CoMission

LEADER BOOK

Jesus First: 40-Day Challenge

For Christians who are disappointed with the church. Forty days back to the Word, the Spirit and the people God is drawing, until Jesus is first again.

Print it, write in it, and take it to the group.

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Start here: how the 40 days work

REMEMBER

> take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

WHAT A DAY LOOKS LIKE

About 15 to 20 minutes. Days 7, 14, 21, 28 and 35 are for talking it over instead.

1. Check in	Look back at yesterday's “I will”.
2. Pray	A short written prayer, or your own words.
3. Read it twice	The passage is printed in full.
4. Retell it	Put it in your own words, as if telling a friend.
5. Ask, then decide	Three questions, then one specific “I will” and who to tell.
6. Write one line	Where might God have been in my day?

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 20 to 30 minutes, before anyone starts day 1

Before the session Read this chapter and the first week of passages, Psalm 73 to Luke 19:41-48, before you hand the book over. Settle what your own disappointment with the church is.

Watch for

- Your urge to defend the church, or to pile on it. Receive what people say.
- Explaining what they will find. Let the passages do the teaching.

Someone has agreed to spend forty days putting Jesus first, and you are the person they will talk it over with: the leader of a small group, or one friend walking beside one person. Most people who pick up this class are long-time Christians who have grown honest enough to be disappointed with the church. Some are still in the pew. Some have stepped out, or are close.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this is, and what it is not

This is not a class about fixing a church. It is not a case for leaving, and it is not a defence of staying. It is a short Discovery Bible Study every day, built on one conviction: what most disappointed Christians have been missing is not a better congregation but honest, intentional obedience to Jesus Himself.

Expect anger, grief and cynicism, and some real wounds. Receive them. Do not excuse what was done, do not rank anyone's hurt, and do not rush to the lesson. Do not pile on either. Some congregations are on track, often because somebody stayed through the human mess and watched God work. Others are not. You can let both be true.

How the days work

Every ordinary day has the same rhythm: check in on yesterday's "I will", pray the written prayer, read the passage twice, retell it, ask what it says about God and about people, decide one specific "I will" and who to tell, and write one line about where God might have been in the day. The picture is Eat, Digest, Grow. They eat the passage by reading, re-reading and retelling it. They digest it with the questions, a specific "I will" and someone to tell. The growth is God's part, not theirs and not yours.

So don't chew their food for them. If you explain today's passage, they will wait for you to explain tomorrow's. Days 7, 14, 21, 28 and 35, and the final gather on day 40, are the days you matter most.

Your part

If you are leading a group, fix the day, time and place of every talk-it-over day before day 1. Keep the circle small enough that everyone speaks. Ask, listen, and let quieter people go first. When someone's answer to one of the questions drifts away from what the passage says, bring the group back gently with "Where do you see that in the passage?" Use it for that and nothing else.

If you are walking with one friend, agree how you will talk each week; in person is best, a phone call is fine. Ask what they read, what they did and what happened. When they ask you something directly, answer briefly and honestly, then hand the question back.

The safety line

The class will often counsel people to stay where they are. That counsel is for the disappointed. If something is happening in someone's church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class is asking. Say so plainly, and encourage them to talk about it with someone they trust. And if someone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, encourage them to get help beyond this class as well.

Before day 1

Do the first week yourself before anyone else starts, so you know what your people are walking into.

For you, today

Write down one way the church has disappointed you, and one person in your church you have quietly written off. Pray for that person by name today. Then ask God to make you a listener who neither defends nor piles on.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What brought you to this class?

2. What would you like to be different forty days from now?

3. Who could you talk it over with once a week?

TODAY'S READING

Day 1: Honest about it

Psalm 73 (OTB)

[1] God certainly is good to Israel, To those who are pure in heart! [2] Yet my feet nearly stumbled, My steps almost slipped. [3] For I was envious of the arrogant When I observed the success of the wicked. [4] For they seem to have no struggles in their death, And their bodies are well-nourished. [5] They do not face the troubles of others, Nor are they plagued like the rest of humanity. [6] Therefore arrogance adorns them like a necklace; Violence clothes them like a garment. [7] Their eyes bulge with abundance; The imaginations of their heart overflow. [8] They scoff and speak with malice; They speak with haughty intent. [9] They set their mouths against the heavens, And their tongues strut through the earth. [10] Therefore their people turn to them, And they drink up waters in abundance. [11] They say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge with the Most High?" [12] Behold, these are the wicked; Always at ease, they increase in wealth. [13] Surely I have kept my heart pure in vain And washed my hands in innocence; [14] For I have been afflicted all day long, And chastened every morning. [15] If I had resolved to speak like this, Behold, I would have been unfaithful to Your children. [16] When I tried to understand this, It was a burden to me [17] Until I entered the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their final destiny. [18] Surely You place them on slippery paths; You cast them down to ruin. [19] How suddenly they are destroyed, Completely swept away by terrors! [20] Like a dream when one awakens, Lord, When You arise, You will despise their form. [21] When my heart was grieved And my spirit was embittered, [22] I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a brute beast before You. [23] Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You uphold me by my right hand. [24] You lead me with Your wisdom, And afterward You will receive me into honour. [25] Whom have I in heaven but You? And on earth, I desire nothing besides You. [26] My flesh and my heart may falter, But God remains the strength of my heart and my portion forever. [27] For indeed, those who are far from You will perish; You destroy all who are unfaithful to You. [28] But as for me, it is good to be near God; I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge, That I may tell of all Your deeds.

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 1: Honest about it

REMEMBER

> Until I entered the sanctuary of God

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: God, I am tired of pretending. Here is what I really feel about Your people, and about You. Meet me here, not where I am supposed to be. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Psalm 73 twice. Mark the turn at verse 17, and notice that the writer says all of his bitterness to God before it comes.

Watch for

- Rushing to verse 17. The psalm spends sixteen verses in honest complaint; let people stay there.
- Using the psalm to cast the people who hurt them as the wicked who are swept away.
- Your own urge to defend the church on the very first day.

Day 1 sets the tone for forty. The class opens with a psalm in which a faithful man admits that what he saw among people who claimed God nearly made him give up. If your friend or group learns today that honesty is allowed here, the rest of the class can work. If they learn that they have to sound fine, it will not.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

The psalm begins with a statement of faith, that God is good to the pure in heart, and then immediately says, in effect: but I nearly slipped. The writer watched arrogant people do well, saw others follow them, and decided that keeping his own heart clean had been pointless. He felt it every morning. He admits that if he had said all this aloud, he would have betrayed God's children. It was a burden to him, until he went into

the sanctuary of God and saw where things end. After that he calls his own bitterness senseless, and then says some of the most tender things in the Psalms: God holds his right hand, and there is nothing on earth he wants besides God.

Notice two things. The turn does not come from an argument. It comes from going into God's presence. And the writer does not pretend he never felt it. He writes the bitterness down, and God kept it in the Bible.

Questions you might hear

"Is it wrong to feel this way about other Christians?" The psalm does not say the feeling was imaginary. It shows what he did with it. Ask what the writer did with his.

"So the people who hurt me are the wicked?" Be careful here. This class is not a place to sort the people in anyone's church into categories. Ask what the writer came to see about himself in verses 21 and 22.

"I haven't had a verse 17 moment." That is fine. Neither had he, for sixteen verses.

If you're leading a group

Give people time to settle before anyone speaks. Ask for a retell first, and let a second person retell if the first is short. When the talk turns to the church, people may compete to tell the worst story. Thank each person, and do not rank the stories. If one person talks for a long time, say, "Thank you. I'd like to hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." If nobody speaks, wait longer than feels comfortable. In a group like this, the first silence often comes just before the most honest thing anyone says.

If you're walking with one friend

One-to-one, the risk is the opposite: your friend may tell you more than they meant to. Do not hurry to respond with a lesson or a story of your own. Ask, "How long have you been carrying that?" and then ask what the writer did with his. If you are on the phone, say out loud during the pauses that you are still there. End by asking what their "I will" is, and do not grade it. On day 1, a small honest step is plenty.

For you, today

Write your own verses 1 to 16: three or four honest sentences to God about what you feel when you look at His people. Do not tidy them up. Then pray them aloud, and ask Him to bring you into His presence before you bring anyone else into this class.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **There is no yesterday yet. How are you coming into this?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. **If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.**

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 2: God sees what we can't

1 Samuel 16:1-13 (OTB)

[1] The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself from among his sons.” [2] But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ [3] Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I indicate to you.” [4] So Samuel did what the Lord said and went to Bethlehem. The elders of the town came trembling to meet him and said, “Do you come in peace?” [5] He said, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. [6] As they arrived, he observed Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before Him.” [7] But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” [8] Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. But he said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.” [9] Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. But he said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.” [10] So Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen these.” [11] Then Samuel said to Jesse, “Are these all the boys?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is tending the sheep.” So Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here.” [12] So he sent for him and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.” [13] Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and from that day onward, the Spirit of the Lord was powerfully with David. And Samuel got up and went to Ramah.

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Day 2: God sees what we can't

REMEMBER

the Lord looks at the heart.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, You see what I cannot see in other people, and what I would rather not see in myself. Teach me to look the way You look. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13. Notice that Samuel is grieving at the start, and that the youngest son was not even invited.

Watch for

- Using verse 7 only against other people. It reaches the reader's own heart first.
- Turning the story into a lesson about being the overlooked one who is secretly better.

Day 2 gives the class its first real tool for thinking about the church: we see behaviour, and God sees hearts. It is good news and uncomfortable news at once, and both halves matter. People who are disappointed with Christians usually like the first half and have not yet sat with the second.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

The story opens with Samuel grieving over a king who has failed, and God asking how long he will keep at it. Then God sends him to Bethlehem with a horn of oil. Samuel is afraid, and goes anyway. Jesse’s sons pass in front of him one at a time. The first is tall and impressive, and Samuel is certain. God says no, and tells him why: people look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. Seven sons pass. None is chosen. The youngest is out with the sheep, and nobody thought he was worth calling in. He is the one.

Notice that Samuel, a prophet, gets it wrong by looking. Notice that God does not explain what He saw in Eliab's heart; that stays between God and Eliab. And notice that the one God chose was the one his own family overlooked.

Questions you might hear

"So God sees how bad they really are?" Possibly. He also sees things in them we cannot see, and things in us we would rather He did not. Ask where they see God looking in this story.

"Does this mean I should stop noticing what's wrong?" The passage does not say we see nothing. It says what we see is limited. Ask what changes if God sees more than they do.

"I feel like David: overlooked." Many will. Receive it. Then ask what David was doing when they sent for him.

If you're leading a group

This is a good day to have two people retell, because the details matter: who passes, who is missing, what God says. After the questions, ask everyone to think quietly of one person in their church they have written off, without naming them. Do not ask anyone to say who it is. If someone starts describing a person in detail, bring it back kindly: "Let's leave names out. What does this passage say God sees?" Keep the energy on God's way of looking rather than on anyone's faults.

If you're walking with one friend

With one person you can go further. Ask which half of verse 7 is harder for them right now: God seeing other people's hearts, or God seeing theirs. If they hesitate, be honest about your own answer first. Over coffee, let the silence do some of the work. Their "I will" might be about one person they have judged by appearance. Let them name that person to you only if they want to, and never bring it up again unless they do.

For you, today

Think of one person in your church you have judged by what you could see. Write down one thing you do not know about their heart. Pray for them by name, and ask God to show you your own heart as clearly as you think you see theirs.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 3: Jesus saw it first

Matthew 23:23-28 (OTB)

[23] “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practised these, without neglecting the others. [24] You blind guides! You filter out a gnat while you swallow a camel. [25] “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. [26] Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean. [27] “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and all uncleanness. [28] In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

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Day 3: Jesus saw it first

REMEMBER

First clean the inside of the cup and dish

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, You saw all of this long before I did, and it grieved You more. Thank You that my disappointment is not stronger than Your love. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Matthew 23:23-28. List the three pictures Jesus uses, and notice that He does not tell them to stop tithing.

Watch for

- Treating the passage as ammunition against church leaders the group knows.
- Missing verse 23: Jesus says they should have done both, not dropped the tithe.
- Nobody asking whether the cup is a picture of them too.

Day 3 gives people permission to say that something in the church is badly wrong, because Jesus said it first. That permission is real, and you should not take it back. But this is also the first place in the class where the mirror quietly turns around, and part of your job is to let it turn without pushing it.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus speaks to scribes and Pharisees, the most careful religious people of His day. They tithe even their kitchen herbs. He does not mock the tithe; He says they should have kept it. What He condemns is that they neglected the weightier things: justice, mercy and faithfulness. Then come three pictures. They strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. They wash the outside of a cup that is full of greed inside, and He tells them to clean the inside first. They are like whitewashed tombs, lovely to look at and full of death.

Notice where the problem is in every picture: inside. Notice that the outside is not the enemy; Jesus expects the outside to follow once the inside is clean. And notice the tone. These are woes, words of grief and warning, spoken to people He had still come to save.

Questions you might hear

“This is exactly my church.” Maybe parts of it. Receive that without arguing. Then ask what Jesus told the Pharisees to do first, and who He was saying it to.

“Isn’t Jesus being harsh?” He is being direct. Ask what in the passage shows why He cares so much about the inside.

“Who are the Pharisees today?” This is where a group can drift into naming people. Bring it back to the text: what were the Pharisees careful about, and what did they leave out? Then ask what we are careful about.

If you’re leading a group

Have someone read the passage aloud the second time, slowly, because the pictures land better when they are heard. Expect energy in the room. If the conversation becomes a list of other churches’ failures, let it run briefly, then turn it gently with a question: “What would justice, mercy and faithfulness look like in this group this week?” If one person keeps returning to one leader who hurt them, acknowledge the hurt and offer to talk after the meeting.

If you’re walking with one friend

One friend may say things about a pastor or a church that they would never say in a group. Hear it out. Do not defend the person, and do not add to it. When they are done, ask, “What do you think Jesus wanted for those people?” Later, if it fits, ask which of the three pictures they recognise in themselves. Only ask that if you are ready to answer it first.

For you, today

Pick the one picture that describes something in you: a gnat you strain at, a cup you polish, a wall you whitewash. Write one sentence about it. Then do one act of mercy or faithfulness today that nobody will see, and thank Jesus that He sees the inside and loves you still.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 4: Busy, and far away

Revelation 2:1-7 (OTB)

[1] “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. [2] I know your deeds, your labour, and your perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. [3] You have endured and persevered for my name, and have not grown weary. [4] Yet I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first. [5] Remember from where you have fallen! Repent and do the deeds you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. [6] But you have this in your favour: you reject the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also detest. [7] Let those who have ears listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will grant the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 4: Busy, and far away

REMEMBER

> You have abandoned the love you had at first.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord Jesus, I have been busy for You and far from You at the same time. I want my first love back. Show me what that looks like today. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Revelation 2:1-7. Count what Jesus praises before His one complaint, and notice the three verbs in verse 5: remember, repent, do.

Watch for

- Hearing the praise as empty. Jesus means it; a busy, careful church is not worthless.
- Turning first love into a feeling to work up. Verse 5 says to do the deeds done at first.

Day 4 gives people a name for something many of them have felt without words: a church that does everything right and has lost the one thing that matters most. It also quietly asks whether that describes them.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

The risen Jesus writes to the church in Ephesus. He knows their deeds, their labour and their endurance. They do not tolerate evil. They have tested false apostles. They have persevered for His name and not grown weary. Then one sentence: they have abandoned the love they had at first. He tells them to remember where they have fallen from, to repent, and to do the deeds they did at first, or He will remove their lampstand. He closes by telling anyone with ears to listen to what the Spirit says, and promises the tree of life.

Notice the order. Praise comes first, and it is sincere. Notice that the fix is not a new programme; it is a return. And notice that the fix is concrete. He does not tell them to feel something. He tells them to do the first deeds again.

Questions you might hear

“That’s my church: busy, correct, cold.” Receive it. Then ask what Jesus told them to do about it, and what the first deeds might have looked like.

“How do you get first love back? I can’t make myself feel it.” The passage does not ask them to feel. It asks them to remember and to do. Let the text answer this one; ask what verse 5 tells them to do.

“What is the lampstand?” Answer briefly if you know: earlier in Revelation the lampstands stand for the churches. Then move on. Do not let the session become a lecture on Revelation.

If you’re leading a group

Ask people to remember aloud, briefly, what their faith looked like when it was new. Go first if the room is slow, and keep your story short so others feel free to keep theirs short. Some will have no such memory. That is fine; say so. If someone uses the letter to list the faults of a particular church, steer back to verse 5 and ask what doing the first deeds would look like for this group, this week.

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend when they last felt close to Jesus, and what they were doing then. Listen for practices they have dropped: reading, praying with someone, serving quietly. Do not prescribe one back to them. Ask instead, “What is one of those first deeds you could do today?” If they say they never had a first love, take that seriously and gently. Forty days is long enough for that to change.

