



WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE CROSS?
A Student Devotional

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DAY 1 - John 19:7-11

7 "We have a law," the Jews replied to him, "and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." 8 When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever. 9 He went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus did not give him an answer. 10 So Pilate said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?" 11 "You would have no authority over me at all," Jesus answered him, "if it hadn't been given you from above. This is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."¹

That haunting in your heart that something is not quite right about the world we live in is true. By sin, the perfection of creation has been broken, but God's redemptive plan is beautifully underway. God established the Law in the first five books of the Bible and then fulfilled it himself through the cross. Today, by that Law, we see why we are condemned and by Jesus' resurrection, we see how we can be saved.

Who was really in charge in this passage? Describe the coming day when Pilate would stand to be judged by Jesus.

Describe the connection you see between this passage and Isaiah 53:7.

Jesus was the Innocent One being judged by sinners in this passage. We sinners will one day stand in judgement before Him. What is the one hope we have for that day?

Pray:

Confess that Jesus is Lord and thank Him for His willing sacrifice.

DAY 2 - John 19:12-16

¹²From that moment Pilate kept trying to release him. But the Jews shouted, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!"

¹³When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge's seat in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Aramaic, Gabbatha). ¹⁴It was the preparation day for the Passover, and it was about noon. Then he told the Jews, "Here is your king!" ¹⁵They shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Should I crucify your king?" "We have no king but Caesar!" the chief priests answered. ¹⁶Then he handed him over to be crucified.

What a sham! The people shouting in this passage were being completely fake. They were not big fans of Caesar, in fact, they could not stand him. They were just using Pilate to have Jesus crucified. Meanwhile, because Pilate was unsure of what was really true and untrue (see John 18:38), he did exactly what he did not want to do. Without a solid sense of truth in his worldview, Pilate did precisely what the murderous crowd wanted.

Journal a story of a time you did exactly what a careless crowd wanted you to do. Did that crowd care about you at all? Did they show you any loyalty after that?

Now, rewrite the story with an alternate version. What would have happened if you instead stayed true to the Bible?

Pray:

Commit to God that you will not be like Pilate, but instead stay faithful to His Word all your days even if you have to defy the crowd.

DAY 3 - John 19:17-22

¹⁷ Carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him and two others with him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. ¹⁹ Pilate also had a sign made and put on the cross. It said: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Don't write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate replied, "What I have written, I have written."

When you cave in and do what the crowd demands, they will demand more and more until you either finally resist, or they rip all that they can from you and move on to someone else. Pilate, having given into peer pressure, finally pushed back against the crowd. Pitifully, it was over something petty. It seems like he did not have a spine until verse 22. However, even in this tension, God was at work.

Journal the story of a time you did not allow the crowd to manipulate you. What emotions come up as you recount it?

Is it lonely sometimes to stand against the crowd? How does God feel about your willingness to represent Him even if you stand alone?

List people whom you admire for defying the crowd for righteous reasons.

Pray:

When and only when you truly mean it, tell God that the applause of heaven means more to you than the applause of the crowd.

DAY 4 - John 19:23,24

²³When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier. They also took the tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. ²⁴So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see who gets it." This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that says: **They divided my clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing.** This is what the soldiers did.

Psalm 22:18 was written centuries before today's passage. It was written at a different time and inspired by the Holy Spirit to a different earthly writer, but both Psalm 22:18 and John 19:24 are available today in the same Bible. Though modern Bibles are available in single printed volumes and though Psalms and John share a single book spine now, they are not the same document. The Bible is a compilation of different books all inspired by God for one purpose and that purpose involves you right now as you read. There are tons of prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the New Testament. All of God's promises find their "yes" in Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20)

How do you answer someone accusing you of "circular reasoning" if you use the Bible to prove the Bible; showing an Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in the New Testament?

List some prophecies made in the New Testament that have yet to come to pass. Because God fulfills His Old Testament promises, do you believe He will keep the others as well?

Based on this text, should we expect God's will to always be pleasant? Describe what you imagine went through Jesus' mind as He saw this small prophecy fulfilled.

Pray:

Thank God for being faithful to keep His Word; even in small things. Profess to Him your belief in His prophecies because His track record is perfect.

