



# I am

a 21 day devotional **Book of John**





759 S. Lenfesty Ave, Marion, Indiana  
(765) 573-5482 . hello@theriver.cc

[www.theriver.cc](http://www.theriver.cc)

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Welcome to 21 Days of Prayer and the “I AM” series. The phrase “I AM” is used over 300 times throughout the scriptures from Genesis through Revelation. Over the next 21 days of prayer, we will journey through the book of John where we see seven of the most defining “I AM” statements used by Jesus.

For thirty-three years, Jesus felt everything you have ever felt: weakness, weariness, sadness, rejection. His feet got tired and his head ached. He was tempted and his strength was tested. And you know why? Because in becoming human, Jesus made it possible for us to see God. His tears, God’s tears. His voice, God’s voice. Want to know what matters to God? Find out what matters to Jesus. Want to know what in the world God is doing? Ponder the words and life of Jesus.

Don’t settle for a quick glance or a superficial understanding. Look long into the heart of Christ and you’ll see it. Grace and life. Forgiveness of sin. The defeat of death. This is the hope he gives.

Jesus wants you to know him. As you read these pages, may the hero of all history talk to you personally, and may you find in him the answer to your deepest needs.

Inside these pages you will find 18 devotionals to journey through together. I want to encourage you over the 21 Days to engage the devotionals, to seek God in prayer and commit to worship Him. If you will give God one year of your life and go all in, your life will never be the same. I am trusting that if you give God these 21 Days, you will experience all that the I AM has for you.

Partnering with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Pastor Matthew



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## Can I Get a Witness!?

John 1:6-9

John was sent from God to testify about the coming of Jesus.

“He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.” (vs. 7-8)

God is obviously working through John and using his obedience to further His Kingdom and prepare the way of Jesus.

A gentle reminder for you...God worked through John *just as he works through me and you*. This section of scripture is not about John bringing glory to himself, but rather glory to God. John acted out of obedience and shared the good news of Jesus. I believe God wants to use us to do just the same. We are all called to go and tell the good news.

God works through us to bring Himself glory—to make Himself known. It’s my prayer that I would say yes to being a witness for Him each and every day.

Something I say often in Kids Kreek is, “following Jesus is fun, but it’s hard work.”

Being a witness takes effort, it takes intentionality.

When I was called into ministry, I prayed this prayer from Psalm 25:4-5.

*“Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and **my hope is in you all day long.**”*

I did not have it all figured out, but I did know all God wanted was my “yes.” Don’t hesitate to be a witness for Jesus because you’re not sure of all the details. God just wants your obedience, and He will walk with you every step of the way.

Pray for courage to say “yes” to being a witness for His Kingdom.

Pray for opportunities to share His love.

Pray for wisdom as you step into what God has called you to.





## That's A Lot of Grace

John 1:16

“Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.”

One verse. Sometimes just one verse can be so deep that it takes years to let it really soak in. Point in case with John 1:16.

I wore a t-shirt that said “grace upon grace” for a couple years without it ever sinking in. Just was a nice Christiany shirt. Then, one day I was reading slowly through John and it clicked differently. And I knew what I had been wearing around was one of the key explanations of my life with God – “grace in place of grace already given.” That means that God gives me grace. He doesn’t look at me and think, “I wish you would get this figured out faster.” He definitely does not look at me and say, “You’ve met your limit. I’m done helping you.” No. He gives me grace for today’s moment. And then tomorrow, he refills me to the top with more grace. And He’s ready to give more grace at the next need. God gives me grace in place of grace already given. Where God once gave me grace, He really doesn’t mind giving me that again...in that same area! God already knows today that I’ll need more grace tomorrow. He is not caught off guard or disappointed that I am still working on me. In fact, he’s beside me in it all. He is working on me with me! And the main ingredient of this work is grace.

