

40-Day Journey

A GUIDED DEVOTIONAL BOOK

This book belongs to:

Intro

We are heading towards a collision. It is a collision that is hard to describe, but a collision that we will all experience when our faith meets our flesh. Our faith says to consider it pure joy when we face trials, and our flesh says no way. Our faith calls us to persevere when our flesh says let's just give up. These are some of the collisions we will face as we walk with Jesus in this life.

This 40-Day Guide is an invitation to experience God with greater depth. To learn more about God in our trials and in our doubt. To grow in our faith to trust Him more. To lean not on our own understanding but in all our ways acknowledge Him and follow our amazing God. Let's face our fears. Let's stand firm when life is hard. Let's encourage each other to persevere when we want to give up. When we are heading toward a collision, let's choose to trust in our living God.

With you on the journey,

Ronn Smith

Lead Pastor

Getting Started

We believe that the greatest adventure you will ever go on in life is the adventure of following Jesus, and we'd like to invite you to join us for a spiritual journey over the next 40 days! We'd love to see everyone at Compass take on this 40-Day Journey together and see how we might grow personally in our faith and help those around us do the same.

What do you need?

1. A Bible (we'd love to give you a print-Bible if you don't have one – see us at Connection Point, OR you can use an online version, too!)
2. A Pen or pencil for note taking
3. This journal

That's it!

How do you begin?

- Read through the first part of this journal and take the Spiritual Life Self-Assessment on the following pages.

- Pastor Ronn will open the new series that will lead up to Easter on **Sunday, Feb. 11**. Your first day of reading will be on **Wednesday, Feb. 14**. We encourage you to find a consistent time and place to meet with God so that you can make it a daily habit.
- Each day, read the Scripture, the devotional for that Scripture, answer the reflection questions, talk to God and take some time to journal your thoughts. Your journal might be a few short sentences or much more than that. Be open to what God will lay on your heart.
- Once a week, meet with someone. Whether that is a friend or the people in your Life Group, share with them what God is teaching you!
- Join us on Sunday mornings for worship. We will celebrate Easter on **March 31**, and we would love to see you there!

How Do I Use This Journal?

The Bible changes lives. It changes hearts. We believe that your life will be impacted when you read it – whether you realize it or not! This is why we want you in the Word every day. Studying the Bible can seem overwhelming. It's a big book! And some of the language can be confusing and hard to understand. This journal is intended to help you study God's Word over the next 40 days.

For some of you, this will be the first time you've opened the Bible. Or maybe you just haven't opened it for a really long time. For others, daily Bible reading is already part of your life. Wherever you are, our hope is that this journal will help you get into the Word every day.

Before you begin reading, take a moment to pray. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. Just ask God to teach you through His Word. Pray that he would help you learn more about who He is and who He is calling you to be.

This journal is set up with daily Scripture readings Monday through Friday.

- **On Mondays** we will be revisiting the passage Ronn preached through on Sunday and contemplating those passages in a deeper way.
- **On Tuesdays and Thursdays** we will be reading through John 12-19, which details the last week of Jesus' life before he is crucified.

- **On Wednesdays and Fridays** we will be continuing to explore the topic Pastor Ronn preached on Sunday, looking at additional Scriptures.

Each day is set up with 3 different Sections: **Read, Reflect, Pray.**

Read: Begin each day by reading the Scripture reading listed for that day. Then read the short devotional. **It is very important to read the Scripture FIRST.** The daily devotionals are written with the assumption that you've already read the Scripture passage. They are intended to help you apply and reflect upon the Scripture you've just read, not take the place of it.

Reflect: After each reading, there are several questions intended to help you think through what you've read and apply it to your own life.

Pray: Each day includes a short prayer, asking God to help you take what you've read and make it a part of your life. The goal of this devotional is not simply more Bible knowledge, but spiritual transformation, and only God can transform us from the inside out! Pray for that transformation!

There are no readings on Saturday - that is a day to reflect on what you've read throughout the week (or to catch up if you got a little behind). On Saturday, we encourage you to look back at the previous week and ask yourself three questions:

- What did you learn this week that was new or challenging?
- What does God want you to know?
- What does God want you to do?

There are no readings on Sundays either, but we hope to see you at church. You can use your journal to jot down notes from Sunday's message, if you like.

We want you to have a thriving relationship with God and a faith that is growing day by day! The best way to do that is to seek God daily through His Word. We hope and pray this guide helps you do that as we prepare for Easter.

Spiritual Health

Before you start this 40-day adventure, it is good to reflect on where you are currently in your relationship with God. Our goal at the end of this journey is that you will be able to say, "I am walking closer with Jesus now than I was 40 days ago." We know this is subjective and sometimes hard to gauge. But hopefully this assessment will give you some concrete ways to know if you've accomplished the goal.

We encourage you to share this assessment with your accountability partner or Connection Group. It is always good for you to be vulnerable and honest with someone. If you want to have a growing walk with God, if you want more than to just talk the talk, you're going to have to be honest about it with other people. It means taking a risk. It means trusting others. It means being trustworthy with someone else's revelation of the fact that they don't have it all together.

1. Abiding - John 15:1-10, Romans 12:1-2 (Read these two passages before answering the questions)

On a scale of 0-5, how are you doing at abiding or being with Christ? (0 -never, 5 - all the time)



0



1



2



3



4



5

2. Joy, abundant life – John 10:10; Galatians 5:22-23

On a scale of 0-5, how much joy are you experiencing?

By the way, “joy” is much more than extreme happiness. It’s more about a deep, unshakable contentment and peace that frees us from worry and lets us really “enjoy” life, no matter how difficult it may be that day.

(0 – No Joy, 5 – Lots of Joy)

0 1 2 3 4 5

Is joy a reality in your life? Why or why not?

3. Fruit – John 15:1-11; Galatians 5:22-23; Luke 8:4-15

Are you bearing spiritual fruit in your life?

(0 – No fruit, 5 – Multiplying out)

0 1 2 3 4 5

Which fruits of the spirit are you seeing in your life, and which ones are lacking?

4. Studying the Word of God – Psalm 119:33-49; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Corinthians 3:2-3; Acts 23:42

Are you reading and “chewing” on the Word of God?
(0 - Not at all, 5 - I’m chewing)

0 1 2 3 4 5

Are you spending time really feeding on God’s Word, or are you starving yourself? Why or why not?

5. Prayer – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19; Acts 2:42; Matthew 6:5-8

Are you talking with God?
(0 - Not at all, 5 - All the time)

0 1 2 3 4 5

6. Forgiveness – Matthew 6:14; Ephesians 4:26-27, 32

How easy is it for you to forgive someone who has hurt you?
(0 - Easy, 5 - Difficult)

0 1 2 3 4 5

Helpful Links

During the course of this 40-day spiritual journey, you may need to access different resources.

Whether you have a prayer request, re-watch or catch up on sermons you may have missed or find content for your kids, we want to make sure you are equipped for all of it.

Below you'll find a QR code that will take you to that information.



linktr.ee/compasschurchaz

Day 1

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

JOY MEETS PAIN

Read: Psalm 34

The psalmist, David, writes this psalm of praise in a time when his life was anything but peaceful. King Saul of Israel, driven by jealousy and rage, was desperate to kill him (you can read the whole story in 1 Samuel 18-31), and David's life was a chaotic mix of running for his life and hiding. And yet, David praises God, even in a time of tremendous hardship because David's praise is based not just on what God does (or doesn't do), **but in who God is**. It's important to note that David doesn't pretend there aren't troubles - he's not ignoring the danger he's in or the hardship he's enduring. David's faith in God gives him freedom from fear and it is his unceasing pursuit of God that has given David hope, clarity and even gratitude through it all.

Reflect:

- What does David say about who the Lord is in this psalm?
- What does he say about what the Lord does?
- What does he say about what WE should do?

- When you face hard times, do you tend to run TO God or FROM God? Why?
- How does this psalm affect the way you think of God in times of trouble?

