



**JOHN  
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6*

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in [Matthew 28:19-20](#) to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services**, **Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

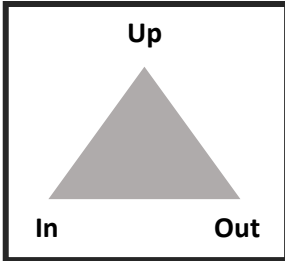
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO JOHN

John wanted his readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son. That is why he wrote his Gospel. The books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the synoptic Gospels, simply meaning 'similar'. John is a stand-alone Gospel. The synoptic Gospels recorded many miracles, but John chose to record only seven. He called them "signs"; they were the miracles which gave evidence that Jesus is truly the Messiah.

John emphasised that Jesus was human, recording that Jesus was tired (John 4:6), thirsty (John 19:28), and needed food (John 4:31). Jesus was broken and He wept when His friend Lazarus died (John 11:35). On another occasion, Jesus became angry (John 2:15). Many people in John's day didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God. John knew that Jesus was a real man, yet He was, and is, also God's Son. John wrote his Gospel to prove this.

I hope that as you study this with me you will be able to recall some proofs in your own life that make Jesus your Saviour and Lord. Maybe think about this: if you were writing to others about Jesus, what would you write? John's unique perspective is what makes his Gospel a stand-alone in its own right. I love this book!

So, let's get going. You'll need your Bible (obviously), journal, pen, plenty of solitude, and oh yes ... your wee brew!

Love and prayers,  
Phil

**Live**

I love how John begins this incredible Gospel, *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”* I could add one word, ‘BOOM!’ What John does here is simply profound. While Matthew and Luke trace their accounts of Jesus back to Joseph and Mary, then to the patriarchs, John traces Jesus all the way back to before God created anything. He does this to show us that the Son of God existed before even creation existed. The Son of God had been present from all eternity going back.

John opens his Gospel with the opening words of Genesis. Not only was the Word the agent of creation but He is also the wisdom of God. When we think about God’s wisdom we must think at least in part of the Holy Scriptures. The Word, Jesus Christ, can and must be understood as God’s words of wisdom in the Bible, the Word of God. The Word is God’s ultimate self-expression. When God desired to speak to man, He spoke in the Old Testament through the prophets who received the Word. In the time of the New Testament, God’s self-expression came to us as an incarnate person. This wisdom of God manifested in His Word is none other than Jesus Christ.

For all eternity going backward and for all eternity moving forward, the Son of God has always been with God and has always been God. So, we see the doctrine of the Trinity. As a boy, I was taught by old scholars that the doctrine of the Trinity can be summarised in seven statements: (1) There is only one God. (2) The Father is God. (3) The Son is God. (4) The Holy Spirit is God. (5) The Father is not the Son. (6) The Son is not the Holy Spirit. (7) The Holy Spirit is not the Father. God exists in three persons but remains one God.

**Pray**

Father, the older I get, the more I come to appreciate the diversity of voices You have included in the Scriptures. There’s no disappointment or delight we will experience in life that is not reflected in the Bible. Today I praise You for the Gospel of John that reminds me of Jesus the Messiah! In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

At the beginning of today's chapter, we find Jesus and His disciples at a wedding in Cana. We also find that Jesus' mother is present at the celebration. It is no accident that this wedding took place in a small, out of the way village. It was just like Jesus to select an insignificant place to perform His first sign. Jesus was not drawn to big and flashy but to the small and lowly. It's also no accident that Cana was the hometown of Nathaniel, whom we met at the close of chapter 1. This small village would serve as the place of Jesus' first amazing sign two days after meeting Nathaniel. One important application for us today is that we must anticipate Jesus' promises coming to pass quickly. It has only been two days, this being the third, since Jesus told Nathaniel of the amazing things he would see as he follows Christ.

Wedding celebrations in those times were very elaborate, often lasting for an entire week. Needless to say, the guests would drink a lot of wine. When they ran out at this celebration, Mary came to Jesus. It would be an embarrassment to the host to run out of wine before the end of the celebration. Mary understood who Jesus was, yet Jesus answered, "*My hour has not yet come.*" Two points can be gleaned from this. First, God works His plans according to His schedule, not ours. Second, Jesus was relating the fact that it was not yet time for Him to reveal His glory. The wine running out was symbolic of the barrenness of Judaism during these days. The people were spiritually dead and had not heard from God for around 400 dry years. When Mary tells Jesus that the wine has run out, she does so in a way to not cause a big scene, that would demean those hosting the wedding celebration. Jesus gently reminds His mother that His time is not yet. It's too early. Jesus still has much work and ministry to accomplish before He gives His life. His work would start right away. He would leave here and immediately cleanse the temple!

