



THE APPRENTICE

Lenten Devotional 2025

A 40 DAY DEVOTIONAL FOR LENT 2025

Dear Church family,

For hundreds of years, Christians have been participating in Lent. Lent has traditionally been a time to prepare our hearts for Easter by fasting, praying, and repenting of sin as we get ready to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

You've probably heard of Lent before—you may have even participated in it before. But it's not just an empty tradition or a meaningless ritual. Christians all over the world observe Lent as a way of removing clutter from our lives so that we can see Jesus more clearly during Easter.

So, traditionally, people who practice Lent give something up in order to spend more time in prayer. What you fast from could be just about anything—chocolate, TV, social media, or even choosing to drink only water or forfeit hairdressers!

When we think about our discipleship journey, I wonder what you think of first? For me, I often focus on the fact that I am becoming all that Christ wants me to be but then if I'm honest I stop and recognise that it feels like I must put in a lot of work, and it becomes more about duty and less about a flourishing relationship with Jesus.

A favourite programme we like to watch each year is 'The Apprentice'. Watching the overly confident applicants trying to win over Lord Sugar and his money for their business plan is certainly entertaining. Watching the different tasks, the arguments, the creativity and of course the inevitable ending each week of someone being fired for not measuring up can either make us smile or reflect based on awkwardness.

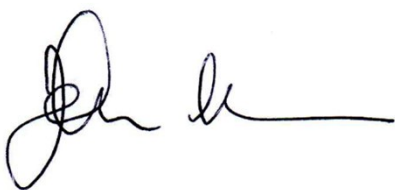
I wonder if we view our apprenticeship under Jesus as a challenge that might mean we miss the mark and get excluded from the life of faith. In my own personal reading recently, I read the following:

'The call to apprentice under Jesus is a call not to do more but to do less. It's not addition but subtraction. It's not about increasing complexity but about pursuing simplicity....'

(Practicing the Way John Mark Comer)

As we approach Lent this year, we invite you to move beyond the sense of duty that causes us to feel like being with Jesus is a chore and becoming like Him is way beyond our understanding and ability. We invite you practice just being with Him, to take some time each day to stop, use the devotional provided and allow Jesus to journey with you to help you to become like him.

Grab your Bible, a journal or notepad alongside your coffee and spend time with Father. Blessings,



**Major John Mclean, MA.
Corps Officer
Bedford Congress Hall
Salvation Army Church & Community Centre.**

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HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

By using the '3 Rs' we hope you will be able to use this devotional to dig deeper into God's Word, to apply it to your daily discipleship journey and consider what applications you need to make in your spiritual formation and prayer life.

READ

Sometimes when we don't have a clue what to say to God, it helps to have a Scripture to prompt our words and thoughts. Each day we have provided some Scripture readings to help you focus your thinking and to use throughout the day.

REFLECT

To start you off on your thinking process we have added a short devotional thought, which we hope will allow you to begin your daily time with God considering the significance of the reading and space for personal reflection and application.

RESPOND

After reading God's Word, and processing the significance of the reading through reflection, we have a response which is the starting point for prayer and a prompt to help you dig deeper.

Day One:

A Question

READ

'While Jesus was praying by himself, having only the disciples near him, he asked them this question: "Who are the crowd saying that I am?" "Some say that you are John the Baptist," they replied. "Others that you are Elijah, and others think that one of the old-time prophets has come to life again." Then he said, "And who do you say that I am?" "God's Christ! said Peter.'

(Luke 9:18-20)

REFLECT

The journey of Lent, being with Christ as he heads toward Jerusalem, Calvary and the empty tomb, makes little sense if we do not have a good idea who this Christ is. This trip is filled with too many challenges and heartbreaks if we are unclear regarding direction and leadership.

If we cannot say, 'this is God's Christ', why even begin?

Along the way He will ask us to give up everything. We will be challenged to lose our lives for His sake. Persecution and suffering will also be commonplace as we travel together. With the deep conviction that the God of the universe is doing something special and eternal, and that He has invited us to be a part of it, it really isn't worth our time if we are not convinced this One, is the Messiah.

Lent is for the faithful not the wishful!

RESPOND

Jesus, show me the areas of my life where I do not show that you are the Messiah. Help me in this area to model the behaviours that you taught me through your word.

Day Two:

Majesty & Human Dignity

READ

'O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you.' (Psalm 8:1-2)

REFLECT

How does God express himself to His human family through His creation? What can we learn about the creator from what He has made? How is it possible to miss the point regarding His brilliance and vastness if we pay attention to the miraculous details of the universe?

Is there anything in or on this earth that God spoke into existence that we have the ability to fully explain? Isn't it true when we look up at night, look out during the day and look down anytime we look in awe?

We gaze in amazement as we consider God's creative wonder.

The stars, the waves, the trees, the mountains, the millions of other unspeakably beautiful things that God has given us to enjoy should quite naturally lead us to two basic responses countless times each day. The first is to acknowledge his reality and majesty through wonder and awe. And second is to say thank you!

Lent is a good season to look around. We should be very impressed.

RESPOND

Write your own Psalm giving thanks for the Majesty of Jesus. Thank Him that you are made in his image.

Day Three:

An Ill-timed Request

READ

'Then Zebedee's two sons James and John approached him, saying "Master, we want you to grant us a special request." "What do you want me to do for you?" answered Jesus. "Give us permission to sit one on each side of you in the glory of your kingdom!" (Mark 10:35-37)

REFLECT

What do you want in heaven? What kinds of acknowledgment and or rewards are you expecting? What is it that motivates you to serve God?

It's not easy to imagine the kingdom of God without competition and levels of achievement and admiration. We simply do not have the capacity to think 'us and we' rather 'I and me'. The leap to a world where community reigns, others matter the most, and service is never filled with the need of personal rewards and cheers, just doesn't seem possible. Where we sit still seems to matter. Who wins still means so much to us. Who gets the raise, the bonus, the promotion still is vitally important. Privilege and entitlement have not lost their grip on our lives.

During Lent let's break free of those deadly desires and choose to learn from Christ the ultimate servant.

May we begin to realise that on our journey Jesus Christ is the reward. He doesn't just lead us to the reward!

RESPOND

Jesus, we recognise that so often we find our hearts and minds overcome with levels of competitiveness that are not of Your Kingdom. Help me to truly be Your apprentice and model your heart and mind.