Pray:

Gracious God, help me to see you for who you truly are: the deliverer, the redeemer, the one who sees us in our troubles and is worthy of our praise! Open my eyes to those times when I reduce you to little more than a personal assistant who should be fulfilling my wish list rather than the Almighty God. Guide me in your ways that I would honor you in all that I say and do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 2

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15

PERFUME, A PLOT AND A PARADE

Read: John 12:1-19

Chapter 12 begins what would be the last week of Jesus' life – almost half of the book of John is spent on the last seven days before Jesus' crucifixion. As it turns out, most of what we see in these first 19 verses is not what it seems. Judas pretends that his objection to Mary's anointing of Jesus is about the poor, but it's really about his greed because he's been dipping into the money bag. The chief priests pretend to be devoted to God, yet they plot to murder Lazarus because they are losing their power and that's where their true devotion lies. And the people who line the streets of Jerusalem act as if their worship is for Jesus, but their worship is fickle and will be short-lived because their real interest is in the miraculous things Jesus has done and not in how Jesus revealed the truths of God. All these people witnessed the miracles and ministry of the living breathing Jesus, God incarnate, and yet their devotion was elsewhere, and it prevented them all from seeing Jesus for what He was.

Reflect:

- When you consider your own devotion, where would you say it lies? Are you truly devoted to Jesus or have other things crowded Him out? Could those things prevent you from seeing Him as He truly is?
- Do you think it's easy to mistake our devotion to religion and religious tradition for devotion to Jesus? Why is the difference so important?

- How can you ensure that Jesus remains the focus and source of your faith?

Pray:

Dear Lord, help me to keep my eyes focused on you and my faith firmly planted in the resurrected Christ. May I remain fully devoted to You amidst all the things that fight for my attention, and may I never deviate from that which is true in this complicated world. Thank you, Lord, for sending your Son as a man who would experience this life and identify with all the struggles we have in this world. Help me to remember the love you have for us that was expressed in Christ's birth, death and resurrection. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 3

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

JOY MEETS PAIN

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-7

In this letter Peter writes to a scattered and persecuted people – people whose livelihoods and very lives were at risk because of their faith in Christ. Peter's words were written to people who were indeed suffering grievous trials, and he encourages them to keep hold of the truth – there is a salvation, an inheritance, through Christ that is eternal, and that is worth rejoicing over even as they suffer. Peter's focus here is very much on the next life and it is a focus many of us don't often consider. When we become caught up in all the things in this life that are not what we expected, hoped for or fair, we can find ourselves in a spiral of disappointment, dissatisfaction and even anger. But this life is not the end – James 4:14 tells us that this life is a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Our suffering and struggles in this life are very real, but they are also temporary. Compared to eternity, this life is short and there is something wonderful and beautiful beyond our comprehension awaiting on the other side of it. Cling to the truth of eternity!

Reflect:

- What is your first reaction when you face struggles, trials or persecution for your faith?
- Have you ever really considered that our inheritance is – indeed – ETERNAL while this life is extremely limited? Does that alter your

perception of the trials in this life?

- Read Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 and then contemplate what he considers "light momentary affliction" as he describes his suffering in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. Why do you think Paul sees his own suffering the way he does?
- Peter is not ignoring the trials or pretending they aren't as difficult as they are, he is merely reminding the believers that Jesus is worth it. When you consider your own trials, do you tend to try and pretend they aren't hard, or do you pray that you can see them in light of eternity?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you that you see me even in my most difficult struggles, and you are right alongside me through it all. Help me to see my life in light of eternity so that I might, like Peter, become deeply aware of the imperishable, undefiled and unfading inheritance you hold for me as I remain faithful to you. Keep me strong in my faith and focused in my pursuit of Christ. In Jesus' Holy name I pray, Amen

Space for Notes

Day 4

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Reflect on This Weeks Reading:

What did you learn this week that was new or challenging?

What does God want you to know?

What does God want you to do?

Space for Notes



God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

JAMES 1:12

Collide

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Perseverance Meets Doubt

James 1:2-12

Take Notes on the Sermon Below

Day 5

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19

PERSEVERANCE MEETS DOUBT

Read: James 1:2-12

There are those who suggest if we have enough faith then we won't have problems - that if we just have enough faith and visualize our best life, it will come to be. This kind of thinking is not only untrue, it can also be dangerously discouraging to believers struggling with life's difficulties. While our faith should absolutely impact how we navigate those issues, it is **not** "crisis kryptonite" against having them. (On Friday we read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 which details some of what the apostle Paul endured, yet I cannot imagine any of us would suggest HE lacked faith!) Our trials serve a very different purpose, according to James. He explains that trials test our faith, and as our faith is tested we develop perseverance, and as we persevere we become more and more mature in our faith, lacking nothing.

God longs for us to grow in our faith, to be strong, mature believers who can endure trials and encourage others along the way. This world is broken and sadly that brokenness means that our lives on this side of heaven come with struggles and pain. But stand strong, eternity awaits those of us who love God and endure!

Reflect:

- Have you ever known someone who faced life's trials and hardships with tremendous faith? (Consider people like Joni Eareckson Tada, Vaneetha Risner or someone you know personally.) How do their lives and the way they face their suffering impact you in your own walk with Jesus?
- As you read verses 5-7, at a glance you might have the impression that God gives us whatever we want if we ask with unwavering faith, but this does not refer to anything, it refers to wisdom. What does it look like to ask God for wisdom without doubt that He will give it to us? What is the difference between looking to God for wisdom and to the world for it?

Pray:

Gracious God, thank you for your unwavering presence, even in my times of struggle. Thank you for being with me in both my celebrations and my grief, in my victories and my pain. Lord, Thank you for those whose faith is an example of perseverance amidst trial, and I pray for their continued strength in the face of adversity. Help me to remain close to you in both good times and bad, and may I always seek your plan and your presence in all I do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 6

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

THE DIVINE PLAN

Read: John 12:20-50

Jesus' ministry has reached its climax and to suggest that Jesus had become a polarizing figure would be an understatement. People either wanted to follow Him or kill Him. But even those who wanted to follow Him did not really understand His mission. The Jewish understanding of the Messiah was that he would be a revolutionary hero that would overthrow their Roman oppressors and restore Israel as an independent nation and military power. Most did not understand that their greatest problem was not the oppression of Rome but rather the oppression of sin, and that is what Christ came to free us all from.

Jesus' time has come and His cryptic parting words likely caused more confusion than clarity to the casual listener, but Jesus makes it very clear - He knows what is coming and what is coming is why He came. Jesus knew that the cross awaited Him, and make no mistake, it was not a tragically unexpected disruption to His growing ministry, it was the very reason He was born.

Reflect:

- Reread verse 25 - when Jesus said we must "hate" life in this world, He didn't mean we should walk around in perpetual misery that we're here, but rather that we should not become too attached to worldly

things. Why is this necessary to serve and follow Him? How strong is your attachment to the things of this world?

- Why is it so important to understand that the cross was not an unfortunate turn of events but rather part of a divine plan?
- In verses 49-50, Jesus makes it clear that His ministry has been under the authority of God and that all He's said and done has been God's will. If Jesus operated under the will of His Father, what does that mean for us as followers of Jesus? Do you regularly consider the will of God for your life, or do you make your own plans and simply assume God will bless them?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, give me a deeper understanding of your will for my life and a deeper desire to follow it. Help me to release any attachments I have to the things of this world that might prevent me from living out the plan you created me for. Thank you for sending your Son as the perfect example of a life lived in consistent pursuit of your will. Help me to do the same. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 7

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

PERSEVERANCE MEETS DOUBT

Read: 1 Kings 17:1, 18:1, 18:41-46

Seven times Elijah prays for rain, rain that God had told him He would send, and the first **six** times the sky remains clear and blue – not a cloud in sight. Elijah is on the ground, his head between his knees in prayer, and yet prayer after prayer, there is still no sign of the rain God had promised. Finally, after his seventh prayer, a tiny little cloud rises from the sea. It isn't long until that little cloud is a full-on thunderstorm.

