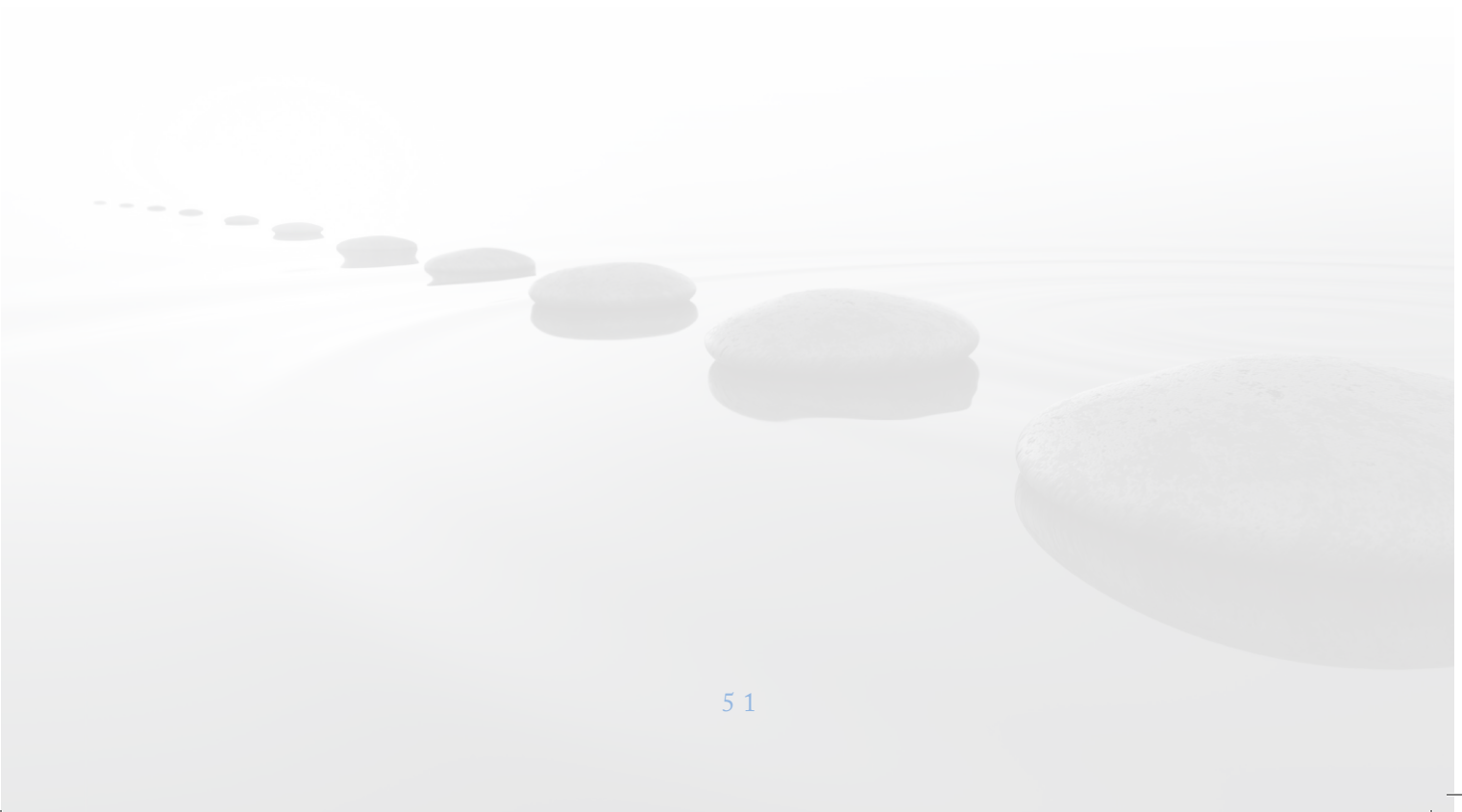
LOOK UP

- Read John 21 together. Why do you think Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him three times?
- The word, love, tends to get overused and thrown out thoughtlessly. When you say you love someone or something what does that mean to you? At what lengths would you go to for someone you love?
- Why do you think Jesus only asked Peter if he loved Him?
- What is the significance of Jesus using “lamb” and “sheep?” What about “feed” and “take care?”
- Is it possible to love Jesus without tending to His flock?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- The last two weeks have been about dropping the things (nets) that may be holding us in place (boat) and keeping us from our true destiny in Christ Jesus. The best way to do these things is not alone but in community, in a group. This week sign up for a group if you are not in one and watch how God will use others in your life to not only help course correct, but also to bless you.
- How can you apply the teachings of the passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

At some point in your life, you may have denied Jesus, just as Peter did. Jesus saw beyond that and commissioned Peter with an important job. Like Peter, we must put our faith and love into action and feed His sheep. We cannot just sit by and keep Jesus' sacrifice, mercy and grace to ourselves. How will you feed His Sheep?

FAST DEVOTIONALS



DAY 15 • JAN. 18

READ

Matthew 10:1-42 Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

1 Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. 2 Here are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (also called Peter), then Andrew (Peter's brother), James (son of Zebedee), John (James's brother),

3 Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew (the tax collector), James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus,

4 Simon (the zealot), Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

5 Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: "Don't go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans

6 but only to the people of Israel—God's lost sheep.

7 Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!

9 "Don't take any money in your money belts—no gold, silver, or even copper coins.

10 Don't carry a traveler's bag with a change of clothes and sandals or even a walking stick. Don't hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve to be fed.

11 "Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy person and stay in his home until you leave town.

12 When you enter the home, give it your blessing. 13 If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not, take back the blessing.

14 If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave. 15 I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day.

16 "Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves.

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

17 But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues.

18 You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me.

19 When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time.

20 For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

21 "A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed.

22 And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved.

23 When you are persecuted in one town, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, the Son of Man will return before you have reached all the towns of Israel.

24 "Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master.

25 Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons, the members of my household will be called by even worse names!

26 "But don't be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all.

27 What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

28 "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. 30 And the very hairs on your head are all numbered.

31 So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

32 "Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.

33 But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.

34 "Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

35 'I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

36 Your enemies will be right in your own household!

37 “If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine.

38 If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine.

39 If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

40 “Anyone who receives you receives me, and anyone who receives me receives the Father who sent me.

