

21:

A 21 day journey for the new Believer

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Parenthesis in Scripture quotations reflect the author’s added emphasis.

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About Jeff:



Jeff Maness is the founding and Lead Pastor of Element Church in Cheyenne, WY, and the author of the book “Because You’re Called: Three words that will change your life.”

His first calling is to his family. He married his high school sweetheart (Sabrina) in June of 1997, and they saw their family grow from two to six in the first 9 years of their marriage. They have one son (Jonah), and three daughters (Mariah, Makalah and Jaydah).

He and Sabrina take very seriously the calling to raise their children according to the will of God! Jeff says, “If you’re not careful, you can be so moved, so inspired, so ‘called’ by God that you’ll end up pursuing *it* at the cost of your family.”

In December of 1997, Jeff graduated from Oklahoma Wesleyan University with a degree in Pastoral ministry. He immediately began pastoring a little country church in Ringwood, OK, before God called them to Gillette, WY, to serve as youth pastors and where He would eventually call them to start Element Church in Cheyenne.

The vision of Element Church is to guide people to experience life to its fullest, connect into meaningful relationships, and make a lasting impact! What began with six people in the basement of the Maness home, has turned into a movement of people living out that vision in whatever community God has placed them.

With Wyoming being the 9th largest unchurched state in America, Element has a long-term vision of partnering with existing churches, producing video locations, or planting stand-alone churches in all twenty-three counties around the state.

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Introduction and Instructions:

Hello and welcome to 21! I'm so glad you picked up a copy of this booklet and are willing to check it out. 21 is meant for new Believers in Jesus, and/or those who need a fresh start in their walk with Christ. If that is you, *congratulations* on your new decision!

So often as Christians, we use a bunch of “churchy” words and terms trying to explain what it means to follow Jesus. What we don't offer is something simple and practical that can get us started on our journey. This booklet is just that...a start!

First of all, 21 will take you through all 21 chapters of the book of John in the Bible. John was one of Jesus' 12 disciples, which makes him an eyewitness to His life and ministry. Not only will this get you reading the Bible regularly, but every day we'll pull some significant truths from each chapter in John that might be helpful as you start your walk with Jesus.

All Scripture will be referenced from the New Living Translation of the Bible. If you don't have a Bible you can download a free Bible app on any smart phone or tablet called “YouVersion.”

21 will be most effective if you intentionally, consistently and diligently read the suggested Bible reading and follow the chapters every day. “What happens if I miss a day?” Don't give up! Jump right back in on the chapter you missed and commit to read each day. I encourage you not to do more than one day at a time. This ensures that you'll be able to apply effectively what is being taught.

I also encourage you to take a few minutes each day to pray. Prayer is just like talking to a close friend. God is always there. He is listening and waiting to connect with you. Just tell Him what is on your heart and mind, thank Him for what He is doing and ask Him for what you need. Reading the Bible consistently and talking to Him through prayer will help you stay connected to His purpose and plan for your life.

Each day in 21 there are two reflection questions to consider. There is also a place for you to write down any questions you have that may come up as a result of your Bible reading and prayer. If you do have any questions, find a trusted Christian friend, or a pastor at your local church. I've also included a simple prayer for you to conclude your time with God.

21 won't answer all of your questions concerning Christianity and it definitely is not the end all in your journey. What it will do is get you off to a great start. A great start is important to so many things. A race. A job. A vacation. A kiss. Why? Because if you start well, there is a better chance you'll end well. I'm praying this will be a great start for you. I believe in you and am praying for your success!

Till the end,

Pastor Jeff

DAY 1: WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Scripture: Read John chapter 1 (John is the fourth book in the New Testament portion of your Bible. Matthew, Mark, Luke then John)

A natural tendency as human beings is to try and figure everything out immediately. If you're reading this, it means recently you've made a decision to follow Christ, or you are getting a fresh start in your spiritual journey. You've "prayed the prayer" if you will. But what in the world does that mean? If you're anything like me you're already thinking about everything this entails. "Where is Jesus going and why do I need to follow Him? What does it mean that He lives in my heart? And born again...? I don't get it."

Take heart, you're not alone. You will have questions. You will *always* have questions. I have questions and I've been a Christian for decades. Part of following Jesus means we're trying to figure this thing out together. Being a Christian is a journey. It has a definite beginning, a definite end (at least in this life), but what happens in between is the adventure. My advice to you is don't try and figure it all out today. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither is your Christian faith.

"So what do I do now?" Great question! Begin the journey.

John 1:1 says: "In the beginning the Word (Jesus) already existed. The Word was with God and the Word was God."

If you don't get anything else on your first day of following Christ, get this. *It's all about Jesus!* He came as one of us, died because of us and rose victorious, so that if we put our faith in Him we become a child of God! *That's you!* You are a child of God. You belong to Him. That's all you need to know today.

Regardless of how you feel, regardless of how much you know or don't know, regardless of *all* the sins you've *ever* committed,

regardless of where Jesus will take you from this point on...know this: *You belong to Jesus because you believe!* Start there!

1. How does it make you feel to know that you belong to Jesus?

2. What new things is God teaching you in your spiritual journey?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for dying for me and for making me *Yours!* I don't understand everything and I still have lots of questions but I am committing to start right where I am. Please help me as I begin my journey, to listen and follow You, wherever You take me. Amen.