### Pray

Father, as I see today how Jesus begins His earthly ministry, I can only proclaim that I'm delighted to be part of His finished work. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

I love this story of Nicodemus who, even though he was in a position of power and could have sent someone else to find out about Jesus, came himself. That was a smart move that would radically change his life. God's love for the world has been manifested through the coming and the cross of Jesus Christ. This is the way God loved the world and it is the only way anyone can enjoy the love of God. It is both foolish and dangerous to believe in a God of love without submitting to the Son of His love, Jesus Christ. How often I hear it said, "Well, I believe in a God of love..." Then they go on to say that such a God would never condemn anyone to hell. Our text tells us just the opposite. The God of love who sent Jesus Christ to save the world from sin is the God who will send Him a second time to judge the world for sin. Those who have looked up to Him for salvation look up, waiting for His return. Those who have rejected Him fail to grasp the truth that when He returns, He will come as their judge. What a terrifying thought! What a blessed salvation! How can I proclaim this today? And to whom?

We bump into the fiery evangelist John the Baptist for the first time in today's chapter. If my dad were alive, he'd say, "He's some boy" and he'd be right. John was the forerunner chosen for such a time as this. I love him! Let's thank God for sending us a Saviour who shattered false ideologies by demonstrating what God is really like and showing us the way to God's heart. I am forever grateful to Him for going in search of this one lost sheep. His eyes never tire of looking into the darkest of places to passionately seek and generously satisfy souls who thirst for true love. We stand amazed at the reality of the Creator of the universe who would lovingly long for our companionship. Such wonder and beauty!

**Pray**

Father, thank You for this passage which stands out in all the Bible, revealing a God who gave His only Son. I want to respond to the love You extended to me first. It would be my great pleasure to keep Your company today and satisfy the longing of Your heart. I love You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

What an amazing example of the grace of God manifested toward sinners. And what an encouragement! Chapter 4 prepares us for the great harvest of Gentile sinners who are soon to be saved as a result of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the rejection of Him as Messiah by the Jews. What an amazing thing that Jesus found it necessary to pass through Samaria. Jesus has been in Judea ministering with His disciples and it was time to return to His native Galilee. There were three routes between Galilee and Jerusalem: along the coast, along the Jordan valley, or along the central ridge road that wound north through the passes in the mountains. The last route was the fastest and most direct, but it required travelling through Samaria. Our text says that Jesus *“had to”* or *“must needs”* take this route, surely because Jesus had a divine appointment with a woman at Jacob's well outside of Sychar. These Samaritans would not come to Jesus, but Jesus would come to them.

There is sometimes an expectation that unbelievers should come to us, but it is a presumption on our part, and a bad one. *“Go”* is an important word in the Great Commission and Jesus has set the example for us. If the church is saying, *“Come”* to unbelievers, let us remember that our Lord says, *“Go”* to the church. The first thing the Samaritan woman does is *“Go”* to those who are lost in her hometown. It begs us to ask that all important question, to whom can we *“Go”* today? Let's thank God for relentlessly pursuing us with His love and making a way for us to find Him through the life of His Son. Let's respond to His love-driven seeking today and set ourselves upon a steadfast pursuit of God's heart. As we read of Jesus' pursuit of this immoral woman, we see Him as the source of both pleasure and purpose – dreams are realised through hearts set aflame. Truly, Jesus is the fountain of every good thing.

**Pray**

Father, thank You for releasing me into my destiny as I draw near to know the depths of Your heart. May Your goodness continually lead me to discover the amazing adventures, exquisite joys, and profound fulfilment that lie within the pleasure of Your company. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Healing pools and shrines were common in the Middle East during biblical times. Some were mineral or hot springs with edifices built around them, others were shrines to a god like the Greek god, Asclepius. These were very popular and culturally important to the Greeks and Hebrews; people with limited medical help could use them for getting well or ritual purification. The point here is not that Jesus heals. He certainly *can* heal, but more importantly, Jesus is greater than the gods and the cultures, greater than our fears and weakness, greater than our sin and pride. He is greater than what people back then thought was important, like healing shrines, and what we think is important today, like what hurts us. Jesus takes us beyond our hurts and fears and truly liberates us. What could you be putting more trust in than in Jesus today?

