CoMission

WORKBOOK

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?

First, congratulations. If you care enough about the church to be disappointed in it, and you are honest enough to say so, you are probably closer to God than you think. Indifferent people do not grieve.

This book is the paper version of the 40-day challenge, with every reading printed in full. It will not ask you to defend the church or to pretend you feel something you do not. It will ask you to do something harder: put Jesus first, every day, for forty days, and see what He does.

Each ordinary day follows the rhythm in the box above. You eat the passage: read it, read it again, and retell it. You digest it: ask the questions and decide what you will do. Then you leave the growth to God, because that part is His.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Days 7, 14, 21, 28 and 35 have no new reading. You take the week to a small group doing the class, or to one friend you trust.

This class will often encourage you to stay where you are. That counsel is for the disappointed. If something is happening in your church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what this class is asking of you. Talk about it with someone you trust. And if you have felt numb or hopeless for a long time, please talk to someone beyond this class as well.

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?

NOTES

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.

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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.

You probably did not arrive here neutral. Maybe you have watched church leaders chase attendance and budgets. Maybe you have sat for years beside people who seemed to care more about the building than about Jesus. Maybe you were hurt. Maybe you have simply stopped feeling anything on Sunday morning and wondered whether anyone else noticed.

Whatever it is, today you do not have to fix it, explain it or defend anyone. The first step back toward God is honesty: telling Him where you actually are.

The man who wrote today’s psalm was honest too. He looked around at people who claimed God and lived as if He did not matter, and it nearly knocked him off his feet. He says so, in plain words, to God.

Read it twice. Notice how long he stays in his complaint before anything changes, where the turn comes, and what he says about God once it has come.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

When we are disappointed with the church, we are reacting to what we can see: what people say, how they spend their time, how they treat each other. That is real, and it matters.

But there is a limit to it. We only ever see the fruit. God sees the root. He knows the person who looks faithful and is far away, and He knows the person who looks like nothing much and is quietly His.

In today's story even a prophet gets it wrong. Samuel is sent to one family to anoint a king, and he is sure he knows which son it is the moment he sees him.

That cuts two ways, and the story shows both. God sees the emptiness that bothers you more clearly than you do. And He sees your heart too, not just your opinions about everyone else's. Read it twice. Notice who God passes over, who nobody thought to bring in, and what the Lord tells Samuel about how He looks.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Here is something worth noticing before you read: the sharpest words Jesus ever spoke were not to people who had never heard of God. They were to deeply religious people. People who tithed carefully, knew the Scriptures and never missed a gathering, and had lost the heart of the thing.

So if you have looked at the church and thought, something here is badly wrong, you are not being cynical. You are seeing a little of what Jesus saw. He saw it first, and it grieved Him more than it grieves you.

Today's passage is short and hard. Jesus uses three pictures, one after another, to describe religion that looks right on the outside and is empty inside.

Read slowly, twice. Notice what He says the religious leaders were careful about, and what He says they left out. Notice what He tells them to clean first.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

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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.

This is a letter Jesus sent to a real church. It was a good church by most measures: hard-working, patient, careful about false teaching. Most of us would be glad to belong to it.

And yet Jesus had one thing against them.

This is what Jesus wants from His people more than anything they can do for Him. He wants them to want Him. The New Testament calls the church His bride, and a bridegroom does not want a well-run household. He wants his bride's heart. The ache you feel when you see a church going through the motions is a small echo of that longing.

It is possible to be busy and faithful and far away, all at once. Read the letter twice. Notice everything Jesus praises before He says what is wrong, then what He tells them to remember and to do, and the promise He makes at the end.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Another letter, to another church. This one is harder to read. Jesus does not have much good to say about them. They thought they were doing fine. He thought they were lukewarm.

The church in Laodicea was comfortable. It said it was rich and needed nothing. Jesus saw something very different, and He said so, because He loved them.

Look for two things as you read. First, how strongly He feels about what He sees. Then, what He does anyway, and where He is standing when the letter ends.