For you, today

Write down one thing you used to do because you loved Jesus that you no longer do. Do it today, in some small form, whether you feel like it or not. Then tell Jesus plainly that you want your first love back, and ask Him to show you what that looks like this week.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 5: He is still knocking

Revelation 3:14-22 (OTB)

14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the
origin of God’s creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot!
16 Therefore, since you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to reject you. 17 You say, ‘I am rich; I have
acquired wealth and do not need anything.’ But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and
naked. 18 I advise you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white garments to wear,
so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. 19 Those whom I love, I
rebuke and discipline. Therefore, be earnest and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone
hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with that person, and they with me. 21 To the one who is
victorious, I will grant the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father
on his throne. 22 Whoever has an ear, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

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Day 5: He is still knocking

REMEMBER

I stand at the door and knock.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, I hear You knocking. I have kept the door half shut for a long time. I open it now. Come in and eat with me. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Revelation 3:14-22. Notice verse 19, that the rebuke comes from love, and that verse 20 is spoken to anyone inside a church.

Watch for

- Treating verse 20 as an appeal to outsiders. It is addressed to a church.
- Settling on lukewarm as a label for other people, and not hearing the knock.

Day 5 is the strongest word the class has yet read against a church, and one of the tenderest. Your friend or group needs to feel both. If they only hear the judgment, they will feel vindicated. If they only hear the invitation, they will miss how much Jesus cares.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus writes to Laodicea. He knows their deeds: they are neither cold nor hot, and He wishes they were one or the other. Because they are lukewarm, He is about to reject them. They say they are rich and need nothing; He says they are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. He advises them to buy from Him gold refined in fire, white garments and salve for their eyes. Then He explains Himself: those He loves, He rebukes and disciplines. And then He is standing at the door, knocking. If anyone hears and opens, He will come in and eat with them.

Notice where Jesus is in this letter: outside the door of a church that bears His name. Notice that the invitation is to anyone, one person at a time. And notice the meal. He is not asking them to perform. He is asking for a seat at the table.

Questions you might hear

“How can He be outside His own church?” That is a good, unsettling question. Let them sit with it. Ask what in the letter explains how He came to be outside.

“Isn’t verse 20 for unbelievers?” The letter is to a church. Ask who “anyone” in verse 20 might include.

“I’m tired of being told I’m lukewarm.” Some people have heard this passage used as a club. Receive that. Then point them to verse 19 and ask why Jesus says He rebukes.

If you’re leading a group

Read the passage aloud twice, with two different voices if you can, and ask people to listen for the tone the second time. When it is time for the “I will”, invite people to keep it private if it concerns their own door. Some of the most important “I will”s on this day are ones nobody else hears. If the group drifts into rating local churches by temperature, ask simply, “And where is Jesus standing?”

If you’re walking with one friend

With one person, you can ask the quiet question directly, once, and then leave it alone: “Is there a door you’ve kept half shut?” If they answer, listen. If they do not, let it go. Offer to pray with them before you hang up or leave the table, and if they want to, let them pray the day’s prayer in their own voice. Do not push them to tell you what is behind the door. That is between them and the One knocking.

For you, today

Name one area of your life where you have kept Jesus at the door: a habit, a relationship, a decision you keep putting off. Open it today in one concrete way, and tell one person you trust what you are doing. Then pray the day’s prayer slowly, as your own.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 6: He wept

Luke 19:41-48 (OTB)

41 As he drew near to Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, “If you, even you, had known on this
day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your
enemies will build a barricade against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will bring you to
the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not
recognise the time of God’s visitation to you.” 45 Upon entering the temple courts, Jesus began to drive out those
who were selling, 46 saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house will be a house of prayer’; but you have made it a den of
robbers.” 47 Each day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the leaders
among the people were seeking to kill him. 48 Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people were
hanging on his words.

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 6: He wept

REMEMBER

Jesus grieved over His people before He cleared the house.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, You wept over Your people. Let my disappointment become what Yours was: grief, love, and a longing for them to come back to God. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Luke 19:41-48. Notice that the weeping comes before the clearing, and that the people hang on His words at the end.

Watch for

- Jumping to the tables and skipping the tears. The order is the point.
- Using the temple scene to justify anger that has no grief in it.
- Missing the week's anchor: what you feel is a taste of what God feels.

Day 6 closes the first week and says its main idea out loud: what you feel is a taste of what God feels. The passage shows it. Jesus is not indifferent to His people. He weeps over them, and then He acts.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus comes near Jerusalem, sees the city and weeps. He says that if only they had known what would bring them peace; but now it is hidden from them. He describes the destruction that is coming, because they did not recognise the time God visited them. Then He enters the temple courts and drives out the sellers: His house was meant to be a house of prayer, and they have made it a den of robbers. He goes on teaching there every day. The leaders want Him dead. The people hang on His words.

Notice the order: grief first, action second. Notice what made Him weep: they did not recognise God among them. And notice that after the clearing He stays and teaches. He does not abandon the temple; He fills it with His words.

Questions you might hear

“So my anger at the church is righteous?” Some of it may be. Ask what came before Jesus’s anger in the passage, and whether their disappointment has any tears in it.

“Why did He weep if He knew what would happen?” Let the text answer. Ask what He says He wanted for them.

“Should I be turning over tables at my church?” Go gently. Ask what Jesus did after He cleared the temple, and what that says about whether He had given up on it.

If you’re leading a group

This is the last reading before the first talk-it-over day, so leave a few minutes to look back over the week. Ask, “Has your disappointment changed at all since day 1?” Do not expect it to have. Watch for the person who has been quiet all week; this passage sometimes opens people up. If someone weeps, let them. Do not hurry to comfort them out of it. A hand on the shoulder and a quiet “Take your time” is enough.

If you’re walking with one friend

With one friend, ask the week’s anchor as a question: “Do you think what you feel about the church could be a small taste of what God feels?” Then let them answer without help. If they say yes, ask what that changes. If they say no, ask what feels different. Before you part, confirm when and where you will meet for the first talk-it-over day, so it does not slip.

For you, today

Spend five minutes praying for your own congregation, out loud if you can, the way Jesus wept over His city: not about what is wrong with them, but for them to know what brings them peace. Then write down one name you will pray for every day this week, and begin today.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

Day 7: Talk it over

REMEMBER

> Take the week to someone else.

TALK IT OVER

No new reading today. Take the week to a small group doing the class, or to one friend you trust.

1. Recap the week	Take turns retelling one passage that stayed with you.
2. Share a hard "I will"	What did you try, and what happened? What got in the way?
3. Ask the hard question	If our disappointment is a taste of what God feels, what does that change?
4. Pray together	Short and honest, or pray one of the week's prayers aloud together.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 45 to 60 minutes with a group; 20 to 40 with one friend

Before the session Reread the six passages of week one, Psalm 73 to Luke 19:41-48, so you can follow along when someone mentions one.

Watch for

- Defending the church, or piling on it. Receive what people say.
- Summing up what you think the week meant. Let them say it.
- Filling silences. A pause often comes before the most honest thing.

This is the first time the people doing the class will say out loud what the week stirred up. For many of them, it will be the first time they have said these things about the church to another Christian without being corrected. How this conversation goes will shape the next five weeks. The most important thing you can do is listen more than you talk.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

How to run the conversation

Use the four steps in the box. The class page adds one more, and it is worth doing between the recap and the “I will”: ask each person to name what they are carrying. What have they felt this week about the church, about God, about themselves? Nobody needs to fix it.

For the recap, ask someone to retell one passage that stayed with them. Do not correct details.

For the hard “I will”, go first if it helps, and choose one you did not keep. Then ask, “What got in the way?” and let them recommit. Never shame anyone for a missed day.

For the hard question, read it slowly: if our disappointment is a taste of what God feels, what does that change about how we look at the church? Let the answers come from the week’s passages. If someone’s answer drifts away from what a passage actually says, bring them back gently with “Where do you see that in the passage?” That is its only job.

Pray briefly. If someone does not want to pray aloud, that is fine.

What you might hear

“I’ve felt this way for years and nobody ever said it was okay.” Thank them. Do not rush past it.

“My church is fine; I’m the problem.” Receive that too. Some congregations are on track, often because people stayed through the mess and watched God work. Do not argue anyone into more disappointment than they have.

Stories of real harm. If someone describes something in their church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, tell them plainly that staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class is asking. Encourage them to talk about it with someone they trust, and offer to stay afterwards if they want. And if someone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, gently encourage them to get help beyond this group as well.

If you're leading a group

Start on time and say how long you will meet. Seat people so nobody is outside the circle. In the recap, let the quieter people go first if they are willing. If one person dominates, thank them and turn to someone else by name. If there is a long silence after the hard question, let it last; then go round once, allowing anyone to pass. Close with each person saying one "I will" for week two, out loud, in a sentence.

If you're walking with one friend

Meet somewhere you can both talk freely: a kitchen table, a quiet corner of a café, a walk. If it has to be a phone call, pick a time when neither of you is driving or rushing. Let your friend set the pace. You may only get through the recap and what they are carrying, and that is a good meeting. Ask the hard question near the end rather than at the start. Before you part, ask about their "I will" for the coming week.

After today

Fix when you will meet on day 14. A short message midweek is fine if that suits your friendship. Do not chase anyone who misses a few days. Week two turns to the silence of God; read Psalm 13 and 1 Kings 19:1-18 before your people do.

For you, today

Write down one thing someone said today that you want to remember, and one thing you said that you wish you had not. Then pray for each person by name, briefly and specifically, for the week ahead. You are responsible for being faithful beside them, not for what God does in them.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Which passage from this week stayed with you, and why?**

2. One “I will” that was hard. What did you try, and what happened?

3. What did the other person notice that you had not?

4. What will you try this coming week?

TODAY'S READING

Day 8: How long?

Psalm 13 (OTB)

[1] How long, Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? [2] How long will I carry this concern in my soul, With sorrow in my heart throughout the day? How long will my enemy triumph over me? [3] Look upon me and respond, O Lord my God; Brighten my eyes, lest I fall into the sleep of death, [4] And my enemy will declare, “I have prevailed against him,” And my adversaries will be glad when I am unsettled. [5] Yet I have placed my trust in Your steadfast love; My heart shall find joy in Your deliverance. [6] I will sing to the Lord, Because He has been gracious to me.

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Day 8: How long?

REMEMBER

How long, Lord?

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, how long? I do not feel You the way I used to. I am choosing to tell You so, and to keep talking to You anyway. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Psalm 13. Notice that nothing in the writer's situation changes between verse 4 and verse 5. Only his choice does.

Watch for

- Treating the silence as proof that someone has done something wrong. Not today.
- Hurrying to verse 5 as if it cancels verses 1 to 4.
- Long numbness or hopelessness that needs help beyond the class.

Week two turns from the church to God. Many disappointed Christians blame Him, or have quietly stopped expecting to hear from Him. Today's psalm gives them words for that, and permission to say those words to God directly.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

The writer asks how long, four times over. How long will God forget him? How long will He hide His face? How long will this sorrow sit in his heart all day? How long will his enemy win? He asks God to look at him and answer, before he falls into the sleep of death. Then, with nothing changed that we can see, he says that he has placed his trust in God's steadfast love. His heart will find joy, and he will sing, because God has been gracious to him.

Notice that the complaint is addressed to God. He never stops talking to Him. Notice that verse 5 begins with yet: it is a decision, not a feeling. And notice that he remembers what God has done before he sees what God will do.

Questions you might hear

“Why doesn’t God answer?” The psalm does not explain it either. Do not invent an answer. Ask what the writer did while he waited.

“Is it my fault He’s quiet?” Some will jump there on their own. Day 10 raises that possibility gently, as one among several. Today, do not go there. Say only that the Bible is full of faithful people who felt exactly this.

“I can’t say verse 5 yet.” That is honest. Ask whether they can say verses 1 to 4 to God today. That is a real prayer, and it is in the Bible.

If you’re leading a group

Ask how many have felt that God was quiet, and let people simply raise a hand if they would rather not speak. The psalm is short, so two retells are easy; ask for both. Some will want to tell how long their silence has lasted. Let them, but keep each turn short so everyone can speak. If someone describes months or years of numbness or hopelessness, receive it quietly, and talk with them afterwards about getting help beyond the group. Do not do that in front of everyone.

If you’re walking with one friend

One-to-one, ask your friend when they last felt God near, and what has happened since. Do not rush to reassure. A silence on the phone is not a problem; let them think. If they tell you they have felt numb or hopeless for a long time, take it seriously. Encourage them, kindly, to talk with someone beyond this class as well, and check in again in a day or two. Then ask what their “I will” is. It may be as simple as praying verses 1 to 4 aloud.

For you, today

Write your own how long: one or two honest sentences to God about where He has felt quiet to you. Then write your own yet: one thing you know He has done. Pray both aloud, and choose one way to keep seeking Him today, even if you feel nothing at all.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. **If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.**

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 9: The only one left

1 Kings 19:1-18 (OTB)

[1] Ahab reported to Jezebel all that Elijah had accomplished, including how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. [2] Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more so, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like the life of one of them.” [3] Elijah, filled with fear, arose and fled for his life, arriving at Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, where he left his servant. [4] But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree; and he asked for himself to die, and said, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” [5] Then he lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree; but behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, “Arise, eat!” [6] Then he looked, and behold, there was at his head a loaf of bread baked on hot stones, and a jug of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. [7] But the angel of the Lord returned a second time, touched him, and said, “Arise, eat, for the journey is too much for you.” [8] So he got up, ate and drank, and travelled in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. [9] Then he came to a cave and spent the night there; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” [10] He said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have abandoned Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they sought to take my life.” [11] So He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and powerful wind was tearing out the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. [12] And after the earthquake, a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, the sound of a gentle whisper. [13] When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” [14] Then he said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have abandoned Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they sought to take my life.” [15] The Lord instructed him, “Go, return by the way you came to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram; [16] and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint as king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. [17] And it shall be that whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will put to death, and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will put to death. [18] Yet I will preserve seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

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Day 9: The only one left

REMEMBER

the sound of a gentle whisper.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Father, sometimes I feel like the only one who cares. Forgive me for thinking so little of what You are doing. Help me hear Your quiet voice. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read 1 Kings 19:1-18. Notice that God feeds Elijah twice before He speaks, and that the seven thousand answer Elijah's complaint.

Watch for

- Skipping the bread and water. Rest and food come before the word.
- Agreeing that the reader really is the only one left who cares.
- Turning the whisper into a technique for hearing God.

Day 9 meets a disappointed Christian's most private thought: I am the only one left who cares. Elijah said it twice, almost word for word. God's answer is gentle, practical and humbling, and it is worth letting your people discover all three for themselves.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

After the great contest on Mount Carmel, Jezebel threatens Elijah's life. He runs, goes a day into the wilderness, sits under a broom tree and asks to die. He sleeps. An angel wakes him and tells him to eat: bread and water. He sleeps again. The angel comes back: eat, because the journey is too much for you. In the strength of that food he walks forty days to the mountain of God. There God asks what he is doing there. Elijah says he alone is left. Wind, earthquake and fire pass, and God is in none of them. Then the sound of a gentle whisper. God asks the same question. Elijah gives the same answer. God gives him work to do, and tells him there are seven thousand who have not bowed to Baal.

Notice the order: food and sleep, then the word. Notice that God does not argue with Elijah's feelings; He corrects his facts. And notice that the answer to burnout is not only rest. It is also the next assignment.

Questions you might hear

"I really do feel like the only one." Receive it. Then ask what God told Elijah about the seven thousand, and whether Elijah knew any of them.

"How do I hear the whisper?" Be careful not to teach a method. Ask what Elijah did when he heard it: he went out and stood, and then he obeyed.

"Was God angry with him?" Let the text answer. Ask what God did first.

If you're leading a group

This is a long passage, so allow time for two careful retells. Ask whether anyone has felt like Elijah, and keep the answers short. Some may find, in this very room, a few of their seven thousand. Point that out only if it is obvious; do not manufacture it. If someone is plainly exhausted, the most faithful thing the group can do may be practical: a meal, a lift, an afternoon off.

If you're walking with one friend

With one person, ask about the bread and water before anything else: "Are you sleeping? Are you eating? When did you last rest?" Disappointment with the church often rides on plain exhaustion. Then ask the question God asked twice, as gently as you can: "What are you doing here?" Let them answer however they like. If they are worn out, their "I will" can be rest. That is obedience too.

For you, today

Do one ordinary thing to care for your body today: sleep, a real meal, a walk. Then sit in silence for five minutes with no phone, and listen. Write down the names of two people you know who still care about Jesus, and thank God that you are not the only one.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 10: Good, and lacking one thing

Mark 10:17-27 (OTB)

17 As He set out on a journey, a man ran up to Him, knelt before Him, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to
inherit eternal life?” 18 Jesus replied, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the
commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud,
honour your father and mother.’” 20 He said to Him, “Teacher, I have observed all these from my youth.” 21 Looking
at him, Jesus loved him and said, “One thing you lack: go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have
treasure in heaven; then come, follow Me.” 22 At this, the man's face fell, and he went away grieving, for he had
great wealth. 23 Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How difficult it is for those who are wealthy to enter
the kingdom of God!” 24 The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how challenging
it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich
person to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 They were even more astonished and said to one another, “Who then is
able to be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God; for with God, all
things are possible.”

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Day 10: Good, and lacking one thing

REMEMBER

Looking at him, Jesus loved him

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, I have been good, but I have not always been Yours. Show me the one thing I have been holding back, and give me courage to let it go. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Mark 10:17-27. Notice verse 21: Jesus looks at the man and loves him before He names the one thing.

Watch for

- Turning a possibility into a diagnosis. Never tell someone their silence is their fault.
- Making it only about money, so nobody has to ask what their own one thing is.
- Shame. The good news is that this is the easiest silence to end.

