



BEGIN YOUR  
TIME OF FASTING  
AND PRAYER WITH  
AN EXPECTANT  
HEART

HEBREWS 11:6

# 40 DAYS

of Prayer & Fasting  
Lenten Devotional

Our hope is that this time of prayer and fasting will refresh us personally but also our church as we seek His blessing and direction.

# LENT DEVOTIONALS

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	5
Day 1 .....	6
Day 2 .....	7
Day 3 .....	8
Day 4 .....	9
Day 5 .....	10
Day 6 .....	11
Day 7 .....	12
Day 8 .....	13
Day 9 .....	14
Day 10 .....	15
Day 11 .....	16
Day 12 .....	17
Day 13 .....	18
Day 14 .....	19
Day 15 .....	20
Day 16 .....	21
Day 17 .....	22
Day 18 .....	23
Day 19 .....	24
Day 20 .....	25
Day 21 .....	26
Day 22 .....	27
Day 23 .....	28
Day 24 .....	29
Day 25 .....	30
Day 26 .....	31
Day 27 .....	32
Day 28 .....	33
Day 29 .....	34

Day 30.....	35
Day 31.....	36
Day 32.....	37
Day 33.....	38
Day 34.....	39
Day 35.....	40
Day 36.....	41
Day 37.....	42
Day 38.....	43
Day 39.....	44
Day 40.....	45



# INTRODUCTION

---

For most of us, Christians, Easter comes and goes so quickly. Indeed, the brightness and excitement associated with this special day are often just a distant memory for the rest of the year. Unfortunately, Easter has been reduced to a one-day affair for the Church. We rarely celebrate this special day during the week leading up to it. Why? The events *before* Easter are not as glorious as Easter itself.

But what if we could change how we celebrate Easter this year by preparing ourselves in sincere reflection during Lent? Lent is a solemn religious observance in the liturgical calendar of many Christian denominations that begins on Ash Wednesday and covers approximately six weeks before Easter Sunday. Lent's traditional purpose involves the preparation of the believer through prayer, penance, repentance of sins, almsgiving, atonement, and self-denial. Lent lasts for forty days, the same time that Jesus spent before beginning His public ministry fasting in the desert.

Today, many churches offer various guidelines and regulations for fasting during Lent. The Daniel Fast, Moses Fast, and Darius Fast are popular models of fasting. The Daniel Fast only permits fruit, vegetables, certain types of seafood, and water. Animal products, alcohol, leavened bread, processed, artificial, and chemically altered foods are prohibited from the Daniel Fast. The Moses Fast is a time-specific fast that only allows for food consumption during a specific time. Individuals who use the Moses Fast normally fast from “sun up” to “sundown”. Lastly, the Darius Fast is not limited to food. Individuals who use the Darius Fast model prohibit engaging in certain activities such as social media, television, and other hobbies.

Although every denomination has different ways to observe the Lenten period, the goal is very much the same: to help remove a believer’s attachment from the world and focus his or her attention on God and Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. This devotional book is a 40-day guide to help you accomplish just that: to prepare your heart, mind, and Spirit for the joyous celebration of Easter. Each devotional includes an exhortation to share the gospel with others, along with a prayer that you can make your own during your quiet time with the Lord.

Let us make this Easter a day that we will always cherish in our spiritual memories. Jesus Christ arose from the dead so that we may also live eternally with Him. Let us worship Him with our whole hearts and lives.

# Day 1

---

## Are You in the Picture?

*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

**(Ephesians 2:10 NLT)**

In March of 1990, two men posing as Boston police officers entered an art museum, tied up the night watchman. They stole 13 masterpieces painted by Rembrandt and Monet. It has been identified as the largest art heist in history. In 1990, the art was valued at \$500 million. If you visited the Boston Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum at that time, you would just view empty frames where those fine masterpieces used to hang. While touring that very room where those famous portraits were displayed, I could not resist the urge to put my face in that big, empty frame. The first thing I wanted to know was this: Do I look good in that frame?

All of us have read Luke's colorful account of the Triumphant Entry from the perspectives of Jesus and the anonymous persons who participated in both the prearrangement and this moment. Yet today, it is as if Luke is saying, "Here is the picture frame. Do you fit in it?" As God's masterpiece, you certainly do have the potential to fit. He wants you to be His masterpiece of salvation, service, commitment and compassion. All of us remember the day when the Enemy of our souls broke in at night and ripped us out of the picture frame. It was an enemy who tried to destroy our very lives. But now, God says, "As My greatest work, I want you to be inside of the frame, displayed for the world to see. They will view the beauty of a transformed life."

*Heavenly Father, even though the Enemy stole us from our original picture frames, You have graciously restored us as Your glorious masterpieces. While we are displayed for the unsaved world to view, let us reflect your hands' beautiful work through our compassion and love for them. Then they can become Your masterpieces of grace as well. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Day 2

---

### The Lord Needs It

*“Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”*

**(Luke 19:30-31)**

Everything had been prepared from the foundations of the world, and now it was set in motion. The Old Testament Scriptures' convergence had finally come to a head: Now the King is coming. From the Mount of Olives, from Bethphage in Bethany, He would make His way. For the past three years, other than crossing over the Sea of Galilee, the Lake of Gennesaret, the only mode of transportation Jesus used was His two feet in His leather sandals. For the first time now, the walking Messiah would be the riding King. The Lord needed the disciples to bring Him an unbroken donkey colt, that was ready and waiting for them to retrieve it. (The donkey that had never been ridden submitted to the King of Glory, willingly bearing Him on its back—a clear visual demonstration that Jesus is Lord over all creation.)

In the same way, Jesus wants you to bring Him something or someone that He needs. It may be as simple as inviting someone to a virtual church event or donating food to the church pantry. You may say, “I do not believe that I have what it takes to bring anyone or anything before God.” Perhaps the Lord Jesus wants you to identify with the donkey by taking Him somewhere He needs to go—across the street or across the sea to share His life-changing gospel with those who do not know Him.

*Heavenly Father, unlike this submissive donkey colt, we often buck and kick in stubborn resistance against Your will. Often, You want to ride us where we do not want to go because the path is hard or inconvenient. Forgive us for our selfishness and change our hearts so that we will gladly be Your humble servants to a broken, dying world. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 3

---

## A Donkey?

*They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt, and put Jesus on it.*

**(Luke 19:35)**

Unlike other noble animals such as lions and eagles, donkeys have never gotten much respect. Some things about donkeys make people laugh—they are stubborn, recalcitrant, and slow. Lions demand respect. Dogs get the affection of their owners. Dolphins are viewed with a kind of curiosity. Eagles are held up as the emblem of the nation, but not a donkey. They do not get much respect. Who wants to be identified with a donkey?

Interestingly, the Lord of creation could have selected an animal to bear him on His kingly ride through Jerusalem, yet, He asked for a donkey. Why did He not enter on the back of a white steed prancing majestically down the street? That would have made for a grander entrance.

Perhaps Jesus used a donkey because it is the most unlikely, unusable animal that you would ride down the middle of Main Street leading a parade. It was the Lord's way of saying, "Hey, for those of you who are biased against others because of their race, social standing, or checkered past, you reject them, but I do not. I take people just the way they are and use them for what they have been created to be." Perhaps you can take Jesus where He needs to go or take someone else where they need to be to meet with Jesus. God has an uncanny way of using unlikely people—even many of us. Thank you Lord for using someone like me!

