



# Parts 1 – 20

## Day 1: John 5, 15

“I can do nothing on my own.” Can you believe that *Jesus* said this? Yes, Jesus was a man, but wasn’t He also God, the one with power to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and even raise his friend Lazarus from the dead? How is it that Jesus would say that He could not do anything on His own?

When Jesus spoke those words, He had just healed a man who had not been able to walk for almost forty years. When people asked Jesus about it, He said He was only doing what He watched His Father do.

As you have grown up, you have watched your parents walk, talk, eat, and all sorts of other things. In time, you followed, and did those things, too. Jesus was simply following what His Father had shown Him. Like a human parent and a loved child, Jesus and God the Father were united in what They did.

Jesus also said to His followers, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus means that they are to follow Him, but there is more to it. Jesus says that He is like a vine, and His people are like branches on the vine. A branch cannot do anything by itself! The vine, like the trunk of a tree, is rooted into the ground, and it carries everything to the branch that it needs to live and to produce fruit!

Jesus says this is how it is with Him and us. He has united us to Him like a father and son, like a vine and branches. We are to follow Him and He will supply everything we need to do the things He has shown us. We are dependent on him *radically*, which means all the way down to the root!

When we do things to make ourselves look good, or to get something for ourselves (even when we do *really* good things), we are not really accomplishing anything spiritual. It’s like a branch, laying on the ground, trying to think hard enough to push out some fruit! We need spiritual power to do spiritual things.

Jesus says that His people are united to Him, like a vine and a branch, like a parent and a beloved child! He promises to forgive our sins, and to do amazing things through us for His glory! Those who believe this good news have God the Holy Spirit within us. When we trust in the good news and follow the way He has shown us, then things begin to happen, which we could *never* do alone! God’s spiritual power works through us!

*\*Let’s pray that God would help us remember that we are radically dependent on Him, and that we would see God do things through us that we cannot do alone!*

## Day 2: Exodus 14, Deuteronomy 3, Numbers 13

Do you remember the story about God's people, the Israelites at the Red Sea? They had been slaves in Egypt, until the Lord sent Moses to Egypt's leader Pharaoh to say "let my people go!" After Pharaoh finally let them go, God's people started a long trek across the very hot and very dry desert. Pharaoh changed his mind, though, and he sent a whole army of warriors out into the desert to bring them back!

They got all the way to the banks of the sea and looked up to see Pharaoh's army in the distance, coming toward them! Can you imagine that? Would it be scary? God's people were very scared! Moses told them, "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." The Lord told Moses, "Tell the people of Israel to go forward."

The Bible says that God sent a great wind that split the sea, and His people walked across to the other side on dry land. He rescued them from their enemies! Can you imagine *that*? What an amazing story! If you saw that, do you think you would ever doubt God's plan again?

Well, God's people did ... God promised to take care of them and bring them into a beautiful land. They were to go forward and settle the land, where they would worship Him and be unlike every other people on earth, so that all people would see our amazing God and worship Him too!

They got up to the banks of the river and looked across into the promised land at the powerful people who lived there, and they were afraid. So ... they just didn't go. The God who loved them so much, that had split an entire sea in half to rescue them from slavery and death, had promised again that He would fight for them, but they focused on how weak they were, instead of how powerful God is.

Many years later, that same God came to us in Jesus. He loved His people so much, He gave His only Son, Jesus to rescue them from the slavery and death of sin! He told His people to go make followers from all the people on earth! Jesus promised that He would be right there with us the whole way, bringing people to Himself through our words and our love.

Sometimes, God's people still feel afraid. We still look at our own weakness instead of His power. Can you imagine what might happen if we trusted His promise and followed His instruction to "go forward," with the rescue plan of Jesus, *together*?

*\*Let's pray for our whole church to have a heart of radical dependence on God to do the things that only He can do as we follow Him!*

**Day 3: 2 Samuel 24, 1 Chronicles 21, John 16:13, Galatians 5**

Do you know what a census is? It's when the government of a nation counts all the people that live there. It's usually a helpful thing. In every country, people have to give some of their money to the government, which is called a tax. If you were the leader, and you wanted to make sure you were getting the right amount of taxes, it would be good to know how many people were in the country.

A leader might also count the people to see how many could join the army if another nation attacked. That's why it was a big problem when King David, the leader of God's people, Israel, took a census. David was a man after God's heart, who trusted in the Lord on many occasions, but this time, he was trusting in the power of Israel, not God.