DAY 5 - John 19:25-27

²⁵ *Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.*

The disciples had all but scattered. The loyalty they proclaimed only hours prior had dissolved into cowardice as only John remained with Jesus' mother Mary, Jesus' aunt, another Mary, and Mary Magdalene. What an honor it must have been for John, who refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved (v.26)" throughout his Gospel, to be entrusted with caring for Mary in Joseph's absence. Oh, to be that kind of disciple. Oh, to be faithful when others scatter and to be right there at the Savior's side while the crucifixion is underway. While Peter had denied Jesus three times and while the others fled, John was steadfast. John took Mary into his home "from that hour" which means that he did not delay to follow-through with what Jesus commissioned him to do.

When other believers fall away from their faith, does that give you an excuse to fall away too? Why not?

Read the first six words of this passage once more. How does this encourage you to stand by Christ when you are tempted to deny Him?

What could have happened if John had delayed obeying Jesus? How can we fight the temptation to delay our obedience to God's clear commands?

Pray:

Thank God for being faithful to you even when no one else is. Commit to God that you will be faithful to Him even when no one else is.

DAY 6 - John 19:28-30

²⁸After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, "I'm thirsty." ²⁹A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth. ³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished." Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

There was one final prophecy of Scripture to be fulfilled before Jesus would die—one last detail to take care of. Everything about this crucifixion event, traditionally called "The Passion," is intentional in Scripture. Every dark stroke of the Artist's brush completes perfectly the picture of redemption. Even the type of branch they used was foreshadowed in David's ancient Psalm 51 as he plead to be washed clean of his murderous adultery. "Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow (Ps. 51:7)." When Jesus said, "It is finished" in verse 30, the original Greek of the Bible used the word *Tetelestai* which was also used in financial ledgers to indicate that a debt had been paid in full.

What was paid in full? What did Jesus finish by dying on the cross?

Based on the final sentence of verse 30, who was in control during the crucifixion? Why would Jesus not give up His spirit before this?

By His birth, Jesus fulfilled Scripture. By His death, Jesus fulfilled Scripture. What else about Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament?

Pray:

Confess sin to God and abide gratefully in His mercy and grace for you. Thank Him for His sacrifice upon the cross.

DAY 7 - John 19:31-37

³¹ Since it was the preparation day, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a special day). They requested that Pilate have the men's legs broken and that their bodies be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other one who had been crucified with him. ³³ When they came to Jesus, they did not break his legs since they saw that he was already dead. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. ³⁵ He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth. ³⁶ For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: Not one of his bones will be broken. ³⁷ Also, another Scripture says: They will look at the one they pierced.

Jesus' accusers kept things tidy and were coldly diligent about appearances, rituals, and rules; all while missing the point. Are you skilled at keeping up appearances, but far from God in your heart? Is your religion a series of rituals and rules?

Using the fine print and footnotes in your Bible, what Old Testament verse was fulfilled by the words, "Not one of his bones will be broken," in verse 36?

Similarly, where did the words, "They will look at the one they pierced" first appear in Scripture? Describe in words what the Holy Spirit does in your heart at the thought of Jesus pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our sins.

Pray:

Thank God for doing all that He said He would do, even working through those who crucified Him.

DAY 8 - John 19:38-42

³⁸After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus—but secretly because of his fear of the Jews—asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus’s body. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and took his body away. ³⁹Nicodemus (who had previously come to him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰They took Jesus’s body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the fragrant spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹There was a garden in the place where he was crucified. A new tomb was in the garden; no one had yet been placed in it. ⁴²They placed Jesus there because of the Jewish day of preparation and since the tomb was nearby.

It is a beautiful act of defiance when timid Christians defy the crowd and let their hearts for Christ be known. It is similar to what Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea did in this passage. It was to Nicodemus that Jesus originally spoke the famous words of John 3:16. They met at night because Nicodemus was afraid of his fellow Pharisees, but not anymore. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea defied their peers and stepped righteously out of line.

Describe a time you observed the a Christian stand out alone in a crowd and stand up for Christ. Do you believe that he or she was truly alone in that moment?

Prayerfully predict an opportunity on the horizon for you to, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, defy the crowd and stand for Jesus.

Name someone whom God has placed on your heart who, like Nicodemus in John 3, secretly believes in Jesus and needs to stand out like Nicodemus in John 19.

Pray:

Lift up the secret Christians in your life and, if you can pray this with a clear conscience, pray that they would arise from their hiding.

DAY 9 - John 20:1,2

¹On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she went running to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, "They've taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him!"