*Heavenly Father, it never ceases to amaze us how You use the unlikeliest people to accomplish great things for the kingdom of God. In a way, each one of us is just like this humble donkey. None of us is worthy to bear the message of the gospel because of what we have done. But the good news is that You can use anyone willing to submit to Your perfect will. We're honored to carry the gospel to everyone we know. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



# Day 4

---

## Making the Lord's Ride Smoother

*As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.*  
**(Luke 19:36)**

The chivalrous courtier Sir Walter Raleigh was attending to Her Majesty Elizabeth I, and anytime she encountered an impasse of water or mud on the road, he would remove his fur coat and lay it on the ground. She then passed over, walking on the back of his mink. He wanted to make the queen's movements easy and smooth over the rough terrain. During the Triumphal Entry, this is precisely what the people of Jerusalem were exemplified. They removed their cloaks and spread them on the rough, uneven, damp, and filthy road to make the ride smoother for their King, Jesus. It was a gesture of loving respect that involved humility and submission.

Are the things you are doing in your life, ministry, or work to make it easy for the King to travel? We adorn ourselves in necklaces with crosses around our necks and quoting Scripture. Yet some of us make Christ's travel rough when we misrepresent Him in private. Resolve today to become a loving, merciful, noble courtier of the King. Let's commit ourselves to imitating Christ and present Christ to those who do not know Him. Let's make the Lord's ride smooth!

*Heavenly Father, we confess that often we do not make the ride smooth for You. Even though we tell our unsaved friends that we love You, our actions and attitude do not match our words. Lord, please cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our lives so that we will live for You every day of the week—not just on Sunday. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 5

---

## God in the Ordinary

*My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, Lord, I will seek.*  
**(Psalm 27:8)**

Brother Lawrence, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Carmelite monk, penned a life-changing book that thousands of Christians have on their bookshelf—*Practicing the Presence of God*. He learned to meet God in the kitchen doing mundane, everyday work—washing dishes. This seemingly routine task was not too small for him, and it did not belittle who he was. There he was, washing dishes while enjoying God’s presence. Kathleen Norris, also from the Catholic tradition, wrote a beautiful book entitled *Quotidian Mysteries, Laundry Liturgy, and Woman’s Work*. Its central theme involves the intriguing way God breaks through our awareness in just ordinary, regular times.

Indeed, God breaks through and meets you in ordinary times. Some of us would be so much more in tune with the Spirit of God if we did not think that we could decide how, when, and where God was going to show up. Sometimes, real church can break out at our house or in our cars. While this may not be typical setting, God is bound to show up in unlikely moments. You may be taking your daily walk around the neighborhood and start thinking about Jesus and His goodness. All of a sudden, tears run down your face as you reflect on how good God has been to you. If your unsaved friends or family see you, do not apologize for those tears. Just share with them how God has blessed you!

*Heavenly Father, at times we wrongly think that You only manifest Your presence to us at church, a Christian conference, a retreat, or some other “godly” setting. But how often we forget that You are omnipresent and You promised You would never leave nor forsake us. Help us to be more aware of You during the ordinary tasks of daily life. Help us to realize that the glory of Your presence will be expressed in our countenance, attitudes, words, and deeds. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 6

---

## Shouting “Hosanna” For All the Miracles

*When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.*  
**(Luke 19:37)**

Picture the setting. Streets full of people making all kinds of joyful noise and waving their hands, tree branches, and palm leaves. We know what they were saying: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” Why did they get all excited? For all the miracles they had seen. Somebody in the crowd had seen Jesus take fish sticks and Wonder bread to feed a multitude and have plenty left over. Some of the people who were there witnessed ten lepers—outcasts of society—get clean. Nine of them forgot to turn around, but one came back and said, “They may have forgotten, but I came back to say, ‘Thank You for cleaning me up and giving me a new start and a new direction.’” The nine probably were not there at the Triumphal Entry. Still, one of the noisy shouters was probably that healed leper, telling them, “If you only knew like I know what the Lord had done, you would be shouting in my place.”

We can nominate whoever we want to be in that crowd. Hopefully, we are in that same grateful bunch when we think of what God has done for us—especially how He has forgiven us and transformed our lives. You can get as loud as you want, shouting like those jubilant people lining the streets a couple of thousand years ago, “Hosanna! Blessed be the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”

*Heavenly Father, we cannot praise You enough for healing and restoring our lives in every way. We’re just as grateful as that one leper out of the ten. We can joyfully sing the Christian musician Carman’s lyrics: No way, we are not ashamed of the gospel or His name, Holy hands are lifted high, to the name of Jesus Christ. Let this praise always be in our mouths! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 7

---

## A Banner for Jesus' Row

*May we shout for joy over your victory and lift up our banners in the name of our God.  
(Psalm 20:5)*

One year, Pastor West's buddy got him court-side tickets to the Spurs-Knicks basketball game. He sat next to Tim Duncan's uncle, who was listening to the game on the radio because he was visually impaired. They had a banner saying, "Go, Tim Duncan!" Those of you who know Pastor West understand that one thing he does not like to do is hold up a banner. A consulate from the Virgin Islands enthusiastically asked him to lift it up with him. Because Pastor West was on the Duncan's row, he was required to hold it up.

Likewise, if you are going to be on Jesus' row, you have to hold up the sign: "Go, Jesus, Go!" Make a noise for Him! Now, I am not suggesting that we all have to do it the same way. You do not have to be loud all the time. Some days you feel like standing, and other days you may want to just sit quietly. What I am saying, is that your praise ought to have some content to it. And here is the reason why: The next time you do not physically feel like praising the Lord, you just have to look to where the Lord has brought you from, and you cannot help but give Him praise! Clap your hands, stomp your feet, wave your hands or nod your head—but there ought to be some expression of praise that says, "Lord, You have been good to me, better to me than I have been to myself."

*Heavenly Father, we remember how pitiful and wretched our lives were before You found us. We are forever grateful for Your outpouring of gracious love and mercy through the sacrificial death of Your Son Jesus. Because of Your mighty deliverance, we cannot stay silent. In fact, we ask that You make our very bodies instruments of praise and worship to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 8

---

## Praise God with What You Have in Your Hand

*... others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.*  
**(Matthew 21:8)**

The people shouted, “Hosanna!” while waving branches from all kinds of trees—palm, myrtle, willow—whatever they had in their hands. By the same token, you ought to have something in your hand that you praise Him with. Are you willing to just praise Him with the mind He has given to you? I always like somebody smart enough to know that worshiping God does not deteriorate one’s intellect. In fact, I believe the more knowledge you have gotten, the more you ought to praise Him. When life gets complicated, and you gather now in your home for virtual worship, the place of refuge, God will let you steal away for a little while so that you can be covered.

At other times, we want to praise God, but we think that we have to meet some criteria to praise Him. That is why we miss Him so many times. Some of us think, “Well, I would, but I cannot do that.” I am not all of that, and the rest of us who praise Him are not all of that either. If we were *all of that*, we would not need Jesus. We are praising Him because we *do* need Him. We praise Him with whatever we have in our hand. Perhaps, if we do more joyful praising instead of withdrawing, we can reach more people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Heavenly Father, it seems like every time we think we have got it made through our own abilities and smarts, You allow situations to arise in our lives to show us that we cannot make it on our own. There are other times when we desire to praise You but do not feel that we measure up to some nebulous spiritual criteria. For both of these occasions, remind us to just praise You with whatever is in our hand, and we know that we’ll end up directly in Your loving arms. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 9

---

## Worship God with Your Gifts

*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.*

**(Ecclesiastes 9:10)**

French novelist Anatole France tells the story of a monk who was not as gifted and talented as all the other monks. He could not draw or do arts and crafts. He could not even transcribe. At that very moment, all he had to give to God was his ability to juggle. Feeling inferior and out of place when all the monks went to lunch, prayer time, or choir rehearsal, this monk went inside the chapel. He juggled with his feet in front of the statue of Mary—just using the gift he had. When the other monks found out, they admonished him, “You do not do that in here; that does not belong here.” According to the legend, Mary stepped down from the statue and wiped her tears with his garments. They had broken her heart by disallowing this monk to use the only thing he knew how to do.