Day 10 is the most delicate day of week two. It raises one possibility for why God feels far away: our own quiet disobedience. Offer it as one possibility among several, never as a diagnosis of anyone, and always with the good news attached.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

A man runs up to Jesus, kneels, and asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus lists commandments. The man says he has kept them all since he was young, and nothing suggests he is lying. Then Jesus looks at him and loves him, and says: one thing you lack. Sell what you have, give to the poor, and come, follow Me. The man's face falls, and he goes away grieving, because he has great wealth. Jesus tells His disciples how hard it is for the wealthy to enter the kingdom. They are astonished and ask who can be saved. Jesus says that with people it is impossible, but not with God.

Notice that this is a good man by every outward measure. Notice that Jesus loves him while telling him the hard thing. Notice that the one thing is not a rule he broke. It is something he would not let go of in order to follow. And notice where the passage ends: with God, all things are possible.

Questions you might hear

"Is God silent because I've done something wrong?" Do not answer for them. Say plainly that the class offers this as one possibility, not a verdict, and that only they and God can look at it.

"I'm not rich, so this isn't about me." Perhaps. Ask what the man's wealth did in the story, and whether anything does the same for them.

"Not reading the Bible is disobedience? That seems harsh." Ask what Jesus asked the man to do, and what following Him meant. Let them weigh it without your help.

If you're leading a group

Say at the start that nobody will be asked to name their one thing aloud, and keep that promise. Let the questions about God and about people carry the discussion; the passage is rich in both. For the "I will", give a minute of silence and let people write privately. If anyone shares, thank them without comment. If someone begins confessing at length, listen briefly, then offer to talk with them afterwards.

If you're walking with one friend

One-to-one, ask the gentlest version: "Is there something you sense you've been holding back?" If they say yes, you do not need to know what it is. Ask whether they want to let it go, and what one step today would look like. If they say no, accept it. Point them to tomorrow's reading, where Jesus promises to show Himself to the one who keeps His word. The silence that comes from a quiet no is the easiest kind to end.

For you, today

Ask yourself honestly what your one thing is: a possession, a habit, a grudge, a closed Bible. Write it down where only you will see it. Take one concrete step to let it go today. Then thank Jesus that He looked at the rich man and loved him, and that He looks at you the same way.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. **If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.**

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 11: He shows Himself

John 14:15-24 (OTB)

15 “For if you love me, you will obey my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will provide you with another
Helper, to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither perceives
him nor recognises him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you alone
without provision; I will come to you. 19 In a little while, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me.
Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will understand that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I
am in you. 21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will
be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and reveal myself to them.” 22 Then Judas (not Iscariot) said, “Lord,
how is it that you are going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” 23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he
will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Anyone
who does not love me will not obey my teaching. The words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father
who sent me.

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Day 11: He shows Himself

REMEMBER

I too will love them and reveal myself to them.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, You promised to show Yourself to the one who keeps Your words. I want to know You, not just know about You. Help me obey what You say today. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read John 14:15-24. Notice how love and obedience are joined in verses 15, 21 and 23, and the promise of the Helper in verses 16 and 17.

Watch for

- Hearing obedience as a price paid for God's presence. Jesus says it is what love does.
- Expecting a dramatic experience by tomorrow.

Day 11 is the turning point of week two. After the silence of Psalm 13, Elijah's cave and the rich man's one thing, Jesus gives His own answer: love that obeys, and a promise to show Himself. This is where the class says out loud what the rest of it is built on.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus tells His friends that if they love Him they will obey His commands. He will ask the Father to give them another Helper, the Spirit of truth, who lives with them and will be in them. He will not leave them alone; He will come to them. The world will not see Him, but they will. Then the key promise: whoever has His commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Him, and He will love that person and reveal Himself to them. Judas, not Iscariot, asks how He will reveal Himself to them and not to the world. Jesus answers that whoever loves Him will obey His teaching, and the Father and He will come and make their home with that person.

Notice that obedience is never pictured as earning. It is what love looks like. Notice that the promise is personal: He comes, He shows Himself, He makes a home. And notice the Helper. The disciples are not left to obey on their own strength.

Questions you might hear

“So if I obey, I’ll feel God again?” The promise is that He will reveal Himself. It does not say how or when. Ask what the passage says He will do, and leave the timing with Him.

“This sounds like earning it.” Ask where they see love in the passage. Jesus ties the two together, and the passage is a better answer than any argument you could make.

“What does it mean that He will make His home with us?” Let the group sit with it. Do not explain it away; ask what a home is.

If you’re leading a group

After the retell, ask someone to read verses 21 to 23 aloud again. Then ask how Judas’s question is like their own. Keep the discussion on the text rather than on theology about the Spirit; week four comes back to Him. When it is time for the “I will”, encourage small and specific: one thing Jesus said, one action, today. Ask each person to say theirs aloud in one sentence, so the group can ask about it next week.

If you’re walking with one friend

With one person, ask what “know You, not just know about You” means to them, since it is in today’s prayer. Listen for the gap between the two in their story. Then help them make the “I will” concrete: a name, a time, a place. If you meet for coffee, ask them to send you a message that evening saying whether they did it. Do not check up on them beyond that.

For you, today

Find one thing Jesus said in the Gospels that you know and have not done. Do it today, specifically, and tell one person what you did. Then pray today’s prayer, and ask Jesus to show Himself to you and to the people you are walking with, in whatever way He chooses.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 12: Church-first or Jesus-first

Luke 10:38-42 (OTB)

[38] As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. [39] She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to his word. [40] But Martha was preoccupied with all the preparations that needed to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" [41] "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are anxious and troubled about many things, [42] but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 12: Church-first or Jesus-first

REMEMBER

only one thing is needed.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, I have been worried and distracted by many things, even good things. Today I want to sit at Your feet first. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Luke 10:38-42, and look at Matthew 13:24-30, the story the class page mentions. Notice that Martha is not scolded for serving.

Watch for

- The group sorting people into wheat and weeds. That is exactly what the servants were told not to do.
- Making Martha the villain. Both sisters love Jesus; one is pulled away.
- Someone being harmed hearing the class's counsel to stay. Say the safety line.

Day 12 names the shape of the whole problem: a faith that is church-first rather than Jesus-first. It also brings in an idea that can go badly wrong in a group, the mix in every congregation. Handle the first with honesty, and the second with great care.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus comes to a village, and Martha welcomes Him into her home. Her sister Mary sits at His feet, listening to His word. Martha is preoccupied with all the preparations, and comes and asks Jesus whether He cares that her sister has left her to do the work alone. Jesus says her name twice. She is anxious and troubled about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her.

Notice that Martha's work is good, and it is for Jesus. Notice that her complaint is about her sister, and it reaches Jesus as a question about whether He cares. And notice that He does not tell Mary to get up. Being busy for Jesus and being with Jesus are not the same thing.

The class page adds the mix. Some in every congregation never moved from commitment to the church to commitment to Jesus, and have never been changed by the Spirit. In the story of the wheat and the weeds, the servants are told not to do the pulling. Make sure your people hear the purpose, which is grace and never judgment: we would not expect restraint, good choices or high morals from someone who is drunk, and we cannot expect the fruit of the Spirit from someone the Spirit has not yet changed. That is a reason to pray for people, not to sort them.

Questions you might hear

"So the people who hurt me aren't really Christians?" Do not agree, and do not argue. Say that nobody here can know that, and that today's passage is about which sister we are.

"Is serving at church wrong, then?" Ask what Jesus said to Martha, and what He did not say.

If you're leading a group

Set the rule before discussion starts: no names, and no guessing who is wheat. If someone begins, stop them kindly and return to Martha and Mary. Ask which sister each person has been more like lately. Then ask what sitting at Jesus's feet would look like this week, in actual hours and places. The class will often counsel people to stay where they are, so say once, plainly, that it never applies to harm: if something is happening in a church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class is asking. Talk about it with someone you trust.

If you're walking with one friend

One friend may tell you about a specific person they now suspect was never changed. Listen, then move gently from that person to grace: "If that's true, what would it mean to pray for them?" Ask what is crowding out time at Jesus's feet in their own week. If anything they describe

sounds like harm rather than disappointment, say the safety line plainly and encourage them to talk with someone they trust.

For you, today

Before you do anything for your church today, spend fifteen minutes at Jesus's feet: read, listen, pray. Then think of one person who has disappointed you, and pray for them by name, asking the Spirit to do in them what you cannot.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 13: To whom would we go?

John 6:60-69 (OTB)

60 On hearing it, many of His disciples said, “This is a difficult teaching. Who can accept it?” 61 Aware that His
disciples were murmuring about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? 62 What if you were to see the Son
of Man ascend to where He was before? 63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have
spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the
beginning who did not believe and who would betray Him. 65 He continued, “This is why I told you that no one can
come to Me unless the Father has enabled them.” 66 From this point, many of His disciples turned back and no
longer followed Him. 67 “You do not want to leave as well, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter
answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we turn? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and to
understand that You are the Holy One of God.”

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 13: To whom would we go?

REMEMBER

You have the words of eternal life.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, there is nowhere else to go. You have the words of eternal life. Make me someone who stays close to You, and helps others stay close too. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read John 6:60-69. Notice that many leave because the teaching is hard, and that Peter's reason for staying is Jesus, not the crowd.

Watch for

- Shutting down the honest question. Let people pray it; day 38 comes back to it.
- Hearing "stay where you are" as a rule for someone who is being harmed.
- Defending the church, or saying every church is broken. Neither is true.

Day 13 asks the question underneath many of the others: if a church disappoints me, why not leave and find a better one? It also names the most honest question in the class: *God, really? Is the church really part of Your plan? How can THIS be Your will?* Your job today is to let that question be asked out loud, as a prayer God can take, and not to answer it for anyone.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus has just taught something hard, and many of His disciples say so: who can accept it? Jesus knows they are murmuring and asks whether it offends them. He says the Spirit gives life, that His words are spirit and life, and that some of them do not believe. From then on many of His disciples turn back and no longer follow Him. Jesus asks the twelve whether they want to leave too. Peter answers: Lord, to whom shall we turn? You have the words of eternal life, and we have come to believe that You are the Holy One of God.

Notice that Peter does not say the teaching was easy, or that the crowd was wrong to find it hard. He says there is nowhere else to go. His reason for staying is Jesus. That is what the class means by Jesus-first: staying close to Him is what lets us stay where we are and help others do the same.

The class does not say every church is deeply flawed. Some are on track, often because people stayed through the human mess, watched God work and joined in. Nor does it say a move is never right.

Questions you might hear

“God, how can this be Your will?” Do not rush to answer. Say it is a real prayer, and that the class will come back to it on day 38. Ask what Peter said to Jesus when things were hard.

“So I have to stay in my church no matter what?” No. Say the safety line plainly: if something is happening in a church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class is asking. Talk about it with someone you trust. And if someone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, encourage them to get help beyond the class as well.

If you’re leading a group

Read Peter’s answer aloud a second time after the retell. Give the group permission to say the honest question aloud, and if nobody does, say it yourself as a question you have asked. Then let the silence work. Do not let the discussion become a vote on whether anyone should stay at a particular church. Bring it back to Jesus: where did Peter go?

If you’re walking with one friend

With one person, ask directly whether they have been thinking of leaving their church. Listen without steering. If their reasons sound like harm rather than disappointment, say the safety line and encourage them to talk to someone they trust. If they are disappointed, ask what it would mean to stay close to Jesus first and watch what He does over the next few weeks. Do not ask for a decision today.

For you, today

If you have ever prayed the honest question, pray it again, aloud. Then pray Peter's answer. Write down one person in your church you could help stay close to Jesus this week, and take one small step toward them today.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

Day 14: Talk it over

REMEMBER

> Take the week to someone else.

TALK IT OVER

No new reading today. Take the week to a small group doing the class, or to one friend you trust.

1. Recap the week	Take turns retelling one passage that stayed with you.
2. Share a hard "I will"	What did you try, and what happened? Share only what you want to.
3. Ask the honest question	God, is the church really part of Your plan? What did Peter's answer say to it?
4. Pray together	Pray for each other by name.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 45 to 60 minutes with a group; 20 to 40 with one friend

Before the session Reread week two, Psalm 13 to John 6:60-69. Be ready to hear the honest question asked aloud without answering it for anyone.

Watch for

- Answering the honest question for people. Let them ask it; day 38 comes back to it.
- The mix turning into guessing who in someone's church is wheat and who is weeds.
- Defending the church or piling on. Some congregations are on track; receive both.

Week two asked harder things than week one. It moved from the church to the silence of God, raised the possibility of a quiet no nobody had counted, and ended on the question of whether to leave. Today people bring all of that to you. Expect more honesty than on day 7, and more pain.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

How to run the conversation

Use the four steps in the box. After the recap, ask about the silence: has God felt quiet, and what did this week's passages say to that? When you come to the "I will", invite anyone who wants to name a quiet no they have noticed, and say clearly that this is a discovery, not a confession booth. Nobody has to share.

Then give room to the honest question, in its own words: *God, really? Is the church really part of Your plan? How can THIS be Your will?* Say that it is an honest prayer, and that God can take it. Ask whether anyone has prayed it. Ask what Peter's answer on day 13 says to it. Do not try to close it; the class comes back to it on day 38.

If there is time, talk about the mix: if some who disappointed us may never have truly met Jesus, how does that change what we feel toward them? Set the rule first: no names.

If someone's answer drifts from what a passage says, for example that Jesus told Martha to stop serving, ask gently, "Where do you see that in the passage?" and let the group look together.

End by asking each person what would change this week if Jesus were really first. Pray for each other by name.

What you might hear

"God, how can this be Your will?" Let it hang in the air for a moment. Do not defend the church. Say, "That's a real question. Let's keep asking it together."

"Now I see why my church is the way it is: half of them aren't saved." Gently stop the sorting. The servants in Jesus's story were told not to pull the weeds. The point of the mix is grace and prayer.

"My church is actually doing well." Be glad with them. Some congregations are on track, often because people stayed through the mess. Ask how they might help it stay that way.

Stories of real harm. If someone describes something in their church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, say plainly that staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class is asking. Encourage them to talk about it with someone they trust.

And if someone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, gently encourage them to get help beyond the group as well.

If you're leading a group

Open with a minute of quiet before anyone speaks. Keep the recap brisk so there is time for the honest question. If two people start debating whether to leave their church, stop it kindly: this is not a vote, and nobody's decision belongs to the group. Watch for anyone who has gone quiet since day 10, and check in with them privately afterwards.

If you're walking with one friend

With one friend you can take the honest question slowly. Ask whether they have prayed it, and how it felt to say it. Tell them whether you have asked it yourself. If they are close to leaving their church, do not argue them into staying. Ask what staying close to Jesus would look like whatever they decide, and suggest they decide nothing this week. Meet in person if you can; this is a hard conversation to have on the phone.

After today

Fix the day 21 meeting. Week three turns to the Word and answers this week's question: if a new church will not fix it, what will? Read Romans 10:8-17 before your people do.

For you, today

If you have ever prayed the honest question, pray it again and tell God plainly what you feel. Then pray for each person you met with today by name, and for one person in your own church you have written off.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Which passage from this week stayed with you, and why?**

2. One “I will” that was hard. What did you try, and what happened?

3. What did the other person notice that you had not?

4. What will you try this coming week?

TODAY'S READING

Day 15: Faith comes by hearing

Romans 10:8-17 (OTB)

[8] But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: [9] If you acknowledge with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and have faith in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one declares and is saved. [11] For Scripture says, “Whoever believes in him will never be put to shame.” [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, richly blessing all who call on him, [13] for “Everyone who invokes the name of the Lord will be saved.” [14] How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one they have not heard about? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? [15] And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings!” [16] But not all heeded the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” [17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the message of Christ.

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Day 15: Faith comes by hearing

REMEMBER

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the message of Christ.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Father, I need more faith than I have. Thank You for telling me where it comes from. Open my ears to Your word today. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Romans 10:8-17. Trace the chain of questions in verses 14 and 15 to verse 17, and notice that the word is near you in verse 8.

Watch for

- Treating faith as a feeling to work up. The passage says where it comes from.
- Getting lost in verses 9 and 10 and missing the week's point in verse 17.
- Explaining the passage for them. Don't chew their food for them.

Week three answers the question week two left open: if a new church will not fix this, what will? The class's answer is faith, and today's passage says where faith comes from. This is also the week the class names the daily rhythm for what it has been all along: eating the Word every day.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Paul says the word is near: in your mouth and in your heart. If you acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and believe God raised Him, you will be saved. Whoever believes will never be put to shame, and everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved, with no distinction. Then a chain of questions runs backwards: how can people call on someone they have not believed, believe someone they have not heard, hear without someone preaching, preach unless they are sent? Not all heeded the good news. Then the conclusion: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the message of Christ." Romans 10:17 (OTB)

Notice that faith is not pictured as something we work up. It comes. Notice what it comes through: hearing the message of Christ. And notice how near Paul says the word already is.

The class page calls faith insulation. With more of it, what other people do does not knock us down the same way, we see more as God sees, and we can love people and face problems without fear. If faith comes from hearing, the way to more faith is to keep hearing.

Questions you might hear

“I’ve heard the Bible my whole life. Why is my faith so thin?” A fair question, and the week ahead takes it up. Ask what kind of hearing the passage seems to mean, and whether sitting through a sermon and hearing for yourself are the same thing.