I'm increasingly grateful for all the reasons God sent Jesus into the world. When we look in the mirror of the Word, we can be thankful that Jesus came to set us free from our imprisonment to sin and death and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. When we look at places like Uganda and India, we can be so thankful that Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, not just good news concerning spiritual poverty, but also good news of a kingdom which provides food for the hungry, clean water for the thirsty, shelter for the homeless, advocacy for the marginalised, a family for the orphan. When we look at systemic evil in the world, like human trafficking or the pornography industry, we can be thankful that He also comes to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. No one is a greater champion of justice than the Lord Jesus. One Day, all the pillaging weeds of unrighteousness will be replaced with mighty oaks of righteousness, "*a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendour*", according to Isaiah 61:3. What a wonderful Saviour.

**Pray**

Father, no one was broken in heart and body like Jesus. No one was crushed in spirit like Him. And He did it all for me. In the mystery and in this moment, I praise You that You comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve. You're a healing, amazing God. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Apart from the resurrection, this is the one miracle that is recorded in all four Gospels. I wonder why this story was singled out. In this account, we see that the reason for the multitude's presence was the attraction of "signs" that Jesus wrought. John records Philip's perplexity over the feeding of the great crowd and his little piece of mental arithmetic which showed the impossibility of a solution coming out of the disciples' own resources. The disciples were filled with despair but Andrew looked beyond this and saw the possibilities. Andrew brings the boy with the gifts to Jesus, and Jesus does the rest.

There is a humility about Andrew that I think made him different from many of the other disciples. He may not have had outstanding gifts like Peter or Judas or John or James. Many times he was left behind. But he used what he had, even though it was not much. He knew that little is much when God is in it. He was approachable, kind, thoughtful, sincere, bent on bringing others to Christ. Andrew distinguished himself among the disciples for these characteristics and so Philip trusted his judgment. They reckon Andrew may have been the counsellor or the listener of the group. Because of this, Philip brought the Greeks to him and then both Philip and Andrew went to Jesus. Tradition says that Andrew went into Asia Minor or Turkey and ministered there in remote areas until he died on a cross. He hung on that cross for two days, preaching all the while, trying to bring more people to Jesus.

You'd exhaust the wonder of this passage as soon as you'd memorise the names of every star launched into the heavens. No other king could show up to conquer humbly riding on the foal of a donkey. No other king could offer His life and death for the redemption and restoration of rebels and idolaters like us. Great ought to be our rejoicing, for He has come to us.

**Pray**

Father, by the riches of Your grace, continue to free me from waterless pits, broken cisterns and worthless idols. By the power of the gospel, enable me to live as a prisoner of hope and an agent of redemption until the Day You return to finish making all things new. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

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### Live

This chapter tells us about the Feast of Tabernacles that all male Jews needed to attend on an annual basis. There were seven feasts annually. The first was Passover. That was associated with the beginning of the grain harvest in the spring. The second feast was Pentecost, seven weeks later. Pentecost was a celebration at the end of the grain harvest. More festivals came in the autumn. Actually, four of Israel's feasts were associated with spring and three with autumn. The Feast of Tabernacles (also called 'Booths') was the third of the autumn festivals. It was associated with the autumn harvest, especially of trees and vines. During that time in the autumn they had to protect the crop, and so they established booths that were temporary shelters in the fields. Theologically, it also reminded them of the temporary shelters they lived in during their wilderness experience.

I love verse 37. In the final day of the festival, as the seven water processions are taking place and they're pouring gallons of water at the foot of the Temple, Jesus seizes a moment. He refers to this flooding as the infilling of His Holy Spirit and tells us to ask Him today and He'll fill us afresh. Just meditating on Jesus' statement fills our hearts with gratitude for the gospel of His grace. Our eternal joy and health are not in doubt; we will flourish and thrive forever. The gates of hell will not overcome the growth and forward movement of God's beloved people. However, until that Day when Jesus returns, so much can happen to us and among us because Satan hates the church, and, while we are an "in Christ" people, we are a "yet to be glorified" people. Really good churches can fall into really big messes and only the love of Jesus can win the day. I'm so glad that, according to Ephesians 3:20, God can do *"immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine"*, but I would settle today for what I can ask and imagine!

### Pray

Father, I ask You to restore my first-love relationship with Jesus. And I ask You for an outpouring of Your Holy Spirit that will enable me to grasp how wide, long, high, and deep is the love of Jesus. Humble me, soften me, and centre me on Jesus. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

One person after another drop their stones and quietly leave until finally, they were all gone. *“He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the centre of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘I do not condemn you either. Go and from now on sin no more.’”* Jesus is not minimising the sin or contradicting the Law. For Him to forgive her is not a cheap thing. If we grasp the nature of Jesus’ forgiveness, and this is implied, it means that He would have to pay for her sins Himself. Remember, one of the great tension points in Paul’s theology in Romans was that God must be just when He justifies sinners.

