

# Moments with Jesus

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**Contents**

1<sup>st</sup> Day ..... 7  
     Morning ..... 8  
     Noon ..... 14  
     Evening..... 20  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Day ..... 25  
     Morning ..... 26  
     Noon ..... 31  
     Evening..... 38  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Day ..... 43  
     Morning ..... 44  
     Noon ..... 50  
     Evening..... 57  
 4<sup>th</sup> Day ..... 63  
     Morning ..... 64  
     Noon ..... 70  
     Evening..... 77  
 5<sup>th</sup> Day ..... 84  
     Morning ..... 85  
     Noon ..... 93  
     Evening..... 99  
 6<sup>th</sup> Day ..... 106  
     Morning ..... 107  
     Noon ..... 113  
     Evening ..... 120

Jesus thought about you when He walked on this earth. You weren't born yet, but you were in His heart. He knew how much you would need Him. What would happen after He left this physical world? How would you feel the presence of His Holy Spirit? How would you recognize His voice?

Jesus wanted you to know His love with everlasting certainty. He thought about you – in all He said; in all He did. He wanted you to have no doubt *He is with you all the time*.

As you read these devotions, listen to the words of Jesus with your heart and spirit. Picture Him looking at you. He sees everything in your heart. He loves you forever. Listen, and that's exactly what He'll tell you, in ways you've never experienced. Listen to His voice, until you can hear it with every heartbeat.

Don't be afraid to ask Jesus questions. Expect His answer! Give this time to Him; trust Him to work deeply. Expect a greater awareness of His presence, His light shining in you.

You can follow the morning, noon and evening devotions in this book, or you can stretch them out – take as much time as you need; skip around if you want.

Let Jesus guide you through the questions. You don't have to answer all of them. He'll show you what's important for you right now. Keep a notebook or journal to write your answers, prayers and conversations with Jesus. He already knows how He will touch your life as you take His words into your heart.

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish...”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> John 10:27-28 NKJV

1<sup>ST</sup> DAY

## Morning

*“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.” (Matthew 7:24-27 NLT)*

I'll never forget it: the moment I realized my life's foundation was collapsing at the seams. I didn't see it coming. I thought everything was fine. *Hardly*.

Years of trauma brought me to a need for deep healing. At the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit, I asked God to show me – *through His eyes* – the foundation I had built. He showed me the sands and the storms were about to swallow me.

My life might have seemed on solid ground by the standards of this world. But it wasn't built deep in the foundation that makes God's Kingdom stand strong.

Through burning hot tears, I asked Him, "What did I do wrong?"

I looked up to find Jesus kneeling beside me. With His hand on my shoulder, He said, "The only thing you did wrong... is that *you* did."

His words were gentle, but they pierced my heart. I'm not the builder that Jesus is. I don't have His ability, His tools, His wisdom. I can't make things right. But He can.

I've known Jesus my whole life. I've listened to His words with my mind, but I never listened with my heart. I never let Him heal all the broken parts of me; never let Him dig deep in my life, and put His foundation in place of mine. It's almost as if I never knew Him at all as my Lord and Savior, until that moment Jesus Himself answered my cry.

The Scripture verse for this morning seems simple. *It is simple* – simple to overlook! We can try to build a solid foundation as Jesus commanded. We can listen with our mind. But unless we hear with our heart, and let Jesus touch our spirit by His words – *let Him **be** our entire foundation* – we'll miss it.

*Lord Jesus, thank You for teaching us so plainly and simply how to let You be our entire foundation. Thank You for gently correcting us when we try to build a foundation in our own strength, by our own wisdom.*

*Jesus, we ask that You come into our hearts and our lives, and reach into every area of weakness in our foundation. Build us up as only You can. Transform each foundation stone with Your presence and love, through Your Holy Spirit living in us.*

*Thank You for comforting us as we experience these changes. Let us rest in the freedom of knowing and trusting that You are the deep foundation of our lives. We love You, Jesus. Amen.*

## For Reflection

### 1

Have you asked Jesus to open your heart to see the truth of His words? Start with this morning's Scripture verse. Do you trust Him to be your only foundation? Talk with Him right now. Ask Him to help you feel His presence, and to help you trust Him with your whole heart. You can start with these words:

“Lord Jesus, I need You. I want to trust You with my whole life. I need You to help me build a stronger foundation, one that can only come from You. Jesus, I don't know where to start. I need You to help me. I need You in my life. I need You here with me right now.”

Keep talking with Jesus, and share with Him whatever you feel. You don't always need words; expressions of feelings often say more than words ever could.

2

Are you ready to let Jesus start showing you the places of weakness in the foundation of your life? How do you feel about doing this? Write your thoughts, hopes and fears. Share your heart with Jesus, right now. Listen for His response.

3

Ask Jesus to show you where your life foundation needs more of Him. Are you willing to let Him put a new foundation stone in place? Don't be afraid that He'll knock down your entire foundation. Just let Jesus replace one stone with Himself, and ask that He start right now, in the way He knows is best for you. Write down what He reveals to you.

4

Do you see areas in your life where Jesus has helped you build a solid foundation in Him? What are those areas? Describe how you see His strength there. How does that build your faith and confidence?

5

What would your life be like if Jesus were your *entire* foundation? Ask Him to guide you as you write your answer. Which area will you trust Him to work on next?

## NOON

*Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?” So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me.” (John 11:40-41 NLT)*

Imagine how He felt.

What was in Jesus' heart that day, as He stood before the tomb where His friend Lazarus lay dead?

Can you put yourself where He was?

Jesus felt as anyone would feel. Yes, He was God in the flesh. But He was also completely human. God created Him that way. Jesus was tormented by everything we feel in times of trial, and much more. We couldn't handle the depth of emotion He allowed Himself to feel. He did it so we would never have to.

John tells us of Jesus' response that day, as He met with the mourners and went to Lazarus' tomb: *Jesus wept*. And He was angry.<sup>2</sup> Can you blame Him? He already knew His Father had worked a miracle. He had faith that everyone was about to see Lazarus rise from the dead.

Nobody seemed to care about faith. They wanted to blame Jesus: "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"<sup>3</sup> Those words had to hurt, across a gulf of unbelief.

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<sup>2</sup> John 11:33-38 author paraphrase

<sup>3</sup> John 11:37 NLT

Jesus knew He was about to die for that same unbelief. He would bear the torment of the world, of death and hell, as He walked in faith to Calvary. He knew His Father would raise Him from the dead. He knew many wouldn't believe, even as they watched Him die for their unbelief.

In the midst of it, He thought about you.

Don't doubt that for a minute.

*Believe it.*

He stood there, weeping, fighting off anger, surrounded by those who expected nothing of God. The crowd jeered. Even Martha, with her strong faith... When Jesus asked that the tomb be opened, she warned Him that He'd smell death.

Across a gulf of unbelief, rocked by strong emotions, Jesus thought of you.

Then He acted by faith and compassion – for *you*. Across thousands of years, Jesus spoke to you: “*Expect to see the glory of God in your life*”<sup>4</sup> Then He showed you how to speak to God with confidence that your prayer is heard: “*Father, thank you for hearing me*”<sup>5</sup> ...even before you see the results. A prayer like that builds faith. Jesus knew that.

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<sup>4</sup> John 11:40 author paraphrase

<sup>5</sup> John 11:41 NLT

Jesus took upon Himself a world of pain and unbelief that day at Lazarus' tomb. It was a foreshadowing of what was to come at Calvary. He didn't do it just for Lazarus, or Martha, or Mary, or the crowd assembled that day.

*He did it for you.*

*Lord Jesus, thank You that Your faith is strong when ours is weak. Thank You for patiently teaching us how to grow in faith and expect God's glory in our lives. It's by faith in Your name we pray. Amen.*

## For Reflection

1

Take a few minutes to put yourself in Jesus' place, as He approached the tomb of His friend Lazarus. What emotions was Jesus probably feeling? What was He seeing and hearing? What might He have thought? Ask Him to guide you, and write what His Holy Spirit reveals to your heart.

2

What has God done recently to build your faith? Write about it. In what ways are you allowing Him to grow your faith each day? How about today?

3

Would you like to see the glory of God in your life? Do you expect to see it today? Why or why not? What can you do to strengthen your expectations?

4

What if you had been there that day at Lazarus' tomb? What might Jesus have said to you? Put yourself there, in front of Him. Let Him speak to you, and ask Him to help you write the words. Ask Him to reveal, in his words, the truth of His eternal love for you.