“Isn’t this passage about getting saved?” Partly. Let them notice both. Then ask what verse 17 says about faith for anyone, at any stage.

“So I just need to read more?” Not so much more as eat it: read, re-read, retell, then ask and obey. Point to the daily rhythm they already have.

If you’re leading a group

This is a good day to name the method aloud. Eat it: read, re-read, retell. Digest it: the questions, a specific “I will” and someone to tell. Grow: that part is God’s. Then do not explain the passage. Don’t chew their food for them. Let two people retell, ask the three questions, and let the group find verse 17 for itself. If the talk turns into a debate about doctrine, bring it back to what the text says and to what anyone will do this week.

If you’re walking with one friend

With one friend, ask how the daily reading has gone after two weeks. Is it a chore? Is anything landing? Be honest about your own reading. If they have missed days, ask, “What got in the way?” and help them recommit without shame. Their “I will” today could be about the hearing itself: a time and a place where they will read tomorrow.

For you, today

Read today's passage aloud once, slowly, as if hearing it for the first time. Then write down one place where your own faith is thin. Ask God to grow it, and keep your own appointment with His Word tomorrow.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 16: What kind of ground

Luke 8:4-15 (OTB)

4 As a large crowd was gathering and people from various towns were coming to Jesus, he spoke to them in a
parable: 5 “A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some fell along the path; it was trampled underfoot, and
the birds of the air ate it up. 6 Some fell on rocky ground, and when it sprang up, it withered because it lacked
moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked it. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It
grew up and produced a crop a hundred times more than was sown.” As he said this, he called out, “Whoever has
ears to hear, let them hear.” 9 His disciples inquired about the meaning of this parable. 10 He replied, “To you it has
been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but to others I speak in parables, so that, ‘though seeing,
they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.’ 11 “The parable's meaning is this: The seed represents
the word of God. 12 Those along the path are those who hear, and then the adversary comes and removes the word
from their hearts, preventing them from believing and being saved. 13 Those on rocky ground are the ones who
receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in a time of testing
they fall away. 14 The seed that fell among thorns represents those who hear, but as they continue on their way,
they are overwhelmed by life’s worries, riches, and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil
represents those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and through perseverance produce a
crop.

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Day 16: What kind of ground

REMEMBER

hear the word, retain it, and through perseverance produce a crop.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, make me good ground. Pull out whatever is choking Your word in me, and help me hold on to it until it bears fruit. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Luke 8:4-15. Notice that the seed is the same everywhere, and that the good soil hears, holds on and perseveres.

Watch for

- Deciding too quickly which ground you are, or which ground everyone else is.
- Using the parable to explain why other people's faith failed.
- Missing perseverance. The good soil keeps going.

Day 16 meets people who have heard a great deal of the Bible over the years and watched it fail to take root. Jesus told a story about exactly that. The seed is always good. The ground is what differs, and the class asks people not to decide too quickly which ground they are.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

A large crowd gathers, and Jesus tells a parable. A sower scatters seed. Some falls on the path, is trampled, and the birds eat it. Some falls on rock, springs up, and withers for lack of moisture. Some falls among thorns, which grow up with it and choke it. Some falls on good soil and yields a hundredfold. Whoever has ears, let them hear. The disciples ask what it means. The seed is the word of God. On the path, the adversary takes it away before it can be believed. On the rock, people

receive it with joy but have no root, and fall away in testing. Among the thorns, life's worries, riches and pleasures choke it, and they never mature. On good soil are those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, hold on to it, and through perseverance produce a crop.

Notice that the sower does not hold back seed from the poor ground. Notice what the thorns are: not great sins, but worries, riches and pleasures, the ordinary crowding of a full life. And notice the last word on the good soil: perseverance.

Questions you might hear

"I think I'm the thorny ground." Many disappointed Christians will say so. Receive it. Then ask what Jesus says the thorns are, and what might be pulled out this week.

"My whole church is rocky ground." Turn it gently: Jesus told this story to the people listening to Him. Ask what kind of ground it asks the listener to be.

"Can ground change?" The passage does not say directly. Let them wonder. Ask what today's prayer asks God to do.

If you're leading a group

Ask for a retell of the story first, then of Jesus's explanation; they are two pieces and both matter. Expect people to rate themselves. Let them, but ask each person to name one specific thorn rather than a general category. If the group starts discussing who in their church is which soil, stop it: the parable is not a sorting tool, any more than the wheat and the weeds were. Bring everyone back to their own ground.

If you're walking with one friend

One-to-one, ask what has crowded out the word in their life, and listen for the ordinary things: work, worry, a screen, a schedule that never stops. Do not suggest a solution. Ask, "What's one thorn you could pull this week?" and let the answer be theirs. If they are discouraged, point to the end of verse 15. Perseverance means it takes time, and the time is not wasted.

For you, today

Name one thorn in your own week: something good or ordinary that keeps choking the word. Pull it today in one concrete way, such as a phone left in another room or half an hour given back. Then pray today's prayer, and ask God to make you good ground.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. **If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.**

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 17: Planted

Psalm 1 (OTB)

[1] Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! [2] Rather, he finds joy in the Lord's Law, And he reflects on His Law both day and night. [3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water, Which bears its fruit in its season, And its leaf remains green; And in all that he undertakes, he thrives. [4] The wicked are not like this, But they resemble chaff that the wind drives away. [5] Thus, the wicked will not endure in the judgment, Nor will sinners be found in the gathering of the righteous. [6] For the Lord is aware of the path of the righteous, But the path of the wicked leads to ruin.

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Day 17: Planted

REMEMBER

He is like a tree planted by streams of water

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: God, I want to be planted, not blown around. Give me a hunger for Your word, day and night, and let my life bear fruit in its season. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Psalm 1. Notice the slow slide in verse 1, walk, stand, sit, and where the tree gets its water.

Watch for

- Treating the psalm as a scorecard of good and bad people in the church.
- Hearing “day and night” as a rule to keep rather than the joy the psalm describes.

Day 17 meets the dry Christian: still believing, perhaps still attending, but with nothing growing. Psalm 1 is placed at the very front of the Psalms on purpose. It gives the class a picture to hold all week: a tree planted by streams of water.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of scoffers. Instead he finds joy in the Lord’s law and reflects on it day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water: it bears fruit in its season, its leaf stays green, and he thrives in what he does. The wicked are not like that. They are like chaff the wind drives away. The Lord knows the path of the righteous, and the path of the wicked leads to ruin.

Notice the slide in verse 1: walking, then standing, then sitting, a slow settling into the wrong place. Notice that the tree does not water itself; it is planted where the water is. Notice that fruit comes in its season, not every day. And notice the word joy. Reflecting day and night is not

described as duty. It is delight.

For this class, the scoffer's seat is worth a quiet look. A disappointed Christian can drift, a step at a time, from honest grief into a settled habit of scoffing at the church. The psalm does not shame anyone for that. It simply shows where that seat leads, and where the water is.

Questions you might hear

"I'm dry, and I don't know why." Ask where the tree in the psalm gets its water, and where they have been getting theirs.

"Day and night? Who has the time?" Ask what the psalm says the man feels about the law. The question is less about hours than about where his mind keeps returning.

"Am I one of the scoffers?" Do not answer for them. Ask what the three verbs in verse 1 describe, and let them decide.

If you're leading a group

The psalm is short, so have the whole group read it aloud together the second time. Ask people to describe the tree in their own words before the three questions. If anyone starts listing the wicked in their church, return gently to the tree: the psalm's question is where we are planted. Help each "I will" be about water: a time, a place and a passage.

If you're walking with one friend

With one friend, ask when they last found real joy in reading the Bible, and what was different then. If they say never, receive it; this week may be the first time. Ask whether any of the class's daily passages has felt like water so far, and suggest they reread that one tomorrow. Do not lecture about devotional habits. The psalm's picture does more than your advice will.

For you, today

Choose one verse from this week's readings and carry it with you all day: on a card, on your phone, on the fridge. Come back to it three times before bed. Then thank God for streams of water, and ask Him for joy in His word, not only discipline.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 18: We had hoped

Luke 24:13-35 (OTB)

13 That same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about sixty stadia from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about all that had happened. 15 While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself approached and began walking with them; 16 but their eyes were kept from recognising Him. 17 He asked them, “What are these matters you are discussing as you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” 19 “What things?” He asked. They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to be sentenced to death, and crucified Him. 21 But we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 Moreover, some women among us amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 and did not find His body. They came saying they had seen a vision of angels, who said He was alive. 24 Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had described, but they did not see Him.” 25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?” 27 And starting with Moses and all the Prophets, He clarified to them what was mentioned in all the Scriptures about Himself. 28 As they approached the village to which they were going, He acted as if He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So He went in to stay with them. 30 While at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and began to share it with them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognised Him, and He vanished from their sight. 32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and revealed the Scriptures to us?” 33 They got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, “The Lord has truly risen and has appeared to Simon.” 35 Then the two recounted what had happened on the way, and how He was recognised by them in the breaking of the bread.

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Day 18: We had hoped

REMEMBER

Were not our hearts burning within us

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, I had hoped for so much, and I have been walking away with my head down. Walk with me. Open the Scriptures to me, and open my eyes. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Luke 24:13-35. Notice verse 21, where they say they had hoped, and that the two walk back to Jerusalem that same hour.

Watch for

- Hurrying past their disappointment to the happy ending.
- Making the burning heart the goal. It came from the Scriptures opened on the road.
- Missing what they did next: they went back to the others.

Day 18 may be the passage in the whole class that sits closest to where your people are: two followers of Jesus walking away, deeply disappointed, with Jesus walking beside them unrecognised. Let them see themselves on that road before anyone gets to the table.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Two disciples walk toward Emmaus, talking about everything that has happened. Jesus comes alongside, but they do not recognise Him. He asks what they are discussing, and they stand still, looking sad. Cleopas asks how He could not know. They tell Him about Jesus, a prophet mighty in word and deed, handed over and crucified. And then: we had hoped He was the one. Some women found the tomb empty and spoke of angels. Jesus calls them slow of heart, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets He explains what all the Scriptures say about Himself. At the village they urge Him to stay. At the table He takes

bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and their eyes are opened. He vanishes. They ask each other whether their hearts were not burning while He opened the Scriptures to them. They go back to Jerusalem that same hour and tell the others.

Notice that Jesus asks about their disappointment before He says anything about it. Notice that the cure for their disappointment is the Scriptures opened, and then His presence. And notice the last move: they do not stay at the table. They go back to the community they had walked away from.

Questions you might hear

“We had hoped. That’s me.” Receive it. Ask what they had hoped for, and let them say it in full.

“Why didn’t they recognise Him?” The passage says their eyes were kept from it. Do not speculate much. Ask when their eyes were opened.

“Do I need my heart to burn?” Ask what was happening when their hearts burned. It was the Scriptures, opened on an ordinary road.

If you’re leading a group

Give the story time; it is long and every part matters. Ask two people to retell, one up to the table and one from the table on. Then ask each person to finish the sentence “I had hoped…” in a few words, and let anyone pass. Do not respond to each answer. When all have spoken, ask the three questions. Notice with the group that the two went back to the others the same night, and ask what that might mean for them, without pushing anyone toward any building.

If you’re walking with one friend

This is a good day for a walk together, if you can manage one. Ask your friend what they had hoped for from the church, and from God. Let them talk as long as they need to. Do not try to fix it. Then ask where they think Jesus might have been walking beside them without their noticing. Their “I will” could be to read the Scriptures with someone else this week, the way Jesus did with these two.

For you, today

Write down one thing you had hoped for that has not happened. Tell Jesus about it plainly, the way the two did on the road. Then read the passage once more, slowly, and ask Him to open the Scriptures to you, and to open your eyes.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. **If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.**

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 19: Doers, not just hearers

James 1:19-27 (OTB)

[19] My beloved brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry; [20] because human anger does not achieve the righteousness that God desires. [21] Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save your souls. [22] Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Be doers of the word. [23] Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at their face in a mirror [24] and, after looking at themselves, goes away and immediately forgets what they look like. [25] But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—will find blessing in their actions. [26] Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is without value. [27] Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unpolluted by the world.

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Day 19: Doers, not just hearers

REMEMBER

Be doers of the word.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, I do not want to look in Your mirror and walk away unchanged. Show me one thing to do today, and help me actually do it. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read James 1:19-27. Notice the mirror picture in verses 23 and 24, and how practical the pure religion of verse 27 is.

Watch for

- Aiming the passage at other people and forgetting to look in the mirror.
- Vague "I will"s. Today is the day to make them specific.
- Shame over missed "I will"s. Ask what got in the way, and recommit.

Day 19 explains why every day of the class ends with an "I will". Many disappointed Christians are disappointed precisely because they see churches full of people who know much and do little. James agrees with them. Then he holds up a mirror.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

James tells his readers to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger, because human anger does not achieve the righteousness God desires. Get rid of moral filth and humbly accept the word planted in you. Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves; do what it says. Anyone who listens and does not do is like someone who looks at their face in a mirror, walks away, and immediately forgets what they look like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that

gives freedom, and keeps doing it, will be blessed in what they do. Religion that does not rein in the tongue is worthless. Religion God accepts is looking after orphans and widows in their distress, and keeping oneself unpolluted by the world.

Notice that the first instruction is about anger, and many in this class carry some. Notice that hearing without doing is called self-deception. And notice how concrete the religion God accepts is: particular people, in particular need.

Questions you might hear

"This is exactly what's wrong with my church." Receive it. Then ask what the mirror is in the passage, and who is looking into it.

"I keep failing my "I will"s." Ask what got in the way, and help them make tomorrow's smaller and more specific. Never shame anyone for it.

"What does looking intently mean?" Let them find it in the text: looking, continuing, not forgetting.

If you're leading a group

Start today with the check-in rather than the reading. Go round and ask each person about yesterday's "I will", simply and without judgment, and go first yourself. Then read. After the three questions, ask each person to make their "I will" specific enough that someone could ask them tomorrow whether they did it: what, when, and for whom. If the talk slides into general complaints about Christians who never do anything, ask what verse 22 asks of the people in this room.

If you're walking with one friend

With one person, look together at the last several "I will"s they have written. Which happened? Which did not? Ask what the difference was. Often the ones that happen are small and have a name and a time attached. Help them write today's that way. If verse 19 touches anger they are carrying, let them say so, and do not hurry them past it.

For you, today

Look back over your own “I will”s from the past week. Pick one you did not do, and do it today. Then think of one person near you in real distress, perhaps a widow, a child without much support or a struggling neighbour, and do one practical thing for them this week. Tell someone what you did.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 20: The book found again

Nehemiah 8:1-12 (OTB)

[1] All the people gathered together as one in the square before the Water Gate, and they requested Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. [2] So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which included men, women, and all who could understand, on the first day of the seventh month. [3] He read from it aloud from early morning until midday in front of the square before the Water Gate, in the presence of men, women, and those who could understand, and all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. [4] Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform constructed for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. [5] Ezra opened the book in full view of all the people, for he was above them; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. [6] Ezra praised the Lord, the great God, and all the people responded, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting their hands. Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. [7] The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—explained the Law to the people while they stood in their places. [8] They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and providing the meaning so that the people understood what was read. [9] Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the Law. [10] Nehemiah said, “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” [11] The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not be grieved.” [12] Then all the people departed to eat and drink, to share portions of food, and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been explained to them.

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Day 20: The book found again

REMEMBER

all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Father, thank You that it is not too late to rediscover Your word. Let it bring me to honest tears where I need them, and then to Your joy. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Nehemiah 8:1-12. Notice how long they listened, that they wept, and that their leaders sent them to celebrate and to share.

Watch for

- Getting stuck on the lists of names and missing the people's response.
- Leaving people in tears without the joy their leaders pointed them to.
- Treating verse 8 as permission to explain every passage for the group.

Day 20 closes week three with a homecoming. God's people, back from exile, ask to hear His word read aloud, and they stand and listen from early morning until midday. It is a picture of what this week has been about: the Bible found again, not as a chore but as a return home.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

All the people gather in the square before the Water Gate and ask Ezra to bring the book of the law. He reads from early morning until midday, to men, women and all who can understand, and everyone listens attentively. When he opens the book, they stand. He praises God; they answer amen and bow down. The Levites help the people understand what is read. And the people weep as they hear it. Their leaders tell them not to mourn: this day is holy. Go and eat and drink, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, because the joy of the Lord is their strength. So the people go to eat, share and celebrate with great joy, because they now understand the words.

Notice that the people asked for the book. Notice the tears: hearing God's word after a long absence brought grief first. And notice where the tears were led: to joy, to a meal, and to sharing with people who had nothing.

Questions you might hear

"Why were they crying?" The passage says they wept as they heard the words of the law. Let the group wonder why, and ask whether anyone has felt something like it this week.

"Doesn't verse 8 mean someone should explain the Bible to us?" It shows people helping others understand. Ask what they notice the people themselves doing: asking, standing, listening, responding. The class keeps explanation light so that each person learns to feed on the Word directly.

"I don't feel joy yet." Receive it. The joy here is the Lord's, and it came as they understood. Ask what has become clearer to them in three weeks.

If you're leading a group

Read the passage aloud standing up, if your group is willing; it changes how verse 5 lands. Pass lightly over the names. After the questions, give five minutes to look back over the week: which reading has fed them most? Remind the group that tomorrow is the next talk-it-over day, and that you will practise a study together. Close with something to eat if you can. The passage ends at a table.