Think today of the sin and darkness in your own life and give thanks for Jesus, for He bore it all! He could delegate a legion of angels. He could send one of heaven’s mightiest warriors, Gabriel or Michael. He could use a number of means, any of which would be awesome. But Jesus, Himself, comes to us in the Scriptures, bringing the manna of daily mercies and fresh grace. Thank Him for His Word which is such a gift to us. It’s a treasure trove of life-giving perspective, a well-spring of well-timed refreshment. With all the spiritual warfare issues swirling about us and the accuser whispering lies, innuendos and accusations, with the tensions of life in the “now” and “not yet”, the eternal Son of God comes to us in and through His Word. He is none other than God in flesh and yet He humbled Himself, becoming like us so we could become like Him. This is the Saviour of the world who today stoops in the dirt and sketches on the ground. This is the One who will not snuff out a smouldering wick nor break a bending reed. What a Saviour!

**Pray**

Father, thank You for being Emmanuel, the God who is with me and for me. Thank You for never rolling Your eyes or resenting my weakness. Thank You for giving me grace, not giving me bootstraps to pull up. Thank You for a perfect salvation and a most perfect Saviour. I cast my care on You right now, knowing that You care for me. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

In verses 1 to 12, all the blind man knows is that this is a man called Jesus. Beginning in verse 13 and going to verse 23, he learns more about Him and realises that He is a prophet. In verses 24 to 34, he acknowledges that He is a man of God. Finally, at the end of the chapter, he comes to regard Him as the Son of Man and worships Him.

There is a progressive development in the titles of Jesus in this chapter. Listen to these titles that spill over each other, creating an outline for the study of this Gospel. He is called “rabbi” in verse 2. He is called “Jesus” in verse 3 and “the Light of the world” in verse 5. In verse 7, He is called “One who is sent from God” and He is “from God” in verse 16. He is “prophet” in verse 17, “Christ” in verse 22, “the Son of Man” in verse 35, and “Lord” in verse 38. And so, we see a developing theme, a definite grounding of who this Jesus is. John, in doing this, was forcing us as readers to discern where we stand in regard to this Jesus. If you go ahead to chapter 20, you will see John’s purpose statement, *“These signs I have selected are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.”*

Jesus was God in flesh, the God from whom all blessings *flow*, not trickle. May He by His grace continue to open our eyes to see every good thing that He has given us in and through Christ. Chapters like this one ought to intensify the aroma of our life for Jesus here on earth, knowing that, according to Hebrews 13:8, *“He is the same yesterday, today and forever.”*

Think today of these four responses in light of your own faith journey: the neighbours’ surprise and scepticism; the Pharisees’ unbelief; the parents’ timidity because of fear; and the healed man’s growing faith!

**Pray**

Father, I praise You that though believers in heaven are more joyful than we are, they aren’t more secure or loved. All my sins are forgiven and You’ve already declared me to be righteous in Your sight. All over again, make this doctrine my irrepressible delight. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

This passage continues at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles when Jesus had healed a blind man and upset the religious leaders. Here, in the middle of Jesus' retort to the Pharisees, is a passionate depiction of our God who cares and leads with character, and asks us to do the same. Pharisees considered shepherds to be unclean, unworthy to enter the Temple, or even to know God. Those rich and sophisticated Greeks and Romans detested shepherds and considered them vulgar. Ironically, Jesus uses this image to instruct and convict the pious frauds as well as to model to good leaders how they should be. Have you heard the voice of your Shepherd lately? Remember, Jesus says, *"My sheep hear My voice"* not just 'read My Word'!

Then we have this promise of abundant life. That, Jesus says, is why He came, that we might *"have life and have it more abundantly"*. What does this mean for us? And in what ways is our life less than abundant at present? Keep in mind that 'abundance' is not something we get; it's a way of living and being. The abundant life is not about quantity, wealth, success, approval, popularity, security or any of the other things we often think it is. How many times have you got what you wanted, been what others said you should be, done what was rewarded by society ... only to discover your own emptiness and sadness? You had it all but you were not abundant. No, the abundant life is touching and living the divine life. It's about quality preceding quantity. It's about meaning, integrity, purpose, creativity, relationship, and wholeness. The abundant life adds to the life of others and the world. It's life that leads to life, love that leads to love, joy that leads to joy, hope that leads to hope, kindness that leads to kindness, generosity that leads to generosity, beauty that leads to beauty, and gratitude that leads to gratitude.