God may never ask you to be a scholar, theologian, historian, or linguist. Instead, He asks you to do what He is created you to do, so you ought to praise Him with whatever He has gifted you. If you have got a hammer, hammer out justice and evil; if you have got a voice, lift it up in praise to Him; if you have got a pen, write to His glory and honor. Whatever gifts and talents you have, use them for the *glory* of God.

*Heavenly Father, we realize now that praise and worship do not just consist of singing and clapping in Sunday morning services. Instead, You have called us to worship You daily with the gifts and talents that You have so generously bestowed upon us. Help us to serve You with all of our mind, strength, and soul. You have given us Your all through Your Son, so we should do no less. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 10

---

## **“It Doesn’t Take All of That”**

*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”*

**(Luke 19:39)**

Even today, there are always those religious, rigid Pharisees who say, “Jesus, tell the people to be quiet. Tone it down; this is church.” They have been to college and graduate school. They are making money. They live in the suburbs. They are educated and cultured now. They always like to be in control of the worship service instead of the Holy Spirit. They cross their arms, frown, and refuse to join in joyful praise and worship, telling everyone, “It does not take all that.” Since when did education and culture ever become an antithesis to a celebration?

Some time ago, I hosted a group of around 20 doctoral candidates from United Seminary in Ohio. They posed this question to me, “Do you still celebrate the Lord with exuberant praise and worship?” One of the young students informed me that there is no place for it because “it was old-timey and out of the way.” I replied, “You can believe anything you want to, but I take it that you do not, pastor.” He said no. I said, “You probably never will, either. You see, when folks have been through hell all week long, they want to believe in a Jesus who will get them out. That is celebration time.” Listen, if you want your Jesus to stay locked in a grave, I am not upset with you for believing that way. But my Jesus got up. If I do not cry out, the rocks will. It takes all of that and more to celebrate Jesus for who He is and all He has done.

*Heavenly Father, we refuse to be intimidated by those legalistic party-poopers who would squash our joyful enthusiasm in praise and worship. Instead, we just want to praise You all the more because heartfelt worship is never out of fashion in Your eyes. We rejoice in You! Praise Your holy name, forever and ever! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 11

---

## Rocks Do Talk

*"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."*

**(Luke 19:40)**

Monolith stones have a vocabulary they use to actually talk. Seismologists have studied them during earthquakes, and they concluded that rocks talk before the earthquake in M, P, and S waves. When the tectonic plates shift, these seismologists say that it causes the rocks to start speaking in their own language. They start talking and making noise. One said it was like the sound of a cannon breaking in the distance. Other earwitnesses claim that it sounds like the rumbling of wind coming your way.

Rocks will talk. In other words, if you will not shout, God has a whole creation that will praise Him. Creation is always in harmony with itself. There are thousands of universes singing God's praises right now, billions of galaxies lifting their voices in the orchestra. All of God's nature joins together in a chorus and sings the song of creation that God still lives and reigns. God still rules. Will you be in harmony with creation? When creation sings, will you join in and get in tune? You may break the harmony, but God has a way of calling creation to be a part of the celebration. Jesus said, "If these won't cry out, the rocks will cry out." I do not want to have a rock stand up and talk about how good God has been because I know for myself what the Lord has done for me.

*Heavenly Father, every time we look at Your marvelous creation, we observe the various ways it praises and worships You. The trees of the field clap their hands, and their very leaves whisper Your name. The rocks cry out before an earthquake. The thunder that rolls declare Your might and majesty. As Your redeemed creation, we have lips, hands, feet, and minds to praise You with. We gladly join in tune with all the universe in giving You praise, for You are worthy! In Jesus' name, Amen.*



# Day 12

---

## How God Uses Rocks

*“Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.”*  
**(Exodus 17:6)**

I can name two or three rocks that once spoke, and they still speak to us right now. There is an *unapproachable* rock. In Exodus 19, Moses climbs up to that rock—a rock filled with fire and smoke. This rock is awesome, dangerous, and unapproachable. It is a rock where God gives him a law that we still hold in our hands right now. When careless worshippers tried to tread upon that stone and touched it, they fell down dead, warning us that you don’t play with holiness. You’ve got to reverence it and then get out of the way.

What about the *rock of provision*? In Exodus 17, after the children of Israel had been emancipated from Egyptian slavery and were walking through the wilderness to the Promised Land, these cattle drivers and herdsman became concerned that there may not be enough water—not just to slake their thirst but to keep their livestock alive. They started complaining, “Moses, you brought us out here to die of thirst in the desert,” and God said, “Do not let them panic. Do not let them pass out. Stop by the rock and speak to it.” When Moses spoke, water gushed from the rock to demonstrate both then and now that He is water in dry places. He is life where there is death. He is the One who can replenish us when our lives seem so empty. We can tell others that if they place their trust in God, He can be their rock of provision also.

*Heavenly Father, we take comfort in knowing that You are both the unapproachable rock and the rock of provision—holiness and mercy combined. Today we come before You with reverence and awe to humbly seek Your providential mercy for our lives. We thank You that because of the new covenant in Christ Jesus, we can come boldly (not arrogantly) into Your presence as Your redeemed children. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 13

---

## Out of the Mouths of Babes

*“Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.  
“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,  
“From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?”  
(Matthew 21:16)*

The children started crying out, “Hosanna!” But the Pharisees were just trying to shut them up: “Shh . . . be quiet. Go on back over there to that student center. That is what they built it for. Do not come over here.” The children did not really know what they were saying. They had just heard what the parents were saying, so they started shouting, “Hosanna!” But the Pharisees nervously told them, “Shh.. be quiet. You are too loud. It does not take all of that in church.” The children kept crying out, “Hosanna in the highest!” The religious leaders got angry: “Shh... We are going to put all of you little ragamuffins out of here. Go away!” When Jesus heard the religionists say, “Get those children out!” He promptly replied, “Leave the children alone,” and quoted Psalm 8:2 to underline His rebuke.

During that particular day and age, children were supposed to be “seen but not heard.” On two previous occasions when parents were bringing children to Jesus to be blessed, the disciples tried to send them away, probably because they thought the children would “bother” Him. But instead, Jesus welcomed the children, saying, “Let the children come unto Me, for such is the kingdom of heaven.” In other words, children have essential qualities for citizens in the heavenly city: they are honest and humble, unafraid to express what is truly in their hearts. As Christians, we should allow this same childlikeness to permeate our very being—in our worship, work, and witness.

