

Finding Christ in the Wilderness:

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A 21 Day Devotional based on Richard Foster’s *Celebration of Discipline*

By Samantha Jones

My Dear Friends,

I want to express how excited I am for you that you are beginning this journey for the next 21 days. You have truly been blessed to have this opportunity to break away from “the world” and find an intimate realm to grow with God. I pray that this during this time you develop skills to carry over to “real life.” I urge you before every reading that you sit in silence with your eyes closed. As you breathe in, create a blank sleight in your mind. As you continue each breath build a scene, placing God at the center. This could take a few seconds or minutes…however long you need. Step into this place and meet with God there.

What a joy and privilege it has been to write this devotional based off of Richard Foster’s *Celebration of Discipline.[[1]](#footnote-1)* I highly encourage you to read Foster’s book at some point soon, if you haven’t already. It is full of wisdom and practical ways to implement Spiritual disciplines into your life. I pray that this road you have started down be full of trials, unique experiences and opportunities to tear down your walls so they may be rebuilt with humility, compassion and love which can only be provided from God.

Love and many blessings,

Samantha Jones

Week 1:

Inward Look

This first week, let us build the foundation of you. Take this time to find your intimate self with God. Meet with Him, dance with Him. Enjoy the intimacy alone with our Creator.

Day 1: Find A Home

# Scripture: Matthew 7:24-27

*Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.*

Devotional:

*Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.* You are beginning a journey. You have come to this place to experience God in a new way. Maybe you are here to meet God for the first time; or maybe you have come as an old friend. Perhaps you have come to get away from “the real world.” Regardless of why you are here, remember that God is welcoming you with open arms. You need to find a place here—not your bed or where you might do work. Instead, venture out, away from people who might be retreating with you; away from where other activities may take place. Find a place that you can go to be with God. In scripture we find Jesus teaching His disciples that a wise person builds his house on solid ground that cannot be broken. He wants His disciples to know that this solid rock is Him.

*Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock.* When we have this firm foundation in God and God alone, we can withstand the most intense weather or attack. Our bedrock is Christ. If we build our foundation, meaning our hope, our faith, our anything on something other than God, we will fall. *But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.* God wants to keep you safe. He wants to be your foundation. You have entered into this place for a reason. You will be stretched out of your comfort zone in many ways. Find a physical place that you can deem your intimate place with God. This is your safety. This is home-base. This is your physical representation of your “solid rock” where you can continue to build you relationship with Jesus Christ who is our firm foundation. With Him, you cannot be moved. As you find this place, keep in mind how you will get there. No matter if it is a significant hike or a short walk, imagine you are taking that journey with Christ, walking side-by-side. Once you get to your place, sit down and take in God’s surrounding beauty. Today, reflect on God’s presence in this place. Take in the small details. You may write them down or take a mental note. Touch the rocks that might be beneath you, remembering God as your solid rock. As you leave this place on your first day, take a rock and keep it with you. When you go about your day each day, have this rock on hand to remind yourself of God as the solid rock on which you stand.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Show me that you are my firm foundation. Help me to see you in this place. When I am scared, keep me safe. When I am in danger, rescue me. When I fail, pick me up again. I am weak and I need you. Help me to remember your solidness through my time here--that I can rely fully on you and you alone.
Amen.*

Day 2: In the Silence

**Scripture: Psalm 46:1-11**

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. "Selah" There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. "Selah" Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. "Selah"*

“God’s first language is silence.” –Dr. Hulitt Gloer[[2]](#footnote-2)

Devotional:

*Be still, and know that I am God.* As one of the most famous verses in the bible, you have heard this time and time again. Be still. But what does being still mean? Do you stand still? Do you stop doing everything? It is close to impossible these days to even stop to breathe, let alone contemplate knowing God. If you look at the full verse, it isn’t describing a quiet place or someone meditating on the LORD. Instead, it paints a picture of a war; of nations falling, of chaos and confusion. In the midst of this, the psalmist calls the LORD a fortress for us to stand behind in order to Be Still. In the midst of insanity, God wants to stand in between us and the world so that we might be able to Be Still, Be in awe of His work, Be aware that He is taking over, Be protected. A lot of times we forget of everything that He is doing and add “Jesus Time” to our chaos instead of standing behind God so that we can stop and recognize God in the work of our lives and even weaving God into our whole days and not just a small portion of it. There is a monastery in Albique New Mexico called Christ in the Desert[[3]](#footnote-3). They dedicate their lives to Ora Et Labora, or prayer in work. Their labor does not come before their prayer, instead their prayer comes before their work, during their work and after their work. For us to Be Still we have to remember the Solid Rock on which we stand, that provides a foundation that won’t crack, and provides shelter in the midst of the wars of life. As you continue your days here, carry your rock with you as a reminder to stop and recognize what God is doing in your life.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Help me to remember that you are my fortress so that I can be still and know that you are God. Help me to invite you into all parts of my life, not just a small section. I will not be perfect at it, I will need your reminders and guidance.
Amen*