### Pray

Father, because I'm called, redeemed and guaranteed a place at Your great banquet, because You've set Your affection upon me and find great delight in me, because I'll spend eternity celebrating the only love that was ever enough, the only love that would never let me go, I will praise You. Help me to hear my good Shepherd's voice afresh today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

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**RESPOND**

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### Live

I love this... *“Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.’”* Jesus has already offered His prayer and knew what He was going to do, but He says this publicly so that His disciples would hear it.

*“When He said these things, He cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’”* The word ‘kraugazo’ used here appears six times in John’s Gospel – for the crowds on Palm Sunday (12:13), and four times again from the crowd calling for Jesus’ crucifixion. It indicates a very loud noise. Jesus raised His voice with authority and power. Some people have quipped that if Jesus had not specified “Lazarus”, the whole graveyard would have emptied.

Then something surprising happens. It says, *“The man who had died came forth,”* but then it goes on to say, *“bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him and let him go.’”* Did you ever wonder how he got out of the tomb? They rolled the stone away, of course, but it says, *“he was bound hand and foot.”* How did he manage to get out?

Maybe like Martha, or me, you have asked Jesus for help and you’re sure He hasn’t heard. Remember, Jesus won’t always answer when or how we expect, but that doesn’t mean our requests are unheard. Jesus will find a way to use even the most painful situations to bring glory to God. Maybe you’re at a place where you feel confused. There are some lessons we may not fully understand, but we can still trust in Jesus. If we just keep faith and continue to walk with Jesus, He will take us to a place where all becomes clear.

### Pray

Father, it’s Your kindness that leads me to repentance. Your knock and Your voice in the gospel are persuasive and powerful, and by faith I rise to greet You. Come in and let me feast together with You this very day. You are the bread I need the most. You give the water that alone quenches my deep thirst. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

The contrast between Judas and Mary could not be greater. Proverbs 10:7 tells us, *“The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.”* *“A good name,”* it says in Ecclesiastes 7:1, *“is better than a good ointment.”* Mary had both, a good name and great ointment. We don’t name too many of our sons after Judas. We name our sons and daughters after people like Mary and David and Paul and Matthew and Mark.

Mary anointed His head and then it flowed over His garments. This extravagant work filled the entire house with its pleasant odour. The ointment had a smell like gladiola, a sweet scent, and it had a red colour. My suspicion is that Jesus smelled like this for the rest of the week, maybe even as He sweated in the garden and hung on the cross. It was the last smell He would sense.

Mary is showing her devotion to Jesus before it is too late. If you look at Mark 16:1, you will notice who went to prepare the body after Jesus’ death. Interestingly, Mary of Bethany was not among them. She had already anointed Him. She had showed her devotion to Jesus before it was too late. This is one of the lessons in this story that grips me. How we need to be people who show our devotion before it is too late.

May God give us all a fresh vision of the occupied throne of heaven. Let’s worship Him for His glory and be like Mary who gave her all to anoint Jesus, her timing perfect and her motive pure as snow. Just as the fragrance of the spikenard could only fill the room when it was broken and poured out, the sweet blessings of salvation could only fill the earth when Jesus was crucified and His blood poured out for our sins. What a Saviour we have!

**Pray**

Father, no one loves me more than You do. May Your peace rule afresh as the umpire in my heart – guarding, centring, and settling me. Protect me from the destructive lies of Satan, the fruitlessness of resentment, and the vanity of trying to be my own saviour. I pray with hunger and hope. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Chapters 13 to 17 tell us what Jesus shared with His disciples on the night before His death. This night and these instructions would change their lives forever. They are intriguing chapters, to say the least. Erwin Lutzer writes, “Many people live their lives crucified between two thieves; the regrets of yesterday and the anxieties of tomorrow.” Christ showed His followers on this night how to wipe out the regrets of yesterday. They were to confess their sins. This would put them in fellowship with Him and give them His power to handle life. Jesus also relieved them of their anxiety for the future by telling them that He was preparing a place for them and would return for them. This would make life more bearable because they knew it wouldn’t last forever and gave them something better to look forward to.

These verses tell us how to cope with the trouble in our lives. When we are depressed about life and overwhelmed, we need to get back in fellowship with Christ and put Him in control. Then we need to remember that the future holds permanent deliverance and we are only facing these trials for a little while.