Walking a balance beam on the floor is easy, but walking on a beam 100 feet in the air is suddenly not easy. Understanding Jesus seems easy in church, but walking with Him when we are being tested is suddenly not easy. Jesus had told his followers repeatedly about His coming resurrection, but they all seemed to have forgotten. Mary Magdalene was the first to the tomb that morning, but it would take an encounter with angels and even Jesus himself for her to understand. Even Peter would take two trips to the tomb that morning. However, even this confusion proves something. The disciples did not steal Jesus' body and fake the resurrection because they were not fully convinced of it themselves at first. This theory persists today and even that theory proves Scripture. It was first spread in Matthew 28:13!

Articulate in a few sentences why you trust the Bible to be true.

List reasons why you know the resurrection to be true.

In light of the trustworthiness of Scripture and the truth of the resurrection, what should you do with our sin? In light of the resurrection, what people come to mind for you in order to share the gospel?

Pray:

Ask God to make opportunities to share the gospel abundantly clear to you today. Ask for the boldness to seize those opportunities.

DAY 10 - John 20:3-10

³At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. ⁵Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then, following him, Simon Peter also came. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. ⁷The wrapping that had been on his head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. ⁸The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then also went in, saw, and believed. ⁹For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

After reading this passage, it may not sound like it, but Peter filled with the Holy Spirit would be the one who shared the gospel with a huge crowd in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. Peter had just denied that he even knew Jesus three times on the night of the crucifixion, but he would serve as Jesus' prophesied "rock" upon whom the church would be built. God used him to lead thousands to Christ!

What do the folded burial cloths indicate?

Why is the resurrection such good news? What does it tell you about your future?

Because God did such amazing things through Peter, what could He do through you?

Pray:

If you are struggling with your faith for the time being, ask God to use you the way He used Peter and John though they were downtrodden in John 20:3-10.

DAY 11 - John 20:11-16

11 *But Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus's body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?"*

"Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put him."

14 *Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. 15 "Woman," Jesus said to her, "why are you crying? Who is it that you're seeking?"*

Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!"—which means "Teacher."

Jesus is near to you even when it seems that He is far away. Mary cried because, even after having encountered angels in Mark 16:1-7 and Luke 24:1-9 that morning, she had still not fully grasped the resurrection. Jesus is, as prophesied, our Immanuel. He is "God with us". He knew Mary's name. He knows yours too. He comforted Mary. He can be your Wonderful Counselor too.

In which of these two circumstances is it possible for us to demonstrate faith; when Jesus is obviously near, or when Jesus seems desperately distant? Why?

Describe a time in your life when God seemed far from you. What good thing or things came about because of that difficult time that could not have otherwise come about?

Now, describe a time in your life when you knew for a fact that Jesus was near. Did your faith grow during that time, or was it just comforting for you?

Pray:

Thank God for being your near, intimate, and close Immanuel. Praise Him for His grace and thank Him for being your Comforter.

DAY 12 - John 20:17,18

17 *"Don't cling to me," Jesus told her, "since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."*

18 *Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what he had said to her.*

If Jesus was referring to Mary and Joseph's biological children, his half-brothers who did not believe in Him, then Matthew 12:46-50 and Mark 10:29 and 30 make more sense in light of today's passage. Their earthly father Joseph adopted Jesus and now Jesus' heavenly Father would adopt them. Jesus is alive and you are on His heart! Even those who are far from God and those who reject Jesus for a time can be radically saved. We have essentially just read what led to the salvation of James for whom the Book of James is named! Though they mocked Jesus before (John 7:1-9), they end up becoming powerful praying believers (Acts 1:14). Let your heart be filled with ambitious hope that those in your life who now mock God may one day become evangelists in Jesus' name!

Now that you have seen how Jesus can turn the hearts of those who deny and mock Him, what skeptical person in your life should you boldly and lovingly engage with the gospel?

By proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus this way, was Mary Magdalene the first evangelist? Why, or why not?

Pray:

Thank God for having even skeptics on His heart and ask Him to draw the skeptics in your life near by the power of the Holy Spirit right this very second!

DAY 13 - John 20:19-23

19 When it was evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you." **20** Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." **22** After saying this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Being sent on a mission is at the very core of Christianity. You cannot be a Christian and not be sent. So go. By the same breath of God that brought Adam to life, that brought the valley of dry bones to life, and that inspired all Scripture, Jesus empowered His disciples with the Holy Spirit and sent them. Similarly, modern believers have been given the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Similarly, modern believers may know that He is with them even to the end of the age.

How does God look at fear? How would He want you to respond to fear?