The leaders of God's people these days are in the church. Ruling Elders, Teaching Elders (or Pastors,) Deacons, and members of the church staff all have significant roles to play in helping a church to follow God. These leaders are to remember the great power of God that raised Jesus up from the dead, and trust in Him, not in the amount of people, or the amount of money, or the amount of talent in the church. That is harder than it sounds!

If you fell down in front of your friend, would your first thought be to pray about it, or to reach out your hand, so your friend could help pick you up? Unfortunately, when we encounter difficulty our first thought is not usually to talk to God about it.

God has told His people, the church, to trust in His power, not our own. So, the church's leaders are to come to Him with all of their questions and difficulties. That is how they are supposed to lead, not by looking at all the stuff the church has, but by looking to the power and guidance that God gives!

*\*Let's pray together for the leaders of our church to depend on God's power and guidance instead of the numbers, dollars, or talent in the congregation.*

## **Day 4: Psalm 61, 62, 86, Philippians 4:6-7**

King David wrote a lot of poems in the Bible that were supposed to be sung by God's people when they came together to worship Him. A lot of times, when we come to worship the Lord on Sundays, we have songs that sound happy. That is a good thing! We have been rescued by Jesus! We have great reasons to be happy, even in hard times.

Many of the songs that are in the Bible don't have a happy sound to them, though. Many of them talk about feeling sad, confused, angry, or afraid. That is also a good thing. That's why they are in the Bible! The Lord wants His people to bring all of their feelings and thoughts to Him, even when it makes us uncomfortable to talk about them.

King David's sad psalms help us to know how we can speak to God when we don't feel like things are going our way. David said things like, "Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy... In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me."

David's story is full of ups and downs, happy moments and very sad ones, like our own lives. The Psalms show us how he worshiped and prayed to God in the good times and the painful ones. David knew that there was nowhere else for him to go. There is no one like the Lord. No one and nothing else can save us.

So, he called out to God when he was in trouble, when he felt like he had no strength, when he knew that his own plans could not help him. God was the only one who could help. It's easy to sing happy songs to God when we feel happy, but when things get hard, we usually try to figure out how to make things better on our own.

God tells us, in the words of His servant David, (and others who wrote sad words and psalms and prayers in the Bible,) that we shouldn't trust our own plans or our own strength. We should cry out to Him! We continue doing what we are supposed to do, but we wait for Him to answer our prayers when we are anxious or sad.

The Lord says that He will help our hearts to trust Him when we do this. He gives His people peace that we can't even understand in the middle of the hard moments, when we wait on Him and depend upon Him alone.

*\*Let's pray honestly to God, even if we're feeling very upset right now. Let's ask Him for what we want, and ask Him to give us peace as we wait for His answer.*

## Day 5: Psalm 63, 2 Samuel 16:14

Have you ever been *really* thirsty? On a super-hot summer day, if you've been outside running or working, sometimes it's like your whole body can feel thirsty! We need water every single day, but we don't always feel it that strongly, do we?

King David probably knew a thing or two about thirst. There was a time, before he was in charge, when the King before him wanted to get rid of David! So, David hid in caves, out in the desert for a long time. Then, even after he became King, he had to hide out in the desert for a while, when his son tried to take over!

Deserts are hot, dusty, and most of all *dry!* If you were out there for a while, you would definitely miss your home, where it's pretty easy to take a sip of water whenever you want! You might realize that you really haven't been very thankful for the water that helps to keep you alive day after day ...

David probably felt all of that, but also, while he was out in that desert, he had a deeper, even more important thirst. "My soul thirsts for *you*," he said to the Lord. The things that we might think and feel about water while in the desert, David was feeling about God.

He recognized that the thing he needed most, even more than water, was the Lord. It is better to have the Lord's love, David said, than it is to keep living! In the desert, David did not merely know that he needed the Lord, he felt it as well, like a deep, consuming thirst!

What about us? We know that we need the Lord, but we don't always *feel* our need, do we? Like people in houses with running water that they can drink anytime, we often don't feel all that thankful, because we don't feel the need. When we are ungrateful, we often forget to go to the source of life!

Even though you don't feel your thirst as strongly every day, you probably still drink water. Do you realize your need for the Lord, so much that you "thirst" for Him?

*\*Let's pray that the Lord would remind us that we need Him just as our bodies need water, and that He would teach us to be thankful for showing us His love in Jesus!*

## Day 6: 1 Thessalonians 5:17, John 1

The Bible says to “pray without ceasing.” Does that sound like a hard thing to do? Doesn’t the Bible say to do lots of other things too? How is it possible to do those things, and also pray without ceasing? It would not be possible if it meant that we always had to pray the same way that we do in a Sunday worship service, or around the dinner table.