Day Four:

Painful Prayer

READ

'Then he walked forward a little way and flung himself on the ground, praying that, if it were possible, he might not have to face the ordeal. "Dear Father," he said, "all things are possible to you. Please let me not have to drink this cup! Yet it is not what I want but what you want."' (Mark 14:35-36)

REFLECT

We have all had those times in our lives when prayer has not only been difficult, but it feels that it has been full of pain, messiness and challenge. Prayer is not always worship and praise. The hard work of telling God our deepest fears and feelings never comes easy. For us to prayerfully, and quite often, painfully ask our Lord to fix or remove a life-or-death situation in our lives is extremely difficult. To plea, 'Please God, not me,' with all your heart is a real prayer. But then to trust God with the answer of 'no' takes incredible faith and courage.

The cross of Jesus Christ has spiritually and practically redirected the history of the world. Everything meaningful and precious to us is centred in that one event. Without Good Friday, anything else would not be very good.

What if Jesus had demanded a 'yes' answer to His prayer? What if He had required God to find another way? What if His will was the most important?

Lent literally means thy will be done, not ours. Are we ready to pray?

RESPOND

Take time today to stop and move beyond superficial prayer but really pray from the dark difficult places you often ignore.

Day Five:

Preparing the Way

READ

'In due course John the Baptist arrived, preaching in the Judean desert: "You must change your hearts—for the kingdom of Heaven has arrived!" This was the man whom the prophet Isaiah spoke about in the words: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'. (Matt 3:1-3)

REFLECT

Loyalty is such a high value on the road to character. The ease of slipping into the trap of disloyalty can happen so quickly and subtly. It doesn't take much to turn our backs on truth if we are afraid, or jealous, or ambitious. Staying true to who or what we believe in takes courage. Playing it safe seems so often the best if self-preservation is our ultimate goal.

But wait! What if our loyalty is misplaced. Suppose we become loyal to the wrong thing. What if time, tradition, security keep us stuck in routines or people that lead us nowhere, or even worse, down the wrong path.

As Jesus' apprentices we know that our loyalty isn't misplaced and can never lead us down the wrong path. He invites us to change our hearts and minds and to invite the world to change.

Repent is a major, often used concept in many books of the New Testament. It means change. During Lent let's give up those elements in our lives to which we've been loyal for so long. Name them. Tell them goodbye and repent.

Now it's time to change and be set free. It is time to be loyal to heavenly things. Things that will last forever.

RESPOND

Lord, often I don't realise how much the things I value do not point people to you. I thank you that you invite me to 'prepare the way' in my world. Help me to focus on Your ways and set me free from the wrong values.

Day Six:

The Right Weapons

READ

'Suddenly one of Jesus' disciples drew his sword, slashed at the High Priest's servant and cut off his ear. At this Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its proper place. All those who take the sword die by the sword. Do you imagine that I could not appeal to my Father, and He would at once send more than twelve legions of angels to defend me? But then, how would the scriptures be fulfilled which say that all this must take place?" (Matt 26:51-54)

REFLECT

Sometimes I try to ignore the news because it highlights the problems in our world and causes me to feel overwhelmed but also powerless to do anything.

Self, community, or national defence by the use of power or violence seems to be of very little interest to Jesus. He confronts, challenges and corrects us, but He does not conquer with the sword. His weapons are different. He fights a different way.

Might, to Jesus, does not make it right. His journey to Jerusalem is focused on the fulfilment of scripture, rather than slaying through force a violent enemy. 'Put the sword away!' Stay on the journey of trust even when the cross seems so horrible and wrong. Let the surprise of Lent teach us new lessons of victory as it leads to peace.

Think of the transformation that will come our way when our God is trusted to realise His outcomes, rather than our strategies of defence and revenge.

Lent reveals a different way to live and grow.

RESPOND

Take time today to focus on the different news headlines in the world. Pray that the God of peace will bring an end to the conflicts in our world that challenge you.

Day Seven:

Giving All

READ

'Back in Bethany, while Jesus was in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster flask of most expensive perfume and poured it on his head as he was at table. The disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, "What is the point of such wicked waste? Couldn't this perfume have been sold for a lot of money which could be given to the poor?" Jesus knew what they were saying and spoke to them, "Why must you make this woman feel uncomfortable? She has done a beautiful thing for me. You have the poor with you always, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she was preparing it for burial. I assure you that wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the whole world, this deed of hers will also be recounted, as her memorial to me."' (Matt 26:6-13)

REFLECT

How do we measure value? What is a good deal, or what is wasteful? Is there a better way to use our time than to waste it on Lent? Is Lent about giving up, or giving all?

It is difficult, quite often, to know when we are wasting our time, or simply giving up a few things. Sacrifice without passion or purpose doesn't mean much.

The extravagant gift of the woman in our story was given to and for Christ. Not for recognition, respect or repayment. She simply, clearly wanted to give all to the One she loved.

Too much? Who knows. Wasteful? Perhaps. Jesus thought it was beautiful, and that the expression of her giving would never be forgotten.

Lent is not about giving up but giving all. When we do that, it will never be forgotten.

RESPOND

Jesus, often in the season of Lent we focus on what we are giving up rather than recognising any sacrifice we feel we are making fades into insignificance when we stop and reflect on your sacrifice.

Day Eight:

God Fearing!

READ

“Dear friends, don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you after that. But I'll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill you and then throw you into hell. Yes, he's the one to fear.

“What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them, and the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

“I tell you the truth, everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, the Son of Man will also acknowledge in the presence of God's angels. But anyone who denies me here on earth will be denied before God's angels.” (Luke 12:4-9)

REFLECT

I remember the conversation that tripped me up as I wasn't expecting it. What happens when we die? I wanted to ignore the question and continue cooking the dinner, but the reality was that if I didn't answer the question would continue. I wondered how I should respond to a 7-year-old without appearing to dismiss the question or scare them.

It is not easy to live, think and reflect upon our human existence without pondering, with a good deal of fear involved, the reality of our death. The sobering, and for some, terrifying fact remains. This journey we are on will come to an end. For a few it will be sooner, for others it will be later. But death will come for all of us. Another reality for everyone is the truth that no one knows very much about what it means to die, what will happen next, and how to explain it to each other. We simply are not experts in this area.

Surprisingly, Jesus tells us not to waste too much time worrying about this. It's the after-death part that should grab our attention. He knows about that. He has a lot of expertise in that area. He wants to share this all-important truth with us. Dying? Not our major problem. Living eternally? Stay close to Jesus. He will clear things up for us.