Let’s remember the setting of this foot-washing night – a setting of service. Jesus takes on the job of the lowliest servant. Jesus, who deserves the highest title, instead grabs a towel to serve these men. What was going on in the disciples’ minds this night? What about in the mind of Judas? Maybe he was thinking that the show was already over with Jesus talking about His death. Maybe he thought it was time to check out and cash in. What we do know is that the enemy was all over this like a rash. And little did Judas know, but he was playing right into the eternal plans of the King of kings.

**Pray**

Father, to Your throne of grace I bring those who suffer from depression fuelled by demonic activity. Satan’s blaming and shaming voice is enough to generate the deepest forms of despair. Show me how to best care for those under the spell and sway of our defeated, fury-filled foe. My hope is in You, Father – for me and for my broken-hearted and dispirited friends. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

My earliest Sunday School memories are around this chapter. Over half a century later, I can still quote the first fourteen verses word perfect. There is something about memorising the Word of God from a young age. *“Let not your heart be troubled,”* Jesus said. *“You believe in God, believe also in Me...”*

We are to love one another as He loved us. God loves you more than you love yourself. He chooses better for you than you would choose for yourself. How many times have we shot ourselves in the foot? We sometimes, out of selfishness or pig-headedness or pride or revenge, do dumb things. God’s love for us is His steady intention for our highest good. His love for us is actually a better love than we have for ourselves. Jesus says He wants us to love one another as He has loved us and that love cannot be attained by human endeavour. That love requires divine enablement.

God who turned the chaos of an unformed world into the beauty of creation can do the same with all the chaos dancing around us and in us. Jesus recognises that our hearts are troubled. He can see it in us because He has experienced it within Himself. He also knows that our lives are not defined by, or limited to, what is troubling. What if not letting our hearts be troubled begins with looking into our hearts and seeing and naming what troubles? That means facing ourselves, our lives, our world. That is the first and most difficult thing Jesus asks of us in today’s chapter. I don’t know about you, but sometimes I don’t want to see. I don’t want to name. It’s too difficult and too painful. It’s takes me too close to the edge of the abyss and a freefall into a collapsing life and a collapsing world.

**Pray**

Father, I love this verse: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6,7). Dear Lord Jesus, I’ve memorised this Scripture, taught it, preached it, and prayed it for many struggling friends. Today, however, I need to lay hold of it for myself. In Your strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This chapter can be summarised in two statements: ‘Abide in Me and experience My love’ (verses 1-8), and ‘Express that love’ (verses 9-17). If we understand and apply this passage correctly, it will turn our priorities upside-down. Most of us are preoccupied with our performance as Christians, rather than being occupied with the person of Christ. We are more interested in the results we achieve than simply abiding in Him. We want to appropriate His power but fail to appreciate His person. We frequently ignore the person of Christ to seek the product of our union with Him, putting the cart before the horse. Abiding is our concern; fruitfulness is God’s concern. The True Vine is the Author, Source, and Finisher of our faith. We should be seeking His fellowship and leaving the fruit to Him. Presence always precedes power. We want it the other way around but it’s impossible to have it that way.

The only requirement for us is to live a branch life. The branch doesn’t produce fruit (that comes from the vine); the branch only *bears* the fruit and only in the season required. I sometimes tell leaders who are burning themselves out that everything is seasonal and you can’t expect to be running at a hundred miles an hour every day. Just be a branch, stay put, wait for the fruit to come, and bear it with honour. The fruit on the branch will be the outward expression of the inward nature of the tree. That’s all the true Vinedresser requires.

We may lift our hands in awe and gratitude for the way He loves us. We may shake our fists at heaven like a pouting, demanding child. We may even wring our hands in anxious unbelief, like a helpless orphan. But we live and we will die secure in *His* hands and written upon His heart.

**Pray**

Father, from beginning to end, salvation is of the Lord. I want to be enthralled with Your beauty, undone by Your goodness, overwhelmed with Your kindness, awestruck by the riches of Your grace, humbled by Your faithfulness, astounded at Your patience and forbearance, and evermore convinced of Your ever-present love. Abiding in YOU; this is what I want more than anything else. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Wouldn't it be sad to go through life and then realise you had squandered your existence and that there would be nothing but dust and ashes in the end? All of us have been created by God with a desire to accomplish something that is meaningful and will endure. I see this in my own life and in my own desire. It is wise for us to be in touch with that deep longing because it is a longing from God. He tells us this: if you do not use your time well and wisely, if you pursue the agenda of the world, rather than the agenda of the Word, you will miss out completely. If you go for second things first, you will not only miss the first things, but you will miss the joy of the second things as well. This is what Jesus is teaching His disciples in today's chapter.