*Heavenly Father, we desire to be like little children in Your presence, which is all the time—not just in church. Show us those places in our spirits, minds, and emotions where we are acting like crusty, old adults. We want to worship You with passionate, childlike faith that’s unfettered by the chains of legalistic religion. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 14

---

## The Right Praise at the Wrong Time

*“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*  
**(Isaiah 55:9)**

How many times have people made affirmations that are proven to be hilariously ridiculous and wrong? Consider some of the greatest misstatements in all of world history. Western Union in 1876 sent a memo out that read, “The telephone has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. This device is inherently of no value.” Movie buffs may remember this line: “I am just glad it will be Clark Gable who falls on his face and not Gary Cooper.” Those were the critics’ words when Cooper rejected the leading role to *Gone with the Wind*. In 1962, Decker Records Company rejected a young rock band with this dismissive comment: “We do not like their sound, and the guitar is on its way out,” turning down The Beatles.

These are statements made about the right thing at the wrong time. When the Romans by the roadside saw Jesus riding on that donkey during the Triumphal Entry, they giggled and snickered under their breath because they had been a part of events like this for so many years. “What a strange parade! What an awkward-looking king! He has no crown. His soldiers have no swords. Is this supposed to be what is going to threaten the kingdom of Rome? Is this what is going to upset our government?” Likewise, when you share the gospel with others, you may get the same scornful reaction. Do not let that stop you. Instead, tell them your testimony. Your testimony will speak for the goodness of Jesus.

*Heavenly Father, the people in Jesus’ day, did not understand His kingdom, and today they still do not understand. They scornfully mock a meek and mild Jesus who teaches forgiveness instead of revenge, selflessness instead of selfishness, and humility instead of self-promotion. As His followers, we also will be understood when we practice His ways. Give us the grace and courage to live for You in the face of scorn and ridicule. When they realize that their ways just don’t work, they’ll come to us for answers. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 15

---

## Save Us, Lord, NOW!

*Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord, we bless you.*

**(Psalm 118:25-27)**

“Hosanna, Hosanna!” What they were really shouting was, “Save us, Lord, now! Give us power now. Give us precedence now. Give us preeminence now, at last, Lord. Make us better than the Romans. Come on!” And the zealots were waiting around the corner sharpening their daggers waiting for this new nationalist movement to strike out against the Romans. They are just waiting to upset something somewhere, but all they need is one sign or signal, and they are going to be off the chain. Something going to jump off in here if He just lets them know.

Amidst all of that electricity, it boils down now to this: They were asking Jesus to do what He could not from the back of a donkey—to improve their lives and give them a makeover. It is no different today. With many of us evangelical Christians, what we want is a cross-less Christianity. We tell Jesus, “Just give me a makeover. Make me feel better about myself. Retouch the photographs of my life.” On the back of a donkey, all Jesus can do is give us some good advice. The only One who can save us has to go to the cross. And all of us could stand a little more saving. We should rather ask Jesus, “Save me from my habits, my addictions, and my problems. Save me from my burdens and missteps. Save me from my critical judgment. Save me from my own hypocrisy. Save me now, Lord!”

*Heavenly Father, we are dissatisfied with the watered-down gospel that teaches us to seek self-fulfillment and prosperity for our lives. Instead, we want the true gospel of salvation—the Christianity that saves us from our self-centered behaviors and transforms us into who You want us to be. Indeed, our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 16

---

## Our Unpredictable God

*“Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?”*

**(Job 38:2)**

The Triumphal Entry shatters our notion regarding the predictability of God. Jesus’ final arrival into Jerusalem would be spent on the back of this donkey instead of a steed, dressed in desert garb rather than regal finery. Rather than ascending to a human throne of majesty, He comes to the throne of the cross. This humble entrance demonstrates the fact that God still upsets our equilibrium. He does not play the game of life the way we predict He should.

I like the unpredictability of our Lord. That is what the season of Lent and Easter reminds us—that God cannot be predicted. You cannot nail God down. You cannot domesticate Him. Right when you think you have figured God out; He does something completely different. You just cannot hem Him in or place Him in a box. No wonder people of that ancient day and time rejected Jesus: He is not predictable. Jesus definitely did not do what was expected of an earthly king. By definition, God is able, and He has revealed both in the biblical record and our lives that He is able. He just may not choose to do things the way that we typically want Him to do them. But God does not have to do what we want because He is the sovereign Lord of all. When our unsaved friends and family express bewilderment about current events, we can assure them that the Lord indeed is in control.

*Heavenly Father, we may not understand Your ways or predict how You are going to move, but there is one thing we do know: You are the good and just God, so we can trust You in all things. This is our assurance and hope. Increase our faith as we walk with You daily so that we will obey You without question, even if we do not understand why or how. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 17

---

## Jesus Conquers Through Love

*Love never fails.*

**(1 Corinthians 13:8)**

Napoleon Bonaparte once said, “Charlemagne, seas and all, will be gone. And we conquered worlds by force. Jesus did it by love, and He’s loved and remembered by millions. We struck fear in the heart of the people that we served. Our names will be lost in oblivion, and this Lord came with no sword or shield, and no machinery, just with the object of love.” Even this great emperor had to acknowledge the life-giving power of Jesus’ love for the world.

Although other kings conquer by military might, Jesus comes along and says, “I am going to conquer people with love.” Today, billions of us worship on Palm Sunday, reverencing Him for what He has done. He did not coerce us into worshiping Him; instead, He demonstrated His love for us by dying on the cross to free us from our chains of sin. As His followers, we also should share His love with a spiritually dead world through acts of kindness and mercy. Instead of beating them over the head with a Bible, we must take the time to simply *love* people. Remember, they will not care until we show them how much we care. Let us love others like Christ has so graciously loved us!

*Heavenly Father, Your dear Son Jesus conquered the world both then and now through His mighty love. We cannot even begin comprehending its depth, height, and breadth. Still, we desire to love others into the kingdom despite our limited understanding. Teach us to love others with Your glorious agape love—a love that is compassionate, forgiving, and kind. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 18

---

## God's Kind of Blessings

*May God bless us still so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.  
(Psalm 67:7)*

Even in unpredictability, God still blesses—just not the way you think. Many people have scratched and clawed through life and never experiencing material prosperity. Yet, they maintain a high level of faithfulness to God. In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that He would bless him with so many descendants that he would not be able to count them. But it is only after a generation had come and gone that He fulfilled that promise. And once the promise was given in the form of his first-born son, God told Abraham to sacrifice it on a mountain. God blessed him with a ram to sacrifice. Joseph saved Egypt from a dire famine, but he was sold into slavery by his brothers and went to prison before reaching the palace's pinnacle. David, a man after God's own heart, would ascend to the throne, but not until he had made moral missteps and his own children turned their back on him.

Indeed, God *moves* in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform are great. We often selfishly want to be blessed to enjoy life, but God has a larger goal for blessing us. Concerning Abraham, Joseph, and David, He blessed them so the entire world would know Him, and in turn, be blessed themselves. Of course, we should receive His blessings with joy, and we must realize that He intends for us to pass on those blessings to future generations. God can use our blessings to open the eyes of jaded, cynical, unbelieving people so that they will see that He is indeed good.

*Heavenly Father, we know that You will bless us as You have promised. Give us the patience to wait for the fulfillment of the blessings. At the same time, we understand that it is not all about us. We need Your wisdom to show us how to pass the blessings on to future generations. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 19

---

## One Portrait, Four Artists

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.*  
**(1 John 1:2)**

On an Oxford trip several summers ago, I visited the summer house of Winston Churchill. It was very evident that the rotund Winston Churchill had many sides to his personality. In one picture hanging on the wall, the stern, grim-faced Churchill is sitting down with President Roosevelt. Another portrait shows his more light-hearted side with his family at tea. There is still another picture of him giving the victory sign in World War II. It was the same Winston Churchill, but each painting showed different sides of the man.