But won’t He eventually get fed up with me? Isn’t it likely that even God gets tired of my ups and downs, my back and forth efforts, my shortcomings? He most definitely wants more for us. He wants us to experience the abundant life (see John 10:10) – not just surviving day to today. But He will never grow weary of us or run out of care for us. John 1:16 says “Out of his FULLNESS we all have received grace in place of grace already given.” He is FULL of grace. It’s who He is! So we can relax and receive God’s grace again and again. He’s not going to run out of grace on me. Or ever. On anyone.

One final thinking note here is found in Romans 6:1-14. Take a moment to read this and let it soak in. Should we go on sinning and lessen our efforts since God is full of grace? No. We are not meant to be victims to our sin but humble recipients of grace. (Hey, if you didn’t really stop and read Romans





## Wedding Advice from Someone That is Not Yet Married

John 2

By the time you are reading this devotional, I am happily married to the love of my life!! But right now, as I am writing, I am in the thick of wedding planning with only a few days left until “I do.” There is so much to do! So many details. So much **mundane**. Addressing invitations doesn’t feel like the “best day of our lives.”

In John 2, we read of one of Jesus’ first stops in his ministry. You guessed it, a wedding. I’m sure the bride and groom envisioned their perfect day but then their worst fear happened: they ran out of drinks (clearly they did not have their guests RSVP using theknot.com). Luckily, Jesus came to the rescue. He should just have to wave his hands and then, like a Disney movie, there would be more drinks. Right? But instead, Jesus says:

*“Fill the jars with water.”*

I can imagine the faces of the bridal party. Really? Water? You think we are *that* cheap? While Jesus could have just made the wine appear, I believe this miracle wasn’t just for miracles sake or to save a desperate bride. I believe he did it to teach those in attendance this: **miracles are preceded by the mundane.**

I am at the front of the line for the most impatient people in the world. When there is disorder, unrest, pain, and brokenness in my world and the lives of those I love, I just want them to be fixed immediately. Doesn’t Jesus want that, too?

I, too, live for the “camp high” moments and moments in a worship service where it seems like God said something or showed up *just for me*. I’ve become accustomed to not having to work for the God who has done so much work for me. When I don’t “feel” God or when I don’t have that big God moment, when it is just mundane, I often think that God is not there.

I want to see the full picture of the mundane, asking that God show me what he has for me at the end so I can see if the mundane is worth it enough for me to invest my time. How selfish, right?





## Living Out God's Purpose

John 3

Do you feel God tugging on your heart to do something? Are you being led by the spirit into anything right now? The truth is that God has a unique purpose and plan for each of our lives. It is one that is centered upon building up his kingdom.

Now just stop and think for a moment. **Are you living that purpose out?**

**Confusion** and **fear** are two of the biggest causes that make many people miss the purpose God has given them!

The first chapter of John displays that God's purpose for our lives is not that confusing at all. Right after Andrew began following Jesus, the bible says "*The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah.' And he brought him to Jesus.*" Later on, another disciple by the name of Philip encountered Christ. Guess what Phillip's first action was? He went and told his friend Nathanael!

Both Andrew and Philip show us that **sharing Jesus** is one of the main purposes that God gives to his followers. If you are confused about what God may be calling you to step into, start by just sharing your faith! The Lord will handle all the details as you go about doing so!

Once you understand God's purpose for your life, fear of being unqualified to do that purpose arises. Jesus said to Nathanael, "*Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.*" In the same way that Jesus already knew everything about Nathanael before meeting him, he also **knows everything** about who we are. There is no reason to fear if you are capable of living out God's purpose for your life! If God knows you from the inside out, why would he give you a task you cannot bear?

God knows who we are now, but also **who we will become!** Jesus told Simon his name would switch to Peter (meaning "rock") immediately after Simon began following him. Why? Because Jesus was focused on who Peter would become in the future, not the simple fisherman he was in that moment. Peter went on to be the solid rock that the early church was built upon!



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## More of Him, Less of Me

John 3 & John 12

When I was younger I always wanted to be the best, the best at whatever I did.

I wanted to be the best student, the best daughter, the best teacher, the best everything!

I think it may have been because it got my parents approval. That started a trend with me in that I wanted and enjoyed getting the approval of others. I mean everyone wants a pat on the back, right? Even the disciples argued about who was the greatest in Luke 9:46. What about you? Do you live for that affirmation?