We could never do anything else, if we were always putting our hands together, closing our eyes, looking down, and speaking out loud to God. The man who wrote those words, the Apostle Paul really did mean what he said about always praying, *and* he also did the other things that the Bible teaches us to do.

So, he must have meant that prayer could look different at different times. The Bible actually describes many different types of prayers. Sometimes, we should pray longer prayers, but sometimes our prayers only have a few words. Sometimes, we should pray out loud. Sometimes, another person prays, while we listen, and agree with them. Sometimes, we pray silently.

The God of the universe, who knows and sees *everything*, knows your prayers even when you just think them! If we are supposed to pray without stopping, *and* tell people about Jesus, *and* get in the car to go to church, *and* do many other things the Bible teaches, that means most of our prayers will be with our eyes open, maybe whispering, or even thinking to the Lord.

Remember, Jesus said we could not do anything without Him! That means we should ask Him to give us strength in every single thing that we do, whether it is school, or work, chores, or even play time! We should ask Him to help us do every single thing as an act of trust in the good news that real life is friendship with God.

We are tempted to think that real life is in friendships and fun, or things that we want to buy, or being really good at sports, or school, or singing, or something. We need the Holy Spirit to help us in every moment to trust the good news. We need God to help us in every moment in so many ways! So, let’s whisper and think prayers all day today!

*\*Let’s pray now that the Lord would remind us to pray over all the little moments of our day!*

## **Day 7: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Proverbs 3:5-8, John 1**

What do you think of when you hear the word wisdom? When a person has wisdom, it doesn't just mean that person knows a bunch of things. It means that person understands how to act in the confusing and hard moments of life. Who do you think is the wisest person you know?

The Bible says that God is the one who is the wisest. It says that people who have true wisdom have started out with the understanding that God is the king, and His opinion is the important one, not the opinions of people. The Bible also says that the Lord's wisdom will seem silly to people who do not have a friendship with God or understand Him.

People in our world are looking for the good life. They believe the lie that real life comes from friendships and fun, or things they want to buy, or being really good at sports, or school, or singing, or something. So, when someone who doesn't yet know Jesus is in a confusing or hard moment, they just try harder to get those things, and they tell others to do the same. That seems like wisdom to them.

A lot of times, God's people forget that real life is friendship with Him, and we act the same way too! We need to remember that God came to us in Jesus. He died on the cross and took the consequence of sin for all of His people. We didn't do anything to deserve this. He chose to do it, and He chose to make us His friends.

So, when God's friends are in the confusing or hard moments in life, we remember this good news! The things that make sense to us, like trying harder to get real life from the things in this world, are not wise. Real wisdom comes not from following ourselves, our hearts, or our desires. Real wisdom comes from remembering what Jesus did, and living like it's true! He gives life, and He gives wisdom!

*\*Let's pray that the Lord would remind us to trust Him, instead of our own understanding today!*



**Day 8: 2 Corinthians 11:30-12:10, Jeremiah 9:23-24, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

Do you ever brag? Sometimes, it feels like everyone else is getting attention, and you have to be the one to remind people about yourself, doesn't it? Some of us still like to brag even when we're getting all the attention! It feels good when someone says that you're good at something, or you look nice, or that they appreciate something about you.

In the Bible, the Apostle Paul and the prophet Jeremiah say that God's people are to boast in, (or brag about,) the Lord. What does that mean? Well, Paul was a very impressive person. If we met him, we would probably think he had a lot to brag about. However, Paul wanted to talk about something different. He did not want to brag about himself, or the things he had done. He did not want all the attention for himself.

Paul wanted all the attention and all the worship to go to Jesus. So, Paul said he would actually brag about the things that were *not* so great about himself! A lot of people want to get big and strong and tell others about their strength. Paul wanted to tell about his weakness! *Why?* Because, when Paul talked about his weakness, he could tell everyone about the strong and powerful one who had saved him, Jesus!

Paul said that the moments in life that were too confusing and too hard for him on his own, were the moments when people could see the power of Jesus the most! This was real strength! Since people get real life, real strength, and real wisdom in Jesus then Paul said he would brag about his weakness!

Jeremiah said something similar. Don't brag about how wise, or strong, or rich you are. Brag about how loving and good God is! We are totally, radically dependent on Him. When we remember that the powerful, loving, good God has paid attention to us in Jesus, when we didn't deserve it, we don't feel the need to brag as much. Actually, we start finding our joy and our life, as we brag to the whole world about Him!