Jesus promises the presence of the Holy Spirit, coming alongside like a rescue vessel to comfort and to convict. The promise is that He will be with us in every season and step of our sojourn. I have always wondered about Jesus' little line, *"It is for your good that I am going away."* He explains why this is in His next statement, *"Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you."* The only thing that could be better than Jesus here in flesh is for Him to be here in *all* flesh. That's so powerful and revealing of the Father's heart for us today. Stunning stuff.

Some of us are walking through different types of transition and may be feeling vulnerable, fearful, and excited all at the same time. May we keep looking up into the Father's face of grace and His heart of mercy. But don't forget to also look and draw from within. For by His Spirit, Christ is in you – the hope of glory.

**Pray**

Father, help us to walk with our friends whatever the season of life, treasuring the moments, sharing our weaknesses, and growing in grace. Thank You for never leaving us. Thank You for the rest we already have in the gospel, and for the consummate rest we will enjoy when You return and take us to be forever with You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

We often refer to, *“Our Father who is in heaven”* as the Lord’s prayer. Actually, this was Jesus teaching His disciples a pattern for prayer; in this chapter, we have the real Lord’s prayer. It is known as the high priestly prayer of Jesus. This is an opportunity for us to listen in to the intercommunication of two members of the divine Trinity, to enter into the holy of holies. There is a deep and profound understanding given in this chapter.

Jesus has been working with and preparing His disciples in chapters 13-16, and this represents His last message to them before He will depart. Jesus made it very clear that He was going away and they could not follow Him now but they would follow Him later. He needed to give them the resources so that when He was no longer with them in His physical manifestation, He would still be with them through the Holy Spirit. This inter-relationship, where the Spirit is with them, and later will be in them, shows that He was not leaving them as orphans.

Furthermore, Jesus offers His disciples three key things. He wants to give them His joy so that their joy would be full. He wants them to become lovers of one another, *“Even as I have loved you”*. And He says, *“Peace I give you,”* not the kind of peace that the world offers, but a peace that will really last. These are the first three fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, and peace. How are you in these three areas today? God knows our dignity and our depravity; He knows our fears and struggles with sin. But this we know, our standing in Christ is made secure by faith and trust in Him. And, at this very moment, Jesus is interceding for us, perfectly tuned into our needs and in total harmony with God’s will to make us one with Him. Now, that is pretty cool!

**Pray**

Father, I cannot measure the peace that knowing You brings. I surrender right now as I know You are at work for my good in all things, including in this season. You have called me to life in Christ, and You will complete Your purpose in me. Thank You eternally. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

We are up to chapter 18, moving now from the private ministry of Jesus with His disciples into the public drama of redemption. We have just had five chapters that slowed the clock to one day. What we see in this chapter is that man will do his very worst and God will respond with His very best. We see a real and beautiful contrast. We see first of all, in the garden, obedience.

*“When Jesus spoke these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.”* It tells us in Luke 22 that Jesus often went to this garden with His disciples not only to rest, but to also meditate, to pray. The fact is that during this particular time of Passover, Jerusalem would be filled with pilgrims. Jesus would want to go to a private place where He could get away from the press of the multitudes. This is an important lesson for all of us, isn't it? We all need places of solitude and silence in our lives, otherwise we only live on the surface of life and we lose the real sense of what life is about. It is good to have rhythms of activity and engagement, but also rest and reflection. Think out your strategy for solitude and silence today.

As I read this chapter, I feel somewhat convicted around my times of solitude and silence. Busyness and hurry need to be eliminated from our lives and schedules. Maybe today you need to repent before it gets any worse – not by beating yourself up and grovelling, but by preaching the gospel to your own heart. Remember that we have a Father who is constantly running to us in His Word, inviting us, imploring us, pleading with us to get on the dance floor of His grace, to enjoy the music of reconciliation, to sing the songs of redemption, to make merry to the glory of God.

### Pray

Father, I acknowledge and repent of my busyness, my whining, my envy, and my complaining. And today I choose to seek You above everything else. I will spend time with You. Thank You for Your patience and kindness. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

As you know, the death of Jesus is a major theme in John's Gospel. You can read the other synoptic gospel references to it in Matthew 27, Mark 15, and Luke 23. Each writer brings their own little personality to the event which changed the world and defined history and eternity, the event which distinguished A.D. from B.C. and determined our eternal destiny. The death of Jesus is pictured as the slaying of a lamb in John chapter 1, the destroying of the temple in chapter 2, the lifting up of a serpent in chapter 3, a shepherd laying down his life for his sheep in chapter 10, and the planting of seed in the ground in chapter 12.