RESPOND

Father God, I thank you that in following Jesus I am invited to live a life beyond thinking about how this earthly life will end but I am invited to focus on the eternal. I pray for my family and friends who do not know you and ask that you use me in your mission.

Day Nine: Followership & Apprenticeship

READ

"If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps, he must give up all right to himself, carry his cross every day and keep close behind me. For the man who wants to save his life will lose it, but the man who loses his life for my sake will save it."
(Luke 9: 23-24)

REFLECT

One of the fundamental lessons we learn on our Lenten journey with Jesus is how to be a follower or an apprentice. Many of us make the critical mistake of seeing our relationship with Christ as something we add to our already well planned and well directed lives. Jesus, for those thinking this way, becomes insurance, protection, safety and security.

But to be an apprentice of Jesus requires an entirely different mindset. We are no longer long-term planners. We take direction, we don't give it. We learn dependence and trust, not independence and control. We work together, not apart. We adapt to change (repent), not just hold firmly to our own ideas. We learn to let Jesus lead, and we learn to follow His example.

There are uneasy and scary moments in a life committed to 'Followship' and not being in charge. For many of us, this is a new concept. To listen to and then follow our leader puts us in a vulnerable position. Surprise takes precedence over strategy. Flexibility is more important than rigidity.

Follow Christ and learn from Him. The adventure is well worth it!

RESPOND

Jesus, sometimes I say I follow you, but I really struggle with letting you have full control of my life, I struggle to release my plans, my expectations and my direction and feel like a failure. Show those areas in my life where I need to surrender.

Listen to the following and spend time responding to what it means to give the steering wheel of your life over to Christ.

<https://youtu.be/-e-xLwoClwM?si=qBpeqS-2DWP3HROk>

Day Ten:

Observation or Encounter?

READ

'When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and saw the man and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry up and come down. I must be your guest today." So, Zacchaeus hurriedly climbed down and gladly welcomed him.' (Luke 19:5-7)

REFLECT

I remember sitting at the piano at my home church. I was playing for a wedding but the whole town was in excitement because the late queen was coming to town, and I had a great vantage point as she drove past heading to the park she was opening. I saw her from a distance but didn't meet her.

Zacchaeus was rich, short and no doubt very lonely. Not many liked this tax collector. He paid dearly for his career with his wealth. To see Jesus coming through his town on the way to Jerusalem was an opportunity not to be missed. Observation was all Zacchaeus desired. He didn't expect more.

When Jesus stopped, looked around and spoke to Zach, his entire world began to change. Encounter is so much different than observation. Knowing Christ is so much more than simply seeing Him. Jesus invited Himself into a lonely man's life, a life filled with regret and shame. Zach jumped at the chance for relationship. Seeing was good, friendship was far better.

Are we content to see Jesus from a distance? Could we seize the moment, leave our place of indifference and walk into a new life with a forever friend?

Let us not safely settle for a comfortable vantage point to simply be an onlooker as Jesus comes our way but, to choose encounter. Our journey will never be the same.

RESPOND

Are there times when you look at Jesus but choose to ignore His invitation to encounter? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where you are in your discipleship journey and pray for a fresh encounter.

Day Eleven:

Search & Rescue

READ

'The Pharisees and their companions the scribes kept muttering indignantly about this to Jesus' disciples, saying, "Why do you have your meals with tax-collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but those who are ill. I have not come to invite the righteous but the sinners—to change their ways"' (Luke 5:30-32)

REFLECT

Good people, wealthy people, healthy people have a hard time wanting to redirect their well-ordered lives. Change does not come easily for those who are comfortable and secure. The gospel, quite often, becomes a threat, not an answer, to the successful.

Jesus, in His teaching, made it very clear that His message was directed toward the sinful, the lonely, and the suffering. He came to rescue and save those wanting a change, and those who desperately needed help. The gospel of Christ is not targeted for the 'best and the brightest.' He is searching for the lost, not those who believe they are already found. As we journey with Jesus, choosing to learn from Him during this season of Lent let us be mindful of two truths.

- Remember how lost and astray we are without the strong, loving arm of rescue we receive from Jesus Christ.
- Be sensitive to those in our world who feel estranged, alone, and hurting. Jesus is here looking for them.

RESPOND

Lord, it is true that I often walk through life saying I am walking with you but in truth I am doing my own thing. Show me how to live the transformed life.

Day Twelve:

Less of Me

READ

'The Spirit, however, produces in human life fruits such as these: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, tolerance and self-control—and no law exists against any of them. Those who belong to Christ have crucified their old nature with all that it loved and lusted for. If our lives are centred in the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit. Let us not be ambitious for our own reputations, for that only means making each other jealous.'

(Gal 5:22-26)

REFLECT

Living with someone who is dying is an educational experience. Doctor appointments, medication, medical routines, meal schedules, and so many other responsibilities to which to attend. Dying isn't easy and usually is not quick. Everything in our system and in our culture is geared to keep us alive. We simply do not want to die.

So, it is with our human nature. The Lord challenges us, when His spirit comes to live in our hearts, to crucify our old natural spirit and begin life anew. We are encouraged to allow the spirit of Christ guide us in a whole new way with a transformed life centred on, and in love with, Jesus. Easier said than done!

Our old, basic nature doesn't die easily or quickly. We keep wanting to live. We don't really know how to live fully in God's spirit. But God is patient with us.

Lent is a perfect time to grow in Him and begin to leave behind those things that were dragging us down and killing us. It's time to come alive in Him.

RESPOND

Celebrate the grace of God in your life today.

Day Thirteen:

More than a Philosophy

READ

"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me." (John 15:9-15)

REFLECT

One of the priceless gifts given to us from God, not only with each other, but also with Himself is the gift of friendship. For most of us it is incomprehensible to imagine that Jesus desires a friendship with us. We know our frailties and shortcomings. We realise that quite often we do not know how in any capacity to return friendship. But He still likes and loves us. He enjoys our company. We are not treated as servants. Our Saviour tells us everything. He lets us in on His life. He will lay down His life for us.

Could there be a better reason to follow Him and become his apprentice? Can we ask for a blessing richer than this? Is friendship with the Saviour the crown jewel of our human existence?

God in human form has openly expressed His intentions to be our friend. Let us respond with joy and commitment to do the same.

RESPOND

Jesus, I thank you that you are more than an idea, a philosophy, a theology but you are my Saviour and my Friend. I am filled with Joy as I become more like you.