It's worth mentioning that Elijah had just had a big showdown with the prophets of Baal and God did not hesitate to show up when Elijah called for fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:20-40). Surely, praying for something God had already said would happen was an easy ask! And yet Elijah had to persevere in his prayers for rain before God sent the tiny cloud that would become a storm.

Reflect:

- Sometimes God's timing in answering our prayers feels...slow. We think the answer should be easier in coming – or faster, at least. God's timing is rarely in sync with our own. But do we persevere in faith? Are we like Elijah, confident that God hears us and will answer when the time is right?

- How do you feel when God's answers seem slow in coming? Do you trust that God is working even when you cannot see what He is doing?
- Why do you think God calls us to persevere?

Pray:

Gracious God, sometimes I can be so fickle in my faith. I can become convinced that I know what is right, I know what is best and I forget that You see all the moving parts and periphery things that I cannot see. Forgive me for my impatience and the times I doubt your wisdom. Give me the strength to persevere without doubting and help me to trust you more than I trust myself. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 8

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

DIRTY JOBS

Read: John 13:1-20

Jesus washed the disciples' feet. In our culture, so far removed in every way from the culture in which Jesus lived, it is hard for us to fully grasp how radical this act was. This was a lowly task assigned to the lowest servant in the house. It was a dirty, dusty, nasty job. I can't help but wonder if the disciples noticed the need for a foot-washer when they arrived. Did they ask if someone was coming all the while thinking, "Well, I'm certainly not going to do it." But then Jesus, the son of God, the one whose humanity veiled the power that brought all of creation into existence (Colossians 1:16), wrapped Himself in a towel and washed the stinking, nasty feet of twelve men - including those of one who hours later would betray Him, and He knew it. Jesus had more than practicality in mind when He poured that water into the foot basin. He was showing by example what it meant to be a Christ-follower; "Do just as I have done to you."

Reflect:

- What does it look like to serve other believers today? How do you feel about doing the menial jobs? The dirty jobs? Are you willing to do those things, or do you struggle to take on those kinds of tasks?

- Do you feel comfortable serving those whose lives are messy, where there is pain and suffering? Or do you find that difficult?
- Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him, but He washed Judas' feet anyway. Why do you think He did that?

Pray:

Dear Lord, thank you for your humble example of love and service. Help me take that example and live it out in my own life. Give me compassion for the messy and the dirty, give me love for the broken and the complicated. Help me to see them with your eyes and serve them with your love. And Lord, in those seasons when I am the one who is messy, when I am the one who is complicated, help me to recognize the truth - that You love and care for me. Help me to develop a servant's heart. In Christ's Holy name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 9

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

PERSEVERANCE MEETS DOUBT

Read: Matthew 14:22-33

Peter was impulsive and so it's not terribly surprising that he was the one who wanted to hop out of the boat and give wave-walking a try. It actually went pretty well – at first. But as Peter began to pay more attention to the waves than to the one who called him out of the boat, he began to sink. Jesus was right there, but Peter wasn't looking at Him anymore. The wind and the waves had taken Peter's attention from the one who would, minutes later, calm both. Jesus' question "Why did you doubt" is one that resonates through the ages – it is the question Jesus asks all of us when we fail to recognize that what keeps us from sinking is our focus on HIM, not our circumstances or our own abilities.

Perseverance in our faith only makes sense if the focus of our faith is the one worthy of it. If Peter focused on his own ability to stay atop the waves, he would have continued to sink. There is nothing within Peter himself that yields the miraculous. If he focuses on his circumstances, the waves and the wind, he's definitely going down. But when his attention is on Jesus, that makes all the difference. Peter can find in Christ what does not exist within himself – the ability to walk on water.

Reflect:

- How do you react when you feel like you're sinking – do you look to Jesus or do you fight and flail and try to pull yourself up in your own power?

- What distracts you from your relationship with Jesus? What tends to draw your attention from Him to the things of this world both in times of peace and times of struggle?
- It's interesting to note that Jesus did not calm the sea until AFTER they were in the boat – He could have done it at any time, but he let Peter step into the water amidst the wind and the waves. Why do you think that was?

Pray:

Dear Lord, you are so very patient with me. With my impulsiveness and my doubts, with my need to control and my fears. Lord, I pray that you would help me to keep my eyes focused on you, no matter what life brings. I pray that I would look to you in my storms and in my times of calm and quiet. Please give me a strong sense of your presence in those times when fear and uncertainty threaten me and help me build my faith so that doubt has no hold upon me. Thank you that you are a God who always stays close, even when I foolishly walk away. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 10

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Reflect on This Weeks Reading:

What did you learn this week that was new or challenging?

What does God want you to know?

What does God want you to do?

Space for Notes



Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

JAMES 1:14-15

Collide

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Truth Meets Temptation

James 1:13-18

Take Notes on the Sermon Below

Day 11

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26

TRUTH MEETS TEMPTATION

Inside Out

Read: James 1:13-18

God never tempts us Himself, but part of His giving us free will is giving us the freedom to choose in the face of temptation. We all have weaknesses – areas of vulnerability. Maybe you struggle with an addiction to drugs, alcohol, food, shopping or something else that you fight to control. Or maybe your greatest battles are against lust, greed, envy, anger, fear or pride. It is important to understand that it's not a sin to be tempted – even Jesus was tempted (Hebrews 4:15)! It is what we do with that temptation that can lead to sin. James explains it simply in verses 14-15; we're enticed by our own evil desires. Those desires unchecked birth sinful actions and that sin, if allowed to grow, gives birth to death. It's a sobering thing to acknowledge the seriousness of sin and its consequences. But we are fools if we don't because sin always separates us from God.

So how do we fight these temptations? Look again at verse 15 – both the NIV and ESV use the word “conceived” – it's the idea that we are entertaining the sinful desire long enough that eventually we act on it. So often the reason we yield to temptation is because we either don't fight it at all or we let ourselves sit in it until we give in. Sin is a liar. It always promises something it doesn't deliver – at least in any lasting way. But God promises good and perfect gifts – and He delivers on His promises.

Reflect:

- Have you given much thought to those areas of your life where sin might have a hold?
- When you face temptation, what is your reaction? Do you walk away from it immediately? Do you allow yourself to linger there (physically or mentally)? Do you need to make a change in the way you face temptations?
- Do you recognize that even though sin sometimes does deliver short-term “happiness”, it always fails us long-term? What changes can you make in your life to avoid situations where temptation is hard to resist?

Pray:

Gracious God, open my eyes to those areas of my life where I allow myself to linger where I shouldn't, where I entertain thoughts and actions that are not your will nor your way. Give me wisdom to recognize what situations I should avoid and the strength to avoid them. Thank you that you are a God of grace and that you provide not only an escape but forgiveness when I fail. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 12

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

BETRAYAL, LOVE AND BRAVADO

Read: John 13:21-38

Imagine yourself as one of the disciples at this dinner. It's been a pretty eventful night, but most of what has transpired won't make sense until later. No one realizes that this is "the last supper". Jesus' mood is serious and troubled as he reveals that there is a traitor in their midst. He speaks cryptically about leaving and gives them instructions to love one another. Jesus tells Peter that despite his bold declarations of undying loyalty, within hours Peter will deny even knowing Him.

Jesus knew what was coming. But the disciples? They had no idea. They did not realize that within 24 hours their lives would be turned upside down and their beloved teacher would be dead.

As modern-day followers of Jesus, we have the benefit of knowing the end of the story. We know that Jesus' death was not the end. We know that the disciples' grief would turn to joy in just a few days. And we know that this was all part of God's perfect plan from the beginning - a plan to save us from our sin for all eternity. Just as the disciples had to live their stories minute-by-minute, our own stories unfold the same way. We rarely know what is coming ahead of time, but we know the One who does know. God is never caught off-guard, and we can rest in the knowledge that He knows what we do not - and within it all is a plan for our good and His glory.