*\*Let's pray that we would see the confusing or hard moments in our lives as opportunities to brag about Jesus!*

## Day 9: Matthew 6, Hebrews 4:14-16

Do you ever feel stuck when you start to pray, like you aren't sure what to say? A *lot* of people have that same feeling! Jesus's followers, the people who spent so much time around Him, even asked Him to teach them to pray! Jesus gave them an example of a prayer which is pretty well known (the Lord's Prayer) and talked to them about how to pray.

One of the things He said was that they did not need a lot of words, or the perfect words, or to have anyone else approve of them in order for God the Father to hear their prayers. Some people in Jesus's country liked to stand and pray on the street corners, so that other people would see them and be impressed by them and their prayers.

There were other people from the countries all around who thought they needed to say certain words or pray *really* long prayers so God would hear them. Jesus says no. God listens to the prayers of His people because Jesus united Himself to us and told us to pray in His name.

It's like we get into the room where the King sits on His throne, to ask the King anything we want, because His son said we could enter. Can you imagine coming up to great big doors and knocking? A guard might say, "who goes there?!" We might feel scared, but we respond, "I come in the name of King's Son," and the doors swing open to a kind and loving King who wants to hear *anything* and *everything* we ask!

There are no magic words. There is no need for long speeches and no need to impress anyone else. We have access to the King! That's good news! The best way to know if we trust this good news is if we really talk to God in prayer. Sometimes we whisper. Sometimes we pray silently. Sometimes our prayers are shorter or longer, but if we trust Him and really depend on Him, we will really talk to Him!

*\*Let's thank God that we don't need special words, or lots of words for Him to hear us, and let's pray from the heart to our King!*

## **Day 10: 2 Kings 6:8-23, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 John 4:4-5, Romans 8**

Elisha was God's prophet. That meant that Elisha spoke to God's people the words that God wanted them to hear. At one time, God also kept His people safe by telling Elisha when their enemies were going to attack! So, the enemies decided to attack Elisha! In the middle of the night, they surrounded the city where Elisha lived ...

Elisha's servant woke up early in the morning and saw a great army all around! He exclaimed, "What shall we do?" Elisha wasn't worried, though, because he knew that the Lord would keep him safe. He prayed and asked God to open the eyes of his servant. The servant then saw an amazing thing! All around Elisha was an army of horses and chariots of *fire* that God had sent to protect His servant! The Lord kept them safe that day.

There are things that are real that you cannot see. You do not see the air you breathe. You cannot see the gravity that keeps you from floating away! You cannot see the wind, though it is very powerful. Without a powerful microscope, you cannot see the germs and viruses that can make you very, very sick! You don't see them, but they are still real.

We cannot see God, or angels, but they are very real! We trust that the air around us is real with every breath we take. We trust that germs and viruses are real when we wash our hands before dinner. The Lord has called us to trust that He will take care of us, even though we don't see Him. When we trust the good news of Jesus, then God the Spirit dwells within our hearts.

The Holy Spirit brings the same power that raised Christ from the dead to our lives! Even though we don't see the spiritual world, God's people still have an enemy who tempts us to disobey the Lord, who tries to discourage us by reminding us of all our sin in the past, and who tries to keep us from sharing the good news of Jesus with our friends and neighbors.

The Lord says to His people again and again, that we should not fear, because He is with us! The Holy Spirit is in us, and "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." The Holy Spirit is *far* more powerful than our enemy! He strengthens us so that we can say no to sin, He reminds us of the truth that Jesus has forgiven all our sin, and He helps us to go forward with the good news of life and forgiveness in Jesus to the whole world!

*\*Let's pray that God would help us to see that He is with us and that our enemy cannot stop the message of Jesus from going out to all the world!*

## **Day 11: Matthew 28:18-20**

If you're about to leave your home and you won't see your family for a while do you say anything to them, or just walk right out the door? If a child is going to school, their parent might remind them of something important, like, "don't forget your homework," or, "don't forget your lunch!" It might be a good time to say, "I love you!" That's an important thing to say, isn't it?

Usually, the last thing we say to someone we love is something fairly important. After Jesus rose from the dead, He spent even more time with His followers, the disciples. After a while, it was time for Him to go and prepare a place for them with God the Father. He wouldn't see them for a long time. So, do you think the last thing that Jesus said to His followers while He was on earth was important? Yes, of course! He chose some very important words to share with them.