## Evening

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:16-17 NKJV)*

Sometimes it's hard to focus on God at the end of a long day. At other times, it's the easiest thing you can do. You're ready to get away from the stress of the world and think about better things. No matter what kind of day you've had, no matter how you feel tonight, let Jesus speak this Truth to you: *God loves you!* He loves you deeply, completely and forever.

What does "forever" mean? It's not easy to understand. We have no concept of forever. But somewhere deep in your heart, you know what it means. You know, because God created you to know. He is forever. His love is forever. He created in *you* the desire to be with Him forever.

God knew this world would get in the way, and try to keep your heart from seeking the depths of love it needs. So He sent Jesus into this world, to show you exactly what His forever love means. Jesus is the living expression of God's love:

Here for you  
Sacrificed for you  
Resurrected forever  
*Just for you.*

In Jesus, God's love walks, talks, teaches, heals, comforts. Everything God wants for you, He gave in His Son. He sent Jesus into the world, so you would be reborn with a heart that believes His eternal love is for *you*.

God's love is so deep. You haven't begun to experience it. You've walked along the edges and it feels incredible. But you want more, and you know you do.

Dive in!

You're not alone – Jesus is with you. He'll take you through the depths of the Father's love. You'll never want to leave!

You never have to, because His love lives in your heart. Right now. Forever.

Tonight as you ask Jesus to bring you into peaceful rest, ask Him to be with you, as you explore the depths of God's heart. He'll take you there! You'll awaken restored, ready to walk in God's eternal love.

*Father, thank You for Your eternal love for us. Thank You for loving us so much that You were willing to die, so that we might be restored in our relationship with You forever. Father, we ask You to continue revealing to us, through the Holy Spirit of Your Son, Jesus, the depths of Your love that has no end. In Jesus' loving name. Amen.*

## For Reflection

1

Do you believe God's love for you is forever? Ask Him to reveal and heal any places in your heart that keep you from believing His eternal love. Write down what He shows you. Ask Jesus to help you understand and grow in healing and love.

2

Before you go to sleep, re-read the three Scripture verses for today. Listen to Jesus' words. Look into His eyes as He speaks them to you. Write down what He is saying to you.

3

Ask Jesus to protect you as you sleep. Ask Him to keep your dreams in His hands, and to use your dreams to reveal His wisdom and His love to you. Keep a journal by your bed, and when you wake up, write down what Jesus showed you in your dreams. Ask Him for understanding... and wait for it.

2<sup>nd</sup> DAY

## Morning

*“If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it.  
But if you give up your life for my sake, you will  
save it.” (Matthew 16:25 NLT)*

This is not an easy Scripture to take to heart. It sounds like Jesus is asking us to give up our lives. Do you realize how many people are afraid to commit to following Jesus, because they don't think they can do what He'll ask? They're afraid if they become one with Him, they will lose all that they are. They ask: "How can I possibly save my life by giving it up for Him?"

Let Jesus help you with this.

Look at Him. Really listen as He says, "I want you to give up your life for Me."

How does that make you feel?

Be honest with Him. Be honest about your fears. Start by saying, "If I give up my life for You, Jesus, I'm afraid that..."

Don't hold back. Tell Him everything that comes into your heart. He already knows everything you feel. He knew it from the first time He spoke these words. That's why He said them – for *you*.

When you take these words into your heart, when you're honest with Him, Jesus can change your life. He can bring you into the glorious new life that He lives right now with our Father!

That's what He means when He tells you: *"If you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."*

It's not about walking away from your life, or giving up who you are. God created you uniquely. He gave you a family, friends, places you love, gifts and talents, a personality, a heart, deep emotions that make you unique and special to Him. He has no desire that you stop being you.

But He does desire that you walk, grow and live in the fullness of who He created you to be, with nothing of this world standing in the way, holding you back, dragging you down.

Most of us don't realize how much the world stops us from being our true selves. If we let Jesus remove all that this world does to hold us back, we would be amazed at the way His glory would surround us! We would be *exactly* what we desire to be – in ways more wonderful than we can imagine.

That's what Jesus wants for you: the intensity of life, the glory He feels. If you trust your Creator to finish what He started in you,<sup>6</sup> then letting go of your life and committing yourself to Jesus will be the easiest thing you ever do. And the most fulfilling.

*Lord Jesus, I want so much more for my life. I am so thankful You gave Your life for me, so I can live in the fullness of blessings our Father has for me. Teach me how to give up more of my life for You, so I can become more like You, and have more of Your life in me. Amen.*

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<sup>6</sup> Philippians 1:6

*For Reflection*

1

What scares you about giving up your life for Jesus? Have you talked with Him about it? Will you? Be honest with Him, speak from your heart, and write down all He tells you.

2

What scares you about trying to hang onto your life?

3

Re-read the Scripture verse again (Matthew 16:25). Read it several times, prayerfully. What new understandings does Jesus reveal to you about God? As revelations come to you, write them down.

4

Is there an area of your life that you're holding back from Jesus? What is it? Will you talk with Him about it? You can start with these words:

“Jesus, I long to give this part of myself to You, but I don't know how or where to start. Lord Jesus, You know the best way to make me more like You. Show me what to do. Let Your Holy Spirit speak to me and guide me, starting today. I trust You, Lord.”

## NOON

*Then [Jesus] turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”*

*(Luke 7:44-47 NKJV)*

What would it cost, right now, for you to worship Jesus the way you really want to? One moment of pure worship... what would that feel like? What price would you have to pay? *Would it be worth it?*

Maybe where you are at this moment, it would be easy to give Him all your worship. How about a time when it might not be?

Think of a place you might be, or a person you might be with, where you wouldn't feel free to worship Jesus the way you want. Not just constrained, or self-conscious. Think of a situation where true worship, from the depths of your heart, would cost you *everything*.

Could you do it?

In that moment, could you worship Jesus anyway? Could you pour your love on Him, despite everything?

What would it be like to worship Jesus with all the love in your heart... in front of someone who might lash out? What would pure worship be like if you knew it would bring devastation? Could you do it, knowing that in this world, it might cost you everything?

What if Jesus were standing by your side, in the flesh, to guide and protect you? Would that make it easier?

Now think of a time when it's costly even to worship Jesus silently. You're hurting so much; all you want is to be in His presence. But you can't even feel His presence. You don't know how to begin to worship. The very thought of worship hurts too much, because it reminds you that you're not where Jesus is.

What would it cost to worship Him anyway – to give Him *all* your worship, *all* that you are? Not because of anything He's done for you, but because of Who He is. What would it cost you?

What if Jesus were there in the flesh, beside you? What if He put His hands on your shoulders to comfort you? Would that make it easier?

The enemy wants to destroy your worship, to keep you feeling distant from God, feeling lost. Jesus knew that. As a broken woman risked everything just to worship at His feet, Jesus knew she was trampling over every landmine the enemy had set for her. *And for you.*

Jesus was there that day, in the flesh, to comfort her, to guide her as she risked everything to worship Him. And He thought about you too. He spoke words of love and comfort, of blessing and reassurance to *you* – words that would live in your heart, and help you feel His presence.

No matter what threatens you, no matter what disheartens you and keeps you from worshipping Him the way you want, Jesus knows your heart. He's here to guide and comfort you, in worship as in everything else. When worship is tough, He is here to lead you Himself.

Maybe you can't worship out loud or in public, or even in your home, for fear of your life. Jesus knows that, and He understands. The quiet worship you give Him in your heart is precious to Him.

Maybe it's painful to worship silently. You're drowning in life, and it's all you can do to form the words in your mind: *God help me!* Jesus knows what you're feeling. He knows you're reaching out to Him, and He knows what it costs you. Let Him take your hand. Let Him hold you until the storm passes.

Maybe you don't know how to worship Him at all. You've tried, but you wonder if He feels or hears anything you say or do.

Look to Jesus right now.

Tell Him you want to worship from your heart, but you don't know how.

Ask Him to help you feel the passion of true worship.

Just say, "Jesus, I want to be with You. I want to spend this moment with You alone."

Even if you don't feel like you mean it, that's okay. If you *want* to mean it, He will know. He will bless you for what you're feeling deep in your heart – *that is worship*.

*Lord Jesus, I want to worship You with all I've got. I don't care what it costs. You are worthy of everything that's in me. I long for one moment of pure worship, where it's just You and me, and the world disappears. Help me to find more of those moments every day. Jesus, I love You and I adore You. It's in Your name I pray. Amen.*

*For Reflection*

1

What are some situations where it might cost a person their life, physically or emotionally, to worship God the way they want to?