If you're walking with one friend

With one friend, ask whether reading the Bible these three weeks has felt more like homework or more like coming home. Either answer is honest. If they have had tears, let them talk about them. If they have had none, do not suggest they should. Confirm when you are meeting for day 21, and ask them to bring the passage from this week that stayed with them most.

For you, today

Send a portion today, as the leaders told the people to: a meal, a gift or a visit for someone who has nothing prepared. Then thank God in your own words that it is not too late to rediscover His word, and ask Him for His joy.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. **If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.**

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

Day 21: Talk it over

REMEMBER

Talk it over.

TALK IT OVER

No new reading today. Take the week to a small group doing the class, or to one friend you trust.

1. Recap the week	Take turns retelling one passage that stayed with you. Has anything shifted in how you read the Bible?
2. Share a hard "I will"	What did you do because of what you read? What happened, and what got in the way?
3. Ask the third question	Pick one passage from this week, read it twice and retell it together, then ask: if this is true, what would we do this week?
4. Pray together	Thank God for any faith that has grown, even a little, and ask Him for more where it is still thin.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 45 to 60 minutes with a group; 20 to 40 with one friend

Before the session Skim the six passages from week three (Romans 10:8-17, Luke 8:4-15, Psalm 1, Luke 24:13-35, James 1:19-27, Nehemiah 8:1-12) and choose one short one you could practise together if nobody else picks. Luke 8 or James 1 works well.

Watch for

- Turning the practice passage into a lesson. You ask the questions; they find the answers.
- Measuring faith by feelings. Someone who read every day and felt nothing has still been hearing.
- Quietly skipping the hard "I will" because the conversation about the Bible is more comfortable.

Week three was the turn of the class. The first two weeks named the disappointment and the silence. This week pointed to the cure: faith, and the Word that grows it. Today you find out how the reading is actually going, and you do one passage together, so that people leave knowing they can open the Bible with someone else and not only alone.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

How to run the conversation

Start with the recap. Ask each person to retell one passage that stayed with them, and then ask whether anything has shifted in how they read the Bible. Some will find it easier, some harder, because they are reading slowly for the first time. Both are good news.

Move to the hard "I will". Go first if the group is quiet. Tell them about one thing you meant to do this week and did not. Then ask, "What got in the way?" and let them recommit. Never turn it into a check-up on who failed. The point is honesty, not a score.

Then practise. Choose one passage from the week, have someone read it aloud twice, have someone else retell it, and ask the three questions together: what does this say about God, what does it say about people, and if this is true, what would we do this week? Each person writes an "I will". This is Eat and Digest done out loud. Do not chew their food for them. If an answer drifts away from what the passage says, bring it back gently: "Where do you see that in the passage?" Then let them look.

Close by praying together. Thank God for any faith that has grown, even a little, and ask Him for more where it is thin.

What you might hear

"I read it, but I don't get much out of it." Ask what they noticed, not what they got. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing does its work slowly, like seed in good ground.

"Reading the Bible like this makes me angry at how little I was taught." Receive it. Do not defend whoever taught them, and do not pile on. Some churches teach the Word well. Point them to Nehemiah 8: people weeping over a book they had lost, and then being told to celebrate because they had found it.

"I still don't feel close to God." Thank them. The class never promised a feeling. Keeping on reading anyway is what faithfulness looks like in a dry season.

If you're leading a group

Keep the practice passage short and give it real time, at least twenty minutes. Ask the quietest person to retell, and ask the most talkative person to read. If one person answers every question, thank them and say, "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Wait through the silence.

If someone describes something in their church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, say plainly that staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class is asking. Talk about it with someone you trust, and help them think of who. And if someone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, gently encourage them to get help beyond this group as well.

If you're walking with one friend

Do the practice passage together over coffee or on a call. Let your friend lead the questions this time, and you answer too. If they have fallen behind on the days, do not lecture. Ask which day they are on and start there. The same safety line holds for one friend as for a group: if something wrong is happening in their church, staying silent is not what God asks; help them talk with someone they trust, and if the numbness has lasted a long time, encourage help beyond the class.

After today

Week four turns to the Holy Spirit. Fix the day and place for day 28 now, and do not chase anyone in between.

For you, today

Pick the passage from this week that you skimmed instead of read. Read it twice tonight, retell it out loud to yourself, and write one "I will" with a name beside it. Then pray: Lord, give me the same hunger for Your Word that I am asking of them.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Which passage from this week stayed with you, and why?

2. One “I will” that was hard. What did you try, and what happened?

3. What did the other person notice that you had not?

4. What will you try this coming week?

TODAY'S READING

Day 22: The Helper

John 16:7-15 (OTB)

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go, the Helper will not come
to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin,
righteousness, and judgement: 9 concerning sin, because they do not have faith in me; 10 concerning
righteousness, because I am returning to the Father and you will no longer see me; 11 and concerning judgement,
because the ruler of this world is judged. 12 "I have much more to share with you, but you cannot bear it now. 13 But
when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only
what he hears, and he will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify me because he will take from what is
mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. This is why I said the Spirit will take from
what is mine and will disclose it to you.

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Day 22: The Helper

REMEMBER

> He will guide you into all the truth.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Holy Spirit, I have not listened for You the way I should. Guide me into the truth today. I want to hear what You are saying. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read John 16:7-15 twice. List what Jesus says the Spirit will do, and notice that verses 8 to 11 are about the world and verses 13 to 15 are about the disciples. Notice too who the Spirit glorifies.

Watch for

- Turning the day into a debate about spiritual gifts or how the Spirit speaks. Stay with what this passage says He does.
- Treating every strong feeling as the Spirit's voice. Verse 13 says He speaks what He hears and points to Jesus.
- Shame in people who say they have never noticed the Spirit at all.

Week four opens on the gap a church-first faith most often leaves: the Holy Spirit. Many of your people have heard all their lives that the Spirit lives in them. Fewer could say what He did last Tuesday. Today Jesus Himself tells His friends why His leaving is good news, and what the Helper will do.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

It is the night before the cross. Jesus says it is to their advantage that He goes away, because otherwise the Helper will not come. Then He describes two kinds of work. In the world, the Spirit convicts concerning sin, righteousness and judgement. In the disciples, the Spirit of truth guides them into all the truth, speaks what He hears, discloses what is to come, and glorifies Jesus by taking what is His and making it known.

Two things stand out for disappointed believers. First, Jesus did not leave His people alone with a book and a building. Second, the Spirit does not draw attention to Himself or to an institution. He points to Jesus. That is the whole direction of this class.

Questions you might hear

“I’ve never heard the Spirit say anything.” Do not argue. Ask whether they have ever understood a passage in a new way, or felt pressed to do something kind and done it. Some people have been led for years without having words for it.

“My church talked about the Spirit constantly and it felt fake.” Receive it. Some places made a show of it. Bring them back to verse 13: the Spirit speaks only what He hears from the Father. Real guidance looks like Jesus.

“How do I know it’s the Spirit and not me?” A fair question. Today’s passage gives one test: He glorifies Jesus and guides into truth. The rest of the week adds more.

If you’re leading a group

Start by asking people to retell the passage, then ask for the list of what the Spirit does. Write it where everyone can see it. Then ask the three questions. When someone shares an experience, receive it, then gently ask what the passage says about it. Do not let the most confident voice set the standard for what counts as hearing from God. Close by having everyone pray the day’s prayer aloud together, slowly. For the “I will”, suggest something small and listenable: ten quiet minutes before reading, asking the Spirit to guide.

If you’re walking with one friend

This one is better over a slow coffee than a quick call. Ask your friend when they last felt led by God, and listen to the whole story without improving it. If they say never, say that is honest and common, and that Jesus promised a Helper anyway. Share one plain time you think the Spirit nudged you, without drama. Then ask what they will do today to listen. Do not chase them for the answer later; ask once at the next meeting.

For you, today

Before you lead anyone else, take ten minutes in silence with verse 13. Ask the Spirit to guide you into the truth about one person you are walking with: what they need from you this week, and what they do not. Write down what comes to mind, test it against Jesus, and then act on one thing today. Pray: Holy Spirit, I want to hear what You are saying, not only what I expect.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 23: A new heart

Ezekiel 36:24-28 (OTB)

[24] For I will take you from among the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you back into your own land. [25] I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. [26] I will grant you a renewed heart and instill a fresh spirit within you; I will take away your unyielding heart and provide you with a responsive heart. [27] And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My decrees and be careful to observe My laws. [28] Then you will dwell in the land I gave to your forefathers; you will be My people, and I will be your God.

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Day 23: A new heart

REMEMBER

I will grant you a renewed heart.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: God, I cannot make my own heart soft again. Take the stone out and give me a heart that wants You. Put Your Spirit in me and move me to obey. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Ezekiel 36:24-28 and count the times God says “I will”. Notice the order: gather, cleanse, give a new heart, put His Spirit within, cause obedience, and then belonging.

Watch for

- Turning grace into homework. The passage is God's promise, not a list of self-improvement steps.
- Someone hearing “hard heart” as an accusation. Cynicism often grew from real wounds.
- Skipping verse 28. The point of all the verbs is relationship: My people, your God.

Day 23 meets the cynic. Many people in this class did not decide to stop expecting anything from God or the church. It happened slowly, one disappointment at a time, until a hard heart felt like the realistic choice. Ezekiel 36 is God’s answer, and it is almost entirely about what He will do.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

God speaks to a scattered people who had lost their land, their temple and their hope. He promises to take them from the nations and bring them home, to sprinkle clean water and cleanse them from impurities and idols, to grant a renewed heart and a fresh spirit, to take away the unyielding heart and give a responsive one, to put His Spirit within them, and to cause them to follow His decrees. Then: you will be My people, and I will be your God.

The key line for this class is verse 27. God does not only command obedience. He causes it, by His Spirit. That is the hope for someone who has tried harder for years and only grown harder.

Questions you might hear

“So I just wait for God to change me?” Ask them to look again at what the people do in this passage. They come home. They receive. Your part is to come and say yes. The changing is His.

“I don’t think my heart is hard. I think the church is the problem.” Do not argue it. Ask which of these promises they would want anyway. A responsive heart is not an admission of guilt. It is a gift.

“What idols?” The passage names idols without detail. Ask what took God’s place in their life, even good things. Some will name church itself.

If you’re leading a group

Ask someone to read it aloud while everyone else counts the “I will” lines on their fingers. Let the group discover how many there are. Then retell and ask the three questions. If someone begins confessing deep bitterness, do not rush past it and do not counsel them in front of everyone. Thank them, and stay with them afterwards. For the “I will”, steer away from vows like “I’ll be less cynical”. Encourage something concrete: praying the day’s prayer at a set time, or naming one person they had given up on.

If you’re walking with one friend

A phone call works, but ask your friend to read the passage aloud to you rather than summarising it. Hearing their own voice say God’s promises does something. Then ask where they think their heart grew hard, and when. Listen. Do not add your own story unless they ask. If they cannot name anything, that is fine; ask which promise they most need, and pray it over them in one or two plain sentences.

For you, today

Name one person you have privately given up on: someone in your church, your family, or this class. Write their name and verse 26 beside it. Then do one small thing today that assumes God can still change them, a message, a kind word, a prayer by name. Pray: God, take the stone out of me first.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 24: Keep in step

Galatians 5:16-26 (OTB)

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfil the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit what is against the flesh; they are in opposition to each other, so that you are not to do whatever you wish. 18 Yet if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The deeds of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; 20 idolatry, witchcraft, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I have before, that those who engage in such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Against these things, there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.

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Day 24: Keep in step

REMEMBER

> Let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Spirit of God, grow in me what I cannot grow myself: love, joy, peace, patience. Help me keep in step with You today. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Galatians 5:16-26 twice. Notice that it is called the fruit of the Spirit, singular and His, and that our part is verbs like walk, be guided, and keep in step. Notice how verse 26 ends.

Watch for

- Reading the fruit as a checklist to grade yourself or others against.
- Using the list of the flesh to describe other church members rather than ourselves.
- Missing verse 26: conceit, provoking and envy are church problems too, and they live in disappointed people.

Many people in your group could recite the fruit of the Spirit before they could read. That familiarity is the trap today. Read as a to-do list, Galatians 5 becomes one more standard to fail. Read as Paul wrote it, it is the best news in the class for a tired believer: the fruit is the Spirit's work, and our part is to keep in step.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Paul sets two ways of living side by side. Walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfil the desires of the flesh. The two are in opposition. The deeds of the flesh are evident, and the list is long: some of it scandalous, and much of it ordinary church life, such as strife, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions and factions. Then the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Those who belong to Christ have put the flesh to death. Since we live by the Spirit, we keep in step with Him. And do not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.

For people disappointed with church, the second half of the flesh list will feel familiar. The passage does not answer it with better structures. It answers it with people walking by the Spirit.

Questions you might hear

“That list describes my last church board.” It may. Receive it, then turn to verse 26 together and ask who it is written to. The passage is a mirror before it is a window.

“I’ve tried to be patient for years. It doesn’t work.” Ask whose fruit the passage says it is. A tree does not produce fruit by trying. Ask what keeping in step might look like on an ordinary day.

“How do I know if I’m walking by the Spirit?” Look at the fruit over time, not on one bad day. Fruit grows slowly.

If you’re leading a group

After the retelling, ask the group to name which items on the flesh list they have seen in church. Let them speak, briefly. Then ask which ones they have seen in themselves this month. Go first, honestly. That turn is the whole day, and it only works if you model it. Do not let the conversation become a catalogue of other people’s sins. For the “I will”, ask each person to name one situation where they will try to keep in step today, such as a meeting, a conversation, or a habit, and someone to tell.

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend which fruit they most wish they had right now. Then ask which deed of the flesh has had the most grip on them since their disappointment began. Answer both yourself as well. Keep it short and honest. If they get stuck on a person who hurt them, listen, then come back to verse 25. Agree on one small step, and text a single line of encouragement later in the week, not a check-up.

For you, today

Read verse 26 slowly. Think of the person in your church or group you are most tempted to envy or provoke. Today, do one kind and specific thing for them that nobody else will see. Then pray: Spirit of God, I cannot grow this myself; keep me in step with You, especially near them.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 25: The shield of faith

Ephesians 6:10-18 (OTB)

[10] Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His mighty power. [11] Put on the full armour of God, so that you can stand firm against the devil's schemes. [12] For our struggle is not against mere human opponents, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. [13] Therefore, take up the full armour of God, so that you may be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. [14] Stand firm then, with the belt of truth fastened around your waist, and the breastplate of righteousness in place, [15] and with your feet prepared with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. [16] Besides all this, hold up the shield of faith, which enables you to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. [17] Receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. [18] Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

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Day 25: The shield of faith

REMEMBER

Hold up the shield of faith.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, I have been wounded by arrows I never saw coming. Today I take up the shield of faith. Teach me to stand firm in Your strength, not mine. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Ephesians 6:10-18 twice. Notice that the strength is the Lord's (verse 10), what the shield of faith does (verse 16), that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit (verse 17), and that the passage ends in prayer for all the saints.

Watch for

- Using “our struggle is not against people” to excuse what someone did. Real wrong is still wrong.
- Promising that faith makes problems disappear. Say it equips us for whatever we face.
- A long tangent about the devil that drifts from the text and from the people in the room.

Day 25 brings back the idea from day 15, that faith is what insulates a disappointed believer, and gives it a picture: armour, and a shield that puts out flaming arrows. It also does something that matters a great deal for this class. It moves the battle from the people who hurt us to a larger struggle behind them, without pretending the hurt was not real.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so you can stand against the devil’s schemes. Our struggle is not against mere human opponents but against spiritual forces of evil. So take up the armour and stand firm: truth, righteousness, the readiness of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith that quenches all the fiery darts, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Then pray on all occasions, and keep praying for all the saints.

The class puts it plainly. Faith given by the Holy Spirit is like a Swiss army knife. It equips us for whatever we face. Not because the arrows stop, but because they no longer set us on fire. And notice that the Word is part of the armour. Week three was not a detour.

Questions you might hear

“So the person who hurt me isn’t to blame?” Be clear: they are responsible for what they did. The passage does not erase that. It says the fight is bigger than them, so that you can stand without being consumed by them.

“My faith feels too small to be a shield.” Good: tomorrow’s passage is for exactly that person. Today, notice whose strength it is in verse 10.

“Why does it end with prayer for the saints?” Ask the group. Many will see that the soldier is not alone. The armour is worn among other believers, praying for each other, even the ones who disappointed us.

If you’re leading a group

This passage teaches staying with God’s people, so the safety line belongs here. If someone describes something in their church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class asks. Talk about it with someone you trust, and help them think of who. Say it plainly and kindly, then keep going. Do not let the group spend the hour on spiritual warfare stories. Retell, ask the three questions, and ask: is there an old arrow still burning in you? Let people answer only as much as they want.

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend which arrow still burns the most. Listen without fixing. Then read verse 16 together and ask what holding up the shield would look like with that memory this week. If what they describe sounds like abuse, manipulation or false teaching rather than ordinary disappointment, tell them this class’s counsel to stay is not for that, and help them talk it over with someone they trust. If they have felt numb or hopeless for a long time, gently encourage help beyond the class too.