Reflect:

- Have you ever put yourself in the sandals of the disciples, imagining what it would be like to have lived through these events as they happened, not knowing or understanding the greater plan?
- Do you realize that no matter how unexpected a turn of events might be in your life, that God is never surprised? Does that affect your perspective on the unexpected trials that you face?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, help me to rest in your perfect knowledge of the unexpected. Help me to draw peace and calm from the fact that nothing ever catches you off guard. There is no situation beyond your sight or your reach. Remind me of your faithfulness in the past and use it to grow my faith and trust in you for the future. I pray these things in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 13

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

TRUTH MEETS TEMPTATION

Read: Genesis 3:1-13

The devil hasn't changed his strategy at all since the Garden of Eden. His efforts to tempt us always begin with a lie: a lie wrapped in just enough truth that we begin to confuse which is which. A lie which makes us doubt the goodness of God, and which makes us believe that the only thing that lies between us and true happiness, fulfillment and fun are three pesky little words "Thou shalt not."

And sin's effect upon us hasn't changed either. Just as Adam and Eve suddenly found themselves fearful and ashamed at the sound of the Lord's approaching footsteps, we, too, tend to avoid God and even the people of God when we know we're involved in sin. Even our reaction to being caught in sin hasn't changed in 2000 years. Both Adam and Eve, when confronted with their sin, blamed someone else!

It's important to notice that God did not withdraw from THEM, they withdrew from HIM. God still sought them out, taking His usual stroll in the garden – and make no mistake, He knew exactly what they'd done! God continues to seek us out, as well. In spite of our failures and missteps, God loves and pursues us!

Reflect:

- Consider the temptations you face in your life: what lies does the enemy wrap in truth to try and get you to doubt the goodness of God?
- Have you ever found yourself frustrated with or resistant to the boundaries God places on our lives as followers of Jesus? Which ones do you resist and why?
- Have you ever found yourself withdrawing from God or people at church when you are struggling with sin in your life?

Pray:

Precious Lord, open my eyes to the schemes of the enemy. Help me to hold tight to your truth and recognize it amongst the lies the enemy uses to deceive me. By the power of your Holy Spirit, may I never doubt your goodness and your love for me. Fan the fires of my faith, Lord, that I might be more and more devoted to you and less and less vulnerable to the enemy's lies. Guard my heart, Lord. In Jesus' Holy name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 14

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29

BELIEVE

Read: John 14:1-14

"Don't Worry!"

Has anyone ever said this to you when it felt like the only thing you could do was worry? The disciples are worried. Their hearts are troubled. Jesus has just told them that there was a traitor in their midst, that He was leaving them and that within hours Peter was going to pretend he didn't even know who Jesus was (John 13). What started out as just the annual Passover dinner was turning out to be something very different indeed. And the disciples are worried. But Jesus doesn't just tell them not to worry - He tells them HOW not to worry. He says: "Believe in God and believe in Me." Jesus makes it clear - he's not just a good teacher. He is God. Six times through this passage Jesus makes the same point - that He and the Father are so enmeshed that to see Him is to see God Himself.

The antidote to worry is belief. Belief in God - not simply that He exists but belief that Jesus is who He says He is, God is in control and that His will and plans are all in the works, even when it seems that chaos and disaster are all around us. Believe in God, believe in Jesus!

Reflect:

- Are you a worrier by nature? What do you worry about? What do you expect to accomplish by worrying?

- When faced with life's troubles, do you find yourself saying, "Yes, I believe in God, but...." What is the "but"? Is it bigger than God?
- Do you feel that if you don't worry it somehow means you aren't acknowledging how big the problem you're facing is or you don't care? What if instead of worrying, you prayed not only over your situation but that God would enable you to not worry?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, I know in your Word, over and over again, you tell me not to worry. You tell me to trust you. I believe, Lord, help my unbelief! Help me to transform my worries into prayers that I lay at your feet and leave there. Help me to trust what you are doing even when I don't see it or understand it. I pray that through the power of your Holy Spirit that my faith would grow more and more each day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 15

FRIDAY, MARCH 1

TRUTH MEETS TEMPTATION

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:13

All of us have been in situations where we felt powerless in the face of temptation. Maybe it's something relatively benign like that bowl of M&Ms on a coworker's desk – our New Year's resolutions for better health and self-control evaporate in the face of that colorful chocolate goodness. Or maybe it's something much more serious. That drink that leads to a binge. A phone call that lures us into an illicit or unhealthy relationship, drawing us away from God. That website that takes us somewhere we promised we would not go again. Temptation is different for all of us, but it's something we all experience – and succumbing to it can have devastating consequences. But God's Word makes a promise to us – God will never allow us to be tempted beyond our capacity to overcome it. He gives us an escape every single time. Don't miss that! God provides us an **escape**. A way out. Sometimes rather than take that escape, we sit in the temptation thinking that withstanding it means that we can sit in it, entertain it and not be drawn to it. God might give you a supernatural healing from certain temptations, but more often than not He gives us a way out of those situations. The best way to withstand is often to run the other way – and God promises there will always be a way to run!

Reflect:

- What areas of temptation do you struggle with the most? How do you avoid putting yourself in situations where you might be tempted

(or do you)?

- If you find yourself faced with a temptation, do you pray that God will help you see that area of escape?
- Read Hebrews 4:15 again (we read it on Monday). Jesus may not have faced the same specific temptations we do (no internet in Bible times, for example), but the core issues that drive those temptations remain the same, even now. Jesus knows what it is like to be tempted! He understands! Does this give you comfort? Do you know that you can go to Him with your struggles?

Pray:

Gracious God, thank you that you never allow me to enter a situation where sin will be impossible to resist. Give me the wisdom to recognize what situations might be dangerous for me, but if I find myself there, Lord, help me to see the way out and the strength to flee. By the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthen my desire for righteousness and the pursuit of your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 16

SATURDAY, MARCH 2

Reflect on This Weeks Reading:

What did you learn this week that was new or challenging?

What does God want you to know?

What does God want you to do?

Space for Notes



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

MATTHEW 25:40

Collide

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY, MARCH 3

Inside Out!

Day 17

MONDAY, MARCH 4

INSIDE OUT

Read: Matthew 25:31-46

Yesterday we left our church campus so that we could go out and **be** the church in our community. We looked outside ourselves and looked for ways to serve and love those around us. Why? Because this is what we are called to do as followers of Jesus!

In today's passage, Jesus shifts His message from the parables He's been telling in the previous verses to a glimpse into the future – a moment in the final judgment. The criteria upon which He divides the people is not based upon success, power, church attendance or Bible knowledge. It is based upon their care for the hungry, thirsty, sick and imprisoned. It is based upon love for those who are often considered outcasts. As followers of Jesus, we are called to care for those in need, to seek out opportunities to share our time and resources with those who are struggling. It's not just an option we can choose to do if we get around to it – the hungry, the thirsty, the sick and imprisoned are so important to Jesus that He tells a story in which our final judgment comes down to whether we loved them well or not! It is when we care for and serve "the least of these" that we most accurately reflect the love and care of God. Let's love our community well!

Reflect:

- Do you seek out opportunities to care for “the least of these”? How can you be more intentional about doing so?
- What was most rewarding about your project this week?
- What was most challenging?

Pray:

Gracious God, help me to see the “least of these” with your eyes of compassion, love, care and mercy. Soften my heart to the needs around me and create in me not simply a willingness, but a desire to serve those in need and show them the love of Jesus. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 18

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

THE HELPER

Read: John 14:15-31

Jesus looks in the faces of the 11 remaining disciples and sees in their eyes confusion, fear and worry. He knows His time grows short. It is only hours now before He will be taken from them and their world will be turned completely upside down. He is explaining that when He dies, which is imminent, He will live again, and then the Father, Himself (the Son), and the Holy Spirit will be with them forever – they will never be alone! Jesus, who is about to perform the greatest act of love in history, wants them to know His love for them does not end there. It continues.