2

Describe the most precious worship experience you've had recently.

3

Read the Scripture verse again (Luke 7:44-47). Put yourself in the woman's place. What would it cost you to walk into the room, amid the angry words and the looks of condemnation, and anoint Jesus' feet with your tears and the best perfume? How would you be blessed in that moment? Put yourself there and write what you feel. Ask Jesus to speak to your heart.

4

Before you get back to your busy day, take a few minutes to worship God. Not with song and dance, or loud words. Just close your eyes, lift your hands in front of you, and silently worship Him. Let your heart speak love to Him. Just focus on Him. Adore Him. Lose yourself in Him.

## Evening

*Jesus said: "I tell you for certain that I am the gate for the sheep. Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them. I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture." (John 10:7 CEV)*

The Lord and Savior of all, who sits at the right hand of God in heaven, is concerned about you! He wants you to have rest. That's why He spoke these words – so you would look to Him for the rest you desperately need.

Are you resting enough in Him?

Think about the picture He described. He was talking to people who understood sheep herding. Probably you have no experience as a shepherd, but surely you can understand that the shepherd would do anything to protect his sheep. He would stay with them all night, to be sure no one tried to snatch them out of his hand.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus is your Shepherd. He is with you all night. All you have to do is ask, and He will sit with you... hold you in His arms... protect you... comfort you...

He'll use your dreams to teach you awesome things if you let Him. He'll show you new depths to your Father's love and wisdom.

And Jesus will make sure the rest you receive this night is peaceful and deep, and that it will restore you.

No matter what you faced today, no matter what you will face tomorrow, Jesus will make sure you have what you need, if you just rest in His love.

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<sup>7</sup> John 10:28

Rest in Jesus, and know that you belong to Him. He treasures you so much more than the greatest shepherd ever cared for his sheep. No one, nothing can take you from Him.

*Blessed Jesus, thank You for being my Shepherd, my Protector, my Defender, so I can rest in safety and peace. Thank You for restoring me while I sleep, so I can walk in joy and strength tomorrow, celebrating the work of Your Kingdom. I trust You, Lord, with everything. Help me to rest this night in You. Amen.*

*For Reflection*

1

What is your rest like? Describe how rest feels to you. What are some things that keep you from resting completely in Jesus' love? Ask Him to work with you on one area of difficulty – to help you give that area to Him, so you can have deeper rest.

2

Before you go to sleep, re-read the three Scripture verses for today. Listen to Jesus' words. Look into His eyes as He speaks them to you. Write down what He is saying to you.

3

Ask Jesus to protect you as you sleep. Ask Him to keep your dreams in His hands, and to use your dreams to reveal His wisdom and His love to you. Keep a journal by your bed, and when you wake up, write down what Jesus showed you in your dreams. Ask Him for understanding... and wait for it.

3<sup>rd</sup> Day

## Morning

*“You don’t have enough faith,” Jesus told them. “I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.” (Matthew 17:20 NLT)*

Read the Scripture verse above.

Read it again.

And again.

Read the words until you memorize them and can hear Jesus' voice clearly.

Then stop looking at the words and just listen. Let Jesus speak the words to you.

He's not speaking from a far-off place. He's right here.

And He's ready to grow your faith stronger than you've ever thought possible.

Faith like a mustard seed. What does He mean by that?

Let Him show you.

For starters, let Him reward you for the faith you are showing Him right now. There is incredible faith in your actions, as you ask Jesus to speak this Scripture verse to you. *Did you know that?*

“I know You're here, Lord Jesus. I want You to speak to my heart and my spirit. I want to hear Your words – *really hear them*. I want You to teach me Your ways. I want to be like You!”

That's what you're saying to Him. By acknowledging His presence as you study this verse, you are showing Jesus you have faith as a mustard seed. *Do you know how much you have touched His heart, by trusting Him this way?*

Maybe it doesn't seem like a lot to you. Maybe you don't feel that you have faith to move a mountain. Ah, but you do! Jesus says so!

The tiniest mustard seed holds in it everything needed to grow it into a mighty tree, one that will spread its branches to give shade and shelter and nourishment to many. The seed only has to trust its Creator for its incredible growth. It's as if God says to the tiny seed, "From you, I will grow a mighty tree. I have the power to make it happen." The seed knows it to be true, and lets God work.

When you show God the tiniest seed of faith in Him, He can do mighty things in your life, and He can do mighty works through you. You don't need to come to Him with an ocean depth of faith. *He will build your faith as you grow in Him.* Just come to Him with the belief that He is here, that He truly cares about you, that He wants to work in your life.

Reach out your hand to Jesus, right now. Show Him you have faith as a mustard seed! God will bless your faith to begin a mighty work in you.

*Jesus, my Savior, thank You for showing me how to grow in faith. Thank You that my faith as a mustard seed is enough to touch Your heart, and the heart of our Father. Lord Jesus, I ask that You take this faith I offer You, and grow it into a heart like Yours, so I can share Your love with others, that they too will find new life in You. It's in Your precious and holy name I pray. Amen.*

For Reflection

1

Describe an incident where God strengthened your faith.

2

What are some things that prevent your faith from growing? Do you trust God to help you overcome in these areas? Talk with Him right now about one place in your heart where you'd like Him to strengthen your faith.

3

Read the Scripture verse again (Matthew 17:20). *Do you really believe God can take a mustard seed of faith and grow it into something mighty in your life?* Write your thoughts. Ask Jesus to read what you've written and speak to your heart about it.

4

What is one thing you can do today to give God a mustard seed of your faith? Will you do it? When you do, ask God to bless you and grow your faith in a beautiful and powerful way. Thank Him for His many blessings!

## NOON

*“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*  
*(John 14:25-26 NIV)*

I'll bet Jesus was really feeling it. As He spoke to His disciples, promising the inconceivable gift of the Holy Spirit, He knew what was ahead. He knew the agony and torment He would face on His way to the Cross. That didn't stop Him from sharing the excitement of His promise!

Listen closely as Jesus speaks the words in this Scripture verse. Listen to the wonder, the excitement in His voice as He looks ahead. Jesus knew He was about to claim a victory that would change the world forever. He was going to shatter, *once and for all*, everything that stood in our way of eternal fellowship with the Father!

Jesus was about to give us *His Holy Spirit*, so we might grow in His likeness and one day live with Him forever! How could He sit still long enough to say the words?

He said these words for you! Though you might find it hard to understand, as Jesus spoke these words, a picture of *you* flashed in His Spirit. I am certain His heart was pounding, as He promised His Holy Spirit would be *yours*.

He could see it happening already. Jesus could see *you* restored in your relationship with God. He could see *you* walking closely with your Father, growing in His image, recognizing that you are royalty and that you will reign with Him forever.

He could see you walking to the heavenly throne and bowing before God and all His angels, while Jesus steps up to them and says, “*This one is Mine!*”

He saw all of it, and it was all about you. Can you imagine the love that filled His heart, as He promised this precious gift of life in the Holy Spirit?

Jesus knew His Holy Spirit would carry His disciples through the difficult days ahead. And He knew His Holy Spirit would allow *you* to grow in your faith and understanding of God’s plan for your life.

Jesus also knew the Holy Spirit would help you commune with Him each day. The disciples would always have their memory of Him, and you can bet it made their celebration of Holy Communion very powerful and personal. After all, they *remembered* the Last Supper. They were there!

You don’t have that memory of walking with Jesus in the flesh. But by faith, and by His Holy Spirit, you can commune with Jesus anytime you want.

Don’t think for a minute Jesus doesn’t want that – *more than anything*. He wants to commune with you. He’s here right now. Talk with Him! Open your heart, and listen to Him. Then spend some time just being in His presence, adoring Him, loving Him.

*Jesus gave His Holy Spirit to you.* Do you understand what a gift that is? It’s a gift that belongs to you forever.

*Lord Jesus, thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit to live in me, to guide me in all things, to teach me Your Truth, and to grow a new heart in me. The gift of the Holy Spirit is so incredible that I have trouble understanding it. But I know the Holy Spirit comes from Your amazing love for me. And the Holy Spirit makes me feel close to You all the time. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.*

## For Reflection

1

Have you taken time to get to know the Holy Spirit that lives within you? Are you aware of His presence? Do you ask for His teaching and friendship every day? Have you shown your love to the Holy Spirit? What will you do *right now* to strengthen your relationship with the Holy Spirit?