If you have been disappointed with lukewarm faith around you, today's passage says you are feeling something Jesus feels. But it also asks a quieter question. Is there a door in your own life He has been knocking on? Read it twice, and notice who He says He will come in to, and what He wants to do once He is inside.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

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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.

Here is the thing this week has been building to. Your disappointment with the church is not a sign that you are far from God. Indifferent people are not disappointed. The fact that you care enough to question, and feel it this deeply, means you may be closer to God than you think.

What you feel is a taste of what God feels. He feels it more deeply than you do, because He knows every heart, and you can only see the fruit. He wants the same thing you want: a people who actually love Him.

So you are in the right place. This season may be the first step of a recovery, not the end of your faith.

Read today's passage twice. Watch what Jesus feels when He sees the city, and then what He does when He walks into the temple. Notice the order, and notice what He goes on doing there every day.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

This week you read:

Day 1, Psalm 73: Honest about it
Day 2, 1 Samuel 16:1-13: God sees what we can't
Day 3, Matthew 23:23-28: Jesus saw it first
Day 4, Revelation 2:1-7: Busy, and far away
Day 5, Revelation 3:14-22: He is still knocking
Day 6, Luke 19:41-48: He wept
No new reading today. Take the week to a small group doing the class, or to one friend you trust, and use the steps in the box above.

Before you meet, think about what you have carried this week: what you have felt about the church, about God and about yourself. Say it honestly when you meet. Nobody needs to fix it. If an "I will" did not happen, say so, and say what got in the way. Then ask the week's hard

Watch this chapter

NOTES

question together: if our disappointment is a taste of what God feels, what does that change about how we look at the church? Write down below what you talk about.

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?

NOTES

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.

Some of the disappointment you carry may not really be about the church. It may be about God. You do not feel the peace you used to feel. You do not hear from Him the way you once did. The gentle pushes and pulls that used to guide you have gone quiet.

That is more common than anyone admits on a Sunday morning. The Bible is full of it. People of deep faith have gone through long seasons when God felt far away; some Christians have called it the dark night of the soul. These are exactly the seasons when God asks us to keep seeking Him and keep obeying.

Today's psalm is short, only six verses, and it does not pretend. It starts in that silence and asks the same question four times.

Read it twice. Notice where it ends, and what the writer decides to do before anything has changed.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Elijah had just seen God do something enormous, and then he ran for his life and asked to die. Burnt out, alone, and convinced that he was the only one still faithful to God.

If you have been disappointed with God's people for a long time, you may recognize that feeling: everyone else has gone along with it, and I am the only one left who cares.

It is a long passage, and a gentle one. God does not begin by scolding Elijah. He begins somewhere much more ordinary.

Watch how God treats Elijah: what He gives him first, how He speaks, and what He tells him about who else is still faithful. The answer to the dark night was not a new feeling. It was to keep listening, and to get up and obey the next thing. Read it twice, and notice the question God asks him, twice.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.”

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

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.

Sometimes God feels distant for reasons we would rather not look at. The prophet Isaiah told the people of his day that their wrongdoing had put a separation between them and their God (Isaiah 59:2). That is not the reason for every silence, and nobody can tell you whether it is the reason for yours. But it is worth asking honestly.

The trouble is that most of us do not think of ourselves as disobedient. We are good people. We do not do terrible things, and we do not have many terrible thoughts.

But God wants more than good behaviour. He wants faithful obedience: taking up our cross daily, seeking Him, and obeying even in the small things. Measured that way, a quiet no counts too. Even silently refusing to open His Word, year after year, is a kind of disobedience, and it can leave us feeling that He has gone silent.

Today’s story is about a very good man. Read it as a discovery, not an accusation. Notice how Jesus looks at him before He says anything hard.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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.

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

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.

Yesterday may have stung. Here is the good news behind it: if part of the silence is the quiet no we have been saying to God, then it is the easiest kind of silence to end. You do not have to manufacture a feeling. You only have to say yes to the next thing He shows you.