Day Fourteen:

Keeping Perspective

READ

'John the Baptist was in prison when he heard what Christ was doing, and he sent a message through his own disciples asking the question, "Are you the one who was to come or are we to look for somebody else?" Jesus gave them this reply, "Go and tell John what you see and hear— that blind men are recovering their sight, cripples are walking, lepers being healed, the deaf hearing, the dead being brought to life and the good news is being given to those in need."' (Matt 11:2-5)

REFLECT

John was in prison. He had lost his perspective; the walls of his jail cell had the effect of reducing and distorting his understanding of Jesus, his cousin. Idle time, hour after hour, put doubts in John's mind. His dreams were dashed. His hopes of a restored, redeemed Israel were disappearing. He wondered if Jesus really was the one to set his people free.

It's not hard to give up. There are times when the natural thing to do seems to be to throw in the towel, call it quits, and walk away. That exciting joy filled, worked so hard for outcome, is just not happening. Darkness seems to overtake the light. Thank God for Jesus' reply to us. Miracles are happening. People are being healed.

Don't let the prison perspective of the world block out the kingdom reality of Christ's presence in our Lenten journey. The good news is being proclaimed. Look again! God's kingdom has arrived - we are picked and privileged to participate with our Lord Jesus.

RESPOND

Think and pray for those within your church who need to experience miracles in their lives.

Day Fifteen:

Learning to Love

READ

“You have heard that it used to be said, ‘You shall love your neighbour’, and ‘hate your enemy’, but I tell you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Heavenly Father. For he makes the sun rise upon evil men as well as good, and he sends his rain upon honest and dishonest men alike.” (Matt 5:43-45)

REFLECT

I remember the fear of arriving at the youth conference worried that I had to connect with new people, to be ‘Mr friendly!’ On arrival I realised that already there was one person who made it clear they just didn’t like me.

How do we learn to love those who do not love us? What does it take to cheer for those on the other team? When will we care for those who hurt us and continue to do so? Wouldn’t it be amazing if our love for others grew no matter what the circumstance or the outcome?

Our journey with Christ inspires us to open wide our hearts to all kinds of people. Reciprocal love is natural human love. Unconditional love only comes our way as a gift from God. As we apprentice with Him, He gives us to the capacity to love our enemies, and to pray for those who wish us harm. It is a remarkable thing to give our best to those who wish the worst toward us. When getting even, or paying back is no longer our motive, we are well on our way to becoming like Him.

28 years later the person who just didn’t like me is still a friend, we learned to love one another as Christ loves us!

RESPOND

Lord God, teach me how to love those who do not show love to me. Help me to remember how you modelled how to love even when those who followed you denied and betrayed you.

Day Sixteen:

Learning from the Master

READ

'Then they took the stone away and Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of these people standing here so that they may believe that you have sent me." And when he had said this, he called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with graveclothes and his face muffled with a handkerchief. "Now unbind him," Jesus told them, "and let him go home."' (John 11:41-44)

REFLECT

Miracles happen on our journey of faith. When Jesus is with us life and death events are bound to occur. Lazarus was his friend. He brought him back from the grave of death and decay into the brilliant light of day restored with life to live and love to share.

Jesus knows how to accomplish things beyond our capacity to understand. We stand in awe and silence as He restores people and dreams, back to life with the sound of His voice.

Quite often Jesus invites us to participate in the miracle process. He calls on us to 'unbind him and help him go home'. What an unspeakable gift He gives us. We get to help. We get in on the action. As we lovingly unbind the grave clothes of our friends, we literally experience life restored and healing happening. We are useful to Jesus.

Miracle workers? No. Servants of the miracle worker? You bet! Thanks for letting us serve with you Jesus!

RESPOND

Jesus, I thank You that I don't just get to watch You at work in the world, but You invite me to learn as Your apprentice. Use me to work Your miracles in the world.

Day Seventeen:

Learning to Trust

READ

“So don't worry and don't keep saying, 'What shall we eat, what shall we drink or what shall we wear?! That is what pagans are always looking for; your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your heart on the kingdom and his goodness, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course.

“Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble is enough for one day.” (Matt 6:31-34)

REFLECT

If we were to be honest, we have all had those struggles in life when we are full of worry about the provisions we need, the emotional support we wish for and the challenges that we might face down this road called life.

Constant concern regarding the cares and comforts of our current style of life make it very difficult to enjoy the surprises and mysteries of God. We quickly lose track of His wonders when we fix our attention on safety, security and success. Ignored are those things that God loves to give us. Things such as unexpected provision, overwhelming dependence on Him, surprising authentic relationships, and the ongoing joy of trust.

Taking care of ourselves never measures up to the fulfilment of watching Him guide and guard our lives. To wake up each morning realising that Jesus has already lined up a day filled with love, adventure and provision beats every strategic plan we could put together. Follow Him and learn from Him, walk with Him today, depend on Him for tomorrow, love Him forever!

RESPOND

Listen to the following and pray for God to help you recognise His provision, presence and power in your life.

<https://youtu.be/vJVHy6SnL8Y?si=xDS9P4moW7Q6u64t>

Day Eighteen:

Transformed on Purpose

READ

'Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tender-hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.' (Col 3:12-14)

REFLECT

God has picked us and equipped us for His new kingdom. The invitation to apprenticeship to Christ and the road we are on has a totally different feel. Values are changed. Priorities have been rearranged. Kindness, gentleness and humility have replaced power, stature, competition and victory. Our apprenticeship is like no other. It is filled with burden bearing, friendship building, joyful service, and loving togetherness. And at every turn there is genuine worship.

Personal ambition no longer dominates our destination. Safety, comfort, and pleasure begin to take a back seat on our life trip. Being on the road with the King is about the King, not about us.

With Him it is a wonderful experience. Without Him what is the point? No direction, no destiny, no permanent purpose. We have been chosen for something far different.

RESPOND

To be like Jesus!
This hope possesses me;
In every thought and deed,
This is my aim, my creed;
To be like Jesus!
This hope possesses me;
His Spirit helping me,
Like Him I'll be.