That is what you actually see when you read the Gospels. Four biographers are writing on the same subject, yet they are just highlighting different aspects of Jesus. Matthew often draws your attention to Jesus as the teacher. Mark portrays the humanity of Jesus. Luke speaks of Jesus as the One who cares for marginalized, rejected, and dehumanized people. John's writing is Christocentric in that every passage points to Christ as the Messiah. Notice that though each writer emphasizes different aspects of Jesus' character, the subject is still Jesus.

Regarding the resurrection, these different writers wrote about the subject of Jesus. Still, they all wrote at least seven of the exact teachings of the resurrection over a period of some 30 or 40 years, proving the authenticity of this dramatic event. When we share our faith with unbelieving skeptics who doubt that Jesus is alive, we can point out this incredible truth to them.

*Heavenly Father, we enjoy reading about the different aspects of Jesus' character through the four writers of the Gospels' eyes. They have provided us with distinctive portraits of our Lord. At the same time, though, we realize that we will always be getting to know Jesus—even through eternity. We anticipate this with joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



# Day 20

---

## The New Sabbath Day

*On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.*

**(Luke 24:1)**

Biblical scholars all agree that the event we call Easter happened on the first day of the week. For today's calendar-makers, this means nothing, but to that ancient world dominated by Rome, it meant everything. The ancient Romans, who were worshipers of the sun, moon, and other assorted gods, named Sunday after the sun, just as they named Saturday after Saturn. But on this day, the whole definition of that day would change. It would be transferred from Rome's dominance to that small rejected, abject group of people called Israel. That day, Sunday would become a new Sabbath Day as the first day of the week. Indeed, everything would change on that day.

This is the reason why we gather for church on this day. In fact, most devout Christians attend services regularly. We should not approach this day casually or flippantly. Many of us reduce Lord's Day to a single hour on Sunday morning. Then, we use the rest of the day to indulge in our own pleasures. Actually, however, the Lord has made this whole day unique for His children to worship Him. At the same time, mature Christians know that Resurrection Sunday is not limited to a particular day on the calendar. It is the everyday experience of every believer. Jesus lives! He lives! Let us celebrate every day of the week by giving Him our best in our work, worship, and witness.

*Heavenly Father, we rejoice that every day for us is really Easter. Our very lifestyles should proclaim to a lost and dying world that Jesus lives and moves in the world today. We ask that You conform us into the image of Your Son so that others will be drawn to Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 21

---

## Early to Rise

*I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word.*

**(Psalm 119:147)**

On this first day, the people who came to the tomb arrived very early. Interestingly, one New Testament scholar says that both death and resurrection take place in the darkness. Indeed, there are some things so sacred that even sunlight removes their beauty. On this special morning, death and resurrection occurred simultaneously in the darkness. They both happened on the first day, early in the morning. In my home church, our sunrise service once started at 4:00 A.M. I recently asked their current pastor, Pastor William Jordan, if they still held sunrise services at that time. He replied, “You will be here all by yourself, Ralph.” Jesus got up *early, early* – too early for the home church to get up.

We also ought to begin our days *early* in the morning. At first light, we should have conversations and fellowship with Jesus. Just as Jesus was the first thought on the minds of the women who visited His tomb early in the morning, He should also be our first thought, not our last. We ought to meet Him then, not just at night. He ought to be the beginning of our day. And when you face the challenges of the day, you will be so glad that you met Jesus early in the morning.

*Heavenly Father, we encounter so many challenges daily that we just have to start our days with You. As we spend this early time with You, we seek Your wisdom and guidance for the day ahead. We long to hear Your voice in the still quiet of the morning so that we'll continue to hear You all day long. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 22

---

## Do You Recognize Jesus?

*At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

**(John 20:14)**

Most of us cannot forget the many meltdowns of well-known celebrity Lindsay Lohan, especially when she left her cell phone in one of the California malls. When she returned to retrieve it and tried to identify who she was, the person behind the counter did not believe her. She said, "But I am Lindsay Lohan. Do you not know who I am?" And the lady replied, "I do not care who you are." There have been times when we, too, have not been able to recognize famous people who passed by us. Then a moment of clarity broke through our minds when somebody told us, "You know who that was, don't you?"

In the biblical accounts of the resurrection, many persons did not recognize the risen Jesus. On at least four occasions, people had conversations with Jesus, sat down, and engaged Jesus, but still did not know who He was because they were not looking for Him. In fact, at the heart of Easter, a couple of thousand years ago, nobody believed that Jesus actually was going to do what He said He was going to do. That is why they initially missed Him. But then Jesus said or did something distinctive to cause people to recognize Him. This happens to us all the time, especially in our darkest days when it seems like all hope is gone. We have a hard time recognizing Jesus in the situation until He speaks to our heart or does something that only He can do. But we must remember that Jesus promised He would never leave us or forsake us. That is the assurance we can convey to a lost and dying world.

*Heavenly Father, some days are so dark and distressing that we do not recognize You anymore, even though You are moving on our behalf. During those times, we cling to that steadfast promise. You give to all Your disciples: You will never leave nor forsake us. Open our spiritual eyes so we can recognize You in every situation, no matter how bad it looks on the surface. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 23

---

## No Expectations

*“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

**(John 20:13-14)**

On the first Easter morning at this particular moment, Mary came to view the body. She had come there with perfume to cover up the stench of hopelessness. Future aspirations of a better world had been diminished. It appeared that the disciples would have to wait even longer for the coming of a Messiah. Out of her grief, she gives voice to her real pain. She pleads with a man whom she thinks is the gardener, “Where is my Lord? Somebody has come and taken Him. Sir, do you know where they have removed my Lord? Could you please point me in the direction?” What irony! Mary is asking Jesus if He could tell her where He has taken Himself. She did not see Him because she did not expect Him. She just assumed somebody had come along and taken His body. But then He called her by name, and she responded, “Rabboni!”

It would be an awful shame this Easter for you to say, “I know Jesus. I have a Bible in my hand, at my house, in my car, and on my iPhone. I grew up in church. I went to Sunday school and BTU. But I do not even see Him.” You cannot see Him if you are not looking for Him, but if you look, you will find Him. There is a relationship that God establishes with those who are looking for Him. We used to sing a song as children, “If He calls me, I will answer.” We need to respond when He calls and develop a close relationship with Him, so the curious, unsaved world will want what we have.

*Heavenly Father, we confess that often we do not recognize You because we are not even looking for You. Perhaps we are so afraid You will disappoint us in some way that we do not expect You to show up. Maybe we are avoiding You because we believe You will ask us to do something we do not want to do. Whatever our excuse, change our hearts so that we are hungry for Your presence. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 24

---

## Fear Not!

*The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.*

**(Matthew 28:5)**

Bright, shiny, and glistening, an angel perched on top of the stone delivered the Easter message to the women. He began with reassurance, *"Be not afraid."* Along with the other disciples to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared later, the women did not initially recognize Him because of their fear. Because the disciples were not expecting Him, they buried their fears, frustrations, and doubts in the tomb. Still, they also buried their betrayals, denials, and unbelief. When Jesus arose on Easter, they figured it out. If He arose, He arose with all the stuff they put in there with Him. Easter was frightening for them because if the Lord arose, they had to face all of those negative emotions.