He told them that what they needed to make sure to do. Go out and help people become His followers. Tell people from anywhere and everywhere about the amazing good news of Jesus, how He forgives all the sin of all who trust in Him, how He will return again to make everything on earth even better than it was before people sinned! Teach them all that Jesus instructed.

That was the last, and therefore *very* important thing Jesus said to His followers. Go make more followers! It's also an important thing because it is *the* plan for how God will save His people. His followers are to take the message and make followers who make followers who make followers, until He returns again!

The message of Jesus is the best news ever. If you understand the good news, it's more exciting than your favorite gift you've ever received! God's plan is for His people to be amazed and thankful for the gift of Jesus and tell others about Him.

He left them and us with a few more words. Even if we get nervous, Jesus went to the throne of heaven, which means He is now in charge of everything, and by His Spirit, the King of kings is with us forever! So, even if we tell the good news to people who didn't want it, or people who act mean, or people who are scary, the King who has adopted us into His family is with us!

So, He will bring people to Himself, when His people tell about Him! He also promises to be with us the whole time, which is even better than being told "I love you," right before you leave. It's the Lord reminding us at all times that He is with us and He loves us because of the good news of Jesus! That's important and worth talking about!

*\*Let's pray that we will remember the greatness of the message of Jesus, the privilege of sharing it, and for opportunities to share it today!*

## **Day 12: 2 Timothy 2:1-2**

The Apostle Paul did some really important things. He wrote many of the books of the Bible. He started many of the very first churches. He shared the good news of Jesus in super important places like Rome and Athens, Greece. It's all very impressive.

Perhaps, the most important thing that Paul did, though was to bring his younger friend Timothy along with him. Paul brought Timothy along to start churches and visit churches, to serve people, to teach them, sometimes to remind them when they were doing something wrong. Paul taught Timothy how to help other people follow Jesus.

Think about it for a moment... If Paul taught people to follow Jesus, but forgot to teach them to teach others, the church would have ended almost 2000 years ago, just as it was beginning! That was not God's plan, though! God's plan was to have the church grow and grow and grow, across huge mountain ranges, and even oceans until it reached us!

Now, we are the ones who get to take care of the church and the message of Jesus. Do you think it would be a good idea for the church to end with us? No way! Because Jesus has loved us, even though we could never have deserved His love, we have the awesome gift of sharing about Him with others! That's what Paul told Timothy to do, too!

He told Timothy to take all the things that He had heard Paul teaching, in all the churches and stops along the way, and share that with people whom Timothy could trust to share with more people! That's the plan.

It may not seem very impressive. It's really pretty simple. As the good news of Jesus changes us, and gives us the strength of Jesus, it isn't just for us to feel spiritually strong or special. The whole idea, the whole plan, is that we would take that good news, and that strength and pass it on to others.

*\*Let's pray that we would be faithful people who seek to follow Jesus and teach others to do the same!*

## Day 13: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

What controls you? For most people, what controls them is the thing that they want the most. If you want people to like you more than anything, then all the things you do will be controlled by that desire. You will be willing to do things to be popular that other people would not do.

If the thing you want most is to have lots of stuff, or do something very impressive, or be very important, or just be loved, that will control you too. Even when the thing we want most is *really* good, it will still cause us to do and say and think things that are sinful. The Bible actually says that wanting anything more than God Himself is a sin, too...

We all naturally want something more than God, even if it's just our own happiness. The good news is that Jesus loves and forgives people who want all kinds of other things more than Him! When a person trusts in that good news they change. Now, the thing you want most is the Lord!

You still struggle with wanting other things, but most of all, you want people to see Him as impressive and important, and love Him, instead of focusing on getting all those things for yourself! That's what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote a letter to the church in Corinth, Greece and said, "the love of Christ controls us."

The word he used actually means that something has grabbed ahold of him! Jesus loved Paul, when Paul did not even like Jesus! Paul was trying to stop the church, before Jesus came to him, and changed his heart. After that, everything was different. Paul still messed up. Paul still sinned, but the amazing love of Jesus for him grabbed ahold of him!

That meant that Paul no longer lived for his own happiness or comfort. Paul's life was now lived for Jesus, and for everyone to know Jesus! The amazing thing is that real happiness actually comes when we stop trying to get happiness with everything that we do!

Real happiness comes from knowing we are loved by God, Himself, and living for the things that please Him! One of the things that pleases Him most is when we tell others about the love and forgiveness that He offers. He has shown us incredible love! He has forgiven us more than we could ever imagine! Has this grabbed ahold of your heart, yet?