Day 3: Body Language

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

*Do you not know that youare God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you.**If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*

Devotional:

 You are God’s temple! Your body a place where the Holy Spirit dwells. Let that sink in for a moment. What a strange knowledge to know that the eternal God and creator of all is dwelling in you. Shouldn’t we take care of the place in which He dwells? Remember that God created you. He has given us our bodies as a gift.

 There are many ways that we can take care of ourselves. By eating right, by exercising, by taking time to destress from our days. In Velingrad, Bulgaria[[4]](#footnote-4)—a small village in a valley next to the Radopi mountains, you can find yourself seeing all of the stars clearly in the night sky. At the end of a day with the students I was working with I would go out onto my balcony and slowly begin to stretch out my body. As I would do that I would release my stress from the day out to the Lord. By the end of my routine, I would find myself on my back staring up at the sky. Each night I couldn’t help but be in awe of God’s creation. Thinking that if I reached up far enough I would be able to touch the stars that He had created.

 Take today to remember that your body is a temple of God. Take care of the gift that He has given you. Spend extra time hiking and seeing what He has created and placed you here to see. Tonight as you get ready to sleep, go outside and stretch and allow God to take the stress of your day, your worries and your anxieties away. Begin with your head, move to your arms, your back, your legs. Become comfortable with the movement of your body. Do as much or as little as you need, but as you move imagine God moving with you and taking away the worries and replacing it with His protection and firm foundation.

Prayer:

 *Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. God I need you in this time. Show me how to take care of and protect the body You have given me. Allow me to stretch outside of my comfort zone, knowing You are with me always. Help me to experience you in a new way.*

*Amen.*

Day 4: Unconventional Prayer

Scripture: Luke 7:36-50

*One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”*

*“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.”**Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.**Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among[*[*h*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+7#fen-ESV-25236h)*] themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

Devotional:

 There are many different practices that can be used as a way to meditate on Scripture. One of these ways is Lectio Devina. This is an active practice that we can use to engage in Scripture and find different things that God might be trying to tell us. You will be reading this passage a total of three times.

 The first time you read this passage, just listen to the text as if it were a story. See what the tax collectors looked like. What does the woman look like? What is the surrounding scene? What does it smell like? Where is Jesus sitting? How many other people are in the room? The second time you read it, pick out a word or a phrase that sticks out to you. Underline it or write it down and continue reading. Go back and figure out why this particular phrase might have stood out to you. Can you relate to it? Does it remind you of something? Take time to really focus on that word or phrase. Finally, during your last read through, write down what you think God is trying to share with you. Let a steady stream of your thoughts go down on paper. Allow God to speak to you in this moment.

Prayer:

 *Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. This might be new to me. I know it will take practice, but as I walk into this, please be with me. Show me what it is I need to know in this moment. Help me to see what you want me to see. Help me to meditate on your word.
Amen*

Day 5: No Time Like Now

Scripture: Matthew 6:16-18; 25-27

*“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you….*

*…“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*

Devotional:

 When we hear the word “fasting” we often assume it is referring to going some time without eating. Jesus exemplified this in scripture by going without food in order to remind Himself that He only need to rely on God and not on food to survive. This is an old practice that goes back throughout time and scripture. Jesus reminds us that when we fast we need to make sure that we do not do it in order to draw attention to ourselves. The purpose of the fasting is to bring you closer to the Lord as you are relying on Him to get you through the time of fasting. He tells us that we do not need to worry about things of this life that He is in control and we will be taken care of by Him.

With today’s technology and busyness, we find ourselves as slaves to time and work. It is very rare to find Sabbath because there is always a deadline to be met. We often hear the phrase “there aren’t enough hours in the day.” What if we took a fast from time? Instead of worrying about where you needed to be and when, you ate when your body told you you’re hungry. What if you drank when your body told you you’re thirsty? What if you relied on God to take you to the places you needed to be when you needed to be there? A young woman in college was put to the test by a professor. In replace of a final, he challenged her to go without time for a week. She admitted that it was difficult and she became stressed that she wouldn’t get to her meetings or classes. Eventually though, it became peaceful. She was not fully reliant on time. She was still able to function without a clock telling her what she needed to do and when. If we take a step back and realize that we need not to worry, we can begin to trust God in a way we have not before.