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, was not only for the disciples. He is for us as well, and we are never alone. As believers in Christ, the Holy Spirit lives within us, helping us to understand Scripture, know truth, and live lives that bring glory to God and reflect the love of Christ.

Reflect:

- Do you understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer? Do you depend on Him as a Helper in your Christian walk or do you tend to ignore Him?
- Why is it so important to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as followers of Jesus?

- Reread verse John 14:15 and then John 14:21 – 24. What does Jesus say about those who love Him? What does our obedience (or lack thereof) say about our love for Christ? Is it possible to truly love Jesus and yet ignore His Word? Why or why not?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you that you don't leave me to navigate this life alone. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit that opens my eyes and heart to the truth about Jesus. Help me to be sensitive to His leading and that I would continue to grow, becoming more and more Christ-like in the way I live and love others. Give me the strength and desire to be obedient to your will and your ways. Thank you for your tremendous love for me and help me to reflect that love in my daily life. In Jesus' precious and holy name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 19

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

INSIDE OUT

Read: Romans 12:9-21

In Paul's letter to the church at Rome, he describes the life of a believer – a life of love, humility, selflessness, integrity and service. A life in which our ethics are not dependent upon our circumstances and our behavior remains the same regardless of the behavior of those around us. All these things sound reasonable – and doable – until we start to deal with all of the other people! Paul opens this passage by calling us to **authenticity**, and that is truly where all of this must begin. Our Christian life must be fueled by our love for Jesus and our own pursuit of God. Otherwise, we're just pretending. Without Christ's love at the core, our efforts will be forced and fake and only successful so long as our human patience holds out – and some of us have less of that than others. None of us can live out these verses in any sustainable way without Jesus. People are messy (sometimes WE are the messy ones!) and our hope of living out Paul's words is truly dependent upon our allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us from within, changing our hearts and growing our faith so that we can live – and love – like Jesus Himself.

Reflect:

- What characteristics in this passage come naturally to you? What characteristics are not natural at all?

- Paul knows that what he's suggesting is counter-intuitive – serve our enemies? That seems crazy! But it's what we're called to as believers. Have you ever seen someone live this way? How did that affect you?
- Paul calls us to leave our vengeance to God. Have you ever been deeply wronged or hurt by someone? Were you consumed with thoughts of getting back at them or were you able to leave it to God? Did you notice that God promises that HE will repay? Are you willing to leave that to God and His timing?

Pray:

Dear Lord, fill me with your spirit that I might live this Scripture out with authentic love and genuine motives. Open my eyes to opportunities to celebrate and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ. Grow my desire to serve and pray for the needs I see. Give me the strength to love those who are difficult to love and the willingness and grace to serve those who would be my enemy. Help me to truly overcome evil with good, and might I do all those things not for my own glory but for yours. Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 20

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

ABIDE

Read: John 15:1-11

The point of the Christian life is not to simply believe in Jesus and avoid hell. We are to bear fruit – that is, our character and our behavior should reflect Jesus in such a way that it draws others to Him. Our lives should be marked by integrity, love and compassion as we share the gospel with both our words and our actions. This is not something we can do in our own power. Jesus explains that if we don't abide or remain in Him, we cannot hope to produce fruit – we will simply wither away, and a withered branch is cut off and thrown aside for the burn pile. As followers of Jesus, **remaining (or abiding)** requires our time and effort. It's more than just showing up to church a few times a month. It is an intentional pursuit of Jesus by reading and studying His Word, prayer and consistent worship with other believers. These things are not just boxes to check so that we can say "I've done all the things!" but rather opportunities to discover more and more of who God is, deepen our relationship with Him and worship Him with other believers. All of these things build our faith and enable us to bear the fruit Christ calls us to bear!

Reflect:

- What do you find to be the hardest thing about remaining or abiding in Christ? Is this a habit you've already developed or are working to develop?

- Jesus says that when we are obedient to His commandments, we remain in His love, so part of remaining, abiding, is obedience to His Word, will and ways. How do you feel about obedience to Christ? Do you pursue this or does the notion of obedience bother you? Why did you answer the way you did?
- Why is it impossible to bear fruit unless you are abiding in Christ? What happens when we try to do this without Him?

Pray:

Precious Lord, draw me closer to you day by day. By the power of your Holy Spirit, help me to abide in you, faithfully serving you with all I say and do. Help me to live a life of obedience, not out of guilt or obligation, but out of joy and gratitude. Grow my faith and my devotion, so that my life is a powerful example of your love and redemption. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 21

FRIDAY, MARCH 8

HUMILITY

Read: Philippians 2:1-8

Humility is probably one of the most challenging things to cultivate as a follower of Jesus. Those of us who have it are in danger of losing it the moment we realize we have it. And those of us who don't have it, have no idea we don't have it – in fact, we probably think we're doing pretty well in the humility department.

Whether we think we already have it (but probably don't) or fear that we don't have it (but probably DO), we should continue to pursue humility because Jesus himself was humble! Jesus was **God**, and yet he humbled himself to become a man. If we do not grasp Jesus' divine identity and the magnitude of his greatness, we cannot hope to recognize the depth of his humility in veiling divinity to become a human being, born in a stable, raised in a shabby little town by a family of no influence or power. Jesus, who holds the power that created the universe, became a human baby - for us. Because He loves us.

Humility is not self-deprecation or living in perpetual shame for what dirtbags we are. Humility is – as I've heard it defined – not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less. Verses 3-4 in our passage for today define it as “counting others more significant than yourselves” and looking “to the interests of others” rather than only our own. Jesus lived with tremendous humility – and as His followers, so should we.

Reflect:

- Have you ever considered what Jesus left behind in order to become a man?
- How does Jesus' humility inspire you to humility (or does it)?
- What is the most difficult thing about pursuing humility? What is the greatest challenge for you personally as you read these verses?
- Are you willing to pray that God will convict you of your own need for humility?

Pray:

Gracious Heavenly Father, forgive me for my arrogance. Forgive me for thinking I deserve more. For insisting that my own needs are more important than the needs of those around me. Help me to live a life of humility that brings you glory. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help me to care deeply for others and remove any root of selfishness or conceit. Thank you, Lord, that you were willing to veil your divinity and humble yourself for me. May I be inspired by your example. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 22

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

Reflect on This Weeks Reading:

What did you learn this week that was new or challenging?

What does God want you to know?

What does God want you to do?

Space for Notes



For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like.

JAMES 1:23-24

Collide

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY, MARCH 10

Doing Meets Hearing

James 1:19-27

Take Notes on the Sermon Below

Day 23

MONDAY, MARCH 11

DOING MEETS HEARING

Read: James 1:19-27

"Quick to hear, slow to speak..." These words of James stand in stark contrast to our natural tendency to be quick to speak and slow to hear, if we bother to hear at all. Social media has given everyone a platform to offer opinions and commentaries on everything from diets to politics and it doesn't take long for a scan of the comments section to reveal that no one's really listening at all.

But that's actually not all James says in verse 19 - he says, "let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, **slow to anger;**" **Slow to anger...** Could it be that part of being slow to anger includes being a hearer first - not just being quiet, as we formulate our response, but really listening? So much divisiveness in our country, communities, families and even our churches comes about because we are so much more determined to be heard than to hear.

As our passage continues, James implores us to not simply hear the word, but to DO it. It's not enough to simply know what it says, it is the doing it, with grace and love and compassion, that sets us apart. As doers of the word, we will stand out as refreshingly different, and will be light and life in this dark world!

Reflect:

- What is the most difficult part of this passage for you to put into practice? Why do you think that is so difficult for you?
- Do you think social media has impacted our willingness to listen to other people? Do you think it has made us more obsessed with being heard?
- Reread verse 26 – what does this tell us about our need to control the way we speak to people if we claim to be a follower of Jesus?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, it can be so easy to hear your Word and then walk away without even considering whether or not I am applying it. Forgive me for the times I ignore it, for the times I think of everyone else who needs to hear it without realizing that I need it more than anyone else. Help me to be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. Help me to be a doer of the Word, and as such, light and life to the world around me. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 24

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

LOVE AND HATE

Read: John 15:12-27

Jesus once again commands His disciples to love each other as I have loved you. Jesus loved them selflessly, powerfully, patiently and unconditionally. And He knew that they would need each other – not just in the days to come, but in the years to come. Ministry would be hard, and they would need to be strong and united for each other.