41 If you receive a prophet as one who speaks for God, you will be given the same reward as a prophet. And if you receive righteous people because of their righteousness, you will be given a reward like theirs.

42 And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.

REFLECT

Matthew 10 tells of Jesus sending out His servants to spread the Gospel message. It is an example for us today to see how we should go. We receive courage when we follow Jesus. There is a challenge here for us. When confronted with a world in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with a world crying out in pain, with a world driven by inequality, poverty and need, how will we respond? Will we hunker down and ignore the outside world? Or will we be willing to say, “whatever it takes.” Whatever it takes to see our communities restored, our workplaces transformed, our world healed? Whatever it takes to see justice and righteousness roll on like a river? Whatever it takes to see our friends, colleagues and neighbors come to realize that they, too, are known, loved and called by their Father in Heaven? As followers what should we be willing to do to see that everyone knows of hope and forgiveness that our Lord and Savior gives? Whatever it takes.

What do you receive when you follow Jesus Christ? Don't we kind of assume that if we obey and be good, God will repay us with a great reward for following Jesus? Following Jesus is costly. If you follow Jesus, the reward is not a pain-free stress-free life.

There is a destination Jesus has for you when you follow Him. Jesus has a mission for each of us. Listen as He tells His disciples in Matthew 10:16-23 – “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues.” Following Jesus is costly!

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

RESPOND

- Jesus promised hard times, but He also promised comfort.
- Are you experiencing opposition for being a Christian but neglecting to accept His comfort?
- Are you willing to do whatever it takes to make disciples? If not, what is the barrier that's holding you back?
- Do you trust that God has a plan for you during difficult circumstances?

PRAY

Father give us courage to stand up for you and courage to do whatever it takes to share you.



DAY 16 • JAN. 19

READ

Jeremiah 23:1-8 Shepherds Who Scatter God's Sheep

“What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for,” says the Lord.

2 Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: “Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. 3 But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. 4 Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the Lord, have spoken!

5 “For the time is coming,”

says the Lord,

“when I will raise up a righteous descendant

from King David's line.

He will be a King who rules with wisdom.

He will do what is just and right throughout the land.

6 And this will be his name:

‘The Lord Is Our Righteousness.’

In that day Judah will be saved,

and Israel will live in safety.

7 “In that day,” says the Lord, “when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.’ 8 Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

REFLECT

With leadership comes heavy responsibility. The Lord holds accountable those who have spiritual authority over the people of God. In this case Jeremiah was talking about the priests, the false prophets and the king. They had all failed the people, leading them into idolatry, injustice and unfaithfulness.

God had allowed many disobedient kings to continue ruling. But now God forewarned the people of His plan for harsh discipline if they once again refused to return to Him. God makes clear what is right and wrong. When people choose to do wrong, God helps them see their sin. God's discipline arises from his love for His people.

Oftentimes we don't recognize the disciplining hand of God. Sometimes God's discipline comes in forms that at first seem to have no relationship to what we have done. In time, the truth usually becomes apparent.

People that accept the discipline of God realize that His discipline is for our own protection. We do not view it as something negative. We see it as an expression of love. My grandmother raised me and I know she loved me beyond words, but when her discipline came, it was harsh and I knew for what reason I was being disciplined. I didn't like it at the time but it was for my own good. It was because she loved me. Our Heavenly Father is the same. He disciplines us because He loves us.

RESPOND

- Do you question why God disciplines you? Do you think you deserve it?
- Are you a shepherd protecting your flock?
- Can you reflect on a time when a shepherd walked into your life to lead you into the arms of a loving Savior?
- Don't be afraid to discipline; don't be afraid of discipline. In the long run, the person being disciplined will be forever grateful.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, teach us how to discipline and accept discipline. Thank you for loving us so much that we see your discipline as an act of kindness and love. You only want what is best for us. Help us to be better shepherds.



DAY 17 • JAN. 20

READ

Galatians 6:1-10 Do Good to Everyone

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer[a] is overcome by some sin, you who are godly[b] should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. 2 Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. 3 If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

4 Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. 5 For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

6 Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

7 Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. 8 Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. 9 So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. 10 Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

REFLECT

Do you love Jesus? Do you want to be more like Him? What's holding you back from being more like Him?

In this scripture, the word burdens is defined as “a heavy load that is hard to lift and difficult to carry.” The text assumes we all have burdens. A burden can be anything that can crush the joy of our faith. Burdens come in all forms – financial, loss, emotional and spiritual. You are either going into a storm, are presently in a storm or just coming out of a storm. Some may say they are storm free. You've heard some Christian friends make this response. They don't wear a mask for COVID-19, but they wear a mask to pretend that they are ok when obviously they aren't. Other Christians may admit that they have burdens but then quickly say, “I got this, no need to worry about me.”

As Christians we are required to compassionately assist those who are being crushed by life's unbearable sorrows and troubles. By helping others with their burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35 (NIV)

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

Someone once said the sweet sign of the Holy Spirit's work in the community is love.

Do you love Jesus? What's holding us back from being like Him? Kick off those shackles and let's love on some people.

RESPOND

- Live today like Jesus would. Love on someone. Help someone with their heavy load.
- Do you have a heavy load you are carrying? Don't be afraid to seek help. Don't let that heavy load crush your joy.
- God has a plan for every life and He wants us to live in fellowship with Him. If you want to know that plan, He will direct and lead you. Reach out to Him.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, please direct our attention back to you. We want to be more like you. Forgive us for taking our eyes off you and thinking we have it all together. We need You. We love You. Thank you for loving us and not abandoning us. Amen.



DAY 18 • JAN. 21

READ

Acts 20:13-38 Paul Meets with the Ephesian Elders

13Paul went by land to Assos, where he had arranged for us to join him, while we traveled by ship. 14He joined us there, and we sailed together to Mitylene. 15The next day we sailed past the island of Kios. The following day we crossed to the island of Samos, and a day later we arrived at Miletus.

16Paul had decided to sail on past Ephesus, for he didn't want to spend any more time in the province of Asia. He was hurrying to get to Jerusalem, if possible, in time for the Festival of Pentecost. 17But when we landed at Miletus, he sent a message to the elders of the church at Ephesus, asking them to come and meet him.

18When they arrived he declared, "You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now 19I have done the Lord's work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. 20I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. 21I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.