2

In the Scripture verse above (John 14:25-26), Jesus says the Holy Spirit “*will teach you all things.*” What is one area where you would like the Holy Spirit to teach you more? Are you ready to learn? What things might stop you from acting on what you learn? Ask the Holy Spirit to speak into this area of your life and guide you, as you walk forward together.

## 3

Read the following Scripture verses, in which Jesus talks about the Father's precious gift of the Holy Spirit: John 14:16-19; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-8; John 16:13-15. What is Jesus saying to your heart, through His words?

## 4

In what ways would you like to be more like Jesus? The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus<sup>8</sup> and works to bring you into His likeness. Before you get back to your busy day, ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart, and show you which of these areas He'd like you to work on next. Ask Him to start working on this with you *today*. With His help, keep yourself open to all that He reveals. Write about it in your journal and keep it going!

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<sup>8</sup> John 16:14

## 5

Read Galatians 4:6-7: “*And because we are his children, **God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts**, prompting us to call out, ‘Abba, Father.’ Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.*”<sup>9</sup>

***The Spirit of Jesus lives within you, because of your faith in Him.*** How incredible! Meditate on this Scripture and ask for God to speak deeply to your heart and spirit. Make this the first verse you read each morning – *until it is written on your heart.*

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<sup>9</sup> NLT, emphasis added

## Evening

*“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.” (John 14:1-4 NLT)*

What a vision to fall asleep to! Jesus had seen this place. He was with the Father in the beginning, before the world was created,<sup>10</sup> and He knew what the Father had planned. He knew that one day He would reign forever in a glorious Kingdom, unlike anything you can imagine. *And He knew you would be there with Him!*

Do you know how much it thrilled Jesus' heart, when He pictured *you* entering this incredible place the Father has for you? Hear the excitement in Jesus' voice. He wasn't giving a weather report. Look at His words: "I am going to prepare a place for you." "I will come and get you." "You will always be where I am." *Do you think He said this calmly?* His heart was pounding with anticipation, with absolute joy. I guarantee it!

Picture Jesus right now, standing in front of you. He's looking into your eyes, speaking to your heart. He's telling you about the most incredible dream He has for you. Except it's not a dream. It is real! It's so real that He almost can't stand the wait. He wants you to see it!

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<sup>10</sup> John 1:1-4

Remember how He started this verse: “*Don’t let your hearts be troubled.*” Was Jesus frowning when He first said those words? Was He concerned? Troubled? *I don’t think so!* I think He was bubbling over with excitement and joy. Listen to Him carefully, and you might hear something like this:

“My precious friend, you have to understand. This place I’m preparing for you is unlike anything you’ve ever imagined. Think of *the most* you could ever want or need. *This is so much more.* It’s greater than your greatest desire. I can’t describe it to you, because your heart couldn’t contain the joy!

“You’re going to see it soon. Almost before you know it, that moment beyond moments will be here. You’ll wonder where it came from! You’ll wonder how it happened so fast.

“In an instant, every problem you’ve ever had will be gone forever. You’ll stand in the middle of the greatest love ever known. A home that only our Father’s perfect love could create.

“*Can you imagine it?* It’s about to become more than imagination, My beloved friend. It’s about to be real – *so real you won’t know what to do!* When you set foot in that glorious place, when you see our Father face to face... *I can’t wait for that day.* Do you understand how hard it is for Me to wait? How much I want to see you there right now?

“So when I say you should not let your heart be troubled today... *do you understand?*”

You've heard it many times: Jesus is the groom that goes to prepare the perfect home for His bride. *Think about that.* He wants everything for her. **Everything!** He wants it for **you!** There is nothing you could ever think or hope to want that He hasn't foreseen and prepared for you. **Do you get that?**

Jesus can't wait for you to be there and see with your own eyes how much He treasures you! He can't wait for you to see our wonderful Father's eternal love – as it *surrounds* you!

You think you've felt His love before? Sensed something in your spirit? That's just the slightest flutter of His heart. Imagine the feeling when *God Himself* is right before you, and His presence is all around you, *consuming* you with His love.

You can't imagine it. Not even close. But you can get a glimpse with your heart, right now, if you just let Jesus talk with you.

*Jesus, my Savior and King... I admit to You that I have trouble understanding how incredible this place is that You're preparing for me. But I hear Your excitement, Lord, and I want You to bring that excitement into my heart. Help me to live each day with greater anticipation and joy in Your Kingdom!*

*Forgive me, Lord Jesus, when I let troubles cloud my eternal vision. Help me to stay focused on You. I am overwhelmed by our Father's love that won't let go of me. You're coming back for me, Jesus. **Thank You!** I want to be with You for eternity. I treasure the anticipation of that day, when **You** will open Your arms to me and say, "Welcome Home!" Hallelujah and Amen!*

## For Reflection

1

If you knew Jesus was coming tomorrow night, to bring you and all others who believe in Him to this incredible, glorious place, *to be with our Father forever*, to **live** in His eternal love... how would that change things for you *right now*? Describe how you would feel, knowing Jesus is about to fulfill His promise!

2

In anticipation, it would be tempting to drop everything and spend the next 24 hours trying to reach those who don't know Jesus. What if Jesus told you not to change anything about your routine? Thinking about the day you have planned, what *would* change, even if your routine didn't? Describe what your day would be like. What can you do, *to have that kind of day tomorrow?*

3

Before you go to sleep, re-read the three Scripture verses for today. Listen to Jesus' words. Look into His eyes as He speaks them to you. Write down what He is saying to you.

4

Ask Jesus to protect you as you sleep. Ask Him to keep your dreams in His hands, and to use your dreams to reveal His wisdom and His love to you. Keep a journal by your bed, and when you wake up, write down what Jesus showed you in your dreams. Ask Him for understanding... and wait for it.

4<sup>th</sup> Day

## Morning

*Jesus answered him, “If you would be perfect [that is, have that spiritual maturity which accompanies self-sacrificing character], go and sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; and come, be My disciple [side with My party and follow Me].” (Matthew 19:21 AMP)*

Do you realize what you just read? Do you know what kind of invitation Jesus is giving you? **The Son of God has invited you to come with Him!**

*Think about that.* Jesus is inviting you to walk by His side, *wherever* He goes:

To listen to His teaching and ask all the questions in your heart.

To meet the people He meets, to touch their lives as He touches them.

To watch the love grow in people's eyes as they encounter Jesus the Messiah, the King of kings.

To kneel beside Him and pray with Him.

To confess to Him when you feel beaten down by the world, when you lose heart.

To feel His comfort and encouragement.

To hear Him say to you, ***"I love you"*** and to say it right back to Him, over and over.

***What an incredible life that would be!***

Wait a minute. There's no "would" about it. This is not wishful thinking. This invitation is *real*. It's open. He's offering it to you. *Right now!*

Jesus didn't just speak these words to a few people in a long ago time and place. When He said these words, He thought about you. He wants *you* to come with Him.

You know *His* presence matters to you. It's time to understand *your* presence matters to Him. He's chosen you to be His disciple, and He won't stop speaking these words to your heart until you accept His invitation.

Does that mean you have to give up all that you have, right this minute? That you literally have to go and sell all your possessions? For most of us, the answer is no. But Jesus is asking you to consider what possessions, what obsessions, what aspects of your life stand in the way of your accepting His invitation. *What is holding you back from walking freely with Him?* What fears and doubts are getting in the way?

Jesus doesn't expect you to answer those questions by yourself. You need **Him** to show you what stands in the way. *Ask Him* – and don't be afraid of the answers!

Jesus won't turn your life inside out overnight. He knows exactly how to lead you, to take you gently through the changes you need in your life, so that walking forward in His invitation will come easily.

He won't drag you away from your life, or make you miserable! Jesus walks in **joy** and in the fullness of our Father's blessings! He wants you to walk with Him – *in the same blessings, the same joy!* He knows just how to make that happen for you.

**All you have to do is tell Him you're ready!**

*Lord Jesus, I want to walk by Your side, and be with You every minute of the day. I want to experience life through **Your** eyes, and I want to feel with **Your** heart. Whatever is holding me back from living completely in You, Lord, reveal those things to me through Your Holy Spirit. Open my eyes and my heart as only You can!*

*I give my life to You, Lord Jesus. I trust You with my heart! I'm not afraid to be vulnerable to You, because You will never hurt me or abandon me. I'm asking You to start making changes in me, so I can walk more closely with You. Jesus, I love You! Thank You for being my Savior and my King. Amen!*

*For Reflection*

*1*

What if you were there, when Jesus lived on the earth? What if He asked you to leave everything behind and follow Him? Describe what that might have been like for you.