But it isn't only their relationship with Him (John 15:1-11) or their relationships with each other that Jesus is concerned about – He also addresses their relationship with the world. He didn't want them to be surprised when the hatred and vitriol He experienced was visited upon them.

We shouldn't be surprised when a world that does not know God is hostile to the things of God. A world that rejects Jesus is not going to embrace His followers. But Jesus instructions are clear – we need to love each other just as Jesus has loved us, and we continue to bear witness about Jesus, providing an example of what Christ's love looks like in a world that desperately needs it!

Reflect:

- What does it look like in your life to love others as Jesus loved you? How can you be more intentional about showing that love, especially to those who might be difficult to love?

- Why is it so important that we, as followers of Jesus, love each other?
- Is it possible to love Jesus, and yet not follow His commandments?
- Should we be surprised when the world is increasingly hostile to the things of God? Why or why not? How should we react to that hostility? How did Jesus react?

Pray:

Dear Lord, I know the only way to love the way you've called me to love is through the power of the Holy Spirit. Fill me with your spirit. Transform my heart so that I can love selflessly and sacrificially. Give me the strength to stand strong in my faith in the face of adversity, not with an attitude of angry defiance, but with an attitude of love and compassion for the lost who don't yet know you. I pray these things in your precious name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 25

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13

DOING MEETS HEARING

Read: 1 Samuel 15:22

The nation of Israel was in trouble. They had become more devoted to their religious traditions and ceremonies than they were to God Himself. They were performing all the rituals, making their burnt offerings and sacrifices, but their hearts were far from God. They'd stopped caring about sin and rather than trying to live a life that pleased God, they just figured their sacrifices would cover it. From a distance they looked like religious people. But their worship was empty.

God's desire for us as His beloved sons and daughters is not that we would just go through the motions of religion, but that we would pursue a deep relationship with Him that yields a life devoted to His will and His ways. Religious ritual doesn't mean anything if our hearts are not in it. When we hear the Word preached, are we putting it into practice? Are we doers? Or just hearers? God wants our hearts, not just our occasional attention and he wants our lives, not just our Sunday mornings. The result isn't legalistic rule-following, but a vibrant life pursuing Christ and living out the purposes for which we were created!

Reflect:

- Have you ever found yourself satisfied with just following religious traditions (like coming to church every Sunday) but not bothering to really pursue God the rest of the week?

- How can you safeguard your heart against worship that is empty and just “going through the motions”? Why does it matter?
- Are you intentional about being a “doer” and not just a “hearer”?

Pray:

Gracious God, convict my heart when my worship is empty. Convict my heart when I presume upon your grace to forgive my thoughtlessness and rebellion. Convict my heart when I make excuses for my sin and try to justify or minimize it. Help me to recognize what my salvation cost you and prevent me from taking it for granted. May I embrace a vibrant life pursuing you with my whole heart, soul and mind! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 26

THURSDAY, MARCH 14

IT'S BETTER THAT I GO...

Read: John 16:1-15

There are some hard days coming and Jesus doesn't want those hardships to come as a surprise and derail the faith of the disciples. But it's not all bad news. Even though Jesus is making it clear that He will soon be leaving them, He's not leaving them alone. He will be sending the Helper, the Holy Spirit, who will guide them and be with them. The Holy Spirit would not be limited by time or space the way Jesus was in His earthly ministry and His truths would be spoken directly to the heart, providing strength, wisdom and power in their future ministries.

The Holy Spirit provides the same for us today - and we need Him, just as the disciples did. God does not call us into His plans and purposes, and then just leave us to figure it on our own - we can't - and to try always leads to disaster. As followers of Jesus who have accepted the work of the cross by faith, we have the Holy Spirit living within us (1 Corinthians 3:16) and it is the Holy Spirit who enables and empowers our Christian walk. The Holy Spirit guides us, gifts us, comforts us, convicts us, intercedes for us and transforms us! We are not alone!

Reflect:

- Can you see how having the Holy Spirit was actually better for the disciples than the physical presence of Jesus?

- What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in your life as a follower of Jesus?
- Do you depend on the Holy Spirit in your efforts to live out God's will in your life or do you tend to try to forge forward in your own power? If it's the latter, what would it look like for you to depend on the Holy Spirit's power instead?
- Can you know God's will without the Holy Spirit?

Pray:

Precious Lord, thank you that you do not leave me alone to try and do it all in my own power. Thank you for the Holy Spirit that guides, gifts, comforts, convicts, intercedes and transforms. Fill me with your Spirit, Lord, that I might walk in your power and live the life of purpose you had in mind when you created me! Reveal to me areas where I am trying to do it all on my own. Help me to be sensitive to the Spirit's guidance and direction, that all I say and do would bring you glory. In the precious name of Jesus, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 27

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

DOING MEETS HEARING

Read: Ephesians 2:8-10

What we do matters. As followers of Jesus, how we live, the way we talk, even what we think matters – not because anything we do (or don't do) saves us, but because we are saved by grace through faith, and that changes us. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that God has prepared good works ahead of time – good works specifically intended for us to do.

Becoming a Christ-follower doesn't mean that we breathe a heavy sigh of relief and then sit back and wait for the second coming. Becoming a Christ-follower means that through the power of the Holy Spirit our hearts and minds are transformed and we become concerned about the things – and people – that concern God. We live differently to become a beacon of Christ's light and hope. We love more intentionally so that we can spread the love of Jesus to those who've never known it. It's not enough to just hear the good news, friends. We've got to be living it out as well. Look for those opportunities God has placed in your path to spread the gospel and be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Reflect:

- What do these verses tell us about being saved by what we do (or don't do)? Do you believe that, or do you still struggle with thinking you have to do certain things in order to be saved?

- Have you ever considered that God has already prepared "good works" – specific opportunities - intended just for you?
- The things God calls us to do as believers are not always big, sweeping, complicated or dramatic – in fact, they're usually not. It's often meeting a need, having a conversation or exhibiting grace and love in a difficult situation. Are there ways you could be more sensitive to those "good works" God has called you to?

Pray:

Gracious God, thank you for the free gift of salvation. Thank you that I am saved by my faith through the blood of Jesus. Keep my heart tender to this truth so that I would never take Christ's sacrifice on the cross for granted! Help me to see the world around me with your eyes so that I recognize the opportunities you've created for me to share and live out the gospel in tangible ways. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 28

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

Reflect on This Weeks Reading:

What did you learn this week that was new or challenging?

What does God want you to know?

What does God want you to do?

Space for Notes



Listen, my dear brothers and sisters:
Has not God chosen those who are
poor in the eyes of the world to be rich
in faith and to inherit the kingdom he
promised those who love him?

JAMES 2:5

Collide

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

Love Meets Favoritism

James 2:1-13

Take Notes on the Sermon Below

Day 29

MONDAY, MARCH 18

LOVE MEETS FAVORITISM

Read: James 2:1-13

It is clear that God's way of seeing people is very different from man's way. We tend to admire power, wealth and prestige. We cater to the rich and famous. We go out of our way to accommodate the powerful. That is the way of the world! But it is not God's way. From the place where Christ was born to the people Jesus called to be His disciples, it's obvious that God operates in a completely different way. He did not send His Son to be born in a palace, nor did Jesus choose the educated or influential to be among the twelve. God looks to the inside, not the outside, and so should we.

Before God, one's wealth means nothing if he does not know Jesus and one's faith means everything, even if he or she is overlooked and ignored by the world. We in the church are called to treat everyone with the same dignity and respect, no matter who they are. There are undoubtedly giants of the faith in our midst, and we will never know it by looking at them.

Reflect:

- Have you seen people being treated a certain way simply on the basis of how they look? Have you experienced this in your own life?