22"And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, 23except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. 24But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

25"And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. 26I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault, 27for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.

28"So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. 29I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. 30Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following. 31Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

32“And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.

33“I have never coveted anyone’s silver or gold or fine clothes. 34You know that these hands of mine have worked to supply my own needs and even the needs of those who were with me. 35And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

36When he had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them. 37They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye. 38They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship.

REFLECT

Have you ever found yourself to be in such a hurry that you get tunnel-vision? Just rushing around, trying to get things done and aiming only for the goal that lies ahead of you? Hopefully, during this time of fasting the Lord has helped you settle in and walk with Him. We read in this chapter of Acts that Paul was finishing a missionary journey and had his sights set on returning to Jerusalem before the Festival of Pentecost was to begin. We see that Paul decided to sail past Ephesus in order to save time, but then once in Miletus he called for the Ephesian elders to come to him. Paul’s decision to call for the elders to meet him in Miletus, instead of docking the ship at Ephesus, leads us to ponder about his reasoning.

We don’t know for sure why he did this, but we do read that he was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem. For three years Paul shared Jesus with these Ephesian men. He spent time with their families, came to know their friends and preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ as he planted a church there; a church that was well established and even still receiving instruction from the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation. God had done a mighty work through the Apostle Paul regarding this city and birthed a loving family of believers there.

As we look at Paul’s message to these elders, what can we learn? Paul knew that he would not see these brothers again for the rest of his earthly life. He began with reminding them of his earnestness in serving the Lord and of the importance of the gospel, the good news of Jesus. He emphasizes that he had one message for all people; repent from sin by turning to God and placing your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Paul was committed to the work that the Lord assigned to him; of telling others of the good news of the wonderful grace of God.

Paul exhorted his brothers to guard themselves and God’s people from false teachers who would come into their church and distort the truth of the Gospel, the good news. Paul finishes his address to them by entrusting them to God and reminding them of the words of our Lord Jesus, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

RESPOND

- As you're moving through life, do you find that God will get your attention and redirect you to a purpose that serves others and glorifies Him?
- Paul emphasized that he had "one message" to speak to all people: the necessity of repenting from sin, turning to God and having faith in our Lord Jesus. How does this message impact you? Are there sins in your life that the Lord is calling you to repent from?
- God has given us the wonderful gift of salvation through His blessed son, Jesus Christ. How can you share that gift with others?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you for your wonderful grace. I ask that you please continue to redirect my attention to living according to your will. Show me where I need to repent and strengthen me in the direction that you're calling me toward. May my life glorify you. In Jesus name, amen.

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS



DAY 19 • JAN. 22

READ

Romans 12:1-8 Living Sacrifice

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

³Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. ⁴Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

⁶In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So, if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

REFLECT

As we approach the end of our fast, we may very well feel that we've sacrificed our bodies above and beyond what we would seem normal. But you may have noticed that the longer you've fasted and intentionally spent time with God, the less of a burden it feels. God honors our obedience. He loves when we deny ourselves and seek Him in prayer and worship. Paul knew this as well. We see in this passage that he is encouraging, no, rather pleading with believers to give ourselves, our bodies, fully to God. Worship is so much more than singing songs; it's about positioning our hearts and minds, in love, to serve the living God in all that we do.

As you surrender yourself to God, He begins to transform you and even change the way you think. He wants you to be Holy, as He is Holy. Paul gives us a warning in this passage to be honest in our evaluations of ourselves. God does not want us to be prideful in our walk with Him. Rather, He wants us to see our weakness. He wants us to see that we need Him, and His strength, in all that we do. As you come before the altar of God and lay yourself down as a living sacrifice, He has promised to reveal His good, pleasing, and perfect will to you.

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

Our Lord Jesus said that the two greatest commandments were to love God with all our heart and to love others as yourself. God reveals to us that, in Christ, we are each one of many parts of one body and we belong to one another. The gifts that God has given to you are not for yourself. They are for Him and for your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. God is calling you to continue to submit yourself to Him and allow Him to transform you into the son or daughter that He has designed and is calling you to be.

RESPOND

- It is tempting to have the mindset that we must work to earn God's acceptance, but Paul pleads for us to give our bodies to God BECAUSE of all that He has done for us. Is this how you think of your worship and service to God? As a response to what He's already done by saving you?
- What is one thing that God is calling you to surrender to Him? It could be a behavior, the way you use your time, or even the way you think about others or your circumstances.
- Peter boldly told Jesus that He would die for Him. The next day Peter denied three times that he ever knew Jesus. Are you honest in your spiritual evaluation of yourself? What gifts has God given you? How is He calling you to use those gifts to serve Him and your brothers and sisters in Christ?

PRAY

Dear Father, thank you so much for your mercy. Thank you for salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection. I want to worship you in truth. I give myself, my body, to you as a living and holy sacrifice. Please transform my way of thinking to be in line with your will. Guard me Father. Let me see myself the way you see me. Help me to use the gifts you have given me for your glory and for serving my brothers and sisters. In Jesus name, amen.

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS



DAY 20 • JAN. 23

READ

Romans 12:9-21 Overcome Evil with Good

9 Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. 10 Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other. 11 Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. 12 Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble and keep on praying. 13 When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. 15 Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

17 Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. 18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD. 20 Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

21 Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

22 I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, to pay attention to what I have written in this brief exhortation.

23 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released from jail. If he comes here soon, I will bring him with me to see you.

24 Greet all your leaders and all the believers there. The believers from Italy send you their greetings.

25 May God's grace be with you all.

WEEK THREE FAST DEVOTIONALS

REFLECT

Here we are! You've made it to the last day of the fast.

We read yesterday that we are not to copy the ways of this world, the customs and behaviors of the times we are in, but rather we are to let God transform our minds and change the way we think. Today's passage contains direction for us to follow as we seek to be made, by God, to be more and more like our Lord Jesus.

We are called to have genuine love toward others, to hate what is wrong or evil and to hold tightly to what is good. The instruction we receive reminds us of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16. We, as the church and members of His body, are to be lights in this dark world. We are to shine as examples of God's grace and love toward all people.