As I got older, I grew to love getting the praise of others. Recognition as a teacher really got me pumped. I wanted to be the best mom, and praise for my kids, meant praise for me. Or so I thought! Life was a sort of competition for me. Competition to be the best.

My brother-in-law had this verse underlined in his bible when he passed away. And I think it applies here.

**John 3:30** says “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

We need to decrease in importance and be sure our focus is on Christ and not us. We want to draw people to Christ and not ourselves. Most of my life I put the focus more on myself and my achievements.

**John 12:43** says, “for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”

Ouch! When I saw that verse, I had to ask myself if that was true of me. I didn't want it to be, but I was afraid maybe it was. It was referring to the Pharisees. Am I a Pharisee? I don't want to be!

Allstair Begg in his devotional Truth for Life says: “Only the grace of God can get your focus off of yourself and set you free from yourself.”

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Only gazing at the one who left the glories of heaven to die for you on a cross can change your heart so that you seek to serve, not to be served, and care less about your prestige than you do about the good of others. Jesus is calling you today to serve, even as He serves you.”

Jesus gave His life for me and for you! Gave his life! Let’s take the focus off of ourselves and put it on Jesus. Let’s live for the “applause of heaven, not of man.

I have to tell you today, that in this season of my life when my job is no longer there to give me status, approval, or praise and my kids are grown and out of my home, I am more fulfilled than I have ever been. The reason is because my desire now is to minister to other women and help them find Jesus and find connection with each other and the body of Christ.

When I go home after meeting with someone about baptism or mentoring them for a season, I am filled with such joy and a sense of fulfillment. More fulfillment than any job could ever give.

**Matthew 20:28** says “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

How are you living your life to glorify Christ? To point others to Christ? How are you giving your life to serve, so that others might know Christ or know Him better? Pray and ask God to show you how to do that practically. Then ask Him to give you the courage and fortitude to actually do it.

## NOTES:

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## Hey, Check this out!

John 1 & John 4

John 1:29-51 and John 4:28-30, 39-41

Take a moment to use your Bible or Bible app and read these verses out of John chapter 1 and chapter 4. See if you notice a theme before you read on. Stop and look those up and read.

Yes, I really meant for you to read that. I hope you did! Did you notice a theme? This was a cool thing for me to notice. I'm going to call it "Helping Your Friends Find Jesus 101." Don't you wish every single person you cared about already knew how much God loved them? That He really does care about all their details? That he knows everything about them - the good, the bad and the ugly - and it doesn't change His affection for them? Don't you wish they all knew the difference God has made in your life? But it's just hard, isn't it? It's hard to figure out the perfect ways to tell your unsaved friends, coworkers, and family members about God. What will they think? How will they react? When will you do it? Probably should be prayed up before and that takes even more intentional time. It just seems really difficult to align everything and do a good job telling your friends about Jesus.

But does it really have to be that complicated? Could it just be something more like: "Hey, check this out." Look at John 1:29-51. We see \_\_\_ different people making it look very, very simple. John the Baptist just says, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." He just points out Jesus and what He has done for him as a person and what he has done for everyone. John says it again a few verses later to another group of people. Then, Andrew goes and tells his brother, "We have found the Messiah" and brought him to Jesus. Then Philip found Nathaniel and tells him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about..." Hmmm. They really just simply came out and told their friends to pay attention to Jesus. In John 4:28-41, we see the woman at the well do the same thing. After her powerful encounter with Jesus, she says "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"

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I think we need to get way more comfortable talking about God. We tell our friends things like, “Hey, you should check out this show I just watched,” or “Hey you need to check out this restaurant we just went to.” We tell our friends about the sales we find at stores. About the ways we figured out how to fix the problem on the car. About the amazing new ways we figured out how to use the grill. Let’s start just throwing Jesus into the conversations. Let’s not overthink it or over plan it. (Go ahead and pray on it in general, but no need to fast for 40 days before telling your coworker about an awesome sermon that is still sticking in your brain.) Just start doing it. Tell them about the cool new worship song that is hitting you right now. Tell them about how what you read in your Bible that day totally pertains to what you are talking about at work. Tell them you prayed for them this morning (but only if you really did). Just starting drawing their attention to Jesus. Because you know what else I saw in these verses? After people simply shared about God, lots of new people started following Him. That’s pretty awesome. I guess maybe we should do more talking so more people will do more following.