How is fear crippling? How does fear cause you to not share your faith?

With brutal honesty, are you excelling at something that is meaningless (your popularity) while failing at the one thing that is eternally meaningful (sharing your faith)?

Pray:

Ask the mighty breath of God to assure you of His anointing Holy Spirit that you would bust out of your hiding place and proclaim freedom to your captors.

DAY 14 - John 20:24-29

²⁴ But Thomas (called "Twin"), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples were telling him, "We've seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don't be faithless, but believe." ²⁸ Thomas responded to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

The nickname "Doubting Thomas" may not be fair to Thomas. It is true that he insisted on tangible proof (like many skeptics today) before he would believe in Jesus' resurrection, but Jesus evidently had a higher expectation of faith from Thomas than He had for the other disciples. When the "first" Christian missionaries entered India, they found churches planted...by Thomas!

Could Jesus have shown himself to Thomas at any point during that week's time between verses 25 and 26? So, why did Jesus delay?

Read verse 29 once more. What blessing did Thomas miss out on because he had to see before he would believe?

Practice how you would share verse 29 with the person demanding that God visibly show himself.

Pray:

Profess to the unseen God your belief in Him, thank Him for this promised blessing, and ask Him for patience until that beautiful day when you finally see His face!

DAY 15 - John 20:30,31

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In verse 31, John shared by the Holy Spirit his whole purpose in writing. He wrote so that you would believe and that, by believing, you would have life in Jesus' name. Life! While the Gospel of Matthew was originally intended to convince Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, this Gospel of John was aimed initially at everyone else in the world. Its original purpose was to show Gentiles that Jesus is the Messiah, it fulfilled that purpose perfectly for its original readers, and it still fulfills that purpose perfectly today! When someone who does not know Jesus reads the Gospel of John and the Spirit of God shows up, the spiritually dead come to life as they read.

According to these verses, why did John write? Why is this good news?

Why did John not record every miracle Jesus ever performed? Why does verse 31 begin with the word "But" instead of the word "Also?"

Why would some skeptics, like the Pharisees who saw almost all of Jesus' miracles, refuse to believe even if God gave them yet another miracle?

Pray:

Ask God to guide you to someone whom He wants to save through the reading of the Gospel of John, then be prepared to give that person a digital or printed copy of it!

DAY 16 - John 21:9-14

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread. **10** “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus told them. **11** So Simon Peter climbed up and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish—153 of them. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. **12** “Come and have breakfast,” Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. **14** This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

In verses 1-8 of John 21, Peter had gone straight back to fishing. Taking other disciples with him, he returned to the very thing he was doing when Jesus first called him. Have you ever done that? When a stranger on the shore convinced them to cast their nets once more, leading to a miraculously large catch, they immediately knew Who it was. Verse 9 could be one of the most underappreciated miracles of the Bible. Charcoal fires take time, but Jesus miraculously made one because He knew this was an important moment.

In verse 9, why would none of the disciples dare to ask Jesus who He was?

What does this miracle teach us about Jesus’ relationship with His disciples?

Based on this text, what kind of relationship does Jesus want to have with you? Does the thought of being close with God this way alarm you, or comfort you?

Pray:

In accordance with 1 Peter 5:7, cast all of your cares upon Him because He cares for you.

DAY 17 - John 21:15-17

¹⁵ When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said to him, "you know that I love you."

"Feed my lambs," he told him. ¹⁶ A second time he asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," he said to him, "you know that I love you." "Shepherd my sheep," he told him. ¹⁷ He asked him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved that he asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." "Feed my sheep," Jesus said.

Just as Jesus had prophesied in Matthew 26:34, Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed on crucifixion night (Matt. 26:74). So, after asking Peter if he loves Him more than this miraculous fisherman's grand-slam, Jesus confronted and commissioned Peter three times; once for each of Peter's denials. Drawing upon the Old Testament theme of God shepherding His people, Jesus put Peter to work as the one who would launch the church into the New Testament era. If you have failed Jesus before, consider bringing these failures before Him that He might heal you and put you back to work.

What did Jesus mean by "these" in verse 15? Read the larger context for clarity.

In what verses of Acts 10 do we see God, once more, show Peter something three times?

We can say that Peter had a sore spot in his heart when he denied Jesus three times. What is that sore spot in your heart that you hope God does not bring back to mind? Journal what it would be like to turn that former failure into a brand new future for Him.

Pray:

Confess to God what He already knows about your past failures and ask Him to use these past failures to minister to others.