"Bless those who persecute you"(Romans 12:14). In Luke 6:27-36, we received this same instruction from our Lord Jesus. This way of living and reacting to others is not normal in this world. It is not natural for us and does not always come easily. God is calling us to be separate from what is natural to us and to be set apart from the ways of the world. He calls us to love the way He loves. We are not to overcome evil with evil, or hatred with hatred; we are to overcome evil with good. In this world we are to conquer evil by doing good.

RESPOND

- What does it mean in verse 9 that we should "really" love others? How is this related to "hating what is wrong/evil," and "holding tightly to what is good?"
- When difficult times come, how do you respond? Do you consider the hope that we have in our future with Jesus? Do you first seek God in prayer?
- How do you respond when someone wrongs you? Is it in a worldly way? With anger and vengeance? Or is it in a Godly way, by praying for the one who wronged you and overcoming evil with good?

PRAY

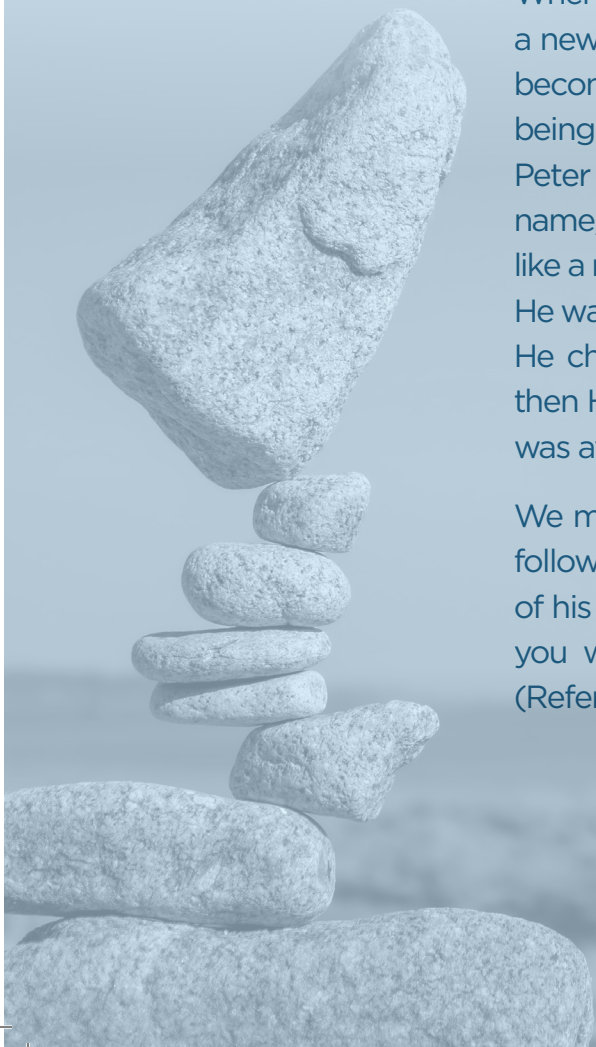
Heavenly Father, thank you for giving Jesus as the perfect example of how you want me to live. I ask that you help me to love the way you love. Thank you for bringing to light the sins that I have in my life and leading me in the everlasting way. I pray that you would continue to strengthen me so that I may respond with love in all situations and not let evil conquer me, but rather conquer evil with good. In Jesus name, amen.

Character Profile of Peter

Jesus' first words to Simon Peter were "Come, Follow me" (Mark 1:17). His last words to him were, "You must follow me" (John 21:22 NIV). Every step of the way, between those two challenges, Peter never failed to follow - even though he often stumbled.

When Jesus entered Peter's life, this plain fisherman became a new person with new goals and new priorities. He did not become a perfect person, however, and he never stopped being Simon Peter. We may wonder what Jesus saw in Simon Peter that made him greet this potential disciple with a new name, Peter - "the rock." Impulsive Peter certainly didn't act like a rock much of the time. When Jesus chose his followers, He wasn't looking for models; He was looking for real people. He chose people who could be changed by His love, and then He sent them out to communicate that His acceptance was available to anyone - even to those who often fail.

We may wonder what Jesus sees in us when He calls us to follow Him. But we know Jesus accepted Peter and, in spite of his failures, Peter went on to do great things for God. Are you willing to keep following Jesus, even when you fail? (Reference: Life Application Bible)



Character Profile

- Peter (Disciple/also known as Simon Peter)
- Father: Jonah (John 1:42)
- Spouse: Unnamed (Matthew 8:14)
- Brother: Andrew (John 1:40)
- First mention: Matthew 4:18
- Last mention: 2 Peter 1:1
- Meaning of his name: Simon means “hearing;” Peter means “rock” (Greek)
- Occupation: Fisherman and apostle
- Place of Birth: Bethsaida in Galilee (John 1:44)
- Place of death: Tradition says he died in Rome

Strengths and Accomplishments

- Became the recognized leader among Jesus’ disciples – one of the inner group of three
- Was the first great voice of the gospel during Pentecost
- Probably knew Mark and gave him information for the Gospel of Mark
- Wrote 1 and 2 Peter

Weakness and Mistakes

- Often spoke without thinking; was brash and impulsive
- During the trial of Jesus, he denied three times that he knew Jesus
- Later found it hard to treat Gentile Christians as equals

Lessons from His Life

- Enthusiasm has to be backed up by faith and understanding, or it fails
- God’s faithfulness can compensate for our greatest unfaithfulness
- It is better to be a follower who fails than one who fails to follow