In today’s passage Jesus is talking to His closest friends the night before He dies. He is about to leave them, and they are afraid of being left alone.

One of them asks Him a question that sounds a lot like yours: why would You show Yourself to us and not to everyone? Look closely at how Jesus answers, and at the promise He makes about the Holy Spirit.

Read it twice. Notice how often love and obedience appear together. The rest of this class is built around exactly this: hearing His words, keeping them, and watching for Him.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Many of us grew up with a faith that was really church-first. Jesus was in there somewhere, but the church was what we organized our lives around. Then one day you get honest, and you realize the church has disappointed you because you were asking it to be something only Jesus can be.

If that kind of faith can last decades in you, it can last decades in the people around you too. Our congregations are often a mix: some who have truly given their lives to Jesus, and some who have only ever been committed to the church. Jesus told a story about wheat and weeds growing side by side, and told His servants not to pull up the weeds themselves (Matthew 13:24-30). That is not our job, and this is not an invitation to judge who is which. But it makes room for grace. We would not expect restraint, good choices or high morals from someone who is drunk. We cannot expect the fruit of the Spirit from someone the Spirit has not yet changed.

Today two sisters both love Jesus. Notice which one He says has chosen what will not be taken away.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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.

Maybe, if you are honest, your question sounds more like this: *God, really? Is the church really part of Your plan? How can THIS be Your will?* That is an honest question, and you may bring it to Him. On day 38 we will look straight at how Jesus Himself sees His church.

The common move is to leave and start over somewhere new. But a new church is usually a temporary fix for a deeper problem. Every church is made of people. Unless we are aligned with God and the Holy Spirit is building us up, we carry the same disappointment into the next one. Some congregations are on track, often because people stayed through the human mess and joined in what God was doing. That could be you.

Staying is for the disappointed. If something is happening in your church that is not right, such as abuse, spiritual manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God is asking of you. Talk about it with someone you trust.

Today a crowd walks away from Jesus. Watch what Peter says when Jesus asks His closest friends whether they want to go too.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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.

This week you read:

Day 8, Psalm 13: How long?
Day 9, 1 Kings 19:1-18: The only one left
Day 10, Mark 10:17-27: Good, and lacking one thing
Day 11, John 14:15-24: He shows Himself
Day 12, Luke 10:38-42: Church-first or Jesus-first
Day 13, John 6:60-69: To whom would we go?
No new reading today. Take the week to a small group doing the class, or to one friend you trust, and use the steps in the box above.

This was a harder week. Bring all of it. If you have noticed a quiet no, you can say so, but this is a discovery, not a confession booth.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Make room for the honest question, if it is yours: *God, really? Is the church really part of Your plan? How can THIS be Your will?* You may say it out loud. It is a prayer God can take. Then talk about what Peter said on day 13. If you talk about the mix in every congregation, do it without naming anyone. Last, ask each other: what would change this week if Jesus were really 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?

NOTES

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.

Last week ended with a question: if a new church will not fix this, what will? The answer this class gives is faith.

Faith is what lets us live with a church made of imperfect people, ourselves included. With more faith, the problems other people cause do not knock us down the way they used to. We see things more clearly, the way God sees them, and things that once hurt us are seen for what they really are. We can love people the way God loves them, and confront what needs confronting without fear. Think of it as insulation.

So how do we get more faith? God can build faith any way He chooses. But He put it plainly in His word, and it is at the end of today’s passage. Look for it.

This week is about rediscovering the Bible for yourself, and you have been doing it every day already. Eat it: read, re-read, retell. Digest it: the questions and what you will do. Then let God give the growth. Read the passage twice, and notice the chain of questions near the end and where it lands.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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.

Many of us have heard a great deal of the Bible over the years: sermons, verses on the wall, songs. Yet it never seemed to take root. We heard it, and life went on.

Jesus told a story about exactly that. The seed in it is always good. What changes is the ground it lands on. Then His disciples asked what the story meant, and He told them, so today's passage carries both the story and its meaning.