Take today and fast from time. Be reliant on God and trust Him to guide you through your day. Maybe you will feel led to fast from food or talking or other ways as well. If so, partake in that with God. Accept it as a challenge and a gift.

Prayer:

 *Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. God today will not be easy. I will want to quit, I will want to show that I am struggling in order to gain attention from others. Father, I need you to get through this. Show me something new during this time. Show me that I don’t need anything other than you. I ask that this be a bonding experience that I can have with you as I tread into the unknown.
Amen*

Day 6: From Memory

Scripture: Psalm 23:1-6

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
    He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters**He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
    for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
    I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
    your rod and your staff,
    they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me
    in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
    my cup overflows.
Surelygoodness and mercyshall follow me
    all the days of my life,
and I shall dwellin the house of the Lord
    forever.*

Devotional:

One of the disciplines that Foster emphasizes in *Celebrations of Discipline* speaks about studying scripture. We might not know how to go about that. The first step that Foster gives us is to be in repetition. In memorizing scripture, we can repeat this passage over and over in order to find new meaning in it. We look toward God wanting a relationship, but not knowing what to say. Lucky for us that God has provided a way for us to connect with Him when we are at a loss for words. This is where repetition in memorizing scripture can help us. Since we will know this by heart we can pray out to God and hear His answer in the text.

Looking at this passage, we find that God is calling us to His table. He is also calling our enemies to that same table. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies…*we have the option to accept this offer to sit at God’s table with your enemies. You don’t have to accept this offer, but remember that it is your decision to sit at God’s table regardless of who else is there.

As you hold your rock to remember Christ foundation in your life. Begin with the first verse. Once you have that, move on to the next, until you have the passage memorized. Recite this as you hike to your place, as you leave your place, when you are alone. As you move on from this time, you can add more scripture to your memory. Use this as your prayer when you have no words. Use this as your guidance when you are lost. Use this as your strength when you have no strength.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Help me to find solace in your word. When I cannot think of what to say to you, guide me to your Word so that I can find the words. Help me to find peace in the Words you have provided. Help me to find answers in Your word and give me the strength to join the table that you have set before me, even if I do not like who else is there. Help me to love them as you love them. Amen.*

Day 7: Rest

Devotional:

As a day of rest and grace, take this time to relax in the care of Christ Jesus. Take in your surroundings as you recite your memory verse. As you read this passage and we wrap up this first week together, remember that Jesus needed to retreat away from others as well. He went into the wilderness to be with the Father in order to continue the work that he was sent to do.

Scripture: Luke 5:12-16

*While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him. Then Jesus ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Show me rest in you today. Aid me in listening what you have to say to me through your Word and through your creation. Help me to remember to remove myself from the chaos and the work you have sent for me to do so that I can be rejuvenated in you. Amen*

Week 2:

Branching Out

As you step into this second week, always remember to reflect back on your home base. Remember your foundation, your Rock which is God as you reach out to others you are on this journey alongside. See how the Lord continues to meet with you intimately as you meet journey with those around you.

Day 8: The Simple Kind of Life

Scripture: Matthew 13:45-46

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearlswho, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

Devotional:

Aren’t we all search of fine pearls? We stand outside the Apple store waiting for the “latest and greatest” IPhone when they just got the previous “latest and greatest” about six months before that. Can you remember back to your childhood and finding the Holy Grail of all presents that you begged your parents saying, “You’ll never have to buy me anything ever again!! It’s the only thing that I ever wanted so badly in my entire life….!!” Eventually, we found something else that we wanted so badly more than anything in the world. We throw our money at anything that we want in hopes that it will make us happy but we find out that our happiness is short lived. When we enter into a relationship with God we are able to push all of those things aside. We realize that God is the one who can take care of us and we do not need to be in search of happiness. Jesus can help us find joy even in our deepest sorrow. Realize that material things are just that: things. God on the other hand, God is worth giving up everything else.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I am trying to find worth and meaning in things other than you. Help me to see that you are all that I need. Help me realize that you have provided strength to get through today. Help me to only set my eyes on you.
Amen*

Day 9: Inside Your Mind

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

Devotional:

Solitude isn't necessarily a place, but a mindset. When we allow ourselves to center on the Lord and mentally separate ourselves from the darkness of this world, we can continue to embrace and engage in the world through love....if not, we produce nothing but tasteless noise. Without recognizing and living out the love of Christ, We are nothing. None of this can come about with trusting in the Lord. Remember, there is a place that you have designated as your place with God. As you continue to go back to that place, remember Jesus’ time in solitude. This is the place where He prayed and was refueled in order to spread the Word and love of God.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I know that only you can give me rest. Show me that inner solitude that I might bless others while being restored in you. Guide me for when I need to break away from others and when I need to be surrounded. I can’t do this on my own.
Amen*

Day 10: Giving of Oneself

Scripture: Ephesians 5:22-33

***Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her******to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,******and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.******In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body.******“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”******This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.******However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.***

Devotional:

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.* Submission: the act of yielding to another being. This passage gives us an example to which we all are to submit to God. However, we often forget the rest of the passage: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but hoy and blameless.* Though there is submission from wife to husband, there is a sacrifice of the husband for the wives. Remember Christ literally gave up his entire life for the Church. There is give and take on both sides. There is a huge responsibility as men and women to submit and sacrifice to one another to further our individual walks with Christ and the Church Universal. Remember, brothers and sisters, to remember Christ’s *submission* to God and His *sacrifice* to humankind so that we might do the same in our relationships with one another.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Help me to remember that submission is not becoming a slave, but rather allowing myself to be humbled and giving me a chance to show love through sacrifice. Help me discern what I should submit to and remember you solid foundation of truth.
Amen*

Day 11: Faith for the Faithless

Scripture: Job 22:21-30

*Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. 22 Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent and assign your nuggets to the dust, your gold of Ophir to the rocks in the ravines, then the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you. Surely then you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God. You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows. What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways. When men are brought low and you say, 'Lift them up!' then he will save the downcast. He will deliver even one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands.*

Devotional:

The story of Job. A man who was faithful to God. However, Job is a man who went through the most troubling times. He lost everything: his family, his land, his health…and yet still remained faithful to the Lord. Something that we fear is becoming enslaved to anything. Instead of submitting to anyone, especially the Lord, we would rather do things our own way. It would be easy to assume that we struggle more when we do things on our own, Foster reminds us that it is in our submission to God that we have found freedom. Job could have become enslaved by sorrow or guilt and turned away from God. Instead, he stayed faithful and in the end, though his pain was great, Job found comfort and rest in the Lord. While you reflect on submission to those around you and to God, hold your rock and recognize the weight of significance of this discipline.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I pray that you help me on the path of faithfulness. Give me faith when I am faithless, give me strength when I am broken and give me rest when I am weary. Remind me that you are the healer, restorer and shelter I need. Help me to humbly accept the gifts that you have bestowed upon me that I might have a place with You.
Amen*

Day 12: To Receive

Scripture: John 13:3-8

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”*

Devotional:

Many times it seems as though humility and pride becomes intertwined when we do not recognize it. Looking at this passage between Peter and Jesus we can see the struggle between this humility and pride. Peter does not want Jesus stooping to the level of disgrace of washing his feet. On the one hand we can see Peter trying to show Jesus how highly he thought of him. Peter, humbling himself to the point where he doesn’t believe he is worthy enough of Jesus to have Jesus wash his feet. However, there is evidence on the other hand that Peter’s pride is shown to him by Jesus. There are many times when we feel ashamed to accept a gift given to us. We forget that not accepting that gift is like saying we do not appreciate what is being offered to us. Peter not accepting Jesus gift of washing his feet was not accepting Jesus. Practice the act of accepting service from others today.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I am not good at accepting the gifts you have provided. I want a place with you. Help me recognize service from others as a gift from you.
Amen*

Day 13: Service

Scripture: John 13:9-17

*Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.” When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

Devotional:

 The notion of “pay it forward” has swept the world. We hear it on the radio of people who pay for the Starbucks order of the people behind them and the trend continues. However, showing people Jesus does not seem to be the popular trend. Getting down to the nitty gritty with others and showing them an intimate love and compassion (such as washing someone else’s feet) is not easy. But, Jesus calls us to do just that. No one is greater than anyone else. If our Lord and Savior can wash our feet, the least we can do is wash the feet of those around us.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. How do I show others your love today? Show me what I might do to represent you and serve others. Even if it is something that I do not want to do, give me the guidance to honor you and bless them.
Amen*

Day 14: Rest

Devotional:

 I hope you have been continuing you memory passage from last week. Spend time today reciting it. Remember the significance of this passage. Use it in your times of difficulty. This passage you are about to read might seem familiar. Take time to see what you saw last week on your day of rest. See something new. What is God trying to share with you now?