- Have you ever been tempted to discount or ignore someone based on their outward appearance?
- Why do you think God always chooses those we would not expect?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I've made judgments about people based on their appearance. Convict my heart when I am tempted to consider external things rather than internal things. Remove from me any tendency towards partiality for any reason and give me the wisdom and discernment to not only recognize, but to pursue, spiritual wealth rather than worldly wealth. In Christ's holy name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 30

TUESDAY, MARCH 19

I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD

Read: John 16:16-33

Jesus continues to pour out His last-minute instructions to the disciples. His impending arrest and crucifixion is now only hours away, and there is so much that Jesus wants them to know before these events unfold. Jesus knows the excruciating pain and suffering that awaits Him, and yet His concern is preparing His disciples. He also knows that they will desert Him in His hour of greatest need. And yet His care and concern for them remains because He also knows that their lives and their mission will not be defined by this moment of failure.

Jesus calls them to have peace - amidst the chaos and the fear and the trouble, through Him there is peace. The troubles of this world may seem overwhelming, but Jesus has overcome the world.

Jesus offers the same to us. The world is full of trouble and hardship. We fail and fall short. But our life is not defined by our failures and this world is only our temporary home (Hebrews 13:14). Cling to these truths! Take heart, Jesus has overcome the world!

Reflect:

- The disciples were about to endure one of the most frightening and uncertain times they would ever face, and yet Jesus promises that through Him they can have peace. Do you have peace in the midst

of trial and hardship? Or do you struggle with being overwhelmed by the troubles in your life?

- Jesus knows that every single one of the disciples will abandon Him in His hour of greatest need, and yet He does not abandon them or disqualify them for ministry. Have you ever felt like your failures are so great that you can't be used by God? Can you now see how God forgives and restores us even when we fail Him?

Pray:

Dear Lord, the struggles and troubles of my life can sometimes feel overwhelming. I can easily be caught up in the stress of it all and forget that you offer me peace, even in the midst of chaos. Your peace is not dependent upon my circumstances! Help me to submit my heart and mind to you, Lord. Help me to believe the truth that Jesus overcame the world, and for that reason, I can take heart. Build my faith and give me strength to endure with grace. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen

Space for Notes

Day 31

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20

LOVE MEETS FAVORITISM

Read: 2 Chronicles 19:7

Throughout the Old Testament we are told to 'Fear the Lord'. The instruction isn't that we should be scared of God, as if He might smite us at any time for any random reason. Rather it is a call to recognize His holiness, His power, His majesty and His greatness. Were we to suddenly find ourselves in His Heavenly presence, make no mistake, "fear" would undoubtedly be one of the words we'd use to describe our feelings about it!

It is this understanding of the reverence and awe with which we should regard God that gives tremendous weight to His instruction here in 2 Chronicles 19:7. One of the things God does not tolerate? Favoritism. Partiality. For any reason.

It's likely that all of us have been both recipients of, and responsible for, instances of partiality, where clouded judgments rendered unjust results. God calls us to rise above the world's tendency to esteem some more than others. Pray for the Holy Spirit's help to see people as God sees them – precious creations bearing the image of God, loved and valued equally.

Reflect:

- When you hear the phrase, "Fear the Lord," what automatically comes to your mind? Do you think you have a healthy fear of God? Or have you even really thought about it?

- How might a fear of God impact how seriously we take His instructions?
- Why would God make a point to call out injustice or partiality? Does this help you realize how seriously he takes this issue?

Pray:

Gracious God, forgive me for the times I've allowed anything other than your truth to sway my opinions. Forgive me for the times I've been anything other than impartial in my judgments. By the power of your Holy Spirit, cleanse me of any tendency to treat people a certain way based upon my preconceived ideas or opinions. Give me eyes to see everyone as your precious creation, bearing your image and loved by you. Help me to be someone who reflects your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 32

THURSDAY, MARCH 21

JESUS PRAYS...FOR US!

Read: John 17

John 17 is called the High Priestly Prayer and it can be divided into three sections: Jesus' prayer regarding Himself, Jesus' prayer for the disciples and finally Jesus' prayer for us, those who would come later. As He prays those believers who would come later (including us), Jesus prays for unity in the church, just as there is unity between Himself and the Father. Through the unity of the believers, the church will be a witness for the gospel and the love God has for us all - a love that will be evident in those who follow Him.

There are times when it seems, even as followers of Jesus, we can be more concerned with being right than being united in Christ and a witness for the gospel. We can easily become consumed with our differences and our preferences rather than recognizing that Christ Himself calls us to be united by our love for HIM, not divided by other things. Those of us who declare Christ as Lord and Savior of our lives are called to love those who declare the same, even when we differ on secondary issues or worship styles. We are to be united by our devotion to Christ and our love of the gospel and each other - may we grow more and more united that we might be a witness to the world for the glory of God!

Reflect:

- Take the time to reread verses 20-26. Why do you think Jesus, in one of His final prayers before His crucifixion, prayed for unity among believers? What does that tell us about how important it was to Him?
- What issues have you seen divide people in churches? Do those issues represent conflict with how God's Word tells us we are saved (by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone)? If not, are they worth dividing over?
- How can we be more intentional about seeking unity with one another as Christ-followers rather than focusing on our differences or preferences?

Pray:

Precious Lord, thank you that I live in a country where I can freely gather with other believers for worship. Thank you that you don't expect me to live in isolation but that you call me to a community of believers, to love and be loved, to support and be supported, to pray for others and to receive prayer. Help me to love others well and pursue unity as Christ desired it. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 33

FRIDAY, MARCH 22

LOVE MEETS FAVORITISM

Read: Acts 10:34-43

There are no restrictions on who is accepted to become a follower of Christ. Anyone from any background or any culture is welcome! It does not matter who you are or what you've done, Jesus receives you with open arms. The only requirement is faith in Christ, believing in His divinity, His death on the cross for our sin and His resurrection. We all need Jesus, and He is available to every one of us.

There is no such thing as preferential status amongst believers. There are none of us that are more worthy than others. Romans 3:23 tells us that we've all sinned, we've all fallen short. But our salvation is not about us. It has nothing to do with who WE are and everything to do with who Christ is! Forgiveness is available to everyone who seeks it through Jesus!

Reflect:

- Have you ever known someone that you thought was beyond the reach of Jesus (maybe that someone was YOU)?
- When you consider that our salvation has nothing to do with who we are and everything to do with who Jesus is, how does that affect any notion that some people seem more "worthy" than others?

- How can we be more intentional about welcoming people who might feel uncomfortable in church?

Pray:

Gracious God, thank you that you are a God who accepts all of us that call on Christ. Help me to be someone who welcomes everyone, regardless of where they come from or where they've been. Help me to be someone who authentically loves and cares for those who don't yet know you. Give me eyes to see the lost, the marginalized and those who have walked through the doors of our church feeling awkward and uncertain. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help me to show them the love of Jesus and the truth of the gospel. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 34

SATURDAY, MARCH 23

Reflect on This Weeks Reading:

What did you learn this week that was new or challenging?

What does God want you to know?

What does God want you to do?

Space for Notes



What good is it, my brothers and sisters,
if someone claims to have faith but has
no deeds? Can such faith save them?

JAMES 2:14

Collide

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY, MARCH 24

Faith Meets Works

Palm Sunday

James 2:14-16

Take Notes on the Sermon Below

Day 35

MONDAY, MARCH 25

FAITH MEETS WORKS

Read: James 2:14-16

There comes a point when our Christian faith must yield Christian works, not because they save us, but because they are a sign that we are saved. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that if we are in Christ, we are a NEW creation! Our lives will look different because WE are different, and this includes both our attitudes and our actions.

James is not suggesting that we are saved by our good deeds, but is making it clear that saving faith is transformative faith and as followers of Jesus, we should become concerned with those things that concern God. God is Holy, so we should be pursuing holiness in our own lives, not because our efforts save us, but because our faith renders in us a desire to please God. God's love and compassion for those in need compels us to meet those needs, not because our service to the poor contributes to our salvation, but because we've come to care deeply for those God cares about.