So often, we have the same fears regarding our own denials, betrayals, and unbelief. Fortunately, however, 2 Timothy 1:7 says that God has not given us a spirit of fear but love and power and a sound mind. No matter how threatening and powerful the forces of Satan may appear, they are not more powerful than the One who conquered the grave. Today, Jesus says to us, *"Stop being scared! Stand up in the power of My resurrection! Face life squarely, and believe that all things are possible to him who believes."* When we have the peace of God amid the worst situations, unsaved people will marvel and ask us why we are not falling apart. We can reply that our Lord has got this.

*Heavenly Father, so many times, our lives are ruled by fear. We are so afraid of the future that we live in a perpetual state of anxiety and stress. The only antidote is to cast ALL of our cares and worries upon You. When we simply release them, we will experience peace beyond all understanding. Give us the grace and faith to trust You with our fears. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 25

---

## He Lives!

*He is not here; he has risen!*

**(Luke 24:6)**

Every year tourists fork over plenty of money so they can view the last remains of famous people. Thousands of people fly to Springfield, Illinois, so that they can see the tomb of Abraham Lincoln. Travelers go over to Paris to see Napoleon's tomb or to St. Paul's in London so they can see the Duke of Wellington. I have been over to the Holy Land to see where Jesus was buried. After bending down to get through that little door, I looked around, but nobody was there. I asked myself, "What are they coming to look at? They are not coming to find Jesus because He left there on resurrection morning."

Wherever you go, Christ is already there. We can say the words of the hymn with assurance, "He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today/He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way." When people ask us, "Why are you always saying that?" we reply, "Because every day somebody's always trying to question the reality of who Christ is. But I do not just say He walks with me and talks with me, but He lives in my heart! He lives! As another verse of that Easter hymn so proudly declares, "I serve a *living Savior*; He's in the world today/I know that He is living, no matter what men may say/I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer/And just the time I need Him, He's always near." Indeed, Christ Jesus lives today!

*Heavenly Father, we find it reassuring that unlike the founders of other religions, our establisher of the faith is not dead but alive! This is the hope that we proclaim to our unsaved friends and family—that our living Lord can also live inside their hearts. We rejoice that because of Jesus' resurrection, we too can live forever! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 26

---

## Jesus Dignifies Women

*When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.*

**(Mark 16:9)**

The first witnesses of the resurrection were women, who received the message and promptly went to tell the men. This was important because, in the ancient world, women were treated as if they were nothing, especially if they did not bear sons. They were not even allowed to worship with the men. So, you are right when you think the Scriptures appear chauvinistic. That is why you must read past Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and the prophets. It was not accidental that of all the people Jesus could have used to tell that message, it was these women. You have to know who they were. Some of them had good reputations, but some used to have a rather notorious character. The Scriptures remind us that God can use whomever He wants to use and He is not asking your permission today. When Jesus arose, He dignified these women, giving them equality to men at that very moment.

Women do not have to build a feminist theology about this because the Lord has already elevated them to a high level of esteem. They do not have to fight their way to the top. We tell that to the women in our church who are in ministry because they would often get up and be upset with us as if we were anti-woman. We say, "Women, you are standing in our pulpit. You are preaching to us. We are dignifying you. Do not beat us up. We are the ones who are telling you to preach the gospel. We are not here trying to tear you down."

*Heavenly Father, it's a relief to us women that we do not have to fight to receive equal attention in Your kingdom, unlike the business world. You treasure women, as You demonstrated through Your Son Jesus. Continue to work through us to reach those women who have been discarded as worthless by our society. It is a joy to be an instrument of restoration in their lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 27

---

## Go Tell Somebody!

*Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."*

**(Matthew 28:7)**

At work, home, and play, can you do what Jesus told the women to do? *Go tell somebody.* Now, that it is Easter! If you do not get to that point, you miss its true meaning. Go tell somebody! And whom do we tell? The angel said, "Go tell Peter," who represents all kinds of people. Tell the young, and the old, those who are up and down, male and female, the have and the have nots. Go tell Peter, or go tell Katrina—it does not matter who it is; just go tell somebody that Jesus is alive. That's the real message of Easter. When you get through with everything else, go tell somebody.

Unfortunately, so many of us have heard today's news that we are not shocked or surprised by it. We still get stunned and overwhelmed by it, but we know how it is. When you learn a great deal about one subject, you say there is nothing else to learn. Some say, "You can tell me about Jesus, but I know everything." We have had people tell us that, and we reply, "You know, that is amazing. Every week, we are still trying to figure it out, still trying to learn, still trying to grow, still trying." Every week, when we attend church, we don't wait for that day to share the gospel. For us, every day is *Resurrection Sunday*, and we have news that is absolutely too good to keep to ourselves. We just have to tell somebody that Jesus lives!

*Heavenly Father, it is our joyful privilege and honor to share the gospel with those who do not know Your Son. Refresh our hearts and minds so that we will never grow complacent or lackadaisical regarding its life-transforming power. Place a burning desire within us to tell everyone that You're alive! In Jesus' name, Amen.*



# Day 28

---

## If You See Something, Say Something

*“As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”*

**(Acts 4:20)**

In New York City, this wannabe bomber turned his car into a bomb and pulled it in front of the U.N. building, intending to blow it up. Fortunately, the bomb did not detonate, and they found the bomber. The police dismantled the bomb and said, “We are going to put a campaign together with this motto: ‘If you see something, you ought to say something.’” They informed the public, “If you see a bag on a train or at the cab stand that is left unattended or something does not feel right, just say something.”

These authorities may not necessarily be Christians, but they urged people to relay their important tips to keep everybody else safe. As believers, we have the best news in the world that can save others—the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. When the Lord has been good to us, we ought to say something. Nobody ought to have to beg us to say anything. If we know the Lord woke us up, watched over us, and started us on our way, we ought to say something. When we drive from one place to the next, and the Lord protects us, we ought to say something because we have seen something. People have heard so much bad news about accidents, problems, and break-ins that it is refreshing to their ears when we testify how the Lord has kept us safe from disasters because He is good. If God’s been good to you, you ought to say so.

*Heavenly Father, the authorities in our society have increased our awareness about possible threats to our safety, to the point that we will tell them about anything suspicious that we have seen, even if we are not sure. But we know what we have seen and heard regarding the gospel of Jesus Christ. It would be a crime of a spiritual kind not to share what we KNOW to be true. Give us the same kind of urgency to convey this lifesaving news. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 29

---

## Just the Facts

*After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.*

**(Acts 1:3)**

Some of you may remember the '60s TV police drama called "Dragnet" about a pair of Los Angeles detectives who solved crimes each week. When the one named Joe Friday was investigating some crimes and trying to collect evidence, he would often make this request from a potential witness he was questioning: "Just the facts—just the facts." Friday knew that random speculation was not enough; he needed solid evidence to bring the guilty party to justice. And evidence demands a verdict.

As Christians living in a skeptical world, we may be asked why we believe in Jesus Christ. Suppose we can just get the first four verses of 1 Corinthians 15 into our heads. In that case, we can easily respond, "I believe according to the Scriptures." When they press us with, "How do you believe this?" we can tell them with assurance, "There are eyewitness accounts that have passed this truth down to us." Indeed, as we examine the four Gospel accounts of the resurrection, written by four different people at different times, our faith is renewed and encouraged by the corresponding testimonies. We gladly celebrate the resurrection because we believe in the facts—that Jesus Christ is alive!