For you, today

Verse 18 asks you to keep praying for all the saints. Write down the names of two believers who have disappointed you. Pray for each by name today, for their good, not for their correction. Then pray: Lord, I take up the shield of faith; teach me to stand in Your strength, not mine.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific "I will", and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 26: Help my unbelief

Mark 9:14-29 (OTB)

[14] When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them, with scribes arguing with them. [15] As soon as the crowd saw Jesus, they were filled with wonder and ran to greet him. [16] He inquired of them, “What is the dispute you are having with them?” [17] One man from the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that renders him mute. [18] Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.” [19] Jesus responded, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I remain with you? How long shall I endure you? Bring the boy to me.” [20] They brought the boy to Jesus. When the spirit saw him, it immediately threw the boy into convulsions. He fell to the ground, rolling and foaming at the mouth. [21] Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” He replied, “From childhood. [22] It has often thrown him into fire or water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” [23] Jesus said to him, “‘If you can’? Everything is possible for one who believes.” [24] Immediately, the boy’s father cried out, “I do believe; help my unbelief!” [25] When Jesus saw a crowd rapidly gathering, he rebuked the impure spirit, saying, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” [26] The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently, and departed. The boy appeared so much like a corpse that many said, “He is dead.” [27] But Jesus, taking him by the hand, helped him to his feet, and he stood up. [28] After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why were we unable to drive it out?” [29] He replied, “This kind can come out only through prayer.”

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Day 26: Help my unbelief

REMEMBER

I do believe; help my unbelief!

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. I bring You my honest, half-sized faith, and I ask You to grow it. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Mark 9:14-29. Notice the scene before Jesus arrives (the crowd and the argument), the father's "if you can", Jesus's reply, the father's cry in verse 24, and the private question in verses 28 and 29.

Watch for

- Blaming people's struggles on weak faith. Jesus did not do that to this father.
- Turning verse 29 into a formula for getting results.
- Rushing past the honest admission of small faith in someone who finally says it out loud.

Day 26 is for the person who has listened to a week about the Spirit and faith and quietly concluded, that is my problem; I do not have much left. Mark 9 gives them a father with exactly that kind of faith, and a Jesus who does not send him away.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus comes down to find a crowd, scribes arguing with His disciples, and a boy no one has helped. The father explains: a spirit throws his son down, and the disciples could not drive it out. Jesus grieves over an unbelieving generation, and says to bring the boy. The father adds, if you can do anything, have compassion and help us. Jesus picks up the "if" and hands it back: everything is possible for one who believes. And the father cries out, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24 OTB). Jesus frees the boy and lifts him by the hand. Later the disciples ask privately why they could not, and He says this kind comes out only through prayer.

Notice what is missing. Jesus does not tell the father to come back when his faith is bigger. He works with the half-sized faith in front of Him. That is the heart of today.

Questions you might hear

“Was it the father’s lack of faith that stopped the healing?” Look at the text. The disciples failed before Jesus arrived, and Jesus healed after a very mixed confession. Faith matters, but it is not a payment.

“I feel like the disciples: I used to be able to help people and now I can’t.” Receive it. Then look at Jesus’s answer to them. It was not try harder. It was prayer.

“Is it okay to say I don’t believe very much?” The father did, out loud, to Jesus. It is in the Bible because it is a prayer God accepts.

If you’re leading a group

Notice the opening scene with the group: religious people arguing in public while a child suffers. Some in your room will recognise it. Let them say so briefly, without piling on, then turn to the father. After the three questions, invite anyone who wants to pray the father’s prayer aloud in their own words. Nobody has to. Leave real silence. If someone weeps, let them; do not rush in with comfort or verses.

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend, on a scale they choose, how much faith they feel they have right now. Do not correct the number. Then read verse 24 together and ask them to say it as their own prayer, if they want to. Tell them honestly where your own faith is thin this week. Being beside them in that is worth more than any encouragement you could prepare. If the thinness has lasted a long time and looks like numbness or hopelessness, encourage them gently to get help beyond the class as well.

For you, today

Name one thing you have stopped praying for because you no longer expect an answer. Pray for it again today, out loud, using the father's words. Write the date beside it in your workbook. Then pray: Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief, and help me not to hide it from the people I lead.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 27: Stay, and stir each other up

Hebrews 10:19-25 (OTB)

[19] Therefore, dear friends, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, [20] by a new and living way opened for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, [21] and we have a great high priest over the house of God, [22] let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. [23] Let us hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. [24] And let us consider how to spur one another on towards love and good deeds, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 12:14-15 (OTB)

[14] Pursue peace with all people, and seek the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. [15] See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springs up to cause trouble and defile many.

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Day 27: Stay, and stir each other up

REMEMBER

Spur one another on towards love and good deeds.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Father, give me grace to stay and love the people around me. Keep bitterness from taking root in me, and let me spur others on toward You. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Hebrews 10:19-25 and Hebrews 12:14-15, both parts, twice. Notice the order in chapter 10: draw near, hold firmly, consider one another, keep meeting. Notice the root of bitterness in 12:15 and what it does.

Watch for

- Hearing “stay” as “put up with anything”. The class's counsel never covers abuse, manipulation or false teaching.
- Turning “do not neglect meeting together” into guilt about attendance. The passage is about stirring each other up.
- Bitterness talked about as someone else's problem.

Two weeks ago, on days 12 and 13, the class said something many people did not want to hear: in most cases, stay where you are, so you can help others draw closer to God. Day 27 shows what staying actually looks like, in two short readings from Hebrews. Staying is not enduring another Sunday. It is drawing near to God and then turning around to stir up the people beside you.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

In chapter 10, because Jesus opened a new and living way, we can draw near with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith. We hold firmly to our hope, because He who promised is faithful. Then we consider how to spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not

neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another. In chapter 12, pursue peace and holiness, see that no one falls short of the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springs up to cause trouble and defile many.

The class puts it plainly. That is how congregations get back on track: someone stays, and starts stirring. Not every church is in trouble; some are doing well because somebody stayed through the mess before. The question is whether your people will be that somebody.

Questions you might hear

“I’ve stayed for years and nothing changed.” Receive it. Then ask what the passage says comes first: drawing near to God. Staying without that is just endurance.

“What about people who left?” Do not judge them, and do not hold them up as examples. Some left for reasons this class would affirm.

“How do I stir people up without being the annoying one?” Ask what verse 24 says to consider. Love and good deeds. It starts with noticing someone, not lecturing them.

If you’re leading a group

Say the safety line clearly, because this day teaches staying. If something is happening in someone’s church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class is asking. Talk about it with someone you trust. Say it to the whole group, not to one person. Then retell both readings and ask the three questions. For the “I will”, ask each person for one name: someone in their congregation they could encourage this week, and how.

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend directly whether they are still in a church, and whether they are thinking of leaving. Listen to all of it. If what they describe is ordinary disappointment, read 10:24 together and help them picture one person to stir up. If it sounds like real harm, tell them the counsel to stay

is not for that, and help them talk it over with someone they trust. If they have felt numb or hopeless for a long time, encourage help beyond the class as well. Either way, do not decide for them.

For you, today

Look at 12:15. Is there a root of bitterness in you toward someone in your own church? Name it honestly in your workbook. Then do one thing today that stirs that person toward love and good deeds: a note, a thank you, an offer of help. Pray: Father, keep bitterness from taking root in me, and let me be someone who stays and stirs.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

Day 28: Talk it over

REMEMBER

Talk it over.

TALK IT OVER

No new reading today. Take the week to a small group doing the class, or to one friend you trust.

1. Recap the week	Take turns retelling one passage that stayed with you. Where might the Holy Spirit have been nudging you?
2. Share a hard "I will"	Did you notice a nudge and act on it, or let it pass? What happened?
3. Ask the third question	If staying and stirring each other up is true for us, what would we do this week, and who comes to mind?
4. Pray together	Ask the Spirit to help each person with what they named.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 45 to 60 minutes with a group; 20 to 40 with one friend

Before the session Skim the six readings from week four (John 16:7-15, Ezekiel 36:24-28, Galatians 5:16-26, Ephesians 6:10-18, Mark 9:14-29, Hebrews 10:19-25 and 12:14-15). Think ahead about who in your own congregation you would name if asked whom you could stir up.

Watch for

- Pressing people to share an old hurt. The gather page says share only what you want to.
- Talk of staying sliding into pressure, when someone's situation is harm and not disappointment.
- Claims about what the Spirit said that nobody can question. Keep testing against the readings and against Jesus.

Week four was the week of the Spirit, and it ended somewhere practical: stay, and stir each other up. Today is where people say out loud whether they noticed God nudging them, whether an old hurt looks any different, and what staying might mean for them in particular. Expect a mix. Some will have had a real week. Some will feel nothing has moved. Both belong in the room.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

How to run the conversation

Begin with the recap. Each person retells one passage that stayed with them, then answers: where might the Holy Spirit have been nudging you this week? Did you notice? Did you respond? Ask it simply and wait.

Then the hard “I will”. Ask, “Did you notice a nudge and let it pass?” Go first. A plain story of your own missed nudge makes it safe for others. If someone did not do their “I will”, ask what got in the way and let them choose again. No scorekeeping.

Then the shield of faith. Ask whether there is an old hurt that looks different now. Say clearly that people share only what they want to. Some will say a lot, some nothing. Receive it all. Do not defend the church, and do not pile on.

Then staying, the third question for the week: if staying and stirring each other up is true for us, what would we do this week, and who comes to mind? Ask for names, and a first step.

Pray together last. Ask the Spirit to help each person with what they named.

What you might hear

“I didn’t notice anything.” Ask what they did read, and whether one line stuck. Noticing is a skill; it grows by asking.

“Something did shift. I’m less angry than I was.” Be glad with them, quietly. Ask what helped.

“I’m not staying in that church.” Do not argue, and do not cheer. Ask what is behind it. If it is disappointment, ask whether the readings this week change anything for them. If it is harm, see below.

“I don’t think I can stir anyone up. I’m the one who needs stirring.” Good. Then let the group stir them, which is what Hebrews 10 describes.

If you’re leading a group

Watch the time on the shield-of-faith question. It can swallow the hour. Give it fifteen minutes, then move to staying. If someone tells a long story, thank them, summarise what you heard in one sentence, and invite another voice. Pair people up for prayer at the end so that each

person is prayed for by name, then close with one sentence from you.

If someone describes something in their church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, say plainly that staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class asks. Talk about it with someone you trust, and help them think of who. If someone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, gently encourage them to get help beyond this group as well.

If you're walking with one friend

Meet somewhere you can talk without being overheard, because the hurt question may go deep. Ask it once, and accept whatever comes. If your friend names a person they could stir up, offer to pray for that person with them every week until day 40. If they name harm rather than disappointment, the same line holds: staying silent is not what God asks, and talking it over with someone they trust is the next step. If they have been numb or hopeless a long time, encourage help beyond the class.

After today

Week five looks outward: the harvest, persons of peace, serving with intention. Tell people that this coming week they will be watching for someone God is already drawing. Fix day 35 now.

For you, today

Write down the name you would have given if someone asked whom you could stir up. Contact that person today with a specific word of encouragement about something you have seen in them. Then pray: Holy Spirit, keep me in step with You, and let me stay where You have put me for their sake.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Which passage from this week stayed with you, and why?

2. One “I will” that was hard. What did you try, and what happened?

3. What did the other person notice that you had not?

4. What will you try this coming week?

TODAY'S READING

Day 29: The harvest

Matthew 9:35-38 (OTB)

35 Jesus travelled through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he told his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 Therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field."

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 29: The harvest

REMEMBER

> The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord of the harvest, give me Your eyes for the people around me. Send out workers into Your harvest, and send me. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Matthew 9:35-38 twice. Notice the order: Jesus goes, teaches, proclaims, heals; then He sees, feels compassion, and asks His disciples to pray. Notice the reason given for His compassion in verse 36.

Watch for

- Hearing this as a call to more church programs. The class has just named busyness as part of the problem.
- Skipping the prayer in verse 38 and jumping straight to a plan.
- Describing the crowds with contempt. Jesus saw people who were troubled and helpless.

Week five turns the class outward. For four weeks people have looked at the church and at their own hearts. Now they look at the crowds, and the first thing Matthew shows them is not what Jesus did but what He saw and felt. Many in your group are tired of church service. This passage shows a different kind.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus travels through towns and villages, teaching, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing. When He sees the crowds, He is moved with compassion, because they are troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He tells His disciples the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, and asks them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers.

Two things matter for disappointed believers. First, Jesus's service was always aimed at people, never at keeping something running. Second, His first instruction is not to work harder but to pray. And the people who pray that prayer often become the answer, as tomorrow's reading will show.

Questions you might hear

"I'm worn out from serving. Now you want more?" Receive it. Ask what kind of serving wore them out. Then ask what kind Jesus is doing here, and how it is different.

"Isn't it the church's job to reach people?" Ask who Jesus speaks to in verse 37. His disciples. Not an institution.

"Sheep without a shepherd: does that mean the church failed them?" Maybe sometimes. But the passage does not dwell on blame. It moves to compassion and prayer. Follow it.

If you're leading a group

After the retelling, ask: what did Jesus see when He looked at the crowds? Then ask what your people see when they look at their neighbourhood or workplace. Let the contrast speak. Do not lecture. For the "I will", ask each person to pray verse 38 every day this week, by name, for three people they know who are not following Jesus, and to write the names down. Then pray it together before you finish, one sentence each.

If you're walking with one friend

Take a walk with your friend somewhere with people around, a market, a park, a busy street, and read the passage there if you can. Ask what they notice about the people passing. Then ask who in their own life looks troubled and helpless right now. Pray verse 38 together for one or two of those people. Keep it light; this is a week of noticing, not of pressure.

For you, today

Look at the people you passed today, at work, in traffic, in a shop. Choose three by name or by face. Pray for each one today, asking the Lord of the harvest to send someone to them, and tell Him you are willing to be that someone. Then pray: Lord, give me Your eyes, and send me.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 30: Look for the person of peace

Luke 10:1-11 (OTB)

[1] After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them in pairs ahead of him to every city and place where he himself was about to go. [2] He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. [3] Go! Behold, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. [4] Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and do not greet anyone along the road. [5] When you enter a house, begin by saying, ‘Peace be upon this house.’ [6] If a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. [7] Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move from house to house. [8] When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. [9] Heal the sick there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ [10] However, if you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and declare, [11] ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God has come near.’

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 30: Look for the person of peace

REMEMBER

Peace be upon this house.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, go ahead of me the way You went ahead of those seventy-two. Show me the person of peace You have already prepared, and make me ready to stay with them. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Luke 10:1-11 twice. Notice: sent in pairs, ahead of Jesus, travelling light; peace spoken first; a person of peace recognised by welcome; stay in that house and do not move around; and what to do when not welcomed.

Watch for

- Treating the person of peace as a target to be won rather than someone God is already drawing.
- Fear of rejection taking over. The passage expects it and says what to do.
- Turning “go out” into “invite them to church”. The seventy-two stay in the house.

Day 30 names the idea that shapes the rest of the class: the person of peace. Jesus did not send His followers out to invite people somewhere. He sent them to find households where God was already at work. That changes what service is for. Your people still serve with no strings, but now with their eyes open.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus appoints seventy-two others and sends them in pairs ahead of Him. He repeats the line from yesterday about the harvest and the workers. He sends them as lambs among wolves, carrying almost nothing. When they enter a house they say, “Peace be upon this house” (Luke 10:5 OTB). If a person of peace is there, their peace rests on them; if not, it returns. They stay in that house, eat what is offered, and do not move from house to house. They heal the sick and say the kingdom of God has come near. If a town does not welcome them, they wipe off the dust and still declare that the kingdom has come near.

For people who came in tired of church busyness, the striking thing is how relational it is. They are not running an event. They are guests in someone's home, receiving hospitality, staying.

Questions you might hear

"How do I know who the person of peace is?" Look at the text: they welcome you, they listen, they open their home. Openness and hospitality, not religiousness.

"Why travel with nothing?" Ask the group what it would force them to do. Depend on God, and receive from the people they meet.

"What if nobody welcomes me?" The passage expects that. Wipe the dust off, bless anyway, keep going. Rejection is not failure.

If you're leading a group

Divide the group into pairs for part of the session, as Jesus did. Let each pair retell the passage to each other and answer the three questions, then come back together. When you regroup, ask what they noticed about how Jesus defines the person of peace. Do not supply the answer. For the "I will", ask each pair to name one place they will serve this week with their eyes open, and to check in with each other by message before day 35.

If you're walking with one friend

You and your friend are already a pair. Read verse 1 together and point that out. Ask who in their life has shown unusual openness lately: a neighbour, a coworker, a relative who asks questions. Help them think, but do not choose for them. Agree to pray for those people by name, and ask once next time whether anything happened. Do not chase.