Day Nineteen:

Sacred Service

READ

'Before the festival of the Passover began, Jesus realised that the time had come for him to leave this world and return to the Father. He had loved those who were his own in this world and he loved them to the end. By supper time, the devil had already put the thought of betraying Jesus in the mind of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son. Jesus, with the full knowledge that the Father had put everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from the supper-table, took off his outer clothes, picked up a towel and fastened it round his waist. Then he poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel around his waist.' (John 13:1-5)

REFLECT

Serving, being a servant, working in a service occupation, are usually not sought after positions. And to add to the mix, to be a foot washing servant brings to mind images most of us would shun. Jesus is modelling for His disciples not a one-time event, but a daily attitude and lifestyle. He is challenging us to 'wash feet' every day. To be a good foot washer you must stoop. It's hard to do it well without bending down and getting close to the dirty, dusty feet being cleaned. Foot washers must assume unnatural and awkward positions to be effective.

Washing feet also means one must get close enough to touch. No long distance, 'hands off' technique will work. The personal, intimate, rubbing, washing and drying is vital. Another aspect of a good foot washer is to wash one foot at a time. Slowly, carefully, tenderly is better than quickly rushing to finish the job. Taking time will produce better results.

Serving is a joy filled activity on our apprenticeship with Christ. When love is added to our service people's lives are enriched and their souls as well as their feet will be fresh and clean.

RESPOND

Jesus, I thank you for modelling the heart and attitude of a servant. Show me today how I can serve you and your people.

Day Twenty:

Sacrifice?

READ

'And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.'

(Romans 12:1)

REFLECT

Sacrifice as a word and an activity has fallen on hard times. Our current age of entitlement makes it very difficult to 'give our bodies' to hardly anything that isn't self-fulfilling. If it doesn't look good on social media, on our CVs then why do it?

The lent season challenges us to keep going to the hard places, the lonely corners, the under-served areas of our communities. We are called to give up our safe and privileged positions and plunge head long into the adventure of service with sacrificial hearts.

Surprisingly something miraculous happens when we 'give our bodies' in sacrificial ways. Life not only takes on fresh meaning, but joy is also usually added to the mix.

Find some ways to live sacrificially this season. As an apprentice of Jesus, give your life to something eternal. You will be the one fulfilled!

RESPOND

Jesus, Show the ways to live sacrificially for you...

Day Twenty-One:

Breaking Free

READ

'And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.' (Romans 12:1-2)

REFLECT

Expectations can be killers. Unexpressed expectations are even worse. The squeeze of the world is to fit in, be normal. Ben Franklin said, 'most people would sooner be in hell than out of style'. For kids and many adults; it's awful to be different.

Conforming to the systems, styles and patterns of society is an exhausting and unsatisfying drill. It never ends and never fulfils.

God's journey in His kingdom reminds us that an ongoing love affair with the lure and expectations of things produced by the world will leave us empty and unfulfilled.

God's road is the less travelled one, fraught with hurdles, pain, and heartbreak. But also, on that road is where peace, joy and adventure will be abundant. Let us not settle for what we lust after but instead let us reach for the highest calling found in Christ Jesus. Trust God to make you unique. Expect His wonderful surprise.

RESPOND

Where do you work hard to fit in? Is God inviting you to break out of expectation and things that bind rather than free?

Day Twenty-Two:

No Expectation

READ

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

“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ (Matt 25:34-39)

REFLECT

Why is it so hard to give our best effort and clearest attention to those who have little or no capability to repay us? What is it about us that requires measurable outcomes or expected responses? Why does God seem to want us to focus on the least, the little, the weak, and powerless?

There is something in our human nature that desires pay back, proper response, or appropriate action. What would happen if our basic and continual motivation for serving and giving sprung from the motivation of gratitude to God for His goodness, rather than our need for response?

It doesn't take long as an apprentice of Christ to see that the world is filled with hungry, hurting, thirsty people. Let's pick up the habit of thanking God for feeding us, as we joyfully share with others without much thought about what's in the return. The joy is in the doing! Period.

RESPOND

Lord, sometimes I don't want to serve, I want to be selfish, I want to be comfortable, I want to serve me! Help me to count the cost of my personal discipleship journey and serve the world in Your Name.

Day Twenty-Three:

Refreshed

READ

'Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.' (Matt 11:28-30)

REFLECT

One of the priceless invitations extended to us from our Jesus is rest. Jesus picks up our heavy pack and carries it for a while. He gives us a break. God's help comes to us with gentleness, no bluster or threats, simply the offer to come to Him and let Him be of assistance.

As a teen I remember going on a hill walk. It seemed a great idea, but the truth is it wasn't. I didn't have the right shoes, I didn't even take a coat and didn't take a drink and after two hours of walking with a couple of friends I was getting slower and slower. I was cold, thirsty and had sore feet. I was a complete moan!

Exhaustion and weariness seem to be so prevalent in the world today. Panic and desperation quite often take over. The journey is no longer joyful when we can't keep up. It's hard to see the beauty and wonder of God's magnificence when we are out of breath and losing hope. Heavy hearts are not happy hearts.

Receive Christ's gift of refreshment today. Let him pick up your step, carry your heart-breaking load and join you on a road that might look impossible.

Don't ask Him how He does it. Just thank Him for the life restoring lift.

RESPOND

Sit in the silence today and just breathe, allow God to refresh you.

Day Twenty-Four:

Seeing as He Sees...

READ

'But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long, your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you."' (Luke 19:41-44)

REFLECT

As Jesus moved close enough to Jerusalem to actually see the great city He began to weep. He did not well up with pride over the construction of a spectacular temple. The centuries of rich Jewish faith and tradition did not grab His attention. His heart was breaking because they did not know God was visiting them. They had no idea, no need for the Messiah in their midst.

War and destruction were coming. Fighting and combat were all they knew in the battle for peace and truth. To turn to the Messiah for a different way to succeed never occurred to them. They just could not see Jesus. What about us?

Is walking with Jesus opening our eyes to change, or is Christ continuing to weep over the choices we have made in our battle to survive? Do we need Him in our cities and towns with His message of forgiveness and redemption?

What is still hidden from our eyes? Why are we content to be blind to the things that break the heart of God? Let us open wide our eyes, examine our actions and attitudes and take some new directions. Lent can lead us to life.

RESPOND

Jesus, 'Break my heart for what breaks Yours. Everything I am For Your kingdom's cause as I walk from earth into eternity.

Day Twenty-Five:

After the Party...

READ

'So, they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, "Why are you untying that colt?" And the disciples simply replied, "The Lord needs it." So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on.

As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him. When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen.