**What is one current thing that God has brought your attention to lately? How can you talk about that today with someone who may not have any faith in God? Pray on that for a few minutes and ask God to help you get started talking about him more.**

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## You Are The Bucket

John 4

When was the last time you told someone about something, and what was it? Why do you tell people about certain things? I think that when we truly think about what we share with others, it really all comes down to impact and transformation. It could be a funny joke, or something very serious. Either way, you are sharing because to you it was good enough to be shared.

In John 4, we see Jesus encounter a woman and set her free by the grace and love He showed to her. From there, the woman went back and told everyone that she could about what happened to her. This led to the people coming to meet Jesus for themselves and ultimately being saved!

I want to think about why this encounter was so transformative and life changing for the woman. We have to look at what Jesus did in this story. It was completely against the culture racially and socially for Jesus to interact with this woman. He knew it, and so did she. In that moment Jesus stood for the true Kingdom and showed that in His kingdom there will be no division, no racism, no gender divide, and no religious hostility. If this is what the Kingdom is, these are the things we are called to proclaim and live out on the earth. When people see the true beauty and freedom found in God's kingdom they will want to be part of it! THAT is what caused this woman to be so different and immediately go and tell. We can be just as impactful as this samaritan woman if we do what God has called us to do!

Jesus said to the woman, "If you would know who I am you'd be asking me for a drink..." then the woman replied saying, "sir you don't have a bucket..." Think about this... maybe Jesus didn't have a bucket because the woman was the bucket! That day the woman was filled up until she was overflowing with the good news of Jesus and that overflow led to her town being saved. I'm saying to you today that God has called you and I to be buckets. He is calling us to be filled up with all of who He is, that we may overflow and flood every place we go and every person we meet with the good news! THIS is the only way the world can be changed. We HAVE to GO and TELL about what God has done in us and who He is. This is not just a suggestion, this is a call to all who claim to follow Jesus. Will you be a bucket?





## Meeting the Needs of the Five Thousand (Plus)

John 6:1-15

Take time to open your Bible (or Bible app) and read the familiar passage in John 6:1-15.

This is one of those primary cool stories of Jesus interacting with others. We read this in kids' Bibles and learn it in our early years of kids ministry. And yet, there is so much more to learn even as adults!

Have you ever been struck by the fact that Jesus literally had thousands of people following Him? He's going about his life and ministry opportunities are literally chasing him down...in the thousands. We traditionally call this story "the feeding of the five thousand," but we know it would have likely been much more. The five thousand would have not just been the household leaders (the men) but women and children would have been along as well. You know what we don't see in this story? We don't see Jesus rushing the relational part of this encounter. He has thousands following him and they are hungry. He could have said, "We will give them a mini-lesson today. They all need to get lunch figured out." He also didn't ignore their physical needs. The way Jesus went about this day was slow. I don't know about you, but I can learn a lot from that. When we interact with people (one at a time or in groups of thousands), are we tuned in to their physical needs? Do we realize how their physical needs impact their ability to follow Jesus? To get involved with them will slow us down. We will need to not rush that process. I have to think that because Jesus took care of feeding the men, women and children, they realized he cared...about them personally. This would have added great value to whatever he was about to say to them. He set the stage for them to really absorb what he wanted to say to their hearts by addressing their physical needs. In one encounter, he showed this massive crowd that they each had value, that he was fully aware of their needs and he addressed both their physical and spiritual needs. Wow. That's the real miracle. Not just the food factor.

The adult version of me also likes to be reminded of the multiplication factor of Jesus from this familiar passage. God's math is not the same as our math. He can and he WILL make more out of less. I can trust him with the 10% of my finances because his math is trustworthy.