If we lack any interest in pursuing God's will, God's purpose and God's plan, do we really possess saving faith?

Reflect:

- How has your life changed since becoming a follower of Jesus?

- What is the difference between being “legalistic” (being focused on following all the “rules”) and desiring to live a life of faith the yields good works?
- What motivates the good we do when we are devoted to following Jesus? What motivates the good we do when we just want to follow the rules? Why is it important to know the difference?
- Do you truly understand that your good works have nothing to do with your salvation?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, give me a tender heart to recognize good works as an opportunity to love people with the love of Christ and not an obligation that has anything to do with my salvation. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and transform my attitudes and my life so that people can see Christ through me. Help me to care deeply for those things that concern you and guide me in your will and your ways. In Christ’s holy name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 36

TUESDAY, MARCH 26

JESUS' ARREST, PETER'S DENIAL

Read: John 18

It is hard to imagine how confusing this moment must have been for the disciples. Jesus had been telling them that He was leaving them, but they did not expect this to be His exit strategy. And how baffling it must have been to see the armed band of soldiers led by their friend Judas, a man they'd lived and served alongside for several years now. The disciples scatter, and only Peter and John follow Jesus after His arrest. Peter, who'd shown such bravado earlier in the evening, now lies about knowing Jesus. Three times he is asked if he was a disciple. And three times he denies it.

For all Jesus' efforts to prepare them, their first moments without Him don't show much promise. How can this band of fearful cowards possibly change the world?

Sometimes we fail. Whether it is our best effort that just didn't turn out the way we'd hoped or whether our own fears and insecurities prevent us from trying at all, sometimes we fail. Sometimes we fail big. But that's not the end of the story. That we find ourselves 2000 years later proclaiming the name of Jesus proves that the disciples' story was far from over. And so is our own.

Reflect:

- Have you ever felt that a failure in your faith journey will prevent God from ever using you? Do you recognize that this is not true?
- When you consider the disciples abandoned Jesus in His hour of greatest need, but then, through the power of the Holy Spirit, were able to change the world, how does that change your perspective on your own failures?
- The disciples faced fear and uncertainty just as we do, yet they overcame that through Christ to become powerful messengers for the gospel. How does this impact how you view the fears you face in your life?

Pray:

Gracious God, remind me that my failures do not define me. YOU define me. Help me to let go of my past missteps, repent where repentance is called for, and move on into the purposes and plans you have for me. Lord, you know me better than I know myself. You know where fear takes hold and where regret clouds my perspective. Free me from any lies of the enemy that prevent me from moving forward. Help me to grasp your love for me and embrace the power of the Holy Spirit to live a powerful, gospel-centered life for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 37

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

FAITH MEETS WORKS

Read: 1 John 3:16-18

(note this is 1 John, not the gospel of John)

John pulls directly from the words of Jesus who said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13). John starts with the greatest, most dramatic of sacrifices (our very lives), but our love for one another is most often demonstrated in the simple everyday sacrifices of time, energy and resources we make to meet the needs of our fellow believers. When we've received the love of God, and abide in Him, we will be moved to share that love by caring for others in practical ways. Our brilliant theology, our eloquence, our upright lives mean very little if they aren't supported by a desire to love sacrificially.

Reflect:

- Recall a time when someone made a sacrifice to show you love and/or care for you in a time of need. How did that make you feel?
- Have you ever made a significant sacrifice for the benefit of someone else? What prompted it? How did you feel? Did anyone know or was it simply between you and God?

- What is the hardest thing for you to sacrifice: time, energy or money? Why do you think that particular thing is difficult for you? Do you make those sacrifices anyway or do you tend to avoid them?
- How has prayer prompted the type of sacrifices you make for your fellow believers?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, you know all of the needs that surround me. You know when I am in a position to meet another's need and you know when I am the one in need. Give me the wisdom and discernment to know when and how you've called me to provide for another. Give me a heart of care and compassion, willing to sacrifice when that is what you call me to do. Help me to be someone who sacrifices out of your love, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and never out of guilt, compulsion or a desire to be seen. Thank you for giving me an example of the ultimate sacrifice through Christ. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 38

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

IT IS FINISHED

Read: John 19

As a follower of Jesus, I'm not sure there is anything more jarring or more humbling than a contemplation upon the crucifixion and the realization that it is our sin that sent Him there. Jesus knew what was coming, and He went, quietly and willingly.

For us.

It is important to understand that the cross was not an unexpected interruption to a ministry in its prime, it was the very reason Jesus was born. This was the plan, it was always the plan, and Jesus knew it all along. Now, as He hung on the cross and prepared to breathe His last, He declared: It is finished. He had accomplished what He came to do. He had paid the penalty for the sins of mankind. His purpose among us had been fulfilled.

There is no sin so great that the cross cannot cover it. And there is no sin so small that the cross was not required. Through Jesus' death, He paid the penalty to mend the relationship with God that was broken through our sin and rebellion. It was a price we could not pay, and so He paid it for us. Is there any love greater than that?

Reflect:

- Have you ever taken the time to really think about the crucifixion and the fact that Jesus died for you, to pay a price you could not pay?
- Jesus' words, "It is finished", are significant – he meant that...it was finished! There was nothing else to do to pay for our sin. Our salvation had been secured. When you consider your own salvation, do you recognize that the work was done on the cross and you don't need to add to it with anything you do? Do you recognize that your faith in what Christ did for you is all that is required?
- Do you fully grasp the love God has for you?

Pray:

Precious Lord, there are no words to adequately express my gratitude for the work of the cross. Don't allow familiarity or time to dull my heart to the magnitude of the sacrifice you made or the depth of love for me that inspired it. Help me to live a life that brings you glory! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 39

FRIDAY, MARCH 29

FAITH MEETS WORKS

Read: Titus 3:1-9

The complicated thing about the Christian life is that we have to live it in the world with all these other people! As followers of Jesus, we're called to live in community and not simply live in community, but to do so while speaking evil of no one, avoiding quarrelling, being gentle and showing perfect courtesy toward all people. ALL people? Yes. All people. And wait, there is more. We are to be devoted to good works. Devoted to them.

All that might feel a little overwhelming, and if we were expected to do it in our own power, we'd never manage it – at least not in any sustainable way. But God has not left us to try and fail and then just try harder. As followers of Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit living within us, and through Him our hearts are regenerated and renewed. We were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions (and more). But no longer. We are a new creation! And the Holy Spirit continues to empower our life of faith, enabling us to live lives that are a compelling witness to the grace and love and glory of God.

Devote yourself to prayer. Commit yourself to the reading of God's Word. Submit yourself to the leadership of Jesus Christ. And discover the life beautiful life for which God created you!

Reflect:

- What do you find the most difficult about living in community? What is the best thing about living in community?
- Do you tend to try and live the life we are called to live under your own power? Do you understand what it means to allow the Holy Spirit the freedom to work in your heart to transform you from the inside out?
- Are you willing to submit your whole life to the Lordship of Christ, or do you tend to hold some things back to keep control of them? Do you really think life is better under your own control? What causes you to hesitate to allow Him free reign in your life?

Pray:

Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit within me. Help me to see those areas I still want to control and those areas that prevent me from truly living the life you've called me to as a follower of Jesus. Draw me closer to you, so that my life might bring glory and honor to your name. In Jesus' holy name, Amen.

Space for Notes

Day 40

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

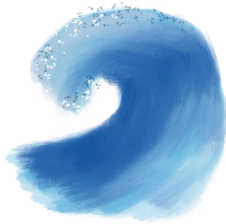
Reflect on This Weeks Reading:

What did you learn this week that was new or challenging?

What does God want you to know?

What does God want you to do?

Space for Notes



But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.

JAMES 1:6

Collide

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY, MARCH 31

Easter

Take Notes on the Sermon Below

Extra Notes

Extra Notes

Extra Notes