Key Verse

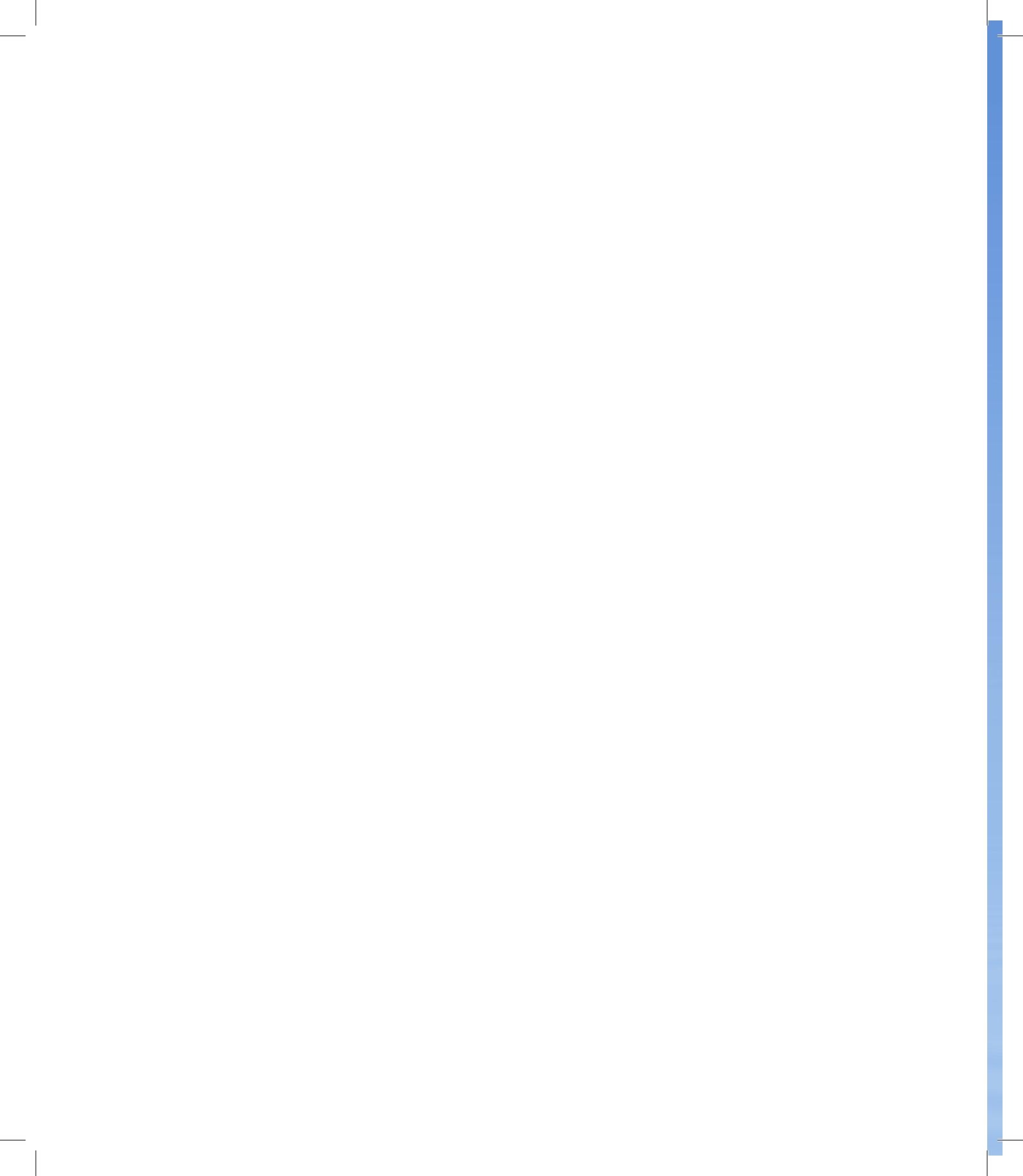
“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18NIV).

Purpose of 1st and 2nd Peter

To warn Christians about false teachers and to exhort them to grow in their faith and knowledge of Christ.

Date Written

About A.D. 64 and three years later 2nd Peter was written, possibly from Rome.



HOPE

WEEK FOUR • IMAGO DEI



JANUARY 24

WEEK FOUR 1 PETER 1:1-25

Greetings from Peter

This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. 2 God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

May God give you more and more grace and peace.

The Hope of Eternal Life

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation,⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. 5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

8 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. 9 The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

10 This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. 11 They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward.

12 They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

A Call to Holy Living

13 So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. 14 So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. 15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 16 For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." [c]

WEEK FOUR 1 PETER 1:1-25

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of John 21 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- Read 1 Peter 1:1-25 together.
- In verse 1, Peter refers to his readers as “foreigners”. Other translations use terms such as: aliens, exiles, pilgrims and sojourners. In verse 17, Peter encourages them to live in reverent fear of the Father during their time here as “temporary residents” (see also 1 Peter 2:11). Peter is using their physical circumstances as an example to highlight a deeper spiritual reality. We are all, as born-again disciples of Jesus, called by God to live as pilgrims on this Earth. How do you shift your focus off of the temporary and onto the eternal?
- God the Father, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, didn’t only save us from hell; He caused us to live with great expectation for our future inheritance. How does Peter describe this future inheritance? (also see 1 Corinthians 15:35-58) How does this promise from God give you hope during the difficult times you face in this lifetime?
- The Bible reveals to us that God is holy. The word “holy” means to be separated, set-apart or consecrated for a special purpose. Understanding that God is holy includes knowing that God is wholly other than creation; there is nothing that is like Him. In verses 15 & 16, we are called to be holy as God is holy. This includes both separating ourselves from sin AND separating ourselves unto God as His obedient children. How does this call to “be holy” impact you as you live as a disciple of Jesus? What does the Holy Spirit bring to your mind as you reflect on this?
- In verses 18 & 20, Peter uses the word “ransom”. What does it mean that Jesus was your ransom? What were you ransomed from? How do we, as His disciples, respond to this beautiful truth?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- Write down the boat that you are in. Pray over it each day this week and ask God to give you the courage to get out of it and walk faithfully with Him.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. By His sacrificial death and His resurrection, Jesus secured an eternal hope for all who, through faith, are being protected by the power of God until His glorious return. This same God and Father who gave you the Spirit of adoption and caused you to be born again to a living hope is still with you today. No matter what your circumstances look like, no matter how painful these times are, God is faithful and in charge.

LIVING AS

WEEK FIVE • IMAGO DEI

CHOSEN



JANUARY 31

WEEK FIVE 1 PETER 2:1-10

So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. 2 Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, 3 now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

Living Stones for God's House

4 You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor.

5 And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. 6 As the Scriptures say,

"I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."

7 Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone."

8 And, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them.

9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

10 "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people.

Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."

MESSAGE NOTES



The page contains two columns of horizontal lines for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across most of the page's width. At the bottom of the page, there is a decorative graphic consisting of a series of small, light-colored stones arranged in a path that leads towards a larger, smooth, light-colored stone on the right side. The background of the page is a light, neutral color.