*\*Let's pray that the love of Christ would grab ahold of each of us in a new way, today!*

## **Day 14: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, 7:10, Psalm 32:4-5**

What do you do when you disobey or sin? Do you look down, or close your eyes because you feel so embarrassed or ashamed? Do you think to yourself, "Maybe what I did wasn't that bad... Maybe it wasn't even sin!" Do you feel like you might as well not even try, because you keep messing up? God has a different plan for us.

Jesus already paid the full penalty for every single sinful thing for His people, even the things we have not yet done, or said, or thought! We don't have to hang our heads and feel like we're the worst people ever. We don't have to pretend that our sins aren't that bad, in order to feel better about them. Actually, we should not do those things, and we definitely shouldn't give up trying to obey!

God's plan is for us to remember the forgiveness of Jesus, and to remember that Jesus has made us friends with God! The Lord has chosen not to hold our sins against us. So, instead of pretending like it's not bad, the Bible tells us to pray and agree with God about our sins. Instead of wallowing in shame, the Bible tells us to remember God loves us and made us His friends.

Instead of giving up, the Bible tells us to turn away from our disobedience and turn to Jesus. When we turn to Jesus with honesty about our sins, and joy for our forgiveness, His love grabs ahold of our hearts again and His strength helps us to obey. This is called repenting.

A lot of people feel ashamed that they don't tell others about the love of Jesus very often. Some people pretend that maybe it's not really a big deal. Instead of repenting, they give up. God's plan is to tell the world about Himself through the words of His people, though! God's plan, also, is for His people to repent, instead of being crushed by our sins, or making excuses for them.

When the love of Jesus grabs ahold of us, we love others, and want to share it with others! Repenting helps us to remember the Lord's awesome love and forgiveness, even for our lack of love for those around us. Repenting helps us live with the strength of the Holy Spirit and get back to obeying the things the Lord told us to do. Repenting is God's plan!

*\*Let's pray and repent for ways that we have not loved others well, and ask God for 3 people we might tell about the good news of Jesus!*

## **Day 15: Luke 9:23-24**

Sometimes, Jesus said things that made people *really* uncomfortable. Sometimes, things that Jesus said 2,000 years ago *still* make us uncomfortable! Once, He told His followers that if they really wanted to follow Him it was going to be a lot harder than they thought!

Jesus said, in order to follow Him a person needed to “take up his cross.” Do you know what that means? Remember, Jesus died on the cross. He took up His cross and carried it to the place where the soldiers crucified Him. That does not seem like the best way to get a lot of followers, but this was Jesus’ plan!

He said we must take up our cross daily. Since you can only die once, that means that following Jesus does not mean we all have to die the same way that He did. It means that we deny ourselves every day, which is sort of like death.

In order to really follow Jesus, we have to be willing to give up the things we want. That makes us uncomfortable, but it makes sense. If real life is friendship with God, then God’s friends will need to spend time with Him, talk to Him, learn about Him, and do what He asks them to do.

That means we have to say “no,” to a lot of other things we want, or deny ourselves. If you want to obey the Lord’s plan and tell people about the good news of Jesus, you will probably have to say “no” to that nervous feeling in your stomach. What if my friends don’t want to hear it? What if they think I’m strange for talking about Jesus?

You will probably have to say “no” to your desire to be in control. Sometimes, we will have a chance to talk to someone about Jesus right when we’re really busy, or when we want to look at something on the computer, or phone. Jesus says this saying “no” is a little bit like dying, but it’s worth it.

The strange thing about life is that the things we want so much (friends, fun, things to buy, being really good at something, etc.) never really make us happy, when we are spending ourselves on getting them. When we say “no” to living life for our own happiness, though, we actually get *real* life, and real joy in friendship with Jesus.

It’s actually when we deny ourselves, when we “die” to our desires of making life work our way, and when we embrace the love and message of Jesus that we really find life!

*\*Let’s pray that we would learn to deny ourselves, especially when we see a chance to share the good news of Jesus with someone!*



**Day 16: Philippians 2:3-11, Matthew 28:18-20**

Who is the most important being that exists? You probably answered, “God,” and you’re right, if so! He is perfectly good and holds together everything else that exists. That’s pretty important, right? No one deserves worship, honor, or glory except for Him.

That’s why Jesus’ attitude in His time on earth, was absolutely amazing. Jesus, the God-man, took the form of a servant! He did not spend His time trying to get other people to honor Him, or tell everyone how important He was, even though He was God. Jesus just served. He took care of people. He spent time with people.