It is easy to read a story like this and sort everyone you know into its four kinds of ground. Try not to. Read it for yourself first.

As you read, do not decide too quickly which kind of ground you are. Notice what happens to the seed in each place, what the thorns turn out to be, and what the good ground does that the others do not.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Some disappointed Christians are dry, and they cannot quite say why. They still believe. They may still attend. But nothing seems to grow anymore.

Today's psalm is the very first one in the Bible's songbook, placed at the front on purpose. It describes two kinds of people, and it uses a picture you can hold in your mind all week.

It is only six verses long. Read it slowly, twice, and let the picture form before you start asking questions of it.

Notice where the tree gets its water, and how the psalm describes the person who is like it: not grimly dutiful, but finding joy. Notice what happens to the people who are not like that tree. Then ask yourself honestly where you have been getting your water.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Today's story might be the closest thing in the Bible to where you are right now.

Two of Jesus's followers are walking away from Jerusalem. Everything they had hoped for has collapsed. They are not angry at God exactly. They are just deeply, quietly disappointed, and they are talking it over as they walk.

Jesus joins them, and they do not recognize Him. He does not start by correcting them. He asks them what they are talking about, and lets them tell Him.

It is a long passage, so give it time. Watch what He does with them on the road, and what happens at the table. Notice what they say to each other afterward about their hearts, and what was happening when their hearts felt that way. Then notice what they do next, and where they go.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Many churches are full of people who know a great deal and do very little with it. It is easy to be disappointed in them. It is harder to admit how easily we do the same thing.

That is why every day in this class ends with an “I will”. Not a feeling, not a resolution to be better, but one specific thing, today, because of what you read. A good one has a name, a time or a place in it, so that tomorrow you can tell whether you did it.

Today’s passage begins with listening, speaking and anger, and some of us are carrying a good deal of anger about the church. Then it uses a vivid picture to describe what happens when we hear and do not do.

Read it twice, and notice what James calls religion that God accepts. Then look honestly at yesterday’s “I will”. Did you do it?

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Long ago, God's people came home after years of exile and found that they had almost lost His word altogether. Today's passage is the day they heard it read again.

They asked for it themselves. They gathered in a public square, men and women and everyone old enough to understand, and they listened for hours.

Watch how they listened, how long they stood, and how they responded when they heard it. Then watch what their leaders told them to do with their tears, and who they were told to remember as they celebrated.

There are long lists of names in the passage. Do not let them slow you down; read past them to what the people did.

Whatever the last years have been for you, rediscovering the Bible is not a punishment or a chore. It is a homecoming.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

This week you read:

Day 15, Romans 10:8-17: Faith comes by hearing
Day 16, Luke 8:4-15: What kind of ground
Day 17, Psalm 1: Planted
Day 18, Luke 24:13-35: We had hoped
Day 19, James 1:19-27: Doers, not just hearers
Day 20, Nehemiah 8:1-12: The book found again
Today there is no new reading. Take the week to someone else: a small group doing the class, or one friend you trust.

This was the week of the Word. You have been hearing it every day, and faith comes from hearing. Talk about how the reading is going and what is hard about it. Say where your faith has grown, even a little, and where it is still thin. If you meet, do one passage together the same way you do it alone: read it twice, retell it, ask the three questions, and each write an "I will".

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Write down below what you talk about. You do not have to agree with each other. You only have to be honest.

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?

NOTES

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.

If a church-first faith left one gap, it was usually this one: the Holy Spirit. We heard that He lived in us. We were not sure what that meant on a Tuesday. Maybe you remember a season when you noticed His gentle pushes and pulls, and you miss it.

This week is about what the Spirit does in people who seek and obey God with intention. Not in theory. In real hearts, including yours. Jesus did not leave His people alone with a book and a building. He sent a Helper.