WEEK FIVE 1 PETER 2:1-10

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of 1 Peter 1:1-25 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- Read 1 Peter 2:1-10 together.
- Recall a time where you were, or near, dehydration. Describe how you felt before and after you got what your body needed to recover?
- God wants you to desperately desire Him, like your body needed those fluids when you were dehydrated. What would desiring Him look like in your life now?
- The nature and function of the Church depends on the people God calls there. How does knowing that you have been called by God make you feel, why?
- This passage tells us that as a Christian you are:
 - Chosen by God
 - Precious to Him
 - His special possession
 - Holy and royal
 - A recipient of mercy
 - Designated to declare His greatness
- Which of these do you struggle with accepting the most and why is that?
- What verse in the passage should you commit to memory and why?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- Write down the boat that you are in. Pray over it each day this week and ask God to give you the courage to get out of it and walk faithfully with Him.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

Father God chose Jesus Christ to build His Church. God also calls you to build His Church by making disciples. He has chosen you, given you mercy, declared you as precious, royal and holy. God loves you and wants you to share His grace and love with others. Think about how this calling looks in your life right now.

SUBMISSION

WEEK SIX • IMAGO DEI



FEBRUARY 7

WEEK SIX 1 PETER 2:11-3:7

11 Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. 12 Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world. 13 For the Lord’s sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, 14 or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.

15 It is God’s will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. 16 For you are free, yet you are God’s slaves, so don’t use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. 17 Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king.

Slaves

18 You who are slaves must submit to your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. 19 For God is pleased when, conscious of his will, you patiently endure unjust treatment. 20 Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.

21 For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

22 He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.

23 He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered.

He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

24 He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right.

By his wounds you are healed.

25 Once you were like sheep who wandered away.

But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

Wives

3 In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over 2 by observing your pure and reverent lives.

3 Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. 4 You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. 5 This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They put their trust in God and accepted the authority of their husbands. 6 For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.

Husbands

7 In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.

WEEK SIX 1 PETER 2:11-3:7

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of 1 Peter 2:1-10 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- Read 1 Peter 2:11 – 3:7 together.
- What is your knee-jerk reaction when you read this passage about submission? What experiences or worldly values may lead you to reject the idea of submission?
- Who have you been called to submit to, how well are you doing it and what challenges do you face in doing so?
- How might the idea that someone needs to “deserve” our submission play into our willingness to do it?
- Jesus was subject both to His parents and to God the Father but was not lower than either of them. The submission Jesus models was in action and in heart and demonstrated repeatedly through His surrender. Which is more difficult for you – to submit to your authorities in action or heart? Why?
- What could be at stake in not being obedient to God's principles of submission?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- Write down the boat that you are in. Pray over it each day this week and ask God to give you the courage to get out of it and walk faithfully with Him.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

Just the word, submission, drums up all kinds of emotions and questions that leave us confused about what this passage may mean in today's culture. Even within the church, poor examples of leadership tempt us to discount scripture about submitting to others. The world's ways are to be independent, resist hierarchy, exercise our personal rights and answer to no one. Yet scripture teaches children to obey their parents, wives to submit to their husbands, employees to employer and citizens to their government. In the world, so often the authorities we are under seem corrupt and counterproductive to God's agenda. But what did God say? Submit. As we trust God's way, we place ourselves under the authority of the leaders of our homes, workplaces, communities, out of sheer obedience. When we do God things God's way, we can be confident that it is truly God's (not human) authority we are under. Here we experience protection, His best, freedom.

CLEANSE

WEEK SEVEN • IMAGO DEI

(MAKE)



FEBRUARY 14

WEEK SEVEN 1 PETER 3:8-22

8 Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. 9 Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing.

10 For the Scriptures say,
"If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies.

11 Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it.

12 The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers.

But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil."

Suffering for Doing Good

13 Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. 15 Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready

to explain it. 16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. 17 Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!

18 Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

19 So he went and preached to the spirits in prison—
20 those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. 21 And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

22 Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.

WEEK FOUR 1 PETER 1:1-25

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of 1 Peter 2:11-3:7 made the biggest impact on your week?