*"Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!"
(Luke 19: 32-38)*

REFLECT

Why are we thinking of Palm Sunday so soon! The journey of Jesus to Jerusalem is complete, though the fulfilment of His mission on earth still lies ahead, the crowd loved the parade. Singing, shouting, riding on a donkey, cloaks spread on the road coming down from the Mount of Olives. It was quite an afternoon. No one but Jesus knew what would unfold in the coming week. He alone realised that parades, parties and celebrations would not solve the deep, dark dilemmas of the human heart. Jesus knew we were lost.

We all like the praise and the party. We live for the happy and clappy and often Christians fall into treating our faith as a drug that if we do not get an emotional high or a spiritual touch then it wasn't worth the time.

As the first followers were confused by what was going on I wonder if our apprentice journeys sometimes get stuck in the party zone that we forget the cost of our salvation?

As we walk and learn from Jesus, we celebrate because of who He is and what he has done, not based on hype or happiness but because of grace.

RESPOND

Take time to give thanks today focusing on how Christ has saved you.

Day Twenty-Six:

Kingdom First!

READ

'Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

Pilate said, "So you are a king?"

Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognise that what I say is true." (John 18:36-37)

REFLECT

We live in a very politically dominated society. This past week we have watched as politicians have behaved badly and social media has been full of differing opinions based on political allegiance and personal views. Party values and viewpoint are extremely important to most. Christians living in the different countries have deep convictions regarding the right way to govern and be governed. Quite often dying for God or country are seen as the same thing. We all want God fighting on our side.

Strangely, Jesus Christ seems to show little interest in national agendas, favoured countries, or best blessed lands. He states very clearly, *"my kingdom is not founded in this world-if it were, my servants would have fought..."*.

As Christ teaches us as His apprentices, we must be very careful not to worship a political Messiah determined to make us the best, brightest, and greatest. The Messiah of the New Testament is leading us in a much different way and His kingdom is not of this world.

RESPOND

As you pray today ask God to help you seek His Kingdom first!

Day Twenty-Seven:

All in this Together

READ

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

In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So, if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.' (Romans 12:3-8)

REFLECT

It has been said that the more gifted a person believe he or she is the more the tendency to become independent. Talent, power and ability will often lead to isolation, and a carefully guarded life. As Christ's apprentices we are reminded of how vital it is to be together, to bear one another's burdens and to realise we cannot exist without the lives and the love of others.

Jesus, through His death and resurrection, is building a family and not a business. In His new kingdom on earth, we are all children in need of God as Father and one another as brothers and sisters.

All of us are given gifts, but none of us have enough to make it alone. To elevate our self-focus by comparison and competition will lead to narcissism and disaster. God wants us to find our fulfilment caring for one another more than ourselves. Loving many is much better than only loving one. Genuine outward affection directed toward our community is always more rewarding than inward focus and fascination on self. Enjoy the journey with God's family. Don't go it alone!

RESPOND

Focus your prayers today in those who are part of your church family. Ask God to build unity and love within your church.

Day Twenty-Eight:

He Believes in You!

READ

'Then Peter said to him, "Even if everyone should lose faith, I never will." "Believe me, Peter," Jesus responded, "this very night before the cock crows twice, you will disown me three times." But Peter protested violently, "Even if it means dying with you, I will never disown you!" And they all made the same protest.' (Mark 14:29-31)

REFLECT

The last supper with Jesus was ending. They sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives. Time was running out. Judas and his religious band of soldiers were on their way. It was at this moment that Jesus told his disciples that every one of them would lose faith and deny Him. Peter couldn't stand to hear such direct, personal confrontation. He did not want to believe that about himself. 'I will die first. I am better than that. You have misjudged me. How can you say that, Lord?' Peter couldn't take it.

One of the many hard lessons as an apprentice of Jesus I must remember is just how weak and cowardly I really am. It hurts to realise and be told how little faith we really have. What an embarrassment it is for Jesus to say to us, 'you won't be able to do it!'

Even though Jesus knows the whole truth, He doesn't lose faith in us. He built his entire kingdom on the work of these disciples. Their weakness did not hinder His commitment to them.

As an apprentice learning the ways of the Master we may fall and fail but be assured Jesus will pick us up.

RESPOND

Lord Jesus, I seek to live as your apprentice in all that I do today. My life is your school for teaching me. I relinquish my agenda for this day, and I submit myself to you and your kingdom purposes. In all things today I pray, "Your will, your way, your time."

Day Twenty-Nine:

Fully Following

READ

'Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests and asked, "How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?" And they gave him thirty pieces of silver. From that time on, Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.' (Matt 26:14-16)

REFLECT

When did Judas begin to betray Jesus? Did this seed of deceit begin to grow from the very start of his discipleship journey? Or did it occur only at the end? Did Judas lose heart and give up, or was he never really committed to Christ at all?

What are the marks of being a true apprentice of Jesus? How can we discern loyalty in our own hearts in this life and death journey with Jesus?

Judas worked alone. The others did not know. The challenges he was facing never became a conversation entrusted with Jesus or his friends. His world of reality was a private one.

Judas seemed to desire more than Jesus. His ambition involved cash, power, country and control. He knew how to do a deal for his advantage. Betrayal becomes rather easy if and when our love is self-centred or self-focused. Only when someone is more precious and sacred than our well-guarded private lives will we stay loyal and journey all the way.

RESPOND

My Lord, I devote my whole self to you. I want to be all and only for you, Jesus! Today, I seek to love you with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, all my strength, and all my relationships.

Day Thirty:

Learning the Way of Peace

READ

'Jesus said, "My friend, go ahead and do what you have come for." Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him. But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear.

"Put away your sword," Jesus told him. "Those who use the sword will die by the sword. Don't you realise that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?" (Matt 26: 50-54)

REFLECT

The garden was a quiet place where Jesus and his disciples went to pray. It was a peaceful place intended for reflection, direction and spiritual focus. The Garden of Gethsemane was not a place for hatred, combat or war.

In the darkness of night while Jesus was praying a man lost his ear from the slash of an enemy sword. Suddenly, the connection between heaven and earth became hell on earth. 'Put your sword in its proper place,' said Jesus. 'Those who live by the sword die by the sword.' Not here, not now, not this way.

The commands and warnings of Jesus regarding conflict have been virtually ignored for over 2000 years. We simply do not know how to settle our issues without 'drawing the sword.' Learning from Jesus on the road to the cross shows us a different way to live.

With courage and determination let us travel, depending not on our 'sword' but on the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

RESPOND

Pray for the different conflicts in the world today. Ask that the peace of Christ may reign.