For you, today

Think of one household where you are already welcome: a neighbour, a client, a relative. Go there, call, or send a message today with no agenda except to serve. Notice whether they open up. Then pray: Jesus, go ahead of me, and show me the person You have already prepared.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 31: What I have

Acts 3:1-16 (OTB)

[1] Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, which was the ninth hour. [2] A man who had been lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was placed every day to beg for alms from those entering the temple courts. [3] Seeing Peter and John about to enter the temple courts, he asked them for alms. [4] Peter, together with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, “Look at us.” [5] The man gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. [6] Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” [7] Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were strengthened. [8] He leapt to his feet and began to walk, and went with them into the temple courts, walking and leaping and praising God. [9] Everyone witnessed him walking about, praising God; [10] and they recognised him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. [11] While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the place called Solomon’s Colonnade, utterly astonished. [12] When Peter saw this, he addressed the people, “Men of Israel, why are you surprised at this? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? [13] The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, whom you handed over and disowned before Pilate, even though he had decided to release Him. [14] You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be released to you. [15] You killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, and we are witnesses of this. [16] By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know has been made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through Him that has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

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Day 31: What I have

REMEMBER

What I do have I give you.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, I do not have much, but what I have I give You. Use me to meet someone's need today, and give me the courage to point them to Jesus. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Acts 3:1-16 twice. Notice the order: they were going to pray; they looked at the man and asked him to look at them; they gave what they had; a crowd gathered; Peter turned the attention from himself to Jesus.

Watch for

- Turning the healing into a debate about whether miracles happen today. Stay with the order of the story.
- Thinking you must have something impressive to offer before you can serve anyone.
- Service that never gets to Jesus, or talk about Jesus that never serves.

Day 31 is service with intention, and Acts 3 is a clear picture of it. Peter and John are on their way to pray. They meet a need they cannot meet the way it was asked. They give what they have. A crowd gathers, and Peter turns every eye to Jesus. Serving opened a door, and they walked through it.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

A man lame from birth is carried every day to the gate called Beautiful to beg. He asks Peter and John for money. They fix their gaze on him, and Peter tells him to look at them. The man expects a coin. Peter says, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” (Acts 3:6 OTB) He takes him by the hand, and the man walks and leaps and praises God. When the crowd stares at Peter and John, Peter asks why they look at them as if their own power or piety did it, and points to Jesus, whom God raised from the dead.

Notice how personal it is. They look at a man people had walked past for years. They touch him. And they refuse the credit.

Questions you might hear

“I can’t heal anyone.” Neither could Peter on his own; that is his whole point in verse 12. Ask what you do have to give: time, a skill, attention, a meal, a question.

“Isn’t helping people enough? Why bring Jesus into it?” Serving with no strings is right. But Peter does not stop at the healing. When people ask why, he tells them. Stay alert for that moment.

“How do I start that conversation?” The class offers one simple question: Would you like to learn how to study the Bible? It invites people to the Bible, not to a building.

If you’re leading a group

Ask the group to retell the story in order, step by step, and write the steps down. Then ask which step they usually skip: noticing, looking, giving, or pointing to Jesus. After the three questions, have everyone practise the question aloud once, to the person beside them. It will feel awkward, and some will laugh. Let them. For the “I will”, ask each person to name one need they will meet this week and one person they will notice who is usually overlooked.

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend what they do have: skills, a car, a kitchen, an hour on Saturday. Make a short list together. Then ask who near them has a need one of those things could meet. Offer to go along for the first time if that would help. Practise the question together on the phone, once each. Keep it relaxed.

For you, today

Think of someone you pass regularly without really looking at them: a guard, a cleaner, a vendor, a neighbour. Today, stop, look them in the eye, learn their name, and ask if there is anything you can do for them. Then pray: Lord, what I have I give You; use it, and give me courage when the door opens.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 32: Fields ready for harvest

John 4:27-42 (OTB)

[27] At that moment His disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do You want?” or “Why are You talking with her?” [28] The woman left her water jar and went back to the town, telling the people, [29] “Come, see a man who has told me everything I have ever done. Could this be the Messiah?” [30] They left the town and made their way towards Him. [31] Meanwhile His disciples urged Him, “Rabbi, please eat something.” [32] But He responded to them, “I have food that you do not know about.” [33] Upon hearing this, His disciples wondered among themselves, “Could someone have brought Him food?” [34] “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of the One who sent Me and to complete His work. [35] Do you not say, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. [36] Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. [37] Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ holds true. [38] I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have benefited from their labour.” [39] Many of the Samaritans from that town came to believe in Him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” [40] So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He remained for two days. [41] And through His words, many more came to believe. [42] They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man truly is the Saviour of the world.”

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Day 32: Fields ready for harvest

REMEMBER

Open your eyes and look at the fields!

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, open my eyes. I have been worried about small things while the fields are ready. Let me tell someone what I have found in You. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read John 4:27-42 twice, and if you have time, the first part of the chapter for context. Notice the water jar left behind, the woman's simple words, the disciples' concern about food, verses 35 to 38 about sowing and reaping, and verse 42.

Watch for

- Reducing the woman to her past. The passage does not shame her, and neither should you.
- Using the disciples as an easy target. Many of us are them in this story.
- Assuming telling others needs training first. She had none.

Day 32 continues week five's outward turn with one of the most surprising witnesses in the gospels. A Samaritan woman with a complicated history leaves her water jar and tells her whole town about Jesus. Meanwhile the disciples, who have been with Him for months, come back with lunch and miss what is happening. Many long-time Christians in your group will recognise themselves on the wrong side of that contrast.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

The disciples return, surprised to find Jesus talking with a woman, and say nothing. She leaves her jar, goes to town and says, "Come, see a man who has told me everything I have ever done. Could this be the Messiah?" (John 4:29 OTB). The town starts toward Him. The disciples urge Him to eat. He says His food is to do the will of the One who sent Him. He tells them to open their eyes: the fields are ripe. Others did the

hard work, and they reap what they did not sow. Many Samaritans believe because of her testimony, and then many more because of His words. At the end they tell her that now they have heard for themselves.

Her witness is short and honest: a personal story and a question. And it does what it should. It brings people to Jesus, who then speaks for Himself.

Questions you might hear

“Why would anyone listen to her?” Ask the group what she says. She does not argue. She tells what happened and invites them to come and see.

“What does it mean that others did the hard work?” Let them wrestle. Many will see that God has been at work in people long before we arrive. That is what a person of peace is.

“I’ve been a Christian for decades and never told anyone like that.” Receive it without shame. This passage is an invitation, not a scolding.

If you’re leading a group

After retelling, ask each person to say in one or two sentences what Jesus has done for them, the way she did. No sermons, no preparation, just a story and maybe a question. Go first, and keep yours short. Some will freeze; let them pass and come back to them. Notice together that she left her jar. Ask what each of them might need to set down this week to pay attention to the fields.

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend to tell you in two sentences what Jesus has done for them. Listen as if you have never heard it. Then tell yours. Ask who in their life might be ready, someone who has asked questions or seemed curious, and whether they could share those same two sentences with that person this week. If they say no, accept it and ask again on day 35.

For you, today

Write your own two-sentence story in your workbook: what Jesus has done for you, in plain words, with no religious vocabulary. Read it out loud twice. Then tell it to one person today who has not heard it. Pray: Jesus, open my eyes; I have been busy with lunch while the fields were ready.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 33: Go home and tell

Mark 5:1-20 (OTB)

[1] They crossed over to the other side of the sea, into the region of the Gerasenes. [2] As Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit immediately came from the tombs to meet Him. [3] This man lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with chains. [4] For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he tore the chains apart and broke the shackles; no one was strong enough to subdue him. [5] Day and night among the tombs and in the hills, he would cry out and harm himself with stones. [6] When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and bowed down before Him. [7] He shouted with a loud voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God, do not torment me!" [8] For Jesus had been saying to him, "Come out of this man, you unclean spirit!" [9] Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." [10] And he begged Jesus repeatedly not to send them out of the region. [11] A large group of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. [12] The demons pleaded with Jesus, "Send us into the pigs so that we may enter them." [13] He gave them permission, and the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned. [14] Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people came to see what had happened. [15] When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind; and they were filled with awe. [16] Those who had seen it described to the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man and about the pigs. [17] Then the people began to urge Jesus to leave their region. [18] As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been freed from the demons begged to go with Him. [19] Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you." [20] So the man went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

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Day 33: Go home and tell

REMEMBER

Go home to your own people and tell them.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, You have done so much for me. Show me who at home, at work, or next door needs to hear it, and give me words. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Mark 5:1-20 twice. Notice the man's condition before (verses 3 to 5) and after (verse 15), the town's fear, the man's request to go with Jesus, Jesus's refusal and assignment in verse 19, and what the man actually does in verse 20.

Watch for

- Getting stuck on the pigs. It is a real question, but it is not the point of the ending.
- Assuming faithful service means leaving home for somewhere more spiritual.
- Family wounds surfacing. For some people, home is the hardest field of all.

Day 33 is dramatic, and the drama can distract from its point. A man no one could bind or help is set free by Jesus, and the town, frightened, asks Jesus to leave. The man begs to go with Him. Jesus says no, and sends him home. For many in your group, the people closest to them are the field God has ready, and also the field they most avoid.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Jesus arrives in the region of the Gerasenes and is met by a man from the tombs, who has torn apart every chain and cuts himself with stones. The spirits recognise Jesus, give the name Legion, and beg to be sent into the pigs. The herd rushes into the sea. The townspeople come and find the man sitting, clothed and in his right mind, and they are afraid. They urge Jesus to leave. The man asks to go with Him. Jesus says,

“Go home to your own people and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.” (Mark 5:19 OTB) He goes, and proclaims it throughout the Decapolis, and people are amazed.

Notice what he is told to say: what the Lord has done, and the mercy shown. Not doctrine. Not an argument. His own story.

Questions you might hear

“Why didn’t Jesus let him come along?” Ask the group what the man could do at home that he could not do on the road. The people who knew him before are the ones who could see the change.

“My family knows all my faults. They won’t listen to me.” Maybe not at first. But notice they knew this man at his worst too. That is exactly why his story mattered.

“What about the pigs?” Acknowledge the question honestly, then gently bring the group back to the ending Mark gives the story.

If you’re leading a group

After the three questions, ask each person to name the three people closest to them who are not following Jesus. Some will name a spouse, a parent or a child, and the room may get quiet. Do not hurry it. Ask what mercy God has shown them that those people might have noticed. For the “I will”, encourage something gentle and specific: a conversation, a meal, sharing one thing they read this week, not a confrontation.

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend about home. Who is there, and what is it like? Some will light up; some will tense. Listen. If home is painful, do not push them into a conversation they are not ready for. Ask who else counts as their own people: an old friend, a coworker, a neighbour. Help them choose one person and one small step, and pray for that person together.

For you, today

Who in your own family or closest circle has never heard you say plainly what the Lord has done for you? Call or visit one of them today, and tell them one specific thing, in a sentence or two, without preaching. Then pray: Lord, You have shown me mercy; give me words for the people who know me best.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 34: Do you understand what you are reading?

Acts 8:26-40 (OTB)

[26] An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.) [27] So he arose and went. There was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, [28] and was returning, sitting in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah. [29] The Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” [30] Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” [31] He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. [32] Now the passage of Scripture he was reading was this: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he does not open his mouth. [33] In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” [34] The eunuch asked Philip, “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?” [35] Then Philip began to speak, and starting from this Scripture, he shared the message of Jesus with him. [36] As they travelled along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What prevents me from being baptised?” [37] [This verse is traditionally included in some manuscripts: "Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'"] [38] And he commanded the chariot to stop. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptised him. [39] When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. [40] Philip, however, found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through, he preached the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

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Day 34: Do you understand what you are reading?

REMEMBER

> Do you understand what you are reading?

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Holy Spirit, lead me to the person who is already reading, already asking. Give me the courage to sit beside them and open Your word together. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Acts 8:26-40 twice. Notice how Philip is led (an angel, then the Spirit), that he runs and listens before speaking, his question in verse 30, the man's invitation to sit, and that Philip starts from the passage the man is already reading.

Watch for

- Thinking you need to be Philip the expert. He asked a question and sat beside the man.
- Explaining the whole Bible instead of starting where the person already is.
- Getting sidetracked by verse 37's note in the text or by baptism debates.

Day 34 ends the week with the most practical picture in the class: Philip on a desert road, sitting beside a man who is already reading the Bible and does not understand it. This is what week five has been building toward. Serve, watch for the person of peace, and when you find them, open the Bible together.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

An angel sends Philip to a desert road. There he finds an Ethiopian official, returning from worship in Jerusalem, reading Isaiah in his chariot. The Spirit tells Philip to go up to the chariot. Philip runs, hears him reading, and asks, “Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8:30 OTB). The man says he cannot unless someone guides him,

and invites Philip to sit with him. Starting from that very Scripture, Philip shares the message of Jesus. They come to water, the man asks to be baptised, and Philip baptises him. The Spirit takes Philip away, and the man goes on rejoicing.

Notice the order. Philip goes where he is sent, listens, asks a question, accepts an invitation, and begins where the man already is. No meeting, no building, just two people and a scroll.

Questions you might hear

“I don’t know enough to explain the Bible to anyone.” Good news: the method this class has used every day does not need an expert. Read it together, retell it, ask the questions, and decide what to do. Let the passage teach.

“What if they ask something I can’t answer?” Say you do not know, and look together. Honesty builds more trust than a clever answer.

“Should I invite them to my church?” The class invites people to the Bible first. Philip did not take the man anywhere.

If you’re leading a group

Use the rest of the session to practise. Pair people up. One plays someone curious about the Bible, the other asks the question and walks through the same rhythm with today’s passage. Then swap. Keep it light and short. Come back together and ask what was hard. Most will say the start. Have each person say the question out loud: Would you like to learn how to study the Bible?

If you’re walking with one friend

Ask your friend whether there is someone in their life who reads the Bible, or asks questions about it, but has nobody to read it with. Ask them to picture sitting beside that person. Offer to do the first study with them together, if your friend would like company. If they are not ready, that is fine; ask them to keep watching and praying this week.

For you, today

Choose one person you know who is curious or searching. Today, ask them directly whether they would like to read a short passage of the Bible together sometime this week. If they say yes, set a time before you leave the conversation. If they say no, thank them and keep serving. Pray: Holy Spirit, lead me to the person already reading, and give me courage to sit beside them.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

Day 35: Talk it over

REMEMBER

Talk it over.

TALK IT OVER

No new reading today. Take the week to a small group doing the class, or to one friend you trust.

1. Recap the week	Take turns retelling one passage that stayed with you. Who did God put in front of you this week?
2. Share a hard "I will"	Where did you serve, or try to? Did anyone seem open, curious or hungry?
3. Ask the third question	If this is true, where would we each serve this week with our eyes open for a person of peace? Then take turns asking the question out loud.
4. Pray together	Pray by name for the people you each noticed.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 45 to 60 minutes with a group; 20 to 40 with one friend

Before the session Skim the six readings from week five (Matthew 9:35-38, Luke 10:1-11, Acts 3:1-16, John 4:27-42, Mark 5:1-20, Acts 8:26-40). Come ready to say out loud, in your own words, "Would you like to learn how to study the Bible?" and to name the people you noticed this week.

Watch for

- Treating the people someone noticed as a scoreboard. Some will have no names yet.
- Laughter during the practice turning into avoidance of it. Let it be awkward, then do it anyway.
- Hearing "church" where the class says Bible. Invite people to the Bible, not to church.

Week five turned the class outward. Your people have been asked to notice the crowds, look for a person of peace, serve with no strings, tell their story, go home, and open the Bible with a seeker. Today is where they say who God put in front of them, and practise the one question that makes the rest possible.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

How to run the conversation

Begin with the recap. Each person retells one passage that stayed with them. Then ask: who did God put in front of you this week? Did anyone seem open, curious or hungry? Let people answer with names or descriptions. If someone has nobody, thank them and move on. There is no shame in a week of watching.

Then the hard “I will”. Ask where they served, or tried to. Ask what happened, and what got in the way. Go first with your own honest story, including the time you chickened out.

Then the third question for the week: if this is true, where would we each serve this week with our eyes open for a person of peace? Ask each person for a place and a day.

Then practise. Take turns saying out loud, in your own words, Would you like to learn how to study the Bible? Go around the room twice. The second time is always easier. Talk briefly about what to do if someone says yes: set a time, pick a short passage, and use the same rhythm the class has used every day.

Pray together last, by name, for the people each of you noticed.

What you might hear

“I noticed someone, but I didn’t say anything.” Good. Noticing is the first step. Ask what might help next time.

“Someone said yes!” Celebrate, then help them plan the first study: one short passage, read, retell, three questions, an “I will”. Offer to come along.

“This feels like a sales pitch.” Receive it. Ask what makes it feel that way. Usually it is the fear of using people. That is why the class says serve with no strings, and why the question invites people to the Bible, not to a building or a program.

“I’m not ready to talk to anyone. I’m still angry at church.” That is honest. Ask whether they could pray for one person this week, nothing more.

If you're leading a group

Keep the practice moving and light. Go in a circle so nobody has to volunteer. If someone refuses, let them pass and do not come back to it in front of everyone. Write the names people noticed on a shared list, with permission, and agree to pray for them all through week six.

If someone describes something in their church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, say plainly that staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class asks. Talk about it with someone you trust, and help them think of who. If someone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, gently encourage them to get help beyond this group as well.

If you're walking with one friend

Practise the question with each other twice, then once more on the phone midweek if they want. Ask who they noticed and pray for each name. If your friend has found someone open, offer to sit in on the first study, the way Philip sat beside the man. The same safety line holds here: if something wrong is happening in their church, staying silent is not what God asks; help them talk with someone they trust, and if the numbness has lasted long, encourage help beyond the class.

After today

Week six brings it home: make disciples who make disciples, love the church as Jesus does, and answer His question to Peter. Fix the time and place for the final gather on day 40 now. Encourage everyone to bring their workbook.