Jesus' death was not an accident, nor was it the plan of the enemy (who was only but a tool to implement it). It was a Divine appointment planned before the foundation of the world. We have to keep this in mind: His death was voluntary; He willingly dismissed His spirit. Again, I refer you back to John 10 and a very important statement. Jesus says in verses 17 to 18, *"For this reason the Father loves Me because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."* It was a voluntary submission to His Father and the sovereign plan of the Divine Godhead, a lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

Let's give thanks today for His eternal goodness, His matchless grace and His boundless love. This is an inexpressible gift which is beyond our ability to comprehend but for which we should thank Him continually. This is the imperishable and infinite gift of forgiveness, a price paid through the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We leave the Saviour at the end of the chapter in a borrowed tomb!

### Pray

Father, I thank You for the freedom and forgiveness of sins and for inviting me to come into an intimate relationship with Jesus. I pray that I might press on to a heart of gratitude and of discipleship, that I might become conformed to the image of Your Son. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Yesterday, at the end of chapter 19, we left the Saviour of the world dead and laid in a borrowed tomb after being brutally murdered. I love how chapter 20 opens with the word “*Now*”. All has changed and is about to be revealed. The Saviour of the world has risen from the dead. He has burst asunder the bands of death and is about to be revealed as the risen Lord. The Christian faith stands and falls on the resurrection. It is the central theme throughout the apostolic preaching of the gospel in the book of Acts. The resurrected Christ is a foundational doctrine and proves that Christ is the Son of God. Acts 2, Peter’s great sermon on the day of Pentecost, illustrates this very thing. In verses 32-36, it reads, “*This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.*” Remember, Peter is speaking this in Jerusalem, the city where this resurrection took place. If it was in fact a false account, there would be too many witnesses who could controvert the evidence. They could have dispelled this illusion that Christ was raised and eliminate the whole threat of Christianity by producing the body of Christ.

I am so glad my Jesus is alive today, and this is what Paul was hitting at in his first letter to the church at Corinth. Chapter 15, verse 14: “*If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.*” Jesus died to settle all and rose again to prove that all was settled. It seems to me that the stone wasn’t rolled away to let Him out, but rather to let others in to see that He was out! One day, death shall be no more. Death in all of its expressions will be destroyed because Jesus smashed the power of death, overcoming it as a forerunner for us all. We have much to be full of praise for!

**Pray**

Father, only because You took the ultimate forsakenness of the cross, died, and rose again can I have the absolute assurance that nothing can separate me from Your love, absolutely nothing. Today, may the gospel be more beautiful and believable than ever. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

We are completing our devotional of the Gospel of John today. There is such an extraordinary truth in this Gospel that it is hard to do it justice by writing a devotional on it. Keep in mind that this chapter occurs during the forty days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Jesus appeared and disappeared at will. The disciples never knew when He would appear, so they had to stay alert. An interesting parallel with us, isn't it? We never know when Jesus will be coming, so we need to be alert.

What if Jesus were to say to you today, "Do you love Me more than all of these?" That's what His challenge was to Peter. I love that the Son of God would stop on His way to glory with the Father to meet a bunch of workmen on a shore and cook them some breakfast. You have got to love the practicality of Jesus' ministry, even after His resurrection.

Jesus asks a bewildered Peter three times about his love for Him. Finally, Peter utters these words, "*Lord, You know everything and You know that I love You.*" What but the gospel can explain the change in Peter's life? This was the same disciple who tried to prevent Jesus' arrest by cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant, the same disciple who fled into the night and denied Jesus three times out of fear. And here we have his reinstatement. I love this. What but the gospel can explain his movement from fear and frenzy to faith and freedom? And who but Jesus could bring this change, the One who reattached Malchus' ear (Luke 22:51), the One who could have dispatched more than twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53)? Though His kingdom is "*not of this world*", according to John 18:36, thank God His kingdom has broken into this world, and one day it will utterly transform it, according to Revelation 21-22. Because this is true, may the Lord free us from both naïve passivity and stupid aggression. I hope you've enjoyed this book!

## Pray

Father, when the claims of Your kingdom clash with the values of this world, show me what obeying You, not men, looks like. How do I submit to the authorities for Your sake while bowing my knee and heart to You alone as my King? Keep changing me the way You changed Peter. In Jesus' name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