DAY 2: WINE AND A WHIP

Scripture: Read John chapter 2

You belong to Jesus! That's where we started yesterday, but this is where the rubber meets the road. This is where we start putting some feet to your faith. In the Scripture reading today you read a story about Jesus changing the water into wine at a wedding party (weird I know), and also about Him making a whip to clear out the temple. Both of these stories touch on the second thing I think you need to know, and it's just as important as knowing *whose* you are.

Since you belong to Jesus, you are now part of a New Way! "What?" I figured you'd ask that. When you asked Jesus to come into your heart, you not only became His child, but He set you on a new course. Your life is now meant to please Jesus and *not* yourself. Your aim is different. That's part of following Him. What's cool though is when I live my life to please Christ; I actually find that I become fulfilled. I am pleased as well. It's what my heart was looking for in the first place.

In our Scripture today Jesus is just hanging out at a wedding party and they run out of wine. He steps up to the plate and makes some wine from water that was stored in Jewish ceremonial cleansing jars. Jews would use that water to wash their hands, thinking that by following that ritual they pleased God. It was only tradition, and it really did nothing for the way they were living.

We then find Jesus going into the Temple, a place where people were supposed to receive help from God, yet they were making money from selling overpriced animals to use in sacrifices. You might be saying, "What does that have to do with me?" *Everything!*

Jesus, through those two actions, was literally saying, "Following me is not about washing your hands or giving sacrifices. It's about a *new Way*. You think that washing your hands from these jars and buying

animals to sacrifice makes everything good, but it doesn't. It's about *Me* living in *you* and helping *you* live a *new* life."

You can go to church, sing songs, give money and read the Bible all you want, but it won't make a lick of difference unless you let Jesus lead you on a *new Way*. Jesus wants to make you *new*.

1. What are some specific areas in your life that Jesus has made you new?

2. What are some specific areas in your life that you know He still needs to work on?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for making me new! I can already see in my life the areas where You are changing me. Please continue to mold me and make me into who *You* want me to become. I am Yours! Amen.

DAY 3: WHAT HAPPENED?

Scripture: Read John chapter 3

Ok, it's day three on your journey and we haven't even really discussed what happened to you when you asked Jesus into your heart. We talked about whose you are and about being on a new Way, but what actually happened when you asked Jesus into your heart? Well, in our Scripture reading for today Jesus deals with just that.

Jesus is talking with Nicodemus and says that unless you are "born again" you cannot make it to Heaven. Most likely you've heard that term, "born again," at some point in your life. You may have heard it and been just as confused as Nicodemus was here in John chapter 3. Upon hearing this phrase Nicodemus asks Jesus, "How can I go back in my mom and be born again? First off, that's disgusting, second, it's not even possible." This is where we get the explanation of what happened to you when you asked Jesus into your heart.

Before you asked Jesus into your heart and had your sins forgiven you were spiritually dead. While you may have had a perfectly functioning physical body i.e. your heart pumped the blood, your lungs breathed the air, your brain orchestrated the body, but your spiritual heart was dead. Your spirit had not yet come to life. That is why you needed Jesus, and it's what it means to be born again.

In verse 6 Jesus explains by saying, ***"Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life."***

When you asked Jesus to come into your heart and forgive your sins you became a follower of Jesus. When you became a follower of Jesus, Jesus put His Holy Spirit in you. The Holy Spirit made your heart, your spiritual heart, come to life. You are now *alive!* And it's because of this new life (the Holy Spirit) living in you that you are able to follow Jesus.

Just like you have a day when you were born physically, when you believe, you also have a day you are born spiritually. You are *born again!* You are now *alive!*

1. What day did you come “alive” spiritually? (If you don’t know the exact day that is ok. Write down today as your day, or try to remember as close as you can to the day of your salvation. It is your most important spiritual milestone!)

2. Do you feel a definite difference in your Spirit? If not, do you know why?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for making me *alive!* I still don’t fully understand everything that happened, but I can now say that, “I once was dead, but now I’m alive!” Help me to continue living for You each day. Amen

DAY 4: THIRSTY?

Scripture: Read John chapter 4

I hope this has been beneficial for you as you start your journey of following Jesus. It's only day four, so we still have a long way to go, but you are off to a great start and I want to encourage you to keep taking your next steps in Jesus!

While everything we've talked about so far is vital to your journey, today's topic, at least for me, is the crux of our faith. If we don't get this one thing, it makes everything else that much more difficult.

Jesus finds Himself at a well with a Samaritan woman. First off, this was a *major* taboo for a Jewish man to talk to a woman, let alone a Samaritan woman (Jews and Samaritans despised each other). In their conversation, Jesus mentions water that only *He* can provide. It's different from the water at the well they were standing near. This was Living Water. In fact, Jesus tells this woman that if she drinks water from the well they're standing at she'll be thirsty again, but if she drinks the water He can give she'll never be thirsty again. Scripture records that Jesus' water is like a fresh bubbling spring. That term means, "bursting forth." Jesus is speaking not just of being alive, but having *abundant life*. Life to its fullest!

"Why is this the crux of our faith?" I'm glad you asked. Jesus is using a physical illustration to explain a spiritual reality. He's saying "Earthly things will satisfy you fleetingly, I can satisfy you fully." One of the greatest temptations for us as followers of Jesus, and one of the fastest ways for us to lose our spiritual luster, is to revert back to finding "life" in our stuff, and not in Jesus.