For you, today

Ask the question yourself, for real, to one person this week, and set the day now. Write the name and the day in your workbook. Then pray: Lord of the harvest, I asked them to do this; give me courage to do it first.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Which passage from this week stayed with you, and why?

2. One “I will” that was hard. What did you try, and what happened?

3. What did the other person notice that you had not?

4. What will you try this coming week?

TODAY'S READING

Day 36: Go and make

Matthew 28:16-20 (OTB)

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw
Him, they worshipped Him, though some still doubted. 18 Then Jesus approached and spoke to them, saying, “All
authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising
them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to obey everything I have
commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 36: Go and make

REMEMBER

> Surely I am with you always.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, all authority is Yours. I will go. Help me make disciples who obey everything You have commanded, and remind me that You are with me. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Matthew 28:16-20 twice. Notice verse 17 (some worshipped, some doubted), that Jesus came close to them, that the main command is to make disciples, that teaching is teaching to obey, and the closing promise.

Watch for

- Hearing “make disciples” as “get people to attend”. Jesus says teach them to obey.
- Doubters in the room disqualifying themselves. Jesus commissioned doubters too.
- Turning the commission into a heavy burden instead of a command carried with His presence.

Day 36 opens the last week with the last thing Jesus told His followers to do. The whole class has been leaning toward it. Back to the Word, back to the Spirit, out among the seekers, and now: make disciples, and teach them to obey.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

The eleven go to the mountain in Galilee. When they see Jesus they worship Him, though some still doubt. He comes to them and says everything in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything He has commanded. And He promises, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20 OTB)

Three things matter for this class. Jesus commissions doubters along with worshippers. The command is not to attend, invite or build, but to make disciples. And the teaching is not teaching to know, but teaching to obey, which is exactly what every “I will” in this class has practised.

Questions you might hear

“I still have doubts. Is this really for me?” Look at verse 17 together. Some doubted, and Jesus gave the commission to all of them anyway.

“Isn’t making disciples the pastor’s job?” Ask who Jesus is speaking to. Eleven ordinary followers, no titles. Then ask who in your room is not included.

“What does it mean to teach someone to obey?” Point to the daily rhythm they already know: read it, retell it, ask what it says about God and people, decide one specific thing to do, and tell someone. That is teaching to obey, and anyone can do it with anyone.

If you’re leading a group

Ask the group to retell the passage, then ask directly: what is the difference between teaching people to know what Jesus said and teaching them to obey it? Let them think of examples from their own church experience, without piling on. Then ask who they could walk with in the way this class has walked with them. For the “I will”, ask each person to name the person of peace they have been watching for and one next step toward a first study together.

If you’re walking with one friend

Tell your friend honestly that you have been trying to do with them what this passage describes. Ask what has helped and what has not. Then ask whether they can picture doing the same with someone else. If they say they are not ready, remind them of verse 17 and the promise at the end. Do not pressure. Plant the idea and leave it.

For you, today

Think of the person you have walked with through this class. Ask yourself whether you have taught them to obey or only to know. Today, ask them one question about their most recent “I will” and listen to the answer. Then pray: Jesus, I will go; remind me that You are with me.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. **If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.**

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 37: Entrust it

2 Timothy 2:1-7 (OTB)

[1] Therefore, my son, draw strength from the grace that is in Christ Jesus. [2] What you have heard from me in the company of many witnesses, entrust to reliable individuals who will be able to teach others as well. [3] Endure difficulties with me, like a dedicated soldier of Christ Jesus. [4] No soldier actively serving gets entangled in the concerns of daily life, so that he may satisfy the one who enlisted him. [5] And if someone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned as victor unless he competes according to the rules. [6] The diligent farmer should be the first to partake of the harvest. [7] Reflect on what I say, and the Lord will grant you insight into all things.

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Day 37: Entrust it

REMEMBER

> Entrust to reliable individuals who will be able to teach others as well.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, make me faithful with what You have given me, and help me pass it on to people who will pass it on again. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7 twice. Count the generations in verse 2 (Paul, Timothy, reliable people, others: four). Notice that strength comes from grace first (verse 1), and what the soldier, athlete and farmer have in common.

Watch for

- Measuring success by how many come instead of whether it is being passed on.
- Treating “reliable” as “impressive”. Paul means faithful.
- Skipping verse 1 and making multiplication sound like hard work alone.

Day 37 is about multiplication. Paul, near the end of his life, writes to Timothy, a younger man he has walked with for years, and in one verse describes four generations of faith passed on. For people who came into this class disappointed with church growth that meant bigger crowds and shallow roots, this is a different picture altogether.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Paul tells Timothy to draw strength from the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Then: “What you have heard from me in the company of many witnesses, entrust to reliable individuals who will be able to teach others as well.” (2 Timothy 2:2 OTB). Then three pictures. A soldier endures hardship and does not get tangled in everyday concerns, so he can please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes by the rules. A diligent farmer should be first to share the harvest. And Paul says to reflect on this, and the Lord will grant insight.

A gathering church counts who came. A multiplying movement asks who is passing it on. Verse 2 counts Paul, Timothy, the reliable people, and the others they teach. And it all starts with grace, not effort.

Questions you might hear

“I’m barely a disciple myself. How can I pass it on?” Ask where verse 1 says the strength comes from. And remind them that passing it on is what they have been learning to do all class: read, retell, ask, obey, tell.

“What do the soldier, athlete and farmer have in common?” Let the group answer. Most will land on endurance, focus and patience. None of them gets results quickly.

“Our church never did this. It was always one man teaching everyone.” Receive it without piling on. Some churches do it well. Ask what it would look like for them to be the Timothy in someone’s life.

If you’re leading a group

Draw verse 2 on paper as four circles linked in a chain, and ask the group to name who fills each circle in their own story: who taught them, and who they might teach. Some will have blanks. That is the point. After the three questions, ask which of the three pictures fits where they are right now. For the “I will”, ask each person to name one person they could entrust something to this week, even something as small as how to do a daily study.

If you’re walking with one friend

Tell your friend who your Paul was, the person who passed faith on to you, and ask about theirs. Then ask who could be their Timothy. If your friend has already started a study with a seeker, ask how it is going and encourage them to teach that person how to do it with someone else, right from the start. That is how it multiplies.

For you, today

Write the names of the four generations in your own life, from the person who first taught you, through you, to someone you are teaching, to someone they could teach. If there is a blank, pray over it. Then contact one person today and offer to show them how to do a simple

daily Bible study. Pray: Lord, make me faithful, and help me pass it on.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. **What does this say about God?**

4. **What does this say about people?**

5. **If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.**

6. **One line: where might God have been in my day?**

TODAY'S READING

Day 38: The church He loves

Ephesians 5:25-32 (OTB)

25 Husbands, cherish your wives, just as Christ cherished the church and offered Himself for her, 26 to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to Himself as a glorious church, free from stain, wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are parts of His body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am referring to Christ and the church.

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Day 38: The church He loves

REMEMBER

Christ cherished the church and offered Himself for her.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, You love Your church. Forgive me for loving it less than You do. Teach me to love Your people as they are, and to give myself for them as You did. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read Ephesians 5:25-32 twice. Notice what Christ did for the church (cherished her, gave Himself), what He is still doing (sanctifying, cleansing by the word), what He intends (a glorious church, holy and blameless), and verse 32.

Watch for

- Defending the church, or piling on it. Receive what people say and let the passage speak.
- Hurrying past the honest question from day 13 as if this passage closes it neatly.
- Someone hearing "love the church" as permission to ignore real harm.

Day 38 is where the class answers the question it let people ask on day 13 and carry through gather day 14: *God, really? Is the church really part of Your plan? How can THIS be Your will?* It is an honest prayer, and God can take it. Today's passage does not make the question foolish. It shows how Jesus Himself sees the church, and that He has not walked away from her.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

Paul tells husbands to cherish their wives, just as Christ cherished the church and offered Himself for her. He did it to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a glorious church, without stain or wrinkle, holy and blameless. Paul says no one hates their own body but feeds and cares

for it, just as Christ does the church, because we are parts of His body. Then he quotes Genesis on two becoming one flesh and says it is a profound mystery, and that he is really speaking about Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:32).

The tense matters. Christ gave Himself, is still cleansing her, and will present her. She is not finished. He knows every flaw far better than we do, and He is still at work on her, through the Word. Loving the church as He does means giving ourselves for her anyway.

Questions you might hear

“How can He love a church that hurt people?” Do not defend what was done. Point to what He is doing: cleansing, washing, not ignoring the stains. His love is not approval of the wrong.

“Does this mean I have to go back?” Not necessarily to a particular building. It means not giving up on His people. Some congregations are doing well because someone stayed through the mess and watched God work. Others are not.

“I still don’t see how THIS is His will.” Thank them for honesty. Let the question stand. Ask what one thing in the passage they can hold on to while they keep asking.

If you’re leading a group

Read the day 13 question aloud to the group and ask who still carries it. Let hands go up without comment. Then read the passage and ask the three questions. Say the safety line plainly, because this passage asks people to love and stay: if something is happening in someone’s church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class is asking. Talk about it with someone you trust. And if anyone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, encourage help beyond the group. For the “I will”, ask each person to name one specific act of love for their congregation this week.

If you're walking with one friend

Ask your friend whether their answer to the day 13 question has changed at all. Listen to the whole answer. Then ask them to describe their church the way Jesus might, flaws and all. If what they describe is harm rather than disappointment, tell them that the class's counsel to stay does not cover that, and help them talk it over with someone they trust.

For you, today

Think of your own congregation, with its real flaws. Write down one way you have loved it less than Jesus does. Then do one concrete act of self-giving for it today: serve where nobody is watching, encourage a tired leader, pray by name for someone who frustrates you. Pray: Jesus, teach me to love Your people as they are.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 39: Do you love me?

John 21:15-19 (OTB)

15 After they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He
replied, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” 16 He asked him again, “Simon, son of
John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Tend my sheep.” 17 He asked
him a third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed because Jesus asked him the third
time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.
18 Truly, truly I say to you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished; but when
you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and take you where you do not wish to
go.” 19 He said this to signify the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. After saying this, He said to him,
“Follow me!”

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 39: Do you love me?

REMEMBER

Follow me!

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You. Here I am. I will feed Your sheep, and I will follow You. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 15 to 20 minutes alone; 45 to 60 minutes with a group

Before the session Read John 21:15-19 twice, and remember Peter's three denials by a fire. Notice the three questions, the three assignments, Peter's grief at the third, and the last words: “Follow me!”

Watch for

- Getting lost in the Greek words for love. Stay with what Jesus asks and what He gives Peter to do.
- Using Peter's failure to shame anyone. Jesus restores him without a lecture.
- Skipping the assignment. Love for Jesus here always comes with care for His sheep.

Day 39 is the second to last day, and it is personal. Peter, who denied Jesus three times by a fire, is asked three times by another fire whether he loves Him. Jesus does not ask for an explanation or a promise. He asks one question and gives one assignment. For people who came in with a long list of the church’s failures, and perhaps a quieter list of their own, this question goes under both.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What this passage raises

After breakfast on the beach, Jesus asks Simon Peter if he loves Him more than these. Peter says yes, Lord, You know I love You. Jesus says to feed His lambs. A second time: do you love Me? Yes. Tend My sheep. A third time, and Peter is grieved, and says, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” (John 21:17 OTB) Feed My sheep. Then Jesus tells Peter that when he is old someone else will lead him where he does not want to go, signalling how Peter would die and glorify God. And He says, “Follow me!” (John 21:19 OTB)

Notice that love for Jesus here never stays private. Each answer is met with care for His people, the same flock that has disappointed many in your group. And the restoration ends with the call Jesus first gave Peter: follow.

Questions you might hear

“Why three times?” Let the group connect it to the three denials. Then ask what it would have felt like to be Peter.

“Why does Jesus tell him how he will die?” It is a sober moment. Following Jesus has a cost, which is tomorrow’s reading. Note it and move on.

“I’ve failed Him too. Can He really still use me?” This passage is the answer. Jesus restores Peter and sends him in the same conversation.

If you’re leading a group

This day calls for quiet. After the retelling, read the three questions aloud slowly, with pauses, and ask the group to sit with them silently for a minute. Then ask the three questions of the study. Do not ask people to declare their love for Jesus out loud; let them write their answer in their workbook if they prefer. For the “I will”, ask each person to name one of His sheep, one person in or near their church, they will care for this week.

If you’re walking with one friend

Meet in person if you can. Ask your friend which part of the passage hit hardest. Then ask, gently, how they would answer Jesus’s question today. Do not push for a particular answer. If they say they do not know, that is honest; Peter himself was grieved. Ask who Jesus might be asking them to feed or tend, and pray together for that person.

For you, today

Let Jesus ask you the question three times, slowly, in a quiet place. Answer honestly each time. Then name one of His sheep you have neglected because they frustrate you, and do one practical thing to feed or tend them today. Pray: Lord, You know everything; You know my love for You, and its limits. Here I am.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Look back at yesterday's “I will”. Did you do it? What happened?

2. Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. One line: where might God have been in my day?

TODAY'S READING

Day 40: Jesus first

Luke 9:23-27 (OTB)

23 Then He said to them all, “If anyone wishes to follow Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and
follow Me.” 24 “For whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever gives up his life for My sake will find
it.” 25 “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet lose or forfeit their very self?” 26 “Whoever is
ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of them when He comes in His glory and in the
glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” 27 “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not experience
death before they see the kingdom of God.”

Scripture quotations are from the Open Translation Bible (OTB), used under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Day 40: Jesus first

REMEMBER

> Take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

BEFORE YOU READ

Pray this as it is, or in your own words: Jesus, You are first. Not my church, not my comfort, not my disappointment. I will take up my cross today and follow You. Keep me close, and use me. Then read today's passage on the pages before this one, twice if you can.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 45 to 60 minutes with a group; 20 to 40 with one friend

Before the session Read Luke 9:23-27 twice. Notice the three verbs in verse 23 (deny, take up, follow) and the word daily. Then read back over your own forty days of "I will" lines before you meet, so you lead the look-back from inside it.

Watch for

- Turning the final gather into a performance, where people feel they must announce big change.
- Treating someone still in a hard place as a failure of the class. Stay with them.
- Vague recommitments. Ask for a name and a day.

Day 40 is both the last daily session and the final gather. Your people read the passage the whole class has been heading toward, Jesus's call to take up the cross daily and follow Him, and then look back over everything they wrote. If you can, finish together. This is a recommitment, not a performance. Let people say as much or as little as they want.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

How to run the conversation

Follow the four steps of the final gather.

Read it together. One person reads Luke 9:23-27 aloud. Someone else retells it. Ask the three questions together. Jesus says, "If anyone wishes to follow Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23 OTB) Notice together the word daily. Following Jesus first is not a single decision at the end of a class. It is tomorrow, and the day after.

Look back. Give everyone a few quiet minutes with the look-back pages in their workbook. Then each person shares one thing from their forty days: a day that mattered, an “I will” that changed something, or a moment where God may have been closer than they knew. Go last, so that your story does not set the bar.

Recommit, out loud. Each person says what putting Jesus first will look like this coming week. Push gently for specifics: a name and a day. If someone says something general, ask, “When, and with whom?”

Pray for one another. Pray for each person by name, and for the church each of you belongs to. Ask God to help you love His people the way He does.

What you might hear

“I don’t feel very different.” Thank them. Ask them to read one line from their look-back aloud. Often the change is in the record even when it is not in the feeling.

“I’ve found someone to study the Bible with.” Celebrate it, then help them plan the next step, and remind them to teach that person to pass it on.

“I’m still angry at my church.” That is a real result too. Do not argue. Ask whether their anger has changed shape at all, and what Jesus first looks like for them anyway.

If you’re leading a group

Give the look-back real time, and keep each share to a couple of minutes so everyone is heard. If someone stays silent, do not press; ask afterwards in private. Close by going around the circle and praying for each person by name, briefly.

Say the safety line one more time. If something is happening in anyone’s church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God or this class asks. Talk about it with someone you trust. And if someone has felt numb or hopeless for a long time, gently encourage them to get help beyond this group as well.

If you're walking with one friend

Do the final gather over a meal if you can. Read the passage together, then ask your friend to walk you through their look-back pages. Listen to all of it without interpreting. Tell them one thing you saw God do in them over these weeks. Pray for them by name. If anything wrong is happening in their church, or the numbness has lasted a long time, the same line holds: talk it over with someone you trust, and get help beyond the class.

After the forty days

The class ends; the rhythm does not. Encourage each person to keep the daily study going, with a Bible study plan or simply book by book, and to keep writing their "I will". Ask whether anyone wants to keep meeting. Stay in touch, but do not chase. The growth was always God's work, not yours.

For you, today

Read your own forty days back. Write down one thing God showed you about yourself, and one person you will walk with next. Contact that person this week. Then pray: Jesus, You are first. Not my church, not my comfort, not my disappointment. Keep me close, and use me.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Look back at yesterday's "I will". Did you do it? What happened?**

2. **Retell today's passage in your own words, as if you were telling a friend.**

3. What does this say about God?

4. What does this say about people?

5. If this is true, what would I do today? Write one specific “I will”, and one person you could tell.

6. Days 1 to 20: copy each day's “I will” and one line, then read them back.

7. Days 21 to 39: copy each day's “I will” and one line, then read them back.

8. Looking back over forty days, where do you see God at work?

9. **What does Jesus first look like for you tomorrow, and who will you tell?**

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