## Checkmate

John 8

Above you see a painting of 2 people playing chess. The title/name of this painting is “Checkmate.” If you look closely, you will see that one player is looking pretty rough and the other player is Satan who thinks he has this young man trapped, with no way out and if he wins, he wins his soul.

The story is told of a grandmaster chess player who saw this painting and then went and set up a board and put the pieces on the exact locations as the painting then he steps back and examines the board and a sheepish smile comes across his face. In the empty art gallery on that day, he makes this statement. “Young man in the painting, I sure wish you could hear me right now, because I have some good news for you. The devil only thinks he has won, but I’ve been studying the board, and there is a move he has missed! If you could see what I see, the whole nature of this game would change. Not only would this move save you from defeat, but it would also help you win the entire game!”

Take some time and turn to John 8 where Jesus encounters a woman who looked like she was in checkmate. The religious elites had gathered around her and were ready to stone her to death. And then Jesus shows up and bends down next to her and he writes in the dirt. Then he has some questions for those with the stones in their hands.

John 8:8-10 NLT **“All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”** <sup>8</sup> Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

<sup>9</sup> When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, **“Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”**

She responds with NO and then he tells her to go and sin no more.

So often in life, we consider the world to be a mess. With war, violence, a deadly pandemic, unemployment, struggling marriages, depression, isolation, and more ... we can easily become disillusioned. People begin to feel lost. We look for direction but often end up on the wrong path. It looks like checkmate, but we need not fear—the game is not over.



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## The Deity of Christ

John 8:48-59

Who is Jesus Christ? We must wrestle with this question at some point in our lives. Jesus even asked his disciples this question in Matthew 16. Was he a revolutionary Jewish teacher of love with a popular following? Perhaps a prophet from God? But as we read through the New Testament, we are smacked with the reality of his outrageous claims about himself.

The old liberal view that Jesus taught the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the ethic of love, shattered over and over on the rocks of Jesus' persistent self-exaltation. This is what drove C. S. Lewis to say, "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell."

Throughout chapter 8 Jesus has had an intense interaction with the Jewish leaders. First, with a woman caught in adultery and then Jesus warning the people about their unbelief. This conflict reaches a climax in verse 47 with Jesus' words, "Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don't listen because you don't belong to God."

So our text begins with their indictment of Jesus. Verse 48, "The people retorted, "You Samaritan devil! Didn't we say all along that you were possessed by a demon?" Calling Jesus a Samaritan was a racial slur with the innuendo that his real father was unknown. And to make the insult clear, they said he had a demon. So this is vicious opposition. Incredibly, Jesus continues to talk with them but offers them the gift of eternal life! Verse 52, "I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!"

Jesus is saying, If you keep my word, if you believe what I say about myself, and my Father, and our great work of salvation, you won't see death. You won't taste death. This Gospel ends with Jesus being killed and rising again. And the death of Jesus is explained as the substitution for sinners like these adversaries — like us.

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“I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15; 11:52). So keeping the word of Jesus is to receive the words he speaks about himself, his Father, and their work of salvation through his death and resurrection.

Jesus' audience mocks him because of this promise replying, "Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die! Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" Jesus replies with the biggest mic drop in the history of the world by saying, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!"

There it is, the clearest, most forthright claim in this Gospel that Jesus is Yahweh, the God of Israel, the great “I AM” of Exodus 3:14. If he only wanted to claim pre-existence, he could have said, “Before Abraham was, I was.” But he means to say more than mere pre-existence. He says, “Before Abraham was, I AM.”

The implications of this statement are staggering for our lives, this world, and eternity. Because Jesus **is** God, his work on the cross and his word of promise will be totally successful. If we believe these things, so many of our little anxieties disappear. The world needs Christ and the courage of Christians who believe that Jesus is I AM.