DAY 18 - John 21:18,19

18 "Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don't want to go." 19 He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. After saying this, he told him, "Follow me."

Historic tradition maintains that Peter himself was crucified and that he insisted his cross be turned upside down because the resemblance to Jesus' death was too stark and he felt undeserving. Jesus prophesied such a death as crucifixion with his warning in verse 18. Note the word "glorify" in verse 19. We glorify God by our faith in the midst of suffering. Praising God while we prosper is easy, but praising Him while we suffer brings out a particular brand of praise that could not be more sincere. God is worthy of worship both when we win the lottery and when we lose a loved one to cancer. So, resolve based on this text never to confuse suffering with a disproof of God's Word or His love for you. Those who mistake faith in Christ for a free pass from suffering are ignorant of Scripture. To the Christian, suffering is an opportunity to demonstrate faith and grow in love for Jesus.

What do Jesus' words, "carry you where you don't want to go" indicate about Peter's future death?

Jesus just told Peter that His will for Peter was a brutal death against Peter's wishes. Where do people get the idea that following Jesus brings only happiness on earth?

Be honest: when you envision God's will for your future, do you envision only happy things with zero suffering?

Pray:

Acknowledge before God that all the days of your life will be either in the midst of suffering, or awaiting suffering as it approaches from the horizon. Commit to praise Him in both seasons.

DAY 19 - John 21:20-23

20 So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them, the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, "Lord, who is the one that's going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"

22 "If I want him to remain until I come," Jesus answered, "what is that to you? As for you, follow me."

23 So this rumor spread to the brothers and sisters that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

Peter wanted to know what Jesus had planned for the other disciple, but Jesus almost rebuked him for it. Do you look at other people's lives sometimes and wish that you could trade? Remember how Jesus corrected Peter. No matter how things look from the outside, you do not know what it is like to walk someone else's path. Focus on what God has called you to do. You will not be judged on how well you could have done in someone else's circumstances.

Describe a time in your past when things looked great on the outside, but were actually incredibly difficult on the inside. Who might have naively wanted to trade with you?

When Jesus first called Peter to be His disciple, He said, "Come, follow me." Why did Jesus use the same words in recommissioning Peter in verse 22?

Pray:

Grit your teeth, clench your fists, and express to God your resolve to live out whatever He has called you to face regardless of how easy other believers' walks appear to be.

DAY 20 - John 21:24,25

²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if every one of them were written down, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written.

Throughout the Gospel of John, John has referred to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” It was how he viewed himself. It was the basis for his whole identity in this gospel and it is an incredible foundation for your identity as well. Try it. Like John, because of your personal relationship with Jesus, you know the gospel to be true. Like John, you know that Jesus loves you. So, in prayer, say this of yourself: “I am a disciple whom Jesus loves.” No matter what others say of you, no matter your past failures, and no matter what may come, this will be true of you forever. Trends in what is culturally moral, like trends in what is culturally fashionable, will shift constantly, but God’s love for you will never change. So, build your very identity on this solid rock and never leave, God’s beloved.

Journal a prayer to God that parallels verse 24 in your own life. Proclaim that you know the gospel to be true because of the Holy Spirit’s work in your soul.

That which the Spirit has done in your life is indisputable and so is what He could do in the lives of your friends and family members. Who needs this unshakeable hope today? Journal some names of people you can pray for.

Why would John devote his written words to the mission of convincing people rather than acting like a historian who recorded every single miracle of Jesus?

Pray:

Ask God to make a non-Christian friend or family member the next indisputable miracle of Jesus by saving him or her.

DAY 21 - Acts 1:7-11

7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

9 After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. 11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven."

After the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) comes Luke's letter chronicling the acts of the apostles as the Holy Spirit poured out upon the rapidly growing New Testament era church. In verse 8, Jesus prophesied that the apostles' ministries would reach the end of the earth. Today, there are believers all over the earth! In fact, all modern Christian ministries can trace their ancestries back to the events of the Book of Acts. Now, it is your turn!

What kind of power did Jesus prophecy over His apostles in verse 8?

What does Jesus' commitment to all nations tell us about our responsibility to people of other nations or ethnicities? What is one way you could make an effort to love and serve people in your neighborhood? Across the globe?

Because we do not know when Jesus will come back (v.7, Matt.24), we must live in a state of his constantly imminent return. So, when is it time to repent and share the gospel?

Pray:

Invite the will of God to continue from the ancient generations of believers straight through to you and