*Heavenly Father, we are thankful that we not only have experiential evidence that Jesus is alive, but there are also plenty of factual proofs to back up this actual historical event. When skeptics question us about the validity of the resurrection, bring all of these facts to our remembrance to share with them. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 30

---

## Jesus' Personal Appearances—Inside and Outside

*After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.*

**(1 Corinthians 15:6)**

To prove that He rose from the dead that first Easter morning, Jesus appeared to individual people outdoors and indoors. Over the years, skeptics have dismissed the resurrection as a fallacy, claiming that the body of Christ was stolen by the brokenhearted disciples before His placement in the tomb. However, the truth, according to the Scriptures, is that Jesus died for our sins and was buried, but He arose and appeared outside the tomb to Mary Magdalene and some other women. The risen Christ also appeared inside—to His disciples gathered together in the upper room. While they were there, He provided tangible evidence to prove that He was not a ghost, or they were not just hallucinating. Jesus told Thomas to examine His hands and side so he would know for himself that He was real. He then ate fish in their presence to prove that He was indeed alive. But Jesus did not just appear to individuals; He also appeared to large groups of people, totaling approximately 500.

Why do we talk about these appearances? It is because there's no discrepancy between the eyewitness reports. All of the people testified that they saw Him in Jerusalem and Galilee. He was in the capital city, Jerusalem, walking up and down the streets through the marketplace where His followers would identify Him. Today, even though we are not direct eyewitnesses of His resurrection, we see clear evidence of His work in our own lives that proves to us He is alive and well.

*Heavenly Father, Jesus appeared to so many people after His resurrection, proving to them in many ways that He was not a ghost or hallucination. We are thankful that He has also appeared in our lives in such powerful ways that we know He is very alive and well. As we tell others about our experience, prepare their hearts by melting away their skepticism and unbelief. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 31

---

## Here, There, and Everywhere

*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*  
**(Psalm 139:7)**

In the height of life's experiences, Christ can be there, and in the low places of life, He can be there too. There is no place that is off-limits to where Christ can be. He can come and assist you here and there, not just in Jerusalem and Galilee, not just to individuals and groups, not just indoors and outdoors, but here and now. Christ can appear in different places at the same time here, there, and everywhere. Before the crucifixion, He was limited to one place. He had to die and be resurrected so He could be everywhere at once.

In the daylight, He arose, and the angels testified by asking the women, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?" That is why a church can never reach cemetery status. This is no mausoleum or museum. We are the body of Jesus, our Head, ministering the good news of the gospel to our world. We come to serve a resurrected Christ, a living Christ, a living Lord. We come to worship Christ Himself, the Living Lord who is here, there, and everywhere.

*Heavenly Father, we are comforted by the fact that Jesus is available here, there, and everywhere. We do not have to worry that He is not around when we need Him. Because He is alive, those of us who are believers are alive in Him and always will be. Remind us of this truth when we feel like giving up. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 32

---

## The Road to Emmaus

*As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them.*

**(Luke 24:15)**

In this account, Jesus has already been resurrected. Now we join up with Cleopas and his nameless companion walking to the suburbs of Emmaus. They are discussing in copious detail what took place from Friday to this day, seven miles out of Jerusalem. The conclusion these two followers of Jesus have reached is that the Promised One who died on the cross cannot be who He claims to be. So, they are walking into the sunset of their disappointment. As they are walking, suddenly they are joined by a stranger. These travelers now have a companion along with them. Luke says that God seized their eyes. That word “seized” means that God Himself kept them from recognizing Jesus. They were so preoccupied with their disappointment and personal pain that they started believing that Easter was about them and not about God.

We must make sure that we do not miss the reality of Easter because we are preoccupied with disappointments on our particular road to Emmaus. Some of us are disappointed today because we work jobs that we don't like, or we are married to people we wish would get out of the house. We are disappointed because we are looking at life through narrow slits. And yet today, God can take your disappointments and give you a clarity of vision for you to see home and life and work from His perspective of fulfillment in Christ alone. Indeed, you can only find wholeness in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is only when you are whole that you can be a help to somebody else.

*Heavenly Father, we confess that the disappointments in our lives have seriously clouded our vision to the point that we are unable to recognize You. We pray that You will give us spiritual eyes to see You clearly once again so that we can once again minister effectively to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 33

---

## He's Everything to Me

*And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*  
**(Philippians 4:19)**

The mysterious stranger on the road to Emmaus—who was really Jesus—told the travelers, “These things had to take place for the Scriptures to be fulfilled.” He actually was describing Himself, starting with the books written by Moses. He says in Genesis that He is the sea; in Exodus, He is a deliverer. In Numbers, He is the lifted circle; in Deuteronomy, He is the living word. In Joshua, He is a battle-ax; in Judges, He is the Lord who shall come; in Kings and Chronicles, and even in Samuel, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Then He discussed what the prophets said about Him. He says now in Isaiah, He is the Prince of Peace; in Jeremiah, He is the balm in Gilead. Then He declares that in Daniel, He is a stone hewed out of a mountain tearing the wonders of Babylon down. In Hosea, He is love; in Micah, He is mercy; and in David’s writing, He is music.

Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, is the culmination of all these characteristics. He completely fulfills every single prophecy written in the Torah and the books of the prophets as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. As those who have been cleansed by His blood, we have the joyous privilege and responsibility to tell others that He can be everything for them as well.

*Heavenly Father, we rejoice that Jesus indeed is everything to us—Savior, Deliverer, Wonderful Counselor, the Prince of Peace, and so much more. Because of this assurance, no situation is too difficult and no obstacle impossible to overcome. When others ask us the reason for the hope in us, help us readily give them the Answer: Jesus!! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# Day 34

---

## Stay with Us, Lord!

*But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So, he went in to stay with them.*

**(Luke 24:29)**

On that dusty road to Emmaus, the stranger kept on talking. When the travelers reached their house, the Gospel writer Luke said, "He acted like he would keep on going." And when Jesus talked to these disciples along the way, they pled with Him, "Do not keep walking. Come home with us." They discovered that when they invited Him in, He initially responded as a guest, but once He walked across the threshold, He became *The Host*. They had been walking all day, so He most likely washed their feet and hands. After they said grace, He took over and served them bread.

At some point in your life, you have got to ask the Lord to stay with you because He is always on the move. Jesus always has somewhere to go, so you have got to ask Him, "Lord, will You stay here with me?" He will never turn down that invitation. Just realize that every time you invite Him in, He will take over the circumstance, and the next thing you know, you will see something.

*Heavenly Father, we do not want Jesus to just be a visiting guest in our hearts and lives; instead, we want Him to be the only permanent resident. We surrender every place in our hearts that we have closed to Him in the past. Jesus, come and make Your home in us! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 35

---

## The Broken

*When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.*

**(Luke 24:30-31)**

Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and then broke it. And the travelers thought to themselves that looks familiar. Wait a minute; I have seen this before. They looked at each other as He gave the bread to them. And when they recognized those hands that had broken and blessed, those hands that had been nailed, those hands, they thought, those are—well, we know who this is. This is not a stranger. This is the One that hung on the cross! He got up and now he is at our house. They could not even eat. After Jesus suddenly vanished, they said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within as He talked with us along the way?

That is what this post-resurrection event reminds us—that the same God on the other side of resurrection who took us, blessed us, broke us, and gave us away now in the resurrection will come into our lives and use them if we just give them to Him. When He comes into our lives, He will bless them, but we must always realize that breaking precedes blessing. In order for God to get the best out of us, He has to break us first. Sometimes He breaks us when we deliberately go our own way and sin, but other times, He breaks us with trials of His own making. Nevertheless, all of us who follow Christ will get broken. It is only then that He can give us a way to people in our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and churches. Yes, He will! He will give us away so that we can help others.