## 2

List some of the areas in your life that are holding you back from completely giving your life to Jesus and following Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which area you should work on next.

*What are some of the ways you see this area affecting your daily life?*

Start asking the Holy Spirit to show you how to grow in this area. *Remember, growth doesn't happen overnight.* Keep asking Him, and keep letting Him work in you. When He reveals a problem, it's not to condemn but to teach and help you to grow. ***It's okay to grow!*** Though the revelations might be painful, accept them with **joy** and thanksgiving – and with a humble heart that's ready to learn.

## NOON

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message... Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” (John 17:20,25-6 NIV)*

Jesus is calling you to kneel before Him – not in worship, but because He wants to pray for you. Let Him put His hands on your head. Look up at His face, look into His eyes. Let His love surround you. Listen to His words.

*Jesus is praying for you!*

Lift your hands and receive the blessing He gives you. Then reach out and touch your hands against His heart, and feel His love move through you.

If you still aren't sure Jesus thought about you during His life on the earth, let this one prayer erase your doubts forever. Before His Crucifixion, before his hours of agony praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, before He was beaten, before He bled His life out for you, Jesus called out to the Father on your behalf.

*Jesus prayed for you.*

Prayer is the most powerful thing anyone in this world can do. Prayer opens the way for God to work in your life, to do mighty things, to bring you into the fullness of what He created you to be. Prayer is faith and communion with God. Jesus knew that. And before He left this world, *He purposely prayed for you.*

Let that sink in.

Jesus, the Son of God. He was born into this world by the Holy Spirit. As He walked in this world, He was God in the flesh. He was resurrected and lives in eternity with God the Father. Jesus is divinity. He is the King of kings. He is perfect, He is Love, and He is forever.

His prayers are more powerful than anyone's. He knows the power of prayer. How prayer builds faith and brings life. How prayer changes *everything*. No one can pray for you like Jesus can. And while He was in this world, when He knew He had little time left, He spoke the most heartfelt and powerful prayer... for *you*.

Do you ever stop to think how many blessings you've received in your life, how much agony you've survived, or avoided, how many things have gone right that could have gone wrong, all because Jesus prayed for you?

*Jesus prayed for you.*

What does that mean to you? Have you told Him?

Read Jesus' prayer again – the whole prayer. Open your Bible to John 17 and read verses 20-26. Receive the words He prayed to the Father for you. Listen with your heart. Ask Him to show you how He interceded for you in that moment – and intercedes even now.

Ask Him to show you how He lifted you up to the Father. Held back the darkness with His own life. Said for every angel to hear:

***“This one is Mine!”***

Praise God for the love, mercy and grace that brought you to Jesus – *and that led Jesus to pray for you!*

*Jesus, my precious Savior... it blows my mind every time I think about how You prayed for me. You had so much on Your heart that day. Yet all You could think about was stopping to pray to the Father for **me** – that I would know His love forever, and be with **You** forever!*

*Lord Jesus, I can't tell You what the words of Your prayer do to my heart. I love You, Jesus! As simple as my prayer is, I hope it will touch Your heart too. Thank You for praying for me. Amen.*

## For Reflection

1

How does it feel to know that Jesus prayed for you? Write your thoughts!

2

Who do you think Jesus prayed for when He was in this world? Think about the people close to Him. The people who tried to challenge Him. The people who hurt Him. Think about how He might have prayed for each one of them, and why. Write your thoughts.

3

If you knew you had only one day left in this world, who would you pray for today? What would your prayers be like? Will you pray for one of those people right now, letting the Holy Spirit guide you?

4

Is there someone in your life that is difficult to pray for? Will you ask the Holy Spirit to start guiding you in prayer for that person?

5

Have you thanked Jesus for praying for you? Will you take a few minutes to thank Him, and tell Him what His prayer in John 17:20-26 means to you? Just a few words from your heart, right now, will touch His heart more than you can imagine.

## Evening

*“Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.” (John 14:21 NLT)*

With His words in this Scripture, Jesus gives amazing assurance. He promises God will love you, just because you love Jesus. What an incredible gift!

How does Jesus know you love Him? For one thing, you tell Him – as often as you can! More importantly, you show Him your love, in the way you keep His commandments.

It's not always easy to obey everything He teaches. The world gets in the way. Sometimes it takes all you've got just to get through the day. Jesus knows that. Whatever you experience in this world, He lived through it. He knows that without His help, you'll have trouble obeying His teaching. *He wants to help!* You have to let Him.

Nighttime is an excellent time for Jesus to work in you. He'll use your dreams to teach you His Father's ways. Through His Holy Spirit, He'll take you through situations and confront you with areas where you need growth. Whether you remember the dreams or not, they will shape the way you respond to Jesus when you're awake. They will deepen His work in your heart.

Jesus will use your sleeping time to strengthen you in spirit, to meet every need in your heart. You have needs so deep inside that you haven't discovered them yet; you only know the hurt, the confusion, the fears they bring. Jesus knows where those needs are. He knows how to walk you through them. He'll use your time of rest to do this. But you have to invite Him.

In His words above, Jesus promises to reveal Himself to those who love Him. *That's an awesome promise.* Start by letting Him reveal Himself to you as you sleep tonight. You will be amazed at the changes you see in yourself each day. You'll start to be more like Jesus in all that you do... all because you give your sleeping time to Him.

*Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me first, before I ever loved You. Thank You for Your unconditional love. I know that when I fall short of the way You want me to live, You still love me; You are there to teach and correct, to help me grow to be more like You.*

*I also thank You, Jesus, for the chance to grow in my love for You, as I follow Your commandments, with Your help. I can't do it without You, Lord. Thank You that I don't have to do it alone. You are always there for me, Jesus. I am so humbled that You've invited me to follow You, and that You've given me all I need to become more like You. In Your awesome name I pray. Amen.*

## For Reflection

### 1

Jesus said, “‘*You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.*’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘*Love your neighbor as yourself.*’”<sup>11</sup> In what ways are those two commandments difficult for you to keep? Look at the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20) for examples of how these two commandments might be broken. Give a few examples.

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 22:37-39 NLT

## 2

Re-read the Scripture verse for this evening (John 14:21). The implication is that if you don't follow His commandments, you don't love Jesus. *How does that make you feel?*

Now read Jesus' words in John 15:16. *Jesus knows your heart.* He knows you *want* to love Him, but it's hard sometimes to obey all that He commands. You can't do it without Him – *He knows that!*

Take a few minutes right now and tell Him what's on your heart and why you need Him. If it's easier, write Jesus a note and tell Him how you feel. Be more honest with Him than you've *ever* been in your life. Then let Jesus speak to your heart and show you the depths of His eternal love for you. Remember, *He knows your life is hard.* Let Him guide you, so you can grow in your love for Him and grow in your ability to follow His commandments – *with His help.*

***There is no greater feeling of freedom than walking in His love!***

3

Are you willing to be completely vulnerable to Jesus, as He teaches you and transforms you through His Holy Spirit? What are some of the reasons you're afraid to be completely open to Him? Will you ask Him to minister to you in those areas? Will you trust Him with that?

4

Before you go to sleep, re-read the three Scripture verses for today. Listen to Jesus' words. Look into His eyes as He speaks them to you. Write down what He is saying to you.

5

Ask Jesus to protect you as you sleep. Ask Him to keep your dreams in His hands, and to use your dreams to reveal His wisdom and His love to you. Keep a journal by your bed, and when you wake up, write down what Jesus showed you in your dreams. Ask Him for understanding... and wait for it.

5<sup>th</sup> Day

## Morning

*“Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Matthew 24:42-4 NKJV)*

Jesus loves you. If He didn't love you, He never would have said these words to you. He wants you to be ready for Him!

Take a minute right now, just to think about what that means. Everything you're facing in your life today, no matter what it is – an exciting event; a trauma that doesn't let go; all the things of this world – in one instant, the moment Jesus comes for you, none of it will matter.

Imagine that everything you face in this world is put into a tiny capsule and tossed in the sea, where it disappears forever. That's what it will be like on that day. The painful things will be gone, never to return. As for the wonderful, exciting things, they will pale in comparison to what lies ahead. They are a tiny and delicate sample, just a taste of eternal life in the Kingdom!

*Are you ready for that day?*

When I was a teenager, the Scripture above was the one that caused me to lose the most sleep. We'd talk about it in youth group, or sing about it in choir: Two men working in a field, one blinks, the other is gone. The fear of being left behind. Was I ready? Was I doing enough? Was I going to Heaven?