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## You Can't Box In the Miraculous

John 9

In the Gospel of John chapter 9 we see a story about Jesus passing by a blind beggar and miraculously healing him. John makes sure to mention that this man was born blind, that there was not an incident that caused his blindness. There are different ways I have read this passage throughout my life. Sometimes I see this story through the eyes of the disciples, who act incredibly like the friends of Job, misunderstanding and displaying a very poor theology of suffering in the process. Asking the question *“why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?”* (John 9:2) Jesus quickly shuts down that “tit for tat” thinking, helping them understand that God can use brokenness and suffering to display His power and mercy.

Secondly we see the Pharisees unable to accept an absolutely incredible miracle because it did not fit within the constraints and systems they had built for “God’s work”. Believing that because this man was healed on the Sabbath, it was a sinful act, therefore it couldn’t be ordained by God. Leveraging their considerable social power against the blind man’s family to try and corner them into affirming their own suspicions. *“Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue.”* (John 9:21b-22) I think we have to be especially careful to not allow our social status or power to become a “hindrance” for us to believe and experience the majesty and mystery of God’s miraculous acts in our lives. I tend to believe that when we feel like we’ve got God “figured out”, that’s when he shows up in a new and unexpected way. *God cannot be described as ordinary or expected.* We must humble ourselves into the firm knowledge that we cannot possibly understand the world around us like God can.

Through the perspective of the blind man we can see what this child-like faith and wonder actually looks like. His response to the Pharisees is an absolute representation of how we must hold God’s miraculousness when we encounter it. *“I don’t know whether he is a sinner,” the man replied. “But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!”* (John 9:25) This man didn’t believe or ask anything of Jesus. Jesus simply acted and changed this man’s entire existence for His own glory.





## Empty Nets & Empty Hearts

John 10:10

For years we would take off to Northern Michigan for family vacation and one of the activities would be that I would head out on the water to fish. My good friend Dick would set up the lines, put the best lures on and I would cast the line into the water, and for hours I would cast and reel while hearing Dick share the amazing stories of the fish he had been catching on the lake all summer. Only to come back with nothing to show for my work and an empty “livewell” on the boat.

Maybe you feel like that today, but it is not the “livewell” on a boat that is empty, it is your heart. See it is one thing to go on vacation and not catch anything. It is a whole different issue when you are relying on this for your livelihood.

Twice during Jesus' ministry we see him encounter his disciples at the end of a night of frustrating fishing and in both circumstances he tells them to go back out into the deep waters. And we know in both circumstances there was a miraculous catch of fish. I am sure the disciples were saying, Jesus we hear you but man there are no fish there. We know these waters. But Jesus must be thinking, you might know the waters and you might know me, but you're about to *experience* me.

When we have empty nets/hearts we must realize on our own power we are not going to catch anything, but when Jesus gets in the boat all that changes. Our proximity to Jesus will alter our perception and provision.

Have you worked hard on your schooling, at your job, at being a parent, on your marriage and you are not getting the return you thought? Do you find yourself tired and empty? The spot you have been fishing is not returning anything for you? Remember this: fulfillment doesn't come from more of something; it comes from more of Someone: Jesus!

*John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*





## Clock is at Zero

John 11

It was always a dream of mine to have the ball in my hand as the clock is ticking down 3, 2, 1, let er fly! Everything in the gym goes quiet and all the while this ball is floating through the air until you hear the swish and the crowd rushes the floor as we win the title. As a kid, I would run that scenario over and over again in my driveway. If the shot rimmed off, I would call goaltending on the fake player or I was fouled and was going to the free throw line with no time left to win the game. Because I could not bear the thought of failure, the thought of looking up at the clock and seeing that there was no time left.

The devil is whispering into so many people's ears today your time has run out there is no way for you to win the game. He is trying to get you to believe that the game is over. But it is not over yet. There is still time on the clock, the buzzer has not sounded.

In John 11 we see that Jesus' friend Lazarus is sick. By all appearances his clock is ticking down and the people let Jesus know that and his response is simple ***"This sickness will not end in death."***

When you look at the very next verse it doesn't say Jesus took off immediately, he actually waited 2 days. Jesus wasn't operating by the clock of the world but by his own clock. He knew there was still time on the clock.