Day Thirty-One:

One Word

READ

'Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?" But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I demand in the name of the living God—tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Jesus replied, "You have said it. And in the future, you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."

REFLECT

Right in the midst of the trial of Jesus, which led to His crucifixion, the Jewish high priest asked Jesus if He was the Messiah, the Son of God. Everything in this universe hung on the answer. The entire human race would be impacted by the response.

A 'No' answer would have dismissed the angry crowd, sent them home, and let Jesus, just another teacher, go free. If the answer is 'Yes' it would lead to brutal suffering, unfair conviction, terrible crucifixion, lonely burial, and victorious resurrection. This would lead to untold millions, down through history following this Messiah, joyfully living in the hope of His resurrection.

One word can change everything. One response can make a world of difference. The 'yes' of Jesus Christ for sinful humanity opened the door to the forgiveness of sins, new life in Christ, and a forever apprenticeship with Him in His new kingdom on earth.

RESPOND

Thank you, Lord, for not backing down. We are so grateful you proved to be who you said you were. It means everything to us!

Day Thirty-Two:

In or Out!

READ

'Pilate saw that he wasn't getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So, he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. The responsibility is yours!"

And all the people yelled back, "We will take responsibility for his death—we and our children! So, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.'" (Matt 27:24-26)

REFLECT

Empty words. Meaningless, hollow, cowardly words. 'I take no responsibility for the death of this man.' Pilate wanted out. He wanted not to be blamed. So, by politically checking out he released Barabbas and handed Jesus over for crucifixion. Is that checking out? Are those two brutal decisions really having nothing to do with this issue? Was Pilate really neutral?

Standing back, expressing no interest or involvement when it comes to Jesus Christ doesn't work very well. When we wash our hands and heart of anything regarding God's involvement in our lives, 'Barabbases' are set free, people are 'flogged' and even 'crucified.' Removing ourselves from God's love found in Jesus has incredible consequences. It is not a neutral, no-fault decision. People get hurt when God is not loved and served.

Our discipleship journey as we walk and work with Christ expresses loud and clear we are involved and committed. We have no desire to step away and watch the darkness take over. We are with Him.

RESPOND

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
'Til He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Day Thirty-Three:

The Real Deal

READ

'And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha ("Place of the Skull"). They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it. Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. A sign announced the charge against him. It read, "The King of the Jews." Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Ha! Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!"

(Mark 15:22-30)

REFLECT

Crucifixion was a horrible way to end a life. Unimaginable suffering, long, drawn out public observation, embarrassing physical exposure, scoffing crowds and then gambling for the clothes of Jesus! The irony is striking. The life, love, teaching, feeding, healing days of Jesus were worth no more than nails pounded into a wooden cross.

His body, not worth it - but is His garments? Let's gamble. Jesus we can do without. His clothes might come in handy. They might be worth something.

How many of us enjoy and settle for the outer fixtures, and trappings of Christianity; things like holiday music, sacred concerts, children's baptisms, Christmas Eve services, on and on, but never pay much attention to the essence and miracle of the incarnation. We want the benefits of faith without the relationship.

We will gamble for the garments but bypass the life. His heart is not as important as His apparel. As His apprentices we are reminded of what is important. His life is more precious than anything and it is given to and for us freely!

RESPOND

Take time today to reflect on the Scripture in Mark 15 and pray that The Lord will make calvary real to you.

Day Thirty-Four: *Overwhelming Darkness*

READ

'At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. But the rest said, "Wait! Let's see whether Elijah comes to save him." Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit.' (Matt 27:45-50)

REFLECT

Darkness at noon is very rare. The patterns of our miraculous universe do not allow for irregular cosmic activity very often. Something earthshaking must be happening. The unspeakable power of the divine must be involved.

Jesus, hanging on a tree, fully senses the immensity of the moment. Somehow, He knows that this time is as important to His Father as it is to Him. The excruciating suffering of His crucifixion doesn't compare to the overwhelming horror of His life being cut off, abandoned by God, His Father. 'My God, my God why have you forsaken me?' The scream of Jesus pierced through the endless space of eternity.

Never before had Jesus been alone, lost, and cut off. Until now, he knew nothing of the realities of sin, death, and hell. Why is this dark day happening? Is this Friday really good? Where, oh God, is reason for all this?

Today the answers are far away. We simply do not know how to respond, how to hold on, how to believe. Tomorrow is coming. He has promised, thank God He has promised.

RESPOND

Jesus, as I sit in the silence and contemplate the cross, I recognise I don't fully understand what you experienced but it makes me more determined to learn from you and walk with you.

Day Thirty-Five:

Cultivating Courage

READ

'Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph. He was a member of the Jewish high council, but he had not agreed with the decision and actions of the other religious leaders. He was from the town of Arimathea in Judea, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come. He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Then he took the body down from the cross and wrapped it in a long sheet of linen cloth and laid it in a new tomb that had been carved out of rock.' (Luke 23:50-53)

REFLECT

Doing the right thing in the face of an injustice is difficult. It is often easier to go along with the crowd than to take a stand and speak up in word and action.

Courage is a priceless virtue. It stares down fear and continues to move forward. Joseph, a Jew, stood in opposition of so many of his colleagues. He disagreed with the mood of the mob, the decision of the council. He hated what they were doing to Jesus, voted against it and lost! Courage often is revealed when in the minority. Real conviction quite often stands alone. Joseph is not through. Even after protesting the unlawful, illegal, horrifying death of Jesus, even after watching this good, innocent one die, he stays involved! Joseph didn't walk away. There is still dignified, compassionate, thoughtful work to be done. A body lovingly wrapped, a tomb acquired and paid for. A dignified burial. A respectful finish to a tragic death. 'I will do it. Give me the responsibility in the midst of opposition. I will do the right thing,' determined Joseph.

This holy week, Joseph reminds us of how our lives ought to be lived. He had no thought, yet, of resurrection. All he knew was that Jesus deserved better. Wrong had to be challenged. Right had to be expressed at whatever the cost.

RESPOND

Thank you, Lord, for real, vivid examples for us to follow. With extraordinary courage teach us to go to 'Pilate' and ask the hard questions of our faithless, Christ less culture. May we, like Joseph, take action, even when vision is not very clear.

Day Thirty-Six:

Holding Hope

READ

'But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.'