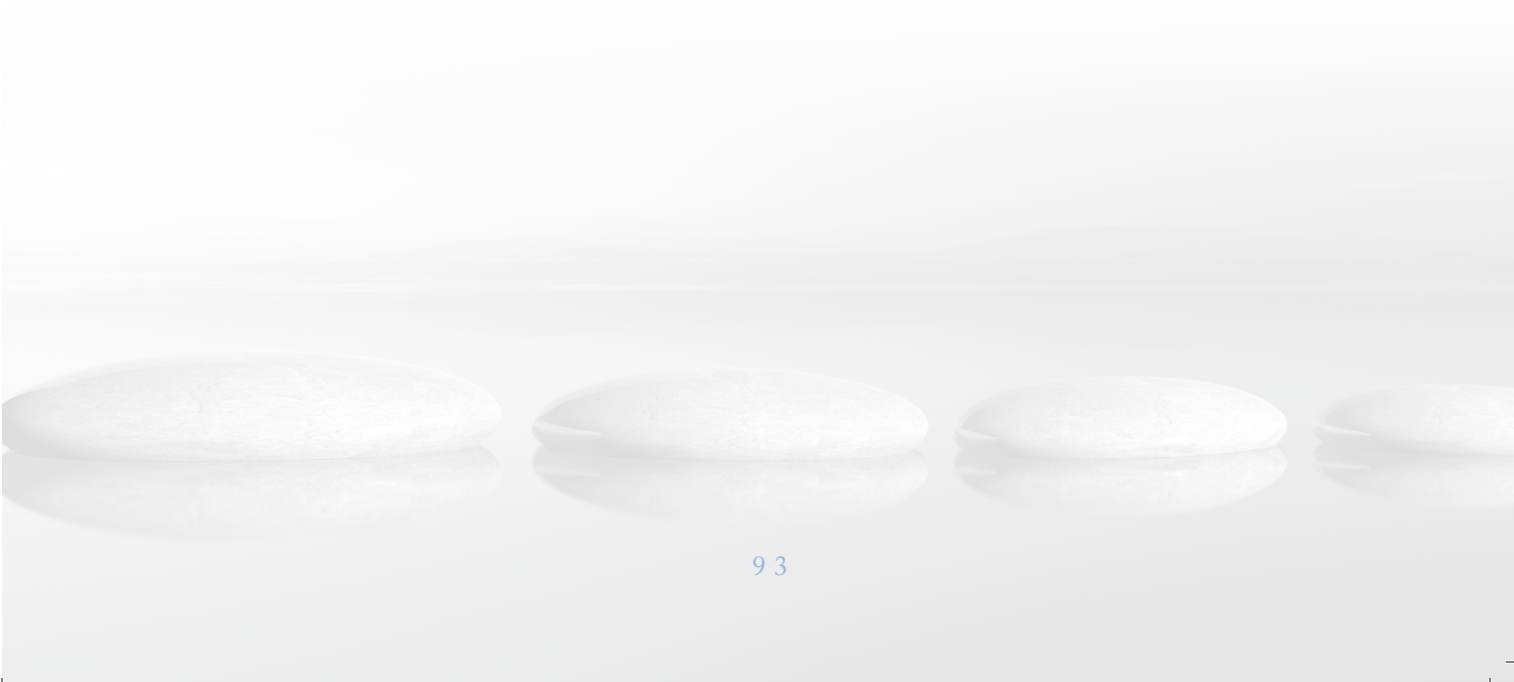
LOOK UP

- Read 1 Peter 3:8-22 together.
- Is it easier for you to retaliate with insults when people insult you or to pay them back with a blessing? How does this passage challenge you?
- Are you prepared to share the hope we find in Christ? Why is it important to share that hope in a gentle and respectful way?
- What does Peter mean when he tells us that Jesus preached to spirits in prison? Have you ever felt imprisoned by sin? If so, how did that affect your life and your relationships?
- How does the story of Noah and the great flood provide a picture of baptism? Explain how the waters of baptism cleanse us without removing dirt from our bodies.
- In today's passage, we are reminded to love each other in obedience to God. We're then told that we may suffer for doing good. How does Christ's suffering teach us it is better to suffer for doing good if it is God's will?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- Write down the boat that you are in. Pray over it each day this week and ask God to give you the courage to get out of it and walk faithfully with Him.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

Our words and our actions
show others that we
belong to Christ.

SUFFERING

WEEK EIGHT • IMAGO DEI



FEBRUARY 21

WEEK EIGHT 1 PETER 4:1-19

So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. 2 You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. 3 You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.

4 Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. 5 But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead. 6 That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead—so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit.

7 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. 8 Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. 11 Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do

you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

Suffering for Being a Christian

12 Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. 13 Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

14 If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. 15 If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. 16 But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name! 17 For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News? 18 And also,

“If the righteous are barely saved, what will happen to godless sinners?”

19 So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.

WEEK EIGHT 1 PETER 4:1-19

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of 1 Peter 3:8-22 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- Read verses 1-4. When you gave your life to Christ and became a Christian, did you have to leave some friends behind? Did you change where you went and what you did? Did people treat you differently? Is some of this happening to you now?
- Verse 7 says, “we need to be earnest and disciplined in our prayers.” This verse gives us a vertical element in how we are to relate to God. How to help us grow closer to Him, get to know Him and receive power from Him to help us overcome the pressure to sin. Share with your group ways that you pray. How is your prayer time? What do you do, or try to do, to be “earnest and disciplined in your prayers.” (P-R-A-Y, A.C.T.S., journaling)
- Verses 8-9 show us a horizontal element in how we are to relate to others, “most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other...” (Read Mark 12:30-31, 1 Corinthians 13:13, 1 John 3:11). What comes to mind when you compare your lifestyle of love to this command? It’s easy to love the loveable but we are called to love the unlovable too. How do we do this?
- Many people believe when you become a Christian and go to church that everything is going to be blessed; no more problems, no more suffering. Verses 12-16 tell us something different. Share a time when you suffered but afterwards you realized that in your suffering your relationship with God grew, so much that there was joy where there was once great pain.
- Read verse 18. This verse refers to God’s refining discipline. He allows His children to sin and then experience the consequences. If He is so loving and full of grace, why does He do that? (Read Hebrews 12:7-9).
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- The last two weeks have been about dropping the things (nets) that may be holding us in place (boat) and keeping us from our true destiny in Christ Jesus. The best way to do these things is not alone but in community, in a group. This week sign up for a group if you are not in one and watch how God will use others in your life to not only help course correct, but also to bless you.
- How can you apply the teachings of the passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

It is difficult to accept that suffering is part of God's plan. We can find comfort and understanding that suffering is part of God's will. Suffering has a reason and a purpose. For believers, suffering is a purifying process to draw us closer to God and when we do, His promise is that He will draw closer to us. (James 4:7-8)

SHEPHERDING

WEEK NINE • IMAGO DEI



FEBRUARY 28

WEEK NINE 1 PETER 5:1-14

And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: 2 Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.³ Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. 4 And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

5 In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for

“God opposes the proud

but gives grace to the humble.”

6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. 7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the

devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.

10 In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. 11 All power to him forever! Amen.

Peter's Final Greetings

12 I have written and sent this short letter to you with the help of Silas, whom I commend to you as a faithful brother. My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that what you are experiencing is truly part of God's grace for you. Stand firm in this grace.

13 Your sister church here in Babylon sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be with all of you who are in Christ.

WEEK NINE 1 PETER 5:1-14

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of 1 Peter 4:1-19 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- Read 1 Peter 5:1-14 together.
- First of all, let's define a shepherd. Who is someone in your life, either now or in the past, that has been a shepherd to you? Use these descriptions as the framework for the rest of the discussion.
- How do shepherding and submission go hand in hand?
- How did Jesus display both of these?
- How can we live out our call to be shepherds while at the same time living in humble submission?
- Who are you following? Who are you leading? In other words, who is shepherding you and who are you shepherding?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- This week ask the question, "Who's missing that I should call?" Meaning, who do you know that should be in the sheepfold but is not currently in it? Write down the name of one person and pray over them each day this week. Pray God will use you to bring them home.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

Peter closes out this letter by pointing directly back to Jesus. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, while at the same time, he's the Suffering Servant. Peter uses Jesus as a model to call the leaders of the Church to find joy in their leadership role. Leaders don't lead because they HAVE to, but because they GET to be a part of the mission of Jesus. In the same way, don't humbly submit yourself to others because you HAVE to, but because you GET to be a part of something bigger than yourself. When we are shepherding and submitting, we will be firm in our faith because Christ will make us strong, firm, and steadfast (v.10)

GROW

WEEK TEN • IMAGO DEI

(BETTER)



MARCH 7

WEEK TEN 2 PETER 1:1-11

This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.