He finally arrives and Lazarus is already dead. The sisters want some answers. Don't we all? Jesus brings them some comfort, and declares a promise to them. ***"Your brother will rise again."***

They think the clock is at 0:00 but Jesus is like, relax there is still time on the clock, I am here. He goes out to the tomb and tells them to remove the stone; Martha is like no way don't you get it. He is dead, the buzzer has sounded. Jesus reminds her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of GOD?"

Jesus then yells into the tomb, "Lazarus come out!" And he walks out. There was still time on the clock.





## An Attitude of Washing Feet

John 13

In **John 13:1-17** we see Jesus in the upper room with his disciples on the night before he would be arrested. To Jesus, who knew what was to come, it was a farewell supper, a time of intimacy with those *“He had loved during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end.”* (John 13:1b) The phrasing that the gospel writer John uses here stands out to me, *“he loved them to the very end”*. The inference to me being, he would love them to the fulfillment of his mission, the mission of Jesus to reconcile all who would choose Him, to himself. Other than the completion of that intent that Jesus committed to on the cross, I believe what happens next is the greatest representation of what Jesus calls his disciples to do/be.

*“So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.”* (John 13:4-5) **What?!?!** This was unheard of, especially from a “Teacher”, much less the Son of God! We see the guttural reaction from Peter when Jesus gets to him. *“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”* (John 13:6b) I can almost see Peter’s panic stricken face as Jesus stoops in front of him to wash his disgusting feet. It is the fear and shame of our sins that can keep us from accepting the cleansing forgiveness that Jesus is offering. We don’t feel worthy of that grace, and that’s because we ARE NOT! Yet Jesus still offers it!

When Peter refuses it, Jesus responds with *“unless I wash you, you won’t belong to me.”* (John 13:8b) In order to actually be a follower of Jesus, we **MUST** accept the washing He offers. We must come to grips with the injustice of our unworthiness of that grace, and let go of the shame the Devil is constantly throwing in our faces, allowing the washing of Jesus to make us clean.

Then Jesus turns the equation on his disciples, *“I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.”* (John 13:15) In response to the incredible, incalculable mercy we have been given, we must adapt ourselves to live with an attitude of washing feet. It’s not a commandment to feel affection for everyone, but to act in a loving way.



# i am the...



## Trouble on the Horizon

John 14

Every summer as a teen our youth group would take the inevitable trip to Cedar Point, a theme park known for some of the fastest and highest roller coasters on earth. And every year the designers would try to add to their collection of what some called fun but I called torture devices. The year was 1991 and off we went and the bus was buzzing with excitement as everyone was talking about riding the Magnum. I sat quietly thinking, man how am I going to get out of this, how can we stay on the rides that stay hooked to the ground. I remember standing in line with my buddies thinking this is a bad idea, and my stomach churning. I was dealing with what so many deal with, FEAR!

*John 14:1-4 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God[a]; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."*

Now I wish at 15 I knew these scriptures so well I could have recited them, but I didn't. When we see Jesus encounter his disciples who are dealing with moments of troubled hearts, when they can see the storms coming, he never is asking them what are you afraid of. Jesus always asks WHY are you afraid?

Aka how can you be afraid if I am right here with you? How can you be afraid if I am walking right beside you? He is whispering to you today, don't let your hearts be troubled no matter what you are up against.

The question I want to ask you and then answer for you is this. Why do we fear? Think about that for a second.

Now here is your answer, because we lack confidence in Jesus. We are not always sure that we are going to be ok. In these 21 Days Jesus is calling all of us into a closer relationship with him so we can turn our fears into trust. YOU can TRUST Jesus.





## Pruning Produces Fruit

John 15:1-8

Gardening is hard work. First you have to prepare the soil, plant the seed, water the seed, weed the soil, prune the dead leaves, and ultimately harvest the produce. That's a lot of steps!

In John 15: 1-2 it says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off any branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit *he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.*"

Allowing God to prune and cut away branches in your life is hard work. Praying scripture over myself is one way I allow God to prune and cut away the dead branches.

Psalm 19:