*Heavenly Father, we realize that we have to be broken before You can give us away to a spiritually starving world just like the bread. Give us the grace to endure the trials with patience, and then when we're ready to minister, stoke our desire to minister to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



# Day 36

---

## Only One Perfect Somebody

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the day approaching.*

**(Hebrews 10:24-25)**

Do not miss God because of disappointment. Do not let death, grief, hate, bitterness, and unfulfilled dreams keep you from seeing God. Instead, let God seize your eyes so that you will see what He wants you to see. He calls us to gather in the community of faith to support each other in times of disappointment. That is the answer to this whole dilemma for these disciples. My heart breaks when I see Christians abandon the church or lose focus on the fellowship's significance and work.

Sometimes I hear church members saying, "I am looking for perfect people." They get upset when they see broken and fragmented folks in the fellowship, so they walk away from the church disillusioned because their perceptions are shattered. In 45-plus years of walking with the Lord, I have never gone to church looking for perfect people. When I was a young Christian in my teens, I knew there was not but one perfect somebody, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why I come to church—people who are imperfect, broken, shattered, lost, and confused can come into the fellowship to meet with other people who are broken, shattered, and confused. The good news is that we don't have to stay that way. We can show our brokenness to somebody else who will say, "Yeah, you are broken, but God knows how to put you back together again." Oh yes, He will, and He accomplishes that feat through the intense pressures of life.

*Heavenly Father, we thank You for the security and protection that Your church provides to every believer. Forgive us when we allow bitterness and disillusionment to keep us from the fellowship. We need each other! Also, we realize that You are the only perfect somebody. Give us the grace to forgive others when they hurt us. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 37

---

## The Church on Fire

*See, I have refined you, though not as silver;  
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.*  
**(Isaiah 48:10)**

Monterey pine trees live in those California deserts and mountains and are closely related to the redwood. The pinecones on these trees are shut, and nothing can open them because the resin keeps them closed. Of course, you can get a hammer and smash them, but that does not mean you have opened them. You can tear them apart, but it does not mean you are opening them. They open only when there is a fire. It is the intensity of the heat that loosens and melts that resin away so the mouth will open. When the seed falls, new life gathers together, but it only happens under the pressure and fire heat.

Often, we want to attend a church that has not got any people under fire. Instead, we want to go where everybody's perfect. But we have got to go where people have been forgiven of their sins and found in their lostness. It is there in the fellowship where we open up, and new life develops. Church is a good place! But you cannot like church if you have got God on a schedule. If you only pencil God in on your calendar, saying, "I am only going to have time with God when it is convenient," you really do not like church. You have got to do church because the church is you, and you are the church. Church is where the people come to pray for you. You have got to be careful that you do not become so perfectionistic and legalistic that you require members to meet certain criteria.

*Heavenly Father, we know the church is as vital to believers as breathing. Despite the pain we're going through, we are going to joyfully gather together with other brothers and sisters in the faith for support and encouragement. Forgive us when we avoid church because it is inconvenient or we feel that the people there do not meet up to our "standard." Remind us often that we are not perfect, just forgiven! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 38

---

## Gone AWOL

*"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said,  
"We'll go with you."  
(John 21:3)*

In John 21, the disciples know all too well that Jesus has been resurrected. In the previous chapter, Jesus instructed Mary Magdalene to tell His disciples and Peter that He is alive. Seven of the eleven disciples, however, decided to resume their occupation as fishermen. Even though they once followed Him and heard the message about His resurrection, they wanted to go back to doing what they did before he called them. In the morning by the seaside, Jesus appears and sees them fishing. The resurrected Lord is back, so it is time to re-engage in their discipleship activity, but they are AWOL right now. He wanted to see what kept them so preoccupied that they could stay away so long from where they are supposed to be. They do not recognize Him because they are running in the wrong direction. Somehow, they are blinded because they aren't seeing Him for who He is.

Perhaps, just like the disciples, you have expected Jesus to do something for you—or even be something else altogether—and you feel that He has let you down. Out of anger, frustration, and disappointment, you have gone AWOL from your active service to the Lord in His church to engage in familiar, “good” worldly activities. But you must realize that, no matter what you think would be good for your life, God always has the best in mind for you. That is where trust and obedience come in. When you acknowledge Jesus as the Lord of your life, you must do what *He* expects of you—not the other way around.

*Heavenly Father, in Your gracious mercy, You are calling us from our AWOL status back into Your service. Forgive us for backsliding into the easy coziness of the world because the going got tough. We know that You truly know what's best for us in all aspects of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 39

---

## Fishing on the Wrong Side of the Boat

*He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." When they did, they could not haul the net in because of the large number of fish.*

**(John 21:6)**

Once again, just as in Luke 5, the disciples were doing the same thing—fishing from the wrong side of the boat. Jesus must have been shaking His head as He told them, "Don't you know by now that you will never be successful without Me? You are just spinning your wheels and running around in circles." The first thing Jesus said, "Let your nets down on the right side of the boat." They are in the same water, in the same pond. The only difference is from one side to the next. Why could not they catch fish on that side instead of the other side? It is because one side is the wrong side, and the other is the right side. And when Jesus said, "Let your nets down," they immediately obeyed Him because He is the Lord.

I have seen rich people who have all kinds of fancy titles and prestige, but they are restless all the time. They never have any joy because nothing is ever good enough. As a result, they are always looking for something else to fulfill their lives. But anytime Jesus is not involved in your life, you are living on the wrong side of the boat, and nothing good will ever come out of your life. However, if you come and live on the right side, there is joy, excitement, love, peace, and power. And then, just as these disciples learned, when the Lord has moved powerfully in your life, you ought to tell your unsaved friends and family about it. There is nothing more persuasive than a transformed life.

*Heavenly Father, we confess that we have wasted precious time living on the wrong side of the boat. We have pursued earthly pleasures and material things while paying You lip service for a couple of hours in church every Sunday. We repent, Lord, and ask You to forgive us for our waywardness. Give us empowering grace to live for You on the right side of the boat. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Day 40

---

## The Commission of Easter

*“But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”*

**(Mark 16:7)**

And the real message of Easter is simply this: “Go tell Peter and the other disciples to meet Him in Galilee.” Now when the angel delivered this message from Jesus, there was weight in what he said. In other words, the Lord says through the angel, “Peter has jettisoned the faith. He is gone in the wrong trajectory because he does not think that I can use him anymore. I know he lied when he said he didn’t know Me, but go get Peter because I can use him. I have got a book that I need him to write. He has not always been wrong. He did say I was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. So, go get Peter and bring him with you to Galilee, where I will meet you.”

The visitors comprehended the angel’s underlying message: A dead man does not tell you to meet him somewhere. He was actually saying, “Tell them Jesus is not dead, but alive.” The true commission of Easter is to tell people news that is too good to keep to yourself. If people have really personally received the gospel message, they will talk about it. Christians can talk in church about how much they love Jesus all they want, but if they are not telling unsaved people about it, they have never really tasted of it. As His followers, we must keep telling people the old, old story over and over again.

*Heavenly Father, we realize that Easter’s commission is quite simple—to proclaim the gospel to every living creature. We indeed have good news to tell! Give us the boldness and faith to tell others about the salvation that Jesus offers through His sacrificial death on the cross and glorious resurrection. We look forward to seeing many people added to Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*