Physical water quenches my thirst, but only until I'm thirsty again. Money satisfies my desire to buy things, but only until I want to buy something else. Sexual experiences will satisfy my human desires, but I have to have another experience to be satisfied again. All these things, and *more*, rise out of the longing in our hearts to have fullness

DAY 5: “OOPS, I DID IT AGAIN!”

Scripture: Read John chapter 5

“So I started this whole following Jesus thing. I’ve been reading in John each day. I’m going through this devotional book. But what happens if I mess up?” Or, “I already messed up, again, now what do I do?”

One of the greatest truths about being a Christian is that God wants to set you free from sin. Yes. Read that again. God wants to set *you* free from sin. *All* of it! Does that mean you’ll never sin again? That would be great wouldn’t it? Most likely you’ve already messed up at least once since starting this journey, right? Don’t give up! Keep reading.

In the story we read today Jesus heals a lame man. He simply told him, “pick up your mat and walk,” and the dude did! Are you kidding me? How cool would it have been to see that?

Later at the Temple, Jesus found this same guy and said some startling words to him: “Stop sinning or something worse might happen to you.” What? Back up the bus! Hold the phone! Come again? At least that’s how I feel when I read that. What’s Jesus saying?

First, I think He’s saying, “In the same way I helped you overcome legs that didn’t work, I can help you overcome sin that controls your actions.” *You can live in victory!*

Second, I think Jesus said this because He knew *if* and *when* that man did sin again, He’d remember those words. And when that man remembered those words, He would remember that Jesus made his legs work. And when he remembered that Jesus made his legs work, he’d remember this: “If Jesus can make me walk he can make me clean again!”

What do you do if you've messed up? What do you do if you've sinned again?

1 John 1:9 says, "If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive them and purify you from all unrighteousness."

If Jesus can make a lame man walk, he can make you clean again. Just ask!

1. What in your life needs forgiven by Jesus?

2. What can you do to make sure those sins don't come back in your life and control you?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Jesus, I pray that You would forgive me of anything that has crept back into my life. I want to live for You *every* day! Help me to see those sins as they are lurking around so I can avoid them. Jesus, please make me and keep me clean! Amen.

DAY 6: OUCH!

Scripture: John 6

It would be easy to take the feeding of the 5,000 or Jesus walking on the water to talk about today. Those are two stories that we never get tired of hearing about. They are cool, inspiring and exciting! Much of the crowd that followed Jesus came for that “cool” stuff too. But there is so much more to Jesus than the signs and wonders. There is so much more to Jesus than “cool”.

The crowds in the story were clamoring for more of Jesus. They were waiting with bated breath for the next big thing He might do. They *loved* the signs and wonders. They *loved* the excitement and anticipation. The problem was many of them couldn’t stand His teaching. Even some of His closest followers found His teaching *very* hard to swallow. This is a real danger for us today as well.

In the last half of chapter 6, Jesus teaches what some of his followers called a “hard teaching”. He spoke distinctly on “eating His flesh and drinking His blood.” Huh? He was basically saying, “You’ve got to take *all* of me or *none* of me. There is no in between.” In fact, in another book of the Bible Jesus said, “You are either *for* me or *against* me.” *Ouch!* That’s hard to swallow! It’s not glamorous! It’s not exciting. It’s definitely not “cool”!

After Jesus said those words in John chapter 6, the Scripture records that some of His own disciples replied, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” At that point many of His followers deserted Him. Why? What does that mean for me?

One of the keys to following Jesus is an understanding that there will be times when it’s hard to accept His teaching. There will be times when it’s not all about the crowds, the signs, or the wonders. There will be times we’ve got to just do what Jesus says, even when it hurts.

When Jesus turned to his twelve closest disciples and asked them “Are you going to leave me too?” Peter spoke it best: ***“Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words of eternal life.”***

You will have “ouch” moments in this spiritual journey. It’s your decisions in those moments that will define *who* and *whose* you are. In those moments, you must respond to Jesus like Peter did, “To whom would we go?”

1. What is Jesus telling you that is hard to swallow?
2. How are you reacting to the teaching of Jesus in your life?
3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Jesus, please help me to take on *all* of Your teachings, even when it hurts. I don’t want to neglect *anything* You are asking me to do. There is no one else and no where else for me to turn. I’m all Yours. Amen.

DAY 7: JUST DO IT!

Scripture: John 7

You want to know one of the things about Christianity that bothers me the most? Well, even if you don't, it's the basis for our discussion today. I get so frustrated with people who are more focused on knowing than doing. I get frustrated with people who have knowledge rather than belief. We say we believe in Jesus, but shouldn't our belief result in action? I've been that kind of Christian before. I *knew* a lot but I didn't *do* very much at all.

In the end of our Scripture reading today Jesus has an encounter with some Pharisees about whether or not He was the Messiah. Now remember, the Messiah was the One in whom *all* Jews, including the Pharisees, were waiting for. All of the Old Testament (The Jewish Scriptures) spoke about the Messiah coming to save the Jews. The Pharisees knew the Old Testament inside and out. They had lots of knowledge, but little action.

Here Jesus was, *the* Messiah. He was the One they were waiting for, speaking right to them, and they missed it. Here they were, with an actual opportunity to live out the promise in which they hoped for, but they couldn't. Why? They were so caught up in what they *knew*, that they couldn't do what they were supposed to do. *Believe!*

In the church today, a very real danger exists for us to be caught up in how much we know. All the knowledge in the world does me no good unless it produces some action in me. I'm not talking about earning God's love or working for my salvation. Salvation is *free!* We discussed that already. I am talking about making sure that what's in our head makes it to our heart, and lives itself out in our daily lives.