Scripture: Luke 5:12-16

*While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him. Then Jesus ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Help me to see something new every time I read your word. Aid me in building upon your foundation. With my rock, let me recognize your solidness compared to this shaky world. Help me to branch out of my comfort zone to serve and be served. Prepare me to go out.
Amen*

Week 3:

One Body

As you enter into this final week, think back to your first day. See how far the Lord has brought you. Do not hesitate to continue to go back to your home base and to hold on to your rock as a reminder of the strong foundation of God. These things are what will propel you forward to reach out to those around you, to show them God through you. All these things prepare you to dive into community. Take time this week to recognize how you have been formed over the last few weeks brings unique life and gifting to this body of believers.

Day 15: This I Confess

Scripture: James 5:15b-16

*And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

Devotional:

 Possibly one of the scariest things is to confess to someone you were wrong. As much as it should scare us to confess it to God, it is something that we can keep in private. However, confessing our sins to one another, especially if we sinned against that person…there is a lot more risk connected to that. The beautiful thing is about community of God is that they are able to provide freedom and forgiveness. It is true that no one can take the place of Jesus Christ who has already died on the cross and took upon our sins that we could be forgiven. But now it is now our part to acknowledge that we are fallen and confess to God and our community so that we may correct (to the best of our ability) our mistakes. This community of believers is there to help us! So let them.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. It is terrifying to confess my struggles with others. I fear judgement. I fear failure. I ask that you calm my heart so that I can confess to my brothers and sisters in You so that I might be healed and continue to grow in You. As I carry my rock that reminds me of You as my solid foundation, give me courage.*

*Amen.*

Day 16: Two or More

Scripture: Matthew 18:20

*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*

Devotional:

 This passage in Matthew follows the confrontation of brother believer and how to correctly address that brother. It goes from confronting him/her, if that doesn’t work, you take further steps. Eventually we are led to a community who is gathered, making decisions as a body selflessly…God is with them. It is amazing how easily we can leave God out of the equation. We must be on our toes that just because we gather, we need to invite God to be a part of our community. It is a dangerous line to tread if we take upon a community that is not ours, but Gods.

 Therefore, brothers and sisters, remember that we have been blessed with a group of people who have been brought together by one thing and one thing only: our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This time can be worship or even fellowship. But, come before one another in humility to worship our God and King. Take time to invite the Spirit in and let the Spirit move. In that, there is freedom, forgiveness, fulfillment and redemption.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I am amazed what you can do in my life, let alone what you can do when many gather in Your name. God, bless our time together that we might learn from one another, grow together in fellowship and strengthen these relationships. I praise You for all You have brought to this place.*

*Amen.*

Day 17: More Than Music

Scripture: Psalm 150

*Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
    praise him in his mighty heavens!**Praise him for his mighty deeds;
    praise him according to his excellent greatness!*

*Praise him with trumpet sound;
    praise him with lute and harp!
Praise him with tambourine and dance;
    praise him with strings and pipe!
Praise him with sounding cymbals;
    praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!*

Devotional:

 So many are brought up with the stigma that worship equals song. It is a shock to some that worship could be as simple as breathing. God gave you this breath! How amazing and wonderful is that?! Without this breath you would cease to exist. What an amazing Father for providing this second to the next!

 There is so much beautiful freedom in worship. Please, do not limit yourself to worshiping God in the same way every time. Music is a wonderful expression of faith. To sing to God, praising His name with your lips and voice. To close your eyes and raise your hands in submission to God. It’s a beautiful sight.

 What about playing the instrument? Have you ever stopped to watch those who are playing the instruments leading worship? Maybe stopping and watching the drummer whose eyes are streaming with tears and she hits the beat of the music, with every stroke feeling the presence of the Spirit more clearly than the last. What about the painter who in pure silence create an amazing scene and presenting it at Jesus’ feet in reverence and thankfulness for the gift of Life? The dancer who can’t stand still when the thought of his God and King makes him leap for joy? Allow yourself to express worship to God in anyway God leads you and celebrate the diversity among this community to worship God.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Open my eyes that I may see more ways than just music to worship You. Allow me to express my love for You in more ways. Help me to be receptive to others forms of worship. I want to learn to worship You with others in a unique way. Show me something new.*

*Amen.*

Day 18: Step by Step

Scripture: James 5:13-15a; 5:19-20

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up…*

*…My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

Devotional:

 Along with the confession of sins and overall vulnerability, it is difficult to admit that we all need guidance. Even pastors need pastors. Mentors need mentors. It is an ongoing cycle. How wonderful that the Lord has provided a community for all of us to help guide one another.