In today’s passage Jesus is talking to His friends on the night before He dies, and He tells them something that must have sounded strange: it is better for them that He goes away. Read it twice. Look for why He says that, and list the things He says the Spirit will do, in the world and in His followers. Notice who the Spirit points to.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Disappointment can harden a heart slowly. It rarely happens in one day. A careless word from a leader, a promise nobody kept, a program that mattered more than a person, and over the years cynicism creeps in. We stop expecting anything, from the church or from God. Some of us even call it being realistic.

You cannot fix that by trying harder. You cannot argue yourself soft again. Today's passage is a promise God made to a scattered, disappointed people who had lost almost everything, and almost every verb in it is His. Count them as you read. Write them down if it helps.

Notice especially who causes the obedience at the end. Your part is to come and say yes. The changing is His work. As you read it the second time, ask which of those promises you most need Him to keep in you.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Most of us know the list in today's passage. Some of us memorized it as children. But it is easy to read it as a to-do list: be more loving, be more patient, try harder at joy. And when we fail at it, we feel worse than before we started.

Read it again, slowly. Whose fruit is it? A tree does not make fruit by straining. Fruit grows when the tree stays connected to what feeds it. And what does the passage say our part is?

Notice too the things on the other list. Some of them, like strife, jealousy, dissensions and factions, look a lot like the church problems that disappointed you in the first place. The answer to them is not a better committee or a new set of rules. It is people walking by the Spirit. As you read, notice which list describes the last church argument you saw, and which describes you in it.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

On day 15 we talked about faith as insulation: the thing we actually need to deal with the disappointment. Today's passage gives the same idea a picture, a soldier's armour, and in the middle of it a shield.

Notice who the struggle is really against. It is not the deacon who hurt you or the pastor who let you down, even when they did real wrong, and even when that wrong needs to be named. There is a bigger battle behind it, and God gives His people armour for it.

Faith given by the Holy Spirit is like a Swiss army knife: it equips us for whatever we face. Not because it makes every problem disappear, but because it lets us stand in the middle of them and see them the way God sees them. Look at what the shield of faith does, notice where the word of God shows up in the armour, and pay attention to how the passage ends. It does not end with a soldier standing alone.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Maybe you are reading all this about faith and thinking, *that is exactly my problem. I do not have much left.* Years of disappointment have worn it thin, and a week about faith as a shield only made you notice how small yours is.

Today's story is for you. A desperate father brings his son to Jesus's disciples, and they cannot help. There is a crowd, an argument, and religious people talking over each other while a boy suffers. Then the father brings his son to Jesus, with very little faith left of his own. He even says *if*.

Pay attention to the father's prayer. It might be the most honest prayer in the Bible. Notice what Jesus does with that *if*, and notice that He does not send the man away to come back when his faith is stronger. Then notice the question the disciples ask afterwards, in private, and how Jesus answers it.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Two weeks ago this class said something that may have been hard to hear: in most cases, stay where you are, so that you can help others draw closer to God.

Today's reading, two short parts of Hebrews, shows what that looks like. Staying is not gritting your teeth through another Sunday. It is drawing near to God yourself, with confidence because of what Jesus did, and then turning around to stir up the people next to you. That is how congregations get back on track: someone stays, and starts stirring.

Notice what the writer says about meeting together, and what he warns can grow in a community and poison many people. Bitterness is a root before anyone sees it, and by then it has spread.

The same exception still stands. If something is happening in your church that is not right, such as abuse, manipulation or false teaching, staying put and saying nothing is not what God is asking of you. Talk about it with someone you trust.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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.

This week you read:

Day 22, John 16:7-15: The Helper
Day 23, Ezekiel 36:24-28: A new heart
Day 24, Galatians 5:16-26: Keep in step
Day 25, Ephesians 6:10-18: The shield of faith
Day 26, Mark 9:14-29: Help my unbelief
Day 27, Hebrews 10:19-25; Hebrews 12:14-15: Stay, and stir each other up
Today there is no new reading. Take the week to someone else: a small group doing the class, or one friend you trust.

This was the week of the Spirit: the Helper, a new heart, fruit you cannot grow yourself, a shield, and a father with half-sized faith. Talk about where the Spirit may have been at work in you, and whether you noticed. Is there an old hurt that looks different to you now? Share only

Watch this chapter

NOTES

what you want to. Then talk about staying: what it would look like for you to stay and stir up the people around you.