I spent too much time worrying, and not enough time talking with the only one who could answer and reassure me: *Jesus*.

You see, this Scripture isn't just about the fear of being left behind. If you talk with Jesus about the words He spoke, He'll show you something deeper. He'll show you wisdom born out of unconditional love.

Put yourself in His shoes, and think about how He sees it. Jesus has the most awesome news for you: a glorious future, where you have a *very* special place by His side, in His Kingdom! Where you are deeply loved, forever!

Jesus wants you to put all your hopes and dreams in His Kingdom.<sup>12</sup> Carry the Kingdom in your heart. Let it be what you think about when you wake up in the morning, all through the day, and when you go to sleep at night. If your heart is focused on Jesus, on His Kingdom, it doesn't matter what you face. You will get through it!

Do you understand how much Jesus wants that for you? He knows what the world does to you. He knows the enemy doesn't want you to dream about the Kingdom. The enemy will do everything he can to distract you, so the Kingdom fades from your vision; so you can't feel Jesus' arms around you, although He's holding you tightly, even now.

That's why Jesus spoke the words above: so you would stay focused on the Kingdom and on Him in all that you do, no matter what happens around you.

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 6:19-21

Take a minute to think about this: If you honestly thought Jesus would return for you today – I mean really, seriously *today* – how would that change things?

*What would your day be like?*

Certainly, you wouldn't let the usual distractions get to you. You'd see them for what they are.

What if you knew for certain Jesus would appear at sunset...

He'd smile, and hold out His hand for you...

Lead you down a path of gold...

Up the steps, into a palace beyond description...

You walk forward, your whole body trembling.

Billions of angels weep at the glory of God.

Jesus turns to you. With a look in His eyes that melts your heart, He says, "Welcome Home. Forever."

If you knew that's how it would go at sunset, you know you'd spend the entire day getting ready. You wouldn't miss that eternal moment for which you've waited so long!

*What if you were to spend every day in that kind of anticipation?*

When Jesus comes to reign in His eternal Kingdom, *He wants you there with Him!* No doubt about it. Just ask!

*Lord Jesus, my Savior and King, I can't tell You how much it means to me, that You've invited me to live in Your eternal Kingdom. I want to be with You forever!*

*Forgive me, Lord, when the world distracts me from my Kingdom excitement, and when I put Kingdom anticipation aside to deal with troubles in my life. Help me, Holy Spirit, to stay focused on the Kingdom throughout each day and night, awaiting that glorious dawn!*

*Thank You, Jesus, for preparing a place for me, and for coming to live right now in my heart! Amen.*

## For Reflection

1

Spending each day in this kind of anticipation gives God the opportunity to work mightily in your life. *Do you believe that?* It puts you in a place to expect and accept miracles. *Will you give Him that? He wants it for you!* Ask God right now to strengthen the Kingdom vision in your heart. Ask Him to grow your Kingdom faith. He will do it!

2

In what ways are you prepared for Jesus' return? In what areas do you still need to work?

3

Have you prayed to thank Jesus for the place He is preparing for you in His Kingdom? Have you told Him your excitement? Take a few minutes right now to thank Him. *Make it a morning habit!*

4

Make a list of things you would do differently, if you knew Jesus would return this evening at sunset. Will you ask Him to help you do one of those things today?

## 5

Make it a daily habit to keep your eyes and heart focused on Jesus and His Kingdom. Focus on the Kingdom every morning and every evening. At the end of the day, notice what things distracted you during the day and took your mind off the Kingdom. *What steps can you take to refocus for the next day?* Make a list, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you put it to work – *in your heart, and in your life!*

## NOON

*He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. (Luke 22:41-44 NLT)*

Have you ever felt the agony of spiritual assault? Have you ever been beaten down emotionally? When was the last time the enemy tried to pound you black and blue? *Do you remember how it felt?*

Jesus felt it in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was there in the darkness, alone. Sure, His friends were nearby. But they couldn't feel what He was feeling. They couldn't have withstood it.

*Because of Him, they never had to.*

The worst torment you've ever felt doesn't come close to what Jesus had to bear. When it feels like the world and all of hell is crashing in on you, crushing you to pieces... multiply that by every soul that's ever lived and ever will... by the worst agony, the worst torture, the worst curses this world has ever known...

You still won't have the faintest idea of the depths of Jesus' suffering that night. *"His sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood..."*

Jesus' death didn't end your suffering in this world. But He ensured that you would be victorious! You might feel crushed by torment, but it's *fleeting*. On the other side of it: **Your eternal life with your Father! Your joy that will live in you forever!**

Jesus thought of you in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed. He knew He had to withstand it **all!** He couldn't take any less than the *full force of sin and death and hell against Him*. He had to be the all-sufficient Sacrifice for all time.

For you.

Forever.

Think about the blows He suffered – every one of them for you. Can you imagine what went through His heart and His mind as He was tortured?

One thing I know in my heart to be true. It's not written in Scripture, but I believe that when Jesus prayed in agony in the Garden, when He took the blows that bled Him, when He hung on the Cross, He pictured *you* with love.

He could see you dancing by His side

Surrounded by the glory of His Kingdom

Your heart overflowing with joy

*It was worth it for Him!*

Listen to the words He cried out from the Cross: “*Father, forgive them...*”<sup>13</sup> Even those who were killing Him, Jesus wanted to save. He was pleading to His Father for their souls! *Have you really thought about that?*

In those words, Jesus gave His assurance to *you!* No matter what you’ve been through, no matter how much the trials of life have forced distance between you and Jesus, *He wants you with Him – for eternity!*

Jesus has taken every blow for you: sin; the guilt of sin; the fear of sin; the sin of false guilt... He’s taken every blow of self-condemnation. Every assault of the enemy that comes against you, as you pray for God to transform you into the image of Jesus...

**All of it, Jesus took it.**

And as He prayed in the Garden, despite the torment that was killing Him, He must have felt renewed strength... as He pictured *you* by His side one day, overflowing with His eternal joy!

*Lord Jesus, I praise You. I’m starting to understand with my heart that before You died, You thought about me with love. You went to Calvary knowing what it would be like one day, with me at Your side in Your Kingdom. **Thank You, Jesus,** for taking upon Yourself every sin that has tried to destroy me. Help me to live in greater faith and joy, knowing You died for me. I love You, Jesus. Amen.*

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<sup>13</sup> Luke 23:34 NLT

## For Reflection

### 1

Re-read the last line of the Scripture verse above: *“He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.” (Luke 22:44 NLT)*

How does it make you feel, to know that Jesus prayed with such intensity, so that you might be free to live forever? *Have you thanked Him?* Will you take a few minutes right now to say a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus? Let the Holy Spirit give you the words to pray.

### 2

Now read the line above it: *“Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him.” (Luke 22:43 NLT)* When you’re facing a tough problem, have you ever felt the peace and strength that come from prayer support? Describe what it feels like, and how it builds your faith. If you’ve never asked for prayer support, will you start asking for prayer today?<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Start with your church – do they have a place you can submit a prayer request? If not, <http://www.brooklyntabernacle.org/prayerrequest.cfm> has an awesome prayer team and you can submit your prayer request online.

## 3

When was the last time you went through spiritual assault? What did it feel like? *Did you turn to Jesus?* How did He comfort you? How did He strengthen your faith with His presence? If you didn't turn to Jesus, why not? *Ask the Holy Spirit to help you reach out more to Jesus, starting today!*

## 4

Read the following Scripture verses, in which Jesus offers comfort and hope: Matthew 11:28-30; Matthew 18:12-14; Matthew 18:20; John 5:24; John 15:9-11; Revelation 22:12-13. What is Jesus speaking to your heart through His words in each of these verses? Write down what He's saying to you.

## Evening

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27 NIV)*

Were you afraid of the dark as a kid? I was! Maybe that kind of fear was never your thing. Even if you're totally at peace in the dark, think about this: You're vulnerable when you're asleep! Maybe you'd rather I didn't talk about this as you're getting ready for bed. But now think about this: *Jesus is with you*, and *He* says, "*Do not be afraid.*"

Listen to Him. *Believe Him*. Let Jesus use this nighttime to show you a new depth of faith. Jesus can grow you in faith right now – *did you know that?* He can grow a faith in you that's stronger than anything you've known. You can have faith that lets you look through the dark night and see nothing but glorious, never-ending light!

When you learn, by faith, to see light in physical darkness, you become more aware of Jesus' light in times of emotional and spiritual darkness. Jesus brings this faith to you, even as He brought His Light into this world, to replace the darkness forever.