James says, ***“Don't just listen to God's Word. You must do what it says.”*** Should we seek knowledge and try to know more of God's Word? *Yes!* Should we strive to know what, where and why we

DAY 8: DON'T STOP

Scripture: John 8

Well, you've been following Christ for one week now. I hope that you're getting a good grasp on what happened, where you're going and what you need to be doing. I'd be remiss though if I didn't challenge you on this subject today because I think it was a key component to Jesus' teaching, especially in this chapter.

In our Scripture today it says that many people believed in Jesus *because* of the things He said. The same can be said of us today. Many people have believed or say they believe in Jesus, but they aren't really following Him. They don't have an up to date, day-to-day relationship with Him.

In verses 31-32 it says: ***“Jesus said to the people who believed in Him, ‘You are truly my disciples (followers) if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”***

Being a follower of Jesus means that I'm actually following Him. If I cease to trust in Him, obey Him or follow Him can I really call myself a “follower” of Christ? As Jesus put it: ***“You are my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings.”***

Does this mean that I'm doomed for all eternity if I disobey Him? *No!* But it does mean that I better be serious about getting back on track. If I continue to resist Jesus, I'll be in danger of forfeiting my relationship with Him. Just like the people in this passage.

Being a Christian doesn't come down to that one moment in time when I asked Jesus into my heart. Being a Christian is a 24-7 gig. If I want to truly be a disciple of Jesus, I don't stop!

“Man this sounds hard!” It is, if it were my own effort. But Jesus says if we'll follow His teaching, the Truth... *His* Truth will set us

free. Jesus and His Word will set us free to continue being the follower He created us to be. One week down. *Don't Stop!*

1. In what areas of your spiritual life have you been tempted to “stop”?

2. On a scale of 1 – 10, where do you put your walk with Jesus this first week?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Wow God, I've made it one week! Thank you for being patient with me as I'm trying to learn this Christian walk! Please continue to show me what I am supposed to do and where I am supposed to go. I still have so many questions and I will continue to seek You and do my best to learn. Amen

DAY 9: WHY AM I HERE?

Scripture: John 9

Ever wonder why you are here? Not here like “On my couch” or “At a coffee shop.” But why am I on this planet? Why did God make me? The things that happened in my life, are they for a purpose? And what about the bad stuff that happened to me, or the bad things I did? How can God use those?

In our Scripture today, the disciples ask a similar question about a man who was born blind. They asked Jesus, **“Why was this man born blind?”** Jesus’ response is somewhat of a surprise. We would expect a theological, philosophical and hard to understand answer. But that’s not what He gives. His answer is simple. He says: **“This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.”**

Why are you here? The answer is simple. So the power of God might be seen in *You*. While you may not have been born blind so Jesus could make you see, you have been made *exactly* the way God wants you to be, so that you can do exactly what He wants you to do. You are uniquely designed *by* God to fulfill a God sized purpose *for* God.

“Really? God wants to use me?” *Yes!* “But what about my sins? What about all the times I’ve messed up?” First off, they are gone! When you accepted Jesus He forgave them. Second, you are now like the blind man. You can now help people who are struggling with those same things you used to struggle with.

How many blind people do you think this man brought back to Jesus? Lame? Deaf? As many as he could? I can see him saying: “You’ve *got* to come see this man named Jesus. I was blind but now I can see. He made me see!” I’m sure he wondered how his blindness could ever be used...but it was.

God has given you passions, talents, yes, even failures, so that His power might be shown through you? Figure out what God has given you to show His power...and then show it. It might take a while to figure it out and but that's ok. Jesus wants to live *through* you. Don't ever stop asking the question, "Why am I here?" You are here for Jesus!

1. So, why are you here? Do you know?
2. What part of your life can you use to help others?
3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, thank You for making me - *me!* Please help me to see and understand why You made me and why I am here. I want my life to be used for Your glory in any way that You want me too. Please reveal to me Your purpose for my life today. Amen.

DAY 10: SATISFIED?

Scripture: John 10

The Scripture for today is one of my favorites in the entire Bible. One verse in chapter 10 stands out to me from the rest, and it is the focus for us today. It is the core of my preaching as a pastor and resonates with me every time I read it. It says, ***“The thief’s (devil) purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”***

Rich and satisfying? We like the sound of that don’t we? Who doesn’t want to have a rich and satisfying life? Here’s the catch though. Jesus’ idea of being rich and satisfied is *nothing* like what our culture describes. The devil wants to make sure he steals our life. Jesus wants to give us abundant life; rich and satisfying. So how do we get it?

The life Jesus offers is only satisfying when not lived for myself; when I *give* instead of *take*. Remember yesterday? You and I are here on this planet, not for us, but for Jesus and for others. In other Scriptures Jesus said, “If you want to be first then you must be last.” “If you want to be the greatest then become the servant to all.” Seems like He’s talking in circles doesn’t it? So what is He saying?