Write down below what you talk about, and the names that came to mind.

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?

NOTES

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."

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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 four weeks you have been looking at the church and at your own heart. This week you look outward.

A great deal of church service is busyness: keeping programs running, filling slots, staying occupied. It is no wonder many people are tired of it, and some of you have quietly stepped back from all of it. But there is another kind of service, the kind Jesus did, which always had people in view. It was never about keeping something running. It was about people who were lost.

Read what Jesus did as He travelled, what He saw when He looked at the crowds, and what He felt. Then notice what He asked His disciples to do about it. Not to work harder first. To pray. Pray it yourself today, and mean it, knowing that the people who pray that prayer honestly often find themselves becoming part of the answer.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

When Jesus sent His followers out, He did not tell them to invite people somewhere. He sent them to find people: households where God was already at work, people who would welcome them and listen. Many call them persons of peace.

This changes what service is for. You still serve with no strings attached. Nobody is a project. But you serve with your eyes open, watching for the person God is already drawing. You are not trying to talk anyone into anything. You are looking for someone God has already prepared.

Read carefully. Notice how Jesus sends them, in pairs and travelling light. Notice how He tells them to recognize the person of peace, and what to do when they find one: where to stay, for how long, and what to say. Notice too what they are told to do when nobody welcomes them. Rejection is expected, and it is not the end of the story.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Peter and John were on their way to pray when a man asked them for money. He had been carried to the same gate every day for years. They had no money. What they did have changed his life.

Watch the order of things in today's passage: what they notice, how they look at him, what they give, and what happens afterwards when a crowd gathers. Serving opened a door, and they walked through it. And when people stared at them as if they had done something special, Peter turned all the attention to Jesus.

This is service with intention. You meet a real need with no strings, and you stay alert for the moment someone wants to know why. You will not always have what people ask for. You always have something to give. A simple question many people find helpful: *Would you like to learn how to study the Bible?*

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.”

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

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.

This is the end of a long conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at a well. She arrived alone, at noon, carrying a lot of history. She leaves as the first person in John's gospel to tell a whole town about Jesus. She has no training and no title. She has a story and a question.

Meanwhile His disciples, who had walked with Him for months, come back with lunch and miss what is happening. They are thinking about food. He is talking about a harvest standing right in front of them.

Notice what the woman leaves behind, what she says to her town, and how simple it is. Notice what Jesus tells His disciples about the fields, and about who did the hard work before them. Then notice what the townspeople say at the very end. Her words brought them to Jesus. His words are what made them believe.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Today's story is dramatic: a man so tormented that nobody could help him, living among the tombs, breaking every chain, hurting himself day and night. Then Jesus sets him free.

But pay attention to how it ends. The town is frightened and asks Jesus to leave. The man asks to go with Jesus, which sounds like the most faithful request in the story, and Jesus says no. He gives him a different assignment. Look for where Jesus sends him, and exactly what He tells him to say. It is not a sermon or an argument. It is what the Lord has done, and how He showed mercy.

For most of us the first field is not far away. It is the people we already know: family, coworkers, neighbours, the friend we have not called in a while. They have watched us for years. As you read, ask who at home has seen the change in you, or could.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Philip is led by the Spirit to a desert road, of all places, and finds a man already reading the Bible, and not understanding it. He is an important official a long way from home, and he has just been to worship.

Notice what Philip does: how he gets there, how he starts the conversation, where he sits, and where he begins. He asks a question before he says anything else. He does not take the man to a meeting or tell him to come back on Sunday. He opens the scroll with him, right there.