Jesus was humble. He was so humble and so obedient, that He followed God the Father’s plan perfectly. Think about it. When the soldiers came to get Jesus, to crucify Him, He knocked them on the ground just by speaking! That’s the kind of power God has. Do you think they could put Him on the cross if He didn’t let them?

Jesus so trusted the plan of His Father that He willingly went to the cross for us, His people. As His followers, we are to have the same attitude as Jesus. That does not come very naturally for us. When we do something well, we usually say, “Hey! Look at me!” We like to feel important!

However, when we follow Jesus, we are to treat other people like they are the important ones, not us. Usually, we just think about what we want, but when we follow Jesus, we are to think about ways to take care of others and help them to do well in life. Can you think of anything that would be better for others than the good news of Jesus?

God has offered friendship to us in Jesus. This is the real life everyone is longing for. If we really love others, and think of them before ourselves, we will want to tell them about Him! The wonderful thing is that, Jesus, the humble one, has now been raised up from the grave and sits upon the throne. He will be with us, giving us His strength, as we try to live humbly and share His love with those around us!

*\*Let’s pray that we would have the same attitude as Jesus, loving others and helping them to grow in Him!*

### **Day 17: John 13:1-20, Acts 1:8, Revelation 7:9-10**

When Jesus knew the time had come for Him to go to the cross, He did something for His closest friends that they thought was crazy. He washed their feet. Think about how gross feet can get after running around outside, sweating, maybe stepping in weird things... Not many people want to get very close to feet, and who can blame them!

When Jesus was on earth it was even worse! People wore sandals, and walked on dirty, dusty roads, where animals also walked. There were all sorts of gross stuff on people's feet. When Jesus tied the towel around his waist and got down to wash His disciples' feet, they were shocked!

Normally, a servant would wash their feet, someone who was not very important. Jesus was the rescuer sent by God! This was not right, they thought! His friend Peter said, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus responded that He had to wash the feet of Peter and His friends. If He didn't, then Peter and the disciples could not have the life and rescue God had promised.

Jesus was talking about more than just feet. People need to be cleaned from more than just smelly toes. Usually, people are more disgusted by our stinky, dirty feet than we are of our sinful hearts, but the sin is much worse than the dirt to God.

The very first sin in the world, and every one of our sins ever since, is a little way that we tell God that we think we should be in charge, and not Him. We think we are important and wise and we want to be the kings and queens of our own lives. That's what sin is.

The Lord could have separated Himself and His love from all of us. Instead, He chose to do something for us that we could not do for ourselves. We could never clean up our own hearts, but Jesus has cleansed His people from *all* of our sins! He did this by denying Himself and serving us.

He tells us that if He washes off the grossest things about us, we need to serve each other in this way. Other people will sometimes seem weird, or boring, or even gross to us, but if the Lord wasn't grossed out by us, who are we to look down on them? We are to serve people who don't look like us, or talk like us, or think like us, and bring this great love of God in Jesus to all the world!

*\*Let's pray that we would love and serve people, no matter how different they are, and that God would use our church to help bring the good news of Jesus to the whole world!*

### **Day 18: Luke 7:36-50**

One time, Jesus was eating dinner with the important people in town. There was a woman who had lived a very sinful life who heard about where He would be. She decided to go there, even though she was not the kind of person who would get invited to a dinner party like this.

She brought with her a bottle of very expensive, wonderful smelling ointment (sort of like a perfume.) She knew that Jesus was from God. She couldn't undo all the bad things she had done in life, but she also knew that God could forgive her sins and rescue her. So, she went.

When the woman saw Jesus, she couldn't keep it in. She burst out crying! There were so many tears that she was able to wash His feet with them. She didn't have a towel, so she used her own hair to wipe His feet. She poured the ointment on His feet and kissed His feet.

She was so thankful that the Lord had sent someone who could rescue her from her life of sin. She knew that she needed to be forgiven for so much! Seeing Jesus, the one who had come to forgive and make people friends with God, made her heart overflow with love for Him.

The important people were not happy about this. The host of the party thought that if Jesus was really from God, He would know that this was a bad woman, and He would not want her around. Jesus knew what the man was thinking. He said that people who think they only need forgiveness for a little bit, don't show love like this woman did.

She knew that God was merciful, so she showed up and threw herself at Jesus' feet, and He said that her many sins were forgiven! The host of the party didn't think he needed much forgiveness, but that's not true. Every person needs to be forgiven for a *lot* of sin!