This whole thing called life is not about me. This journey is not about me. My faith isn’t even about me. It’s when I begin to put Jesus and others ahead of myself that I really begin to experience life. This flies in the face of our pride. This flies in the face of our culture. And that’s exactly what Jesus is trying to expose. *Us!*

Philippians 2 tells us that our attitude should be like that of Jesus’ who, ***“was in very nature God but didn’t consider equality with God as something to pursue, but rather He made himself nothing. Becoming a servant.”***

DAY 11: WRONG QUESTION

Scripture: John 11

Have you ever thought about forever? Forever is a long time. Isn't it hard to believe that we've been doing this for eleven days now, and we haven't once mentioned heaven, forever or eternity?

The afterlife is a hotly contested subject. Are heaven and hell real, and do real people actually go there? If so, who goes where? If I died tonight where would I go? These are all questions that come up when you begin talking about eternity.

In our Scripture for today, Jesus addresses eternity. One of his closest friends, Lazarus passes away. The climax of the story is when Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, even after being in the grave for four days. The truth of the story though is not found in what Jesus did, it's found in what He said. You see, Jesus wasn't focused on the physical death of one man, but the spiritual life of us all.

Verse 25 says: ***“I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.”***

Is there a Heaven and Hell? Yes. Do real people actually go there? Yes. Jesus, along with the entire Bible, speaks of an actual place called Heaven and an actual place called Hell. Those who believe in Jesus go to Heaven and those who don't...well, you get the picture. But why are we always focused on what happens after we die when we have so much time to live today?

In the church world we've become famous for asking this question: “Where would you go if you died tonight?” But I think we've been asking the wrong question. I think we should be asking, “Where *could* you go and what *could* you do if you lived for Jesus *today*?”

Even Jesus said, “Everyone who *lives* in me will never die.” If we would just focus on living, we wouldn’t have to worry about dying or even fear death itself. We’ve been asking the wrong question.

1. Where have you not been “living” for Jesus because you’re focused on dying?
2. If you could do *anything* for Jesus what would you do?
3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Thank You Jesus for making a way to live forever. Thank You that You have opened the door for me to make it to Heaven. I’m so glad that I can spend forever with You, but I want to live *today* for You as well! Jesus, please remind me to focus on my today and not on my forever. Amen.

DAY 12: A DIRTY WORD

Scripture: John 12

No, no, no it's not what you're thinking. It's actually a great word that we've come to avoid like the plague in the church. We hear it, but I don't think we understand it. What is it? Evangelism.

When we hear the word "evangelism" there are some images that we immediately conjure up in our minds. Perhaps for you it's the guy on the street corner yelling through a bullhorn. Maybe it's the little pamphlet that asks the question, "Where would you go if you died tonight?" Perhaps it's the image of going door-to-door and telling people about Jesus. Whatever it is, those are all forms of evangelism, but they aren't necessarily things we *have* to do.

What is evangelism then? I don't know if we can nail it down to one thing but I do know this...it should be natural. We shouldn't have to force ourselves to evangelize. I mean, if I love a new restaurant I'm going to tell people about it. When I experience a great movie I naturally begin talking about it. It's very natural for me to talk about my favorite sports teams.

In our Scripture for today it says that the reason so many people came out to meet Jesus was because others were *talking* about what Jesus did by raising Lazarus from the dead. Now, I know what you're thinking. You might say, "Well, if I saw a dead man raised to life I'd tell everyone too." In reality you've actually seen something greater. You've seen someone have *all* their sins forgiven and their spiritual heart made alive. I'm talking about *you* of course!

Evangelism is all about sharing what God has done in your life. It's simply being excited about being a Christian. You don't have to force it on someone, bring it up at awkward times or be obnoxious about it. You definitely don't need to be afraid of it. Just ask God for the opportunity to share your story. People are open to stories.

Evangelism doesn't have to be a dirty word. If you live your life for the glory of God, He will give you chance to share your story. **1 Peter 3:15** says, ***“And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.***

If we live for Jesus, people will ask.

1. What are some natural situations in your life where you can share your faith?
2. Who in your life do you want to see know Jesus?
3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, please help me to live my life in such a way that people will ask me about the hope that I have. And when they do ask, I pray that You would give me the words to say so I can share my story with them. Thank You for the people in my life who were willing to share with me. Amen.

DAY 13: GETTIN' DIRTY

Scripture: John 13

Following Jesus is somewhat of a dichotomy. While Jesus cleans up our lives, (meaning our sins are gone, our habits change, and our hearts are clean) He also asks us to get dirty. Being a Christian involves rollin' up our sleeves and getting to work. While many people only view Christianity as their ticket out of the hot place, Jesus actually calls us to a life of service while we wait.

In our Scripture for today, Jesus does something that blows the minds of the disciples. What He did was not only counter cultural it was counter religion.

Jesus was a Rabbi (Teacher who had many followers). A Rabbi would *never* be found rolling up his sleeves to wash the feet of *his* disciples, yet that's exactly what Jesus did. He was counter cultural *and* He was counter religion.

Who ever heard of a God that served the servants? Jesus *is* God, which means He *was* God in the flesh and yet he knelt at the feet of His servants to serve them. Think about the implications.

In Jesus' day there were no socks, showers, or paved roads. Animals roamed the streets. This means the disciples' feet were exposed to the dirt, animal waste and weather with *no* regular cleaning. You'd think Jesus would have avoided those 24 feet altogether, but He didn't. He wrapped a towel around His waste, gathered a water basin and washed their feet.