 Kyndall Rae Rothaus[[5]](#footnote-5), a Pastor in Texas addressed George W. Truett Theological Seminary in the fall of 2013. She shared that during her time as a Pastor of a church in San Antonio she went through her own heartbreak and suffering. It was then she saw the congregation she was ministering to ministering to her.

Please, dear brothers, dear sisters, take this to know that whatever position you are in, the ones that have been placed in your community are there to help guide you back to the Savior. Allow others to help you, to love you, to minister to you.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I recognize that I get lost and I am in need of guidance. Help me to accept help from others. Give those put in leadership wisdom to lead. I pray that I can receive as well as give Your guidance to this community.*

*Amen*

Day 19: Out in the Open

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 20-26

*As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.**The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”**On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,**and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,**that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.****26****If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*

Devotional:

University Baptist Church of Waco, Texas spent their Christ the King Sunday the week before the start of Advent in 2015 in a unique way. Instead of Pastor Josh preaching a normal sermon filled with illustrations, subtle jokes and scriptural references and commentaries…three congregants took the stage one at a time. Their stories were not ones of their time in seminary or biblical training…but of sorrow, of fear, of hurt and pain. A man shared that his daughter was diagnosed with type one diabetes, a woman shared that her foster son might be taken away from her once his biological mother is capable of raising him, and another woman shared about her mother dying before her 18th birthday. These stories, though very different in content, all had one thing in common. They all confessed that regardless of their suffering, they acknowledge Christ is King.

 Some may fear sharing their suffering with one another because they don’t want to bring others down. They fear their response. They fear being ostracized for not having the picture perfect “Christian” life. However, for the congregation of University Baptist Church[[6]](#footnote-6), unification came from that service. The transparency of these three brave congregants being faithful in confessing their pain brought a sense of calling of the congregation to surround them, love them in the name of God. It also sparked others to reach out in the same way. I challenge you, remember your rock from your first week. Hold it as you share your life with another today. Allowed yourself to be cared for by your brothers and sisters. Allow God to work through others to love you and care for you.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Thank you for giving me a community that I can be vulnerable in. I ask that I can be a person to mourn with those who mourn and laugh with those who laugh. Give me words to encourage and love.*

*Amen.*

Day 20: Time to Celebrate

Scripture: Luke 2:13-20

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*

*“Glory to God in the highest,
    and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

*When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

Devotional:

 What better way to express celebration than that of our Savior’s birth. Imagine what it must have been like witnessing a choir of angels revealing themselves among the stars, shining brilliantly and brightly proclaiming the Christ child is here. A small baby whom draws the highest praise that angels gather and share this news with mere mortals. Shepherds, leaving their flocks to witness the birth of a King. See the confusion, the chaos…oh but what wonderful chaos it was.

Is it not in the chaos and confusion of life that we wander upon the most brilliant of sights? Is it not in our unexpected moments that God reveals something so profound to us that we are at a loss of what to do? How to express gratitude? That we can’t help but to dance, shout and sing His praise, leaving all things we thought mattered before behind us?

Take time to celebrate the coming of our King. Always make time to stop in the midst of perceived insanity that is life to celebrate this Gift.

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Let us all come together in a celebration of who You are, what You have done for us and Your unconditional and eternal love. I pray that I can take this celebration with me all the days of my life.*

*Amen*

Day 21: Rest

Devotional:

 I urge you brothers and sisters, continue this journey as you go your separate ways. It is not the end, but the beginning of a new chapter. Continue to implement these disciplines in your life and help guide those around you. Take what you have gained from being in this place and spread it among the nations as God asks of you. Be faithful, be humble and allow God to continue work through you.

Scripture: Philippians 1:3-11

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.**It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,**so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

Prayer:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I have come to the end of this journey by your grace. I ask that I cherish this time, always remember what I experienced in You and continue to put these disciplines into practice. Help me as I depart from this place and guide me for the rest of these days.*

*Amen.*

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The Monastery of Christ in the Desert

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