Remember that all of our sins, even the ones we think are little, are actually ways that we tell God that we think we should be in charge, instead of Him. The important host of the party did not realize what a big, big sin this was.

Those who know they have been forgiven for a lot, show a lot of love! They love God. They love God's people. They love people that are not like them. They look forward to the chance to serve others and they share the incredible news of the forgiveness of Jesus.

*\*Let's pray that we will remember how much God has forgiven us, and that we will love others well and share His forgiveness as a result!*

**Day 19: Matthew 13:44-46, John 3:3, 2 Corinthians 5:17,**

Many times, Jesus would tell His followers stories, called “parables.” Sometimes this would help them understand His teaching, (though, they often needed Him to explain the parable, also!) One day, He was teaching them, and telling a few different parables about the kingdom of heaven...

The kingdom of heaven is the place where the Lord’s instructions are obeyed perfectly, where there is no sin, where people honor Him and enjoy friendship with Him forever. The kingdom of heaven is in heaven. Right now, it is *not yet* something we can see, but it will not stay that way, because this kingdom is actually coming to earth, in the end.

The kingdom of heaven is also here *already*, when any person trusts in the good news of Jesus. The Bible tells us that this is like a whole new life, beginning! Anyone who has spent a lifetime trying to get happiness from friends, things to buy, or being really good at things will tell you that when they started trusting and following Jesus, it was like a brand new start to life!

We find real life in following Him. We find real joy in following Him. We are living in the kingdom *already*, even though the world around us is *not yet* changed. Sometimes, those of us who have always been around the kingdom, who have grown up with the stories of Jesus and His instructions, forget what an amazing thing it is to have friendship with God!

One time, Jesus told His followers two parables to remind them. He said the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure! It’s like a treasure so great, that when a person finds it, they know it is worth so much more than the things they already own! The men in Jesus’ stories go and sell everything they have to get the treasure! They are very wise to do so.

Did you know the gift of friendship with God, offered to us in Jesus, is far greater than this treasure? You cannot even imagine how great it is. It is worth everything. Jesus told these parables in order to show people that denying themselves, or saying “no” to the things they want, in order to follow Jesus, is totally worth it!

Whatever we “give up,” it is nothing compared to what Jesus gives! Whatever our friends think will really give them happiness, it can’t compare to new life in Jesus, either. In order to share this with others, we have to remember it, ourselves. Friendship with God is real life. It’s what people are longing for, even before they know it. Let’s remember all we’ve been given in Jesus!

*\*Let’s pray that we and everyone in our church would see the great treasure of our friendship with God.*

## **Day 20: Ephesians 1, Galatians 2:20**

How can we really deny ourselves? Sometimes we might make an unselfish decision, but how do we live every single day in this way? How can we obey the high standards that he has given for us when we are people who still have sin? The things that Jesus says we should do are so difficult!

Is it even possible want something more than the thing we want the most? The answer is no. Jesus is not asking us to do very, very hard things. He is actually asking us to do impossible things!

We tend to want to be the kings of our own lives. We don't really like God being our king! So, we disobey the Lord in all sorts of ways every single day. We disobey him with the things we do, say, and think! We still have what the Bible calls our sin nature.

However, our God would never ask us to do something, even an impossible thing, without making a way for us to do it! The way that God planned to help us do the impossible things was to unite us to Jesus! Every good thing that God gives to his people is through Jesus.

Our forgiveness for sins, our adoption as children of God, our new life in the kingdom have all come to us through Jesus. Our new nature, which lives alongside our sin nature, and helps us to want the Lord and His ways has come to us through Jesus. Our fellowship together as the people of God, loving and serving and caring for one another has come to us because we are all united to Jesus together!

The Bible says that we are "in him." That means that God chooses to hide our sins behind Jesus' goodness. The apostle Paul says it this way, "I have been crucified with Christ." Even though our old nature is still around and we still want the wrong things sometimes, and still do the wrong things lots of times, for those who are in Jesus, all the punishment for our every sin was taken by Him.

So, now we live our lives trusting this truth that Jesus loved us and gave himself for us. As we do this God changes us. He strengthens our desire for Him and His ways and weakens our desire for other things by His Holy Spirit. This is how we do impossible things!

Trusting in the good news of Jesus actually changes our hearts! We cannot force ourselves to want what we don't want, but God can slowly change our hearts with every little step of faith and obedience! We can say "no" to the things we want, because Christ has united Himself to us and has given us the power of the Holy Spirit!

*\*Let's pray to remember that Christ has united Himself to us, taken our punishment, and given us His power so we might do the impossible things He has called us to!*