That's all fine and dandy until we read verse 15. Jesus says, ***"I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."*** *What?* I have to go wash feet now? Well, not necessarily.

DAY 14: PEACE

Scripture: John 14

Today we finish up week number two. I know this has been a lot to take in, but I am so proud of you for continuing on this journey. I hope each day you are learning and growing in your faith.

Peace. That is the subject for today. Not lack of war or a movement in the 70's, but having peace in your heart and rest in your soul. I believe that Jesus was strategic when He talks about peace in chapter 14, because of what we'll see in chapter 15. (*Don't look ahead!*) I think as followers of Jesus, we *must* get what we're talking about today, or there will be many times it would be easy to just...give up.

In our Scripture for today Jesus says, ***"I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."***

Several times Jesus told His disciples that when He left the world He would send them a gift, the Holy Spirit. You are a benefactor of that gift as well. When you decided to follow Jesus and asked Him into your heart, you immediately received the Holy Spirit. So what's so special about that?

Being a Christian doesn't take away stress. Being a Christian won't end all your problems or solve every issue in your life. Being a Christian doesn't fix everything. What it *does* do is give you the ability to have peace through *all* of life. Even in the midst of the storms there can be peace.

Jesus never promised us that following Him would be easy. In fact, at one point He *guarantees* that it won't. Jesus said, ***"In this life you will have trouble."*** But he ends that statement by saying this, ***"But take heart because I have overcome the world."***

Regardless of what you face in this life, remember, that because you follow Jesus you can have peace.

1. How can you better trust in Jesus through the storms of your life?

2. Who in your life is facing a storm right now that you can show Jesus to?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, please help me to trust You in every situation of my life. I understand that there may be times when life gets tough. Times where I face a storm. Lord, in those storms I pray You would give me peace. Thank You for being there for me. Amen.

DAY 15: WE DON'T HAVE TO!

Scripture: John 15

Yesterday was so important because of what we are going to talk about today. It's not easy to think of this happening right here in the United States, but on some levels it already does. It's called persecution.

“Persecution actually happens?” In other countries around the world it is prevalent. Every day there are Christians who are killed for believing in Jesus. Every day churches meet in secret for fear of their own lives. What's amazing is, in some of the most persecuted countries of the world, those Christians have the most excitement, joy and...*peace* in following Jesus. Hmmm, see why Day 14 was so important?

“But we don't have persecution in America do we?” While we may not have it at the level of other countries, I do think we have persecution. Look at how Christians are portrayed by many people in Hollywood. How are Christians treated politically? Go to most schools, work places or organizations and you'll find Christians who are made fun of, scrutinized or shunned for what they believe. Again, it may not be at the level of other countries, but it is growing.

It shouldn't be a surprise really. In our Scripture today Jesus basically says, “If the world hated me they are going to hate you.” Some of you reading this probably have family members who don't like the fact that you follow Jesus now. Some may have friends who treat you differently because of Jesus.

Jesus teaches again about His Holy Spirit, given to us specifically for these times. He says, ***“But I will send you the Advocate – the Spirit of truth.”*** Why does Jesus keep talking about the Spirit? Because without the Spirit I'm not sure we can make it through another day. The gift of the Holy Spirit is, without question, absolutely *vital* to our spiritual survival and success in this life.

Each day we must lean on the Holy Spirit. We do that through prayer, reading our Bibles and simply listening. The Spirit is always there. He always knows. He always cares. We just need to tap into the Holy Spirit to make it through the day. Remember, because Jesus already overcame the world...we don't have to!

1. What can you do better to rest in the Holy Spirit each day?
2. What area of your life do you need the most peace?
3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Thank You Jesus for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Help me in those areas of my life where I need peace. Help me to rest in *You* every single day. If and when I am faced with persecution, I pray that I would find my strength in You. Amen.

DAY 16: ALIGNMENT

Scripture: John 16

This is the third chapter in a row that Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit. Are you getting the picture that this might be important?

We're beginning our final week together as we figure out what it means to follow Jesus. The next six days hinge upon what we're going to talk about today. Today, I'm going theological on ya.

When we become Christians we receive *all* of the Holy Spirit, but I believe that a problem still remains in our hearts. There is a follow up question we need to ask: Does the Holy Spirit have all of me?

When we come to Jesus to be saved, we are coming as a rebel to a ruler. We are consumed in our sin and find ourselves pleading for mercy and relief of that burden. Not long after being "born again" though, we realize some things still haven't been dealt with.

Pride still exists and I try to be in charge rather than God. Bitterness takes root. Attitudes turn sour. I grumble against God. I'm self seeking. My temper is out of control. I have frequent failures. I might believe in Jesus but I'm not living as I should. It's like I'm walking with a foot dragging behind.

What you'll notice is, these things have always been there only now you're deeply bothered by them. Now you want an answer to, "Why can't I overcome these things?" I believe the answer is surrender.

Just as the day in which you surrendered your *sins* to Jesus, so now you need to surrender your *self* to His Holy Spirit. This time, instead of a rebel to a ruler, you're a loyal soldier *asking* for orders. "But how does that fix anything?" It gets fixed through the filling of the Holy Spirit. I've had all of Him but I need to give Him all of me.

In our Scripture today, Jesus says, ***“Righteousness is available because I go to the Father.”*** Being filled with the Holy Spirit (righteousness) is literally a prayer away.