I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

2 May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

Growing in Faith

3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. 4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

10 So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. 11 Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

WEEK TEN 2 PETER 1:1-11

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of 1 Peter 5:1-14 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- Read 2 Peter 1:1-11 together.
- In Peter's introduction, he says that he is writing to, "those who share the same precious faith we have." What does it mean to you to share in the same precious faith as the Apostle Peter? Is your faith in Jesus Christ the foundation on which you live your life? What impact does it have on you to know that, thanks to Jesus, you have been "made right" with God?
- In verse 2, Peter asks that God would give us more and more grace and peace as we grow in our knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. As we grow in our relationship with Jesus, we will come face-to-face with questions like these: Do I know Jesus Christ? Do I really have a relationship with Him? Take some time to reflect on these questions.
- What growth have you seen in yourself as you've come to know Jesus more? Are you aware of more grace and peace in your life as you have continued to follow Him?
- There are 8 qualities of a growing disciple listed in verses 5-7, with the foundation being faith. Which of these qualities are prevalent in your life and which ones are absent? Have you thanked God for the strengths He's given you? Have you prayed and asked Him to help you grow in the areas where scripture reveals you're missing the mark?
- Our spiritual growth is vital for living a fruitful life as disciples of Jesus. Without it we will find ourselves drifting away from God and lacking confidence in the precious promises that lie before us. What changes has the Lord revealed to you, changes you can make, to be sure that you are continuing to grow in your relationship with Him?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- The last two weeks have been about dropping the things (nets) that may be holding us in place (boat) and keeping us from our true destiny in Christ Jesus. The best way to do these things is not alone but in community, in a group. This week sign up for a group if you are not in one and watch how God will use others in your life to not only help course correct, but also to bless you.
- How can you apply the teachings of the passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

Dear brothers and sisters, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life through our Lord Jesus Christ. Are you growing in your relationship with Him? Do you truly know Him? Are you becoming a better disciple?

TRUTH

WEEK ELEVEN • IMAGO DEI



MARCH 14

WEEK ELEVEN 2 PETER 1:12-21 (NIV)

12 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

19 We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

WEEK ELEVEN MARCH 14

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of 2 Peter 1:1-11 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- Read verses 2 Peter 1:12-21 together. Why do you think Simon Peter chooses to use the words, “tent of this body” in verse 13? Why do you think he feels like he has to remind them continuously?
- In verses 16-19 Simon Peter reminds them that the disciples were not just told stories of what Jesus did or said but they were there, that they witnessed God speaking to Jesus. Why do you think this is so important?
- Read verse 2 Peter 1:20-21. What is Simeon Peter referring to in these verses, and why is that important to know?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- Who is that one person you can share God’s truth with? Write down the one person’s name and pray over it each week. Ask that God would give you the courage to speak His truth in love to that person.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES

FINAL THOUGHT

Simon Peter reminds us that the TRUTH came from Jesus. He is the way. They witnessed it and it has been passed on to us by the Holy Spirit that lives in us. We must continue to pass this on until the day Jesus comes back.

MORE

WEEK TWELVE • IMAGO DEI



MARCH 21

WEEK TWELVE 2 PETER 2:1-3:18

But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. 3 In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.

4 For God did not spare even the angels who sinned. He threw them into hell, in gloomy pits of darkness, where they are being held until the day of judgment. 5 And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and the seven others in his family. Noah warned the world of God’s righteous judgment. So God protected Noah when he destroyed the world of ungodly people with a vast flood. 6 Later, God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into heaps of ashes. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people. 7 But God also rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him. 8 Yes, Lot was a righteous man who was

tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day. 9 So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment. 10 He is especially hard on those who follow their own twisted sexual desire, and who despise authority.

These people are proud and arrogant, daring even to scoff at supernatural beings without so much as trembling. 11 But the angels, who are far greater in power and strength, do not dare to bring from the Lord a charge of blasphemy against those supernatural beings.

12 These false teachers are like unthinking animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed. They scoff at things they do not understand, and like animals, they will be destroyed. 13 Their destruction is their reward for the harm they have done. They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain among you. They delight in deception even as they eat with you in your fellowship meals. 14 They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. They lure unstable people into sin, and they are well trained in greed. They

WEEK TWELVE MARCH 21

LOOK BACK

- Through your devotional time and S.O.A.P. journal this past week, what did God reveal to you?
- What part of 2 Peter 1:2-21 made the biggest impact on your week?

LOOK UP

- Read 2 Peter 2:1-3:18 together.
- When it comes to salvation, church unity and morality, what are some modern examples of false teaching we see today? What seems to be the motivation of false teachers within the church and why are new and growing Christians most vulnerable? Have you ever fallen victim to false teaching. If so, how?
- In what way have you personally been tempted to return to your sin vomit and go back to wallow in a life of mud?
- Why must we consciously “refresh our memory” and intentionally “stimulate wholesome thinking”? (3:1)
- If you genuinely believe “everything around us is going to be destroyed” (3:11), why is it essential that we live our lives in such a way that reflects the judgment that is coming? What does this look like?
- Are the events described in 2 Peter, chapters 2-3, “hard for you to understand” (3:16)? How do ignorant and unstable people twist scripture to confuse people and mean something else (3:16)? How can you discern truth in scripture to clearly identify The Word of God, versus the word of man?
- What questions do you have? Write them down here:

LOOK AHEAD

- Who is that one person you can share God’s truth with? Write down the one person’s name and pray over it each week. Ask that God would give you the courage to speak His truth in love to that person.
- How can you apply the teachings of this passage of scripture this week?
- Close in prayer.

NOTES



FINAL THOUGHT

Jesus told His disciples that false teachers would come and Peter goes into great detail to describe how they operate, so we'll know what to look for. In the last days, scoffers and mockers will attempt to lead many astray. The best way to identify a counterfeit is to become very familiar with the real thing. Study and observe consistent Godly character in scripture so you'll know the real deal when you see it. "Be on guard, and then you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. Rather you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:17-18). When you see loved ones being led astray, do everything you can to bring them back. Speak the truth in love and especially pray. "Our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved" (3:15).





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