You can do this. You do not need to be a pastor or know every answer. The same simple rhythm you have used every day of this class works with anyone: read it together, retell it, ask what it says about God and about people, and what you will each do about it. As you read, notice how the man's own question opens the way, and how the story ends.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

This week you read:

Day 29, Matthew 9:35-38: The harvest
Day 30, Luke 10:1-11: Look for the person of peace
Day 31, Acts 3:1-16: What I have
Day 32, John 4:27-42: Fields ready for harvest
Day 33, Mark 5:1-20: Go home and tell
Day 34, Acts 8:26-40: Do you understand what you are reading?
Today there is no new reading. Take the week to someone else: a small group doing the class, or one friend you trust.

This was the week you looked outward. Talk about who God put in front of you, and whether anyone seemed open. Then practise the question. Take turns saying it out loud, in your own words: *Would you like to learn how to study the Bible?* It gets easier the second time, and easier again the third.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Write down below what you talk about, and the names of the people you are praying for.

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?

NOTES

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.”

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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.

Notice the first thing the passage says about the disciples who met Jesus on the mountain: some worshipped, and some doubted. He gave His commission to all of them anyway. He did not wait until every doubt was gone.

Look at what He tells them to do. Not to attend, not to invite, not to build. To make disciples, to baptise them, and to teach them to obey. Notice that last word. Not to know everything He commanded. To obey it.

If the last five weeks have stirred anything in you, this is where it was always heading. The person of peace you are watching for is not a project. They could become a disciple of Jesus, and you could be the one who walks with them, opening the Bible the way Philip did. Read it twice, and notice how the passage begins with who Jesus is and ends with a promise.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Paul is writing to Timothy, a younger man he has walked with for years. Count the generations in the second verse of today's reading. There are more than you might think.

That is the difference between a church that grows by gathering and a movement that grows by multiplying. Gathering counts how many came. Multiplying asks who is passing it on. A disciple is not finished when they come to faith. They are finished, in a sense, when they are making disciples of their own.

Notice where Paul says the strength comes from, before he asks Timothy to do anything at all. Then the three pictures that follow, a soldier, an athlete and a farmer, each say something about what that takes. Notice what they have in common. None of them gets results quickly, and none of them gets there by accident. And notice the promise in the last verse.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.

Six weeks ago you came into this class disappointed with the church. Maybe you still are, and with good reason. Maybe you are still asking the question from day 13: *God, really? Is the church really part of Your plan? How can THIS be Your will?* Today's passage is part of His answer.

It is about marriage, but Paul keeps saying it is really about Christ and the church. Read it and look at how Jesus treats His bride: what He gave for her, what He is still doing for her, and what He intends her to become. She is not finished yet, and He has not stopped working on her.

He knows every one of her flaws far better than you do. And He has not walked away. Loving the church as Jesus loves it does not mean pretending the flaws are not there. It means giving yourself for her anyway, the way He did.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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!”

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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.

Peter had denied Jesus three times, by a fire, on the night Jesus was arrested. Now, by another fire on a beach after the resurrection, after breakfast together, Jesus asks him a question three times.

Read it slowly. Notice what Jesus does not ask about. He does not ask Peter to explain himself, or to promise to do better, or to prove anything. Notice what He gives Peter to do each time Peter answers, and whose sheep they are. Notice the last two words He says.

Many of us came into this class with a list of the ways the church has failed. Some of us also carry a quieter list of our own. Jesus's question goes underneath both lists. Tomorrow is the last day. Today, let Jesus ask you His question, and answer it honestly.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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.”

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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.

Forty days ago you started out honest about your disappointment. Today you read the passage this whole class has been heading toward: Jesus's invitation to follow Him, daily. Not once. Every day.

Read it, and do the session as on any other day. Then use the two large spaces below to copy your "I will" and your one line from each day, and read them back slowly as one story. Notice what God has been doing, even on the days that felt like nothing.

If you can, finish together, with your friend or your group:

Read it together. One person reads the passage aloud, someone retells it, and you ask the questions together.
Look back. 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.
Recommit, out loud. Say what putting Jesus first will look like this coming week. Make it specific: a name and a day.
Pray for one another. Pray for each person by name, and for the church you belong to.
Jesus first. Then His people, the way He loves them.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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?

NOTES

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