It’s a lot like getting the alignment fixed on your car. When your alignment is off you can keep the car on the road, it’s just a constant struggle. The car seems to always be heading toward the ditch. Once the alignment is fixed though, it stays on the road much easier. We still have to steer, and we could still choose to force the car in the ditch, but what we aren’t doing is constantly fighting the cars natural inclination of trying to get there.

We need the alignment of our hearts fixed too. Our hearts are bent toward sin, and *only* being filled with the Holy Spirit, surrendering my whole-self, can God bend it back toward Him. We need an alignment!

1. Have you surrendered your self to the Holy Spirit?

2. What areas do you find yourself most frequently struggling with?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, I surrender myself to You today. Take my attitudes, my desires, my dreams and my ambitions. I ask You to *fill* me with Your Holy Spirit and purify my heart from the inclination to run from You. Thank You for Your righteousness. Amen.

DAY 17: UNITY

Scripture: John 17

This is one of the coolest chapters in the Bible. We actually get to read one of Jesus' prayers to His Father. Several prayers are recorded in Scripture from Jesus that are "in the moment" prayers. Prayers when He calls out to God in certain times of need or in certain situations. This prayer though is deeper. It is one of those heartfelt, thought through and deep rooted kind of prayers.

In this prayer, Jesus prays for Himself. That's encouraging isn't it? Do you know it's ok to pray for yourself? Jesus did. He then prayed a great prayer for His disciples. Imagine the feelings Jesus must have had, knowing He was leaving them behind and knowing that they didn't understand all that was about to happen. Then Jesus prayed for someone that grips my heart every time. *Us!*

In verse 20 Jesus says, ***"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message."*** Jesus prayed for us! That should be such a *huge* encouragement. Around 2,000 years ago, Jesus, the God of the universe, prayed for *you!* I don't want us to miss the core of His prayer though. What did He pray for?

Jesus prayed that we (Christians) would be *one!* He prayed that we would have unity. The only way that's possible is if we have surrendered our all to the Holy Spirit so that we love God and love people with everything we are. If I am self-seeking I cannot be one with anything but myself. The reason Jesus could say that He and the Father are one, is because Jesus is not self-seeking. He is the *ultimate* example of surrender.

So how can we have unity with all these other Christians? Love. Jesus said, "The world will know you belong to me because you love one another." Christians won't always agree on how to worship or where we worship. Christians won't always agree on specific

doctrines or Bible passages. What Christians *can* agree on is that we will love and support each other through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. What other churches can you pray for today?

2. Is there anything between you and another Christian that is keeping you from being one?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, I pray as You did nearly 2,000 years ago, that You would make us one. I pray that we would be unified under the purpose of reaching more people for You. Help us to get past our differences and focus on the one thing that can keep us together. Love. Amen.

DAY 18: IT'S NOT OVER

Scripture: John 18

This is one of the most depressing chapters in the Bible. Are they seriously treating Jesus this way? And what in the world is Peter thinking? I mean, come on! After all Christ did for you Peter, you're just going to throw it all away like that? Why would he do that?

In Matthew and Luke, Peter is recorded making some bold promises. Jesus, knowing the future, told the disciples, "All of you are going to desert me." Peter's response was immediate, and somewhat self-righteous. "Even if everyone else deserts you (meaning the other disciples), I *never* will. I'll even *die* for you." Then we read that when Jesus is arrested and Peter is questioned about knowing Him, he just flat out denies it. He literally says, "I've never met Him!" What changed?

That's just it, a change still needed to be made in his heart. He was committed to Jesus, just not all the way. Not 100%. He was committed, as long as it all worked out good for him. It's what we talked about on Day 16 with alignment.

Peter said he would die for Jesus because he thought Jesus was going to overthrow the Roman government, become the King of Israel and Peter would be His right hand man. When Peter realized that power, popularity and comfort were not in his future he bolted. He was sold out, as long as the situation suited his interest.

But the focus here shouldn't be on Peter's failure. The focus should be the fact that it wasn't over. Did Peter screw up? Yes! But he eventually became an unstoppable force for Jesus because He got his alignment right. In the book of Acts, Peter was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and *then* something changed. He was no longer a coward, self-centered or weak. He was bold, powerful and courageous. This was the same man, but he had a full heart. He was full of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 4, the Jewish leaders told Peter to stop talking about Jesus or they would kill him. This time, when faced with death, Peter said, ***“Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than Him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”***

It's not over...even if you've messed up! Jesus is alive and He's alive *in you!* Maybe you feel like you've blown it, but just remember...it's not over!

1. What failure are you focusing on instead of your future?

2. Is there anything in your life that needs to be forgiven and forgotten by God?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, help me to realize that even when I mess up, it's not over! Help me to keep going no matter what comes my way or what failures I experience. Thank You for loving me through my failures. Amen.

DAY 19: REMEMBER?

Scripture: John 19

Do you ever have those family times where you say, “Remember when...,” and you tell a story about what a family member did? Or, “Remember when...,” and you tell a story about a friend? Those times remind us of important moments in our lives. They help us grow closer together, appreciate each other and become stronger in our relationships. I want to challenge you today to remember.

I think in our Christian journey we need those “Remember when...?” moments. You are now 19 days into your faith journey. Do you remember? “Remember what?” I know that’s what you’re asking. Do you remember what Jesus did for you?

There’s going to come a point in your journey where you’ll wonder about your love for Jesus. At some point you might think that God is not looking out for your own good. In those moments when you wonder if God really cares or knows what you are going through; when you think He doesn’t love you through your mistakes... remember! Remember John 19.