(1 Cor 15:51-52)

REFLECT

Those who follow Jesus first, the ones that knew Him after his resurrection, the members of those early churches established by Peter, Paul, John and others, did not think they would die. Their hope and expectation rested in the glorious fact that their Lord was returning to the earth, quickly and soon, to rule and to reign.

They were mistaken! Christ did not come back quickly. Over two thousand years have passed, and He still has not returned. Millions of faithful followers of Jesus have completed their earthly lives and are still waiting for that blessed hope of Jesus Christ coming back to this world.

As His apprentices we know that Christ lives in our hearts, but we ache for His resurrection power to be released in our lives and world, but we wait in the dark place, not despondent or depressed but with an anticipation and hope that can only come from true relationship. Our timing may have been off, but His promise remains true. Whether alive or dead Jesus will transform our human existence into an eternal resurrected existence like His! His promises are kept. Easter is almost here. Hallelujah!

RESPOND

Take some time today to focus your prayers on those who are overwhelmed and struggling. Pray that the God of Hope will fill them and give them peace.

Day Thirty-Seven:

Go & Tell

READ

'Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside.

When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body.'" (Mark 16:1-6)

REFLECT

Two Marys and Salome. Three faithful, heartbroken women. Love and respect drove them to the burial place of Jesus of Nazareth. They were prepared to do what people had done before, anoint the body. But they would do it with such devotion and tenderness. Anointing the body was all that was left to be done. Hope had been dashed. A great life had been brutally ended. Dreams were now only nightmares.

"We can't just walk away. We must do something to show our love, close the loop, and express our grief. Jesus deserves our tender touch. That's the best and final act we know. It is our dutiful and proper way to say goodbye."

Thank God for women who didn't quit with Friday. Thank God they were in a place close enough to Jesus to be the first to be surprised. Thank God their spices went unused, and their anointing plans were unnecessary. May it be said of us this Easter, even when our faith does not allow us to see beyond today, that we remain ready and prepared to do what we can until God surprises us with the promise of Easter.

And finally, may it be true of us as true apprentices and followers of Jesus, when resurrection is proclaimed, like the women, we 'go and tell' rather than 'stay and anoint.'

RESPOND

Listen to the song, 'I've just seen Jesus' and ask God who you should 'Go and Tell' this Easter time.

https://youtu.be/1JznSz3F_y4?si=pSsXeXmyveEKuoKW

Day Thirty-Eight:

Eager Expectation

READ

'Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.' (1 John 3:2-3)

REFLECT

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ was not only an amazing reality for Him, but it was also a comforting promise for us. Jesus was first to experience God's greatest miracle. We, in His appointed time, will follow His path.

When we anticipate something, we can get fed up with waiting. Whether it is the cheque in the post, the payment into our bank account, the wedding or even the relationship we hope for, sometimes we end up giving up hope and start to try and force things to happen which can lead to us losing our purity, passion and a sense of His presence.

Apprentices who have walked with Jesus and been taught by Him do not give up because they know Him. Are we following with eager expectation? Are we working hard at living out the life that He has modelled for us?

1John tells us we will see Him, and we will be like Him! The greatest promise ever. The most encouraging word ever spoken. All that has been hidden is now revealed. All the sadness and heartbreak has been wiped away.

RESPOND

Ask God to fill you with eager expectation for all that Christ is going to do through you. Pray prayers filled with expectation for miracles, ministry, family members and church family.

Day Thirty-Nine:

What Lies Ahead?

READ

“Dear woman, why are you crying?” Jesus asked her. “Who are you looking for?” She thought he was the gardener. “Sir,” she said, “if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.”

“Mary!” Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, “Rabboni!” (which is Hebrew for “Teacher”).’ (John 20:15-16)

REFLECT

After the crucifixion it seems that everyone recorded in the four gospel narratives are concerned with Jesus' dead body.

- Joseph wants a dignified tomb and proper burial.
- The women want Him lovingly wrapped and embalmed.
- Roman leaders want Him carefully guarded.

When the body of Jesus was missing, the big question was ‘where have you taken him? Where have you put him?’

The real questions, however, when He calls our name like he did Mary's, will be, *‘as His apprentices where will He take us? where will He put us? where will He call us to go?’* We no longer need to wonder about Him. He is risen, alive, active and challenging us to go with him. He, now, is asking the questions? He is the one wondering if we will follow and serve him. He looks for us. No need to keep searching for him. He knows our name.

RESPOND

Take time to ask Jesus where He wants to take you and what He wants you to do for Him beyond Easter. Share this with a friend to keep you accountable and so that you are prayed for as you walk with Jesus.

Day Forty:

Get Up & Get Going...

READ

'As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognised him. And at that moment he disappeared!' (Luke 24:30-31)

REFLECT

The whole idea of apprenticeship is that we learn skills, we become like the teacher. In biblical times this was also true of those who were invited to follow the rabbi, the goal was to become like the teacher.

As 21st Century apprentices of Jesus I wonder what we continue to learn from His life revealed to us in scripture and personal relationship?

Jesus invites us to sit at the table and to share in fellowship with Him through the Holy Spirit. The incredible works of God for His creation is complete. We see Him and sense Him and know Him every time we celebrate with our church family. Our eyes are open wide to the fullness of Jesus. Our hearts are filled with His spirit of love.

We move onto the next level; we take up a new task. Back to Jerusalem (our world) we go, eager to meet with our friends, ready to proclaim our lives in Christ to a hungry world. We have such good news to share. The Lord is really risen. Now he lives with us, in us, equipping us with the motivation to build His new kingdom on earth. Let's get going. There is so much to do!

RESPOND

For thy mission make me holy...

Resurrection Sunday

READ

'...the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you...'" (Luke 24:5b-6a)

REFLECT

The narrative shows us a picture of a group of downtrodden women. The man they had followed, who had brought healing to their physical and emotional hurts, the man who had valued them against everything they knew to be true in society at the time was dead.

The least they could do was to offer the usual rituals of spices and cleansing of the dead body. It was a job that brought closure, a job that would help them process what had happened and release them into the future, but their plans were wrecked.

Jesus wasn't where he should be! Had someone stolen the body? Had the Romans or even the Jewish religious leaders taken the corpse to prevent any further problems for themselves?

Or was what He had said true? In their distress and concern in a dark smelly tomb God shows up! The question, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?'

The question invited them to remember his teaching publicly, his comments in the upper room and at other times when they were together only interrupted by the words, 'He is not here, HE HAS RISEN!'

RESPOND

**Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes,
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever,
With His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!**