Trust Jesus. Trust His protection and His promises. He is with you always – *He said so!*<sup>15</sup> He's with you right now – right this minute! It's time to trust in His words. It's time to understand what they mean for your life.

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew 28:20

Give this vulnerable time over to Jesus completely, this time of darkness and rest, and let Him know how much you trust Him. Then ask Him to grow your faith! Not just tonight. *Every night!*

Before you go to sleep, take some time to read Jesus' words. Make it a nightly habit. Look all through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Find the words Jesus spoke<sup>16</sup> and read them over and over, every night, until it becomes so natural you can't go to sleep without it. Keep His words by your bed, as a reminder that He is with you.

The more time you spend with Jesus before you go to sleep, listening to His voice, listening to His heart, the more you'll rest secure in His presence and His promises. If you can turn to Him and trust Him during the time you're most vulnerable, you'll be amazed at the faith He builds in you.

You'll see *all* that He does for you – that He is true to His words; that He will give you His peace, and protect you, and show you that you have nothing to fear. You'll come to a place where nothing shakes you, nothing stresses you, as you settle down for the night. *All* you will know is the presence of Jesus, and you will rejoice!

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<sup>16</sup> Look for a Bible that highlights Jesus' words in red, so they're easier to find. Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) also offers a great reference book, *And Jesus Said...* (<http://www.parable.com/tbn/item.And-Jesus-Said-Remarkable-Quotes-from-the-Teachings-of-Jesus.9781414318707.htm>)

Jesus will grow your faith through the night, in ways you can't imagine. He'll fill your heart with joy that will spill over into the next day, and you'll start living a brand new life. It won't be long before you'll start to recognize Jesus *in you!*

Jesus wants to do this for you.

Don't wait for tomorrow... *He wants to start tonight!*

Will you let Him? Will you trust Him?

He offers peace, and safety, and love... and a whole new depth of faith.

Think about it for a moment, and you'll realize how much you want that faith. It's the kind of faith that brings you into the depths of God's love – and Jesus is drawing you there. He will give you His faith, His love – *everything He's got* – and He'll give it freely.

Just say, "Yes" to Him, and He'll keep you in His presence all night. You'll wake up with more faith than you've ever known!

He's already here.

He's already yours.

Let Him create in you a faith as deep as His love.

Don't wait...

*This is your night!*

*Thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your presence and protection. Thank You for never leaving me alone. Jesus, my precious Lord and Savior, I want Your words to become a part of me, nurturing and strengthening me in faith, even as I sleep. Precious Holy Spirit, I give my dreams to You. Use them, and teach me how to be more like Jesus! It's in His wonderful and awesome name I pray. Amen.*

## For Reflection

### 1

No matter what kind of day you've had, Jesus' words will bring incredible comfort and rest when you're ready to go to sleep. You'll also find amazing peace in the Psalms. Read some of Jesus' words each night, and then choose a Psalm to read, just before you go to sleep. Read the words out loud; read them with conviction. You will literally feel a faith like Jesus' faith, growing in your heart, and you will find deep rest in God.

### 2

Before you go to sleep, re-read the three Scripture verses for today. Listen to Jesus' words. Look into His eyes as He speaks them to you. Write down what He is saying to you.

3

Ask Jesus to protect you as you sleep. Ask Him to keep your dreams in His hands, and to use your dreams to reveal His wisdom and His love to you. Keep a journal by your bed, and when you wake up, write down what Jesus showed you in your dreams. Ask Him for understanding... and wait for it.

6<sup>th</sup> Day

## Morning

*“Stay awake and pray that you will not be tested. You want to do what is right, but you are weak.” (Matthew 26:41 CEV)*

Have you ever wondered if God really knows you're here? Does He know you have a good heart, and good intentions? Does He know how much you love Him?

Life can be a total mess. The world is noisy. It's not just that we get distracted, and forget to give our attention and love to God. Sure, that happens, maybe a lot. But there are plenty of times when we really try to give Him everything, the very best of ourselves.

Does He know that? Does He hear it? Does He feel what's in our hearts? Or is there too much of this world in the way?

I can assure you God *does* feel the love you have for Him. He knows how much you want to love Him. There is nothing hidden from God.<sup>17</sup> That doesn't just mean that all bad things are out in the open. The good things are there too!

Nothing prevents God from seeing your whole heart. All the love you have for Him – it means *everything* to Him. I can assure you of that. But I'd rather let Jesus give you that assurance. My words won't last. *His words are eternal.*

Jesus spoke the words in the Scripture verse above, because He knew the world would get in the way of your best intentions toward God. It doesn't matter how much you desire to love Him. *You can't see it through – not without God's help.* His grace alone is what makes it possible for you to turn your best intentions into a real relationship with Him, a beautiful relationship that will last *forever.*

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<sup>17</sup> Hebrews 4:13; Proverbs 15:3

That's why Jesus is asking you to stay alert and pray. That's why He says, "*If you truly love Me, you will obey what I ask you to do.*"<sup>18</sup>

The good intentions in your heart will not make you who God created you to be. But if you act on Jesus' words, your good intentions will lead you to seek His help, through His Holy Spirit. He alone can help you follow Jesus, worship Him, love Him.

If you stay alert, recognize your constant dependence on God, pray throughout the day and evening for the Holy Spirit to turn good intentions into true goodness, God will transform you. *He wants to!*

Listen again as Jesus speaks to your heart. His words might sound something like this:

"You want to do what is right. I know you do. I know you're doing the best you can, and I know you truly want to give our Father your very best. I see the truth in your heart. I feel your love. *So does our Father.* He knows exactly how much He means to you, and He rejoices at your love for Him.

"But it's not that easy. There's still such a huge distance between you and our Father, because you live in a fallen world, and you were born into this world. *That's okay.* I gave up My life, and our Father resurrected Me to tear down that barrier between us. You belong to Me now, *forever.*

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<sup>18</sup> John 14:21 author paraphrase

“You are so precious to Me. Now you have to walk in this world by faith in My love for you. That means you need to depend on our Father and the Holy Spirit for every step, *for every breath*, for every thought and feeling. You have to abide in Me *completely*.<sup>19</sup>

“Stay alert and pray. Remember that I am with you.<sup>20</sup> *Trust Me in all things*. And the love in your heart, and the good thoughts in your mind will be transformed into true goodness that comes from our Father... and lasts *forever*.”

*Father, thank You for seeing everything in my heart – the bad and the good. Thank You for accepting my worship of You, and for knowing how much I love You. Help me to love You so much more! Help me to always stay alert and prayerful, remembering that Jesus, my Lord and Savior, is always with me, because of Your eternal love. Father, transform me. I want to be like Jesus! It's in His precious and perfect name I pray. Amen!*

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<sup>19</sup> John 15:4 Author paraphrase

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 28:20 Author paraphrase

## For Reflection

1

When have you seen good intentions lead to problems? Describe one or two situations. Explain how *more* of God would have made a difference.

2

Are there certain times when you feel less spiritually alert than at other times? What causes this for you? What can you do to stay more alert? *Will you do it?* Remember, you can't do any of this without Jesus' help. Talk with Him about it. He understands!

## 3

Do you truly believe God knows how much you love Him, how much you want to worship Him, how much you want to be like Jesus? *Are there times when you doubt this?* Talk with Him about how to *strengthen your faith* in His awareness of you, and in His love for you. Listen for His answers. Let Him lead you.

## 4

God says that His strength is made perfect in our weakness.<sup>21</sup> Describe one or two situations where you've witnessed the truth in these words. How did those moments make you feel? *Did you share them with others?* Why or why not?

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<sup>21</sup> II Corinthians 12:9

## NOON

*After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Master, you know I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” He then asked a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Master, you know I love you.” Jesus said, “Shepherd my sheep.” (John 21:15-16 The Message)*

I don't know what that day was like. I don't know whether it was sunny or cloudy. Birds might have cried out overhead; fish might have splashed in the waves. Perhaps the water glistened with promise, or churned with fear of the future. A steady breeze might have blown, or maybe all was still and quiet. I don't know what it was like, because I wasn't there. But I know Jesus thought of me that day.

And He thought of you.

Jesus spoke these words to Peter, because Peter needed to know in his heart that he was forgiven for denying His Lord.<sup>22</sup> He needed to know Jesus was calling him into ministry – despite Peter's flaws, despite his sin.