“Remember when Jesus laid down His life for me?” “Remember when I was a total jerk to Jesus but he took the nails in his hands and feet for me anyway?” “Remember when I didn’t want anything to do with Jesus but He still came after me?” Remember?

You will face moments in your life where you’ll question your faith. You will face moments in your life where you’ll question God’s faith in you. You’ll question whether or not Jesus actually still loves you. It’s in those moments you *must* remember. It’s day 19. You have a long way to go. Will you remember?

Just like family moments, or moments with friends, remembering strengthens your bond. You’ll need those moments with Jesus too. Remembering when you accepted Him into your heart.

Remembering what He did for you. Remembering that, “While you were a sinner He died for you,” will only strengthen your bond. It helps keep your heart aligned. The devil will always try to remind you of the times that you failed but it’s in those times that you must...REMEMBER!

1. Have you remembered lately what Jesus did for you?
2. What can you do to help yourself remember?
3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, I can’t thank You enough for what You have done for me. I’m sorry for the times that I’ve forgotten Your sacrifice. Help me to remember no matter what. Amen.

DAY 20: BELIEVE

Scripture: John 20

Everything hinges on this. *Everything!* At the core of sin is unbelief. A very real danger for all of us is to simply not believe. At the same time, it is belief in Christ that will continue to keep our hearts aligned with His.

Adam and Eve ate the fruit because they didn't *believe* that God meant what He said. Peter denied Jesus because he didn't *believe* that His Lord was bigger than being arrested or killed. And in Revelation, people are not allowed into Heaven because they did not *believe*.

From the beginning of the Bible, continuing through the middle and all the way to the end, the story in its simplest form is about those who believed, and those who didn't. See how belief is the key?

In our Scripture today John says, ***“But these are written so that you may continue to believe...and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.”***

Your life is hinged on your belief. Notice John said, “continue to believe.” If your heart is to remain aligned and if your spirit is to be alive you must *believe*. If your actions and attitudes are to continue to reflect more and more of Jesus, you must *believe*.

That's why we need to remember what Jesus did. That's why when we mess up we need to believe “It's not over!” It's why we must trust that regardless of what is happening around us, the Holy Spirit is in control and can give us peace. It's why we need to look out for the interests of others and get dirty through serving. I could go on and on through every day of this book and say, “It's why we must *believe!*”

If there is ever a way the devil will try to trip you up, this is it. We often view the devil as offering up some sin to commit or roadblock

to trip us up, and he does do that for sure. But maybe the most common way we are attacked by our enemy is through the area of unbelief. Not necessarily believing *in* Jesus, but actually *believing* Him. A better question than, “Do you believe *in* Jesus?” is, “Will you *believe* Him?” Will you believe what He said and follow it? Hmm, now we’re getting somewhere.

I’ve decided to follow Jesus...so where is He going? I don’t know, but in order for you to get there you must *believe!* Like one man is recorded saying in the Scripture: ***“I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.”***

1. What areas of unbelief are you struggling with concerning Jesus?
2. How can you make sure you are acting in belief?
3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, I pray what the man prayed in Scripture: “I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief!” I don’t want *anything* to stand in my way of serving, loving and honoring You! Please reveal to me any area of my life that I may not be acting in belief. Thank You for giving me the ability to believe. Amen.

DAY 21: SO GO!

Scripture: John 21

The Scripture reading today is similar to what we talked about on day 18. This whole scenario is Jesus telling Peter, “It’s not over!” It’s a *beautiful* picture of the love, grace and mercy of Jesus. It shows how we can totally blow it, yet Jesus still wants to use us. But that’s not what I want to talk about on our last day together.

Today is the final day on this part of your journey. I have no idea if you’ve stuck with this every day. I don’t know if this has helped you or if you’ve done the things I’ve challenged you to do. I guess if you’re reading this you’re at least trying, so let’s talk about what I think Jesus wants you to do.

“Follow me.” That’s it! He wants you to follow Him. So go! I don’t know where He wants to take you, but I know it will be a daring adventure. So go! Most likely it will be different than where He wants to take your friends, co-workers, or even some of your family. So go!

Jesus basically tells Peter, “If you love me, then follow me!” He might take you to dangerous places or call you to dangerous spaces, but, “if you love Me, then follow Me.” So go!

He might not show you the end or give you all the details but, “If you love Me then follow Me.” So go!

There will be times that you’ll face uncertainty, and you’ll wonder if this is *really* the way He wants you to go, but, “if you love Me then follow Me.” So go!

It won’t make sense, it won’t be logical, it will be scary and it will be risky. Some people will scoff. Others will get angry, but, “if you love Me then follow Me!” So go!

I can't promise you safety, comfort, rewards or power but I do promise you that this will be the *best* thing you ever do, if you just...*go!* Remember, Jesus loves you no matter what you do and is with you wherever you go...so go!

1. What areas of growth do you need to work on most in your life if you are to “go” successfully?

2. Where is the first place you need to “go”?

3. What questions do you have?

Prayer: Lord, I don't know if I'm ready but I'm willing. Please lead me and show me where I am supposed to go. I fully understand that where You lead may not make sense in this human world. Lord, make me mindful of *Your* Kingdom and not mine. Wherever You lead...I'll go! I'm heading out today, please be with me. Amen.