As you listen to the love and forgiveness in Jesus' voice, you know He is calling you too – despite your sinful nature, despite your past mistakes, and mess-ups still to come. Jesus is calling you to serve Him, and He knows that by His Holy Spirit, He will make your service possible. It doesn't come from you. It comes from Him.

Jesus thought of you that day for another reason too, as He spoke of His lambs and sheep. That very day, He called His Church into being. As He told Peter earlier: *“Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.”*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew 26:69-75

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 16:18 NLT

In those words, Jesus gave His love and reassurance to you. Jesus knew His disciples would have a tough time in this world without Him. He knew it would be even tougher for you.

You never had the comfort of His physical presence, or the chance to touch His garments and be healed.<sup>24</sup> You never got to look into His eyes as He spoke eternal wisdom from the Father. Yet you face many trials in His name. He knew you would need Him to be here, guiding you, supporting you. So He created His Church, which would become His Body in this world.

We are all called to be the hands and feet of Jesus. No one person can be all that Jesus is – *not even close!* But by working together as a Body, we can allow Jesus to be physically present among us, as we serve Him by helping each other: praying, supporting, teaching, comforting.

That's what Jesus had in His heart that day, as He spoke to Peter. *And He saw you there.* Jesus saw you in the Body of Christ. He saw you reaching out to others in His name. He saw you receiving care and comfort, being tended with love, as one of His precious lambs.

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<sup>24</sup> Luke 8:44

*Lord Jesus, I thank You for the blessings You gave to me that day, as You spoke to Peter. Thank You for calling me to serve You, despite all of my flaws. Thank You for giving me a unique place in Your Kingdom, a place You've chosen for me, that no one else can fill.*

*And Lord, I thank You for building Your Church, so that all who believe in You can comfort and support and encourage each other, and hold back the enemy through Your awesome name. Fill us with Your strength and love, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

## For Reflection

1

Do you believe Peter *received* the forgiveness and assurance Jesus offered him that day? How well do you receive the forgiveness and assurance our Lord offers you each day? What things make it difficult for you to accept forgiveness from our Lord and Savior? Will you ask Him right now to help you with this?

2

Re-read Matthew 16:18. How does that verse make you feel? Write your thoughts, and ask Jesus to continue speaking more deeply to you through His words.

## 3

What does it mean to be the hands and feet of Jesus? *In what ways were you His hands and feet this week?* Don't overlook the simple things. When you smile at a person, or speak a kind word, you are letting Jesus smile and speak through you. When you refrain from showing your irritation, and when you ask the Holy Spirit to show you where the irritation comes from, and how to work through it, you are becoming more like Jesus!

## 4

Jesus calls each of us to serve Him in our daily lives, in ways that are unique to us. You have a special role in the Kingdom that no one else can fill. In what ways is Jesus calling you to serve Him? Have you asked Him? Will you take a few minutes to ask Him right now? What are the next steps you need to take? Do you have prayer support? *Start with your local church.*

5

In what ways does your Christian service come from Jesus, through the Holy Spirit? *In what ways are you driven by human emotion instead?* What steps can you take to serve more through the Holy Spirit, rather than listening to your own emotions?

6

What does it mean to be the Body of Christ? Do you feel that you're a valuable part of the Body? In what ways do you feel *disconnected*? What can you do to strengthen your connection? Ask the Holy Spirit, and let Him start to grow your connection within the Body of Christ!

## Evening

*“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:9-11 NIV)*

Your life comes from the Father. It always has. That's something you might not stop to think about every day, but it's written on your heart. You know you belong to Him. Only your Father could give you life, and He is the only One who can give you new resurrection life.

Jesus is asking you to understand: Apart from the Father, you don't have life. You might have an existence, and you might live in this world, but it's not real life – it won't last! It's not the deep eternal life of God. And it is not filled with the abundance the Father intends for you.<sup>25</sup>

You might understand all of this with your mind, but Jesus wants you to feel it with your heart. That's why He offers such a beautiful and powerful image of living in the True Vine and being nourished by the Vine alone.

Jesus says,

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

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<sup>25</sup> John 10:10

*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.<sup>26</sup>*

Then He asks that you remain in the Vine. Remain in His Love. The Source of the Vine *is* the Father's Love.

This is Love beyond anything we can understand. It's not just an earthly kind of love that comforts or makes us feel special. This Love is life-giving. It is the Source of life. To remain in the Father's love, to live in the True Vine is to *have* life; to be nourished and strengthened in the fullness of life. Real life, filled with abundance. Life that becomes *eternal*.

Though Jesus is the divine Son of God, He also draws His life from living in His Father's love. Jesus wants you to do the same, so that you will always be with Him where He is.<sup>27</sup> It's a tough thing to understand, especially at the end of a hard day. Don't try to comprehend it. Your spirit already knows. Let God speak to your spirit directly.

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<sup>26</sup> John 15:1-8 NKJV

<sup>27</sup> John 17:24

Listen with your heart and with your spirit to the words of Jesus: “*Now remain in my love.*”

Stop thinking about what those words mean.

Let Him *show* you.

Get quiet for a minute.

Visualize the True Vine – a vine that is Love; Love that gives life. Let the image bypass the thinking part of your brain and go straight to your heart and your spirit.

Now picture yourself living as a branch, fully connected to the Vine, drawing all of your life and spirit from its depths.

Breathe in the Vine.

*Breathe the Love from deep within it.*

Breathe the words of Jesus.

*Let them become part of you.*

Now get ready to explore the depths of your Father’s love. It’s a journey into the very heart of God. Let Jesus take you. Start tonight!

Let go of everything but your connection with Jesus, and with the Father, through the life of the Holy Spirit that’s within you. The connection is so deep and strong, so everlasting. Deep in your heart and in your spirit, you know that connection will never be broken.

Remain in His love. You *will* have abundant life forever.

*As I breathe in Your Holy Spirit through the True Vine, as I let Your eternal love nurture me with all that I need, I thank You, Precious Lord. Thank You for loving me. Thank You for creating in me the desire to love and worship You.*

*I am Yours forever, Lord Jesus. Show me how to walk in Your Spirit and in Your Truth, so that my days may be full of abundant life and joy and service for Your Kingdom. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit I pray. Amen.*

## For Reflection

### 1

Re-read the Scripture verse above (John 15:9-11). When Jesus spoke these words, what tone of voice do you think He used? I believe He spoke from a place of overwhelming love. *What does His love sound like?* As you read these words again and again, ask His Holy Spirit to let you hear the words spoken with the love of Jesus. As more of His love is revealed to you in many, many ways, write your thoughts and feelings in your journal. Allow Jesus to grow your heart to be *exactly* like His.

### 2

Before you go to sleep, re-read the three Scripture verses for today. Listen to Jesus' words. Look into His eyes as He speaks them to you. Write down what He is saying to you.

3

Ask Jesus to protect you as you sleep. Ask Him to keep your dreams in His hands, and to use your dreams to reveal His wisdom and His love to you. Keep a journal by your bed, and when you wake up, write down what Jesus showed you in your dreams. Ask Him for understanding... and wait for it.

Jesus said,

*...I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.<sup>28</sup>*

*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.<sup>29</sup>*

*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.<sup>30</sup>*

*...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age...<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>28</sup> John 14:6 NKJV

<sup>29</sup> John 15:16-17NKJV

<sup>30</sup> John 15:4 NKJV

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 28:20 NKJV

## About the author

My name is Janet Eriksson. I'm one of God's kids, just like you. My heart belongs to Jesus. At 42 years old, I'm blessed with a brand new life that the Lord has given me. I'm involved in ministry to teens and to single women; prayer and healing ministry; and I'm working toward becoming a pastoral counselor through the United Methodist Church. I'm privileged to be working at [Eagle Ranch](#), a group home for teens in north Georgia; I'm a parapro at the Eagle Ranch School, and I work with the students in the writing lab. I am "wild and crazy," a kid at heart. I also love to spend quiet time with God, praying and writing what He inspires. I have a wonderful church family at [Dahlonega United Methodist Church](#), a Spirit-filled place of worship, fellowship, missions and outreach in north Georgia. At Dahlonega UMC, I'm active in intercessory prayer, [Elijah House](#), teaching youth Sunday School, community groups, and worship dance. I enjoy going on short-term mission trips. I'm also active in the [Georgia Foothills Walk to Emmaus](#) community and [Georgia Mountain Tres Dias](#). I enjoy coloring books and crafts and making prayer bracelets. I'd love to hear from you at [jlynn.erik@gmail.com](mailto:jlynn.erik@gmail.com)!

*Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." -- John 15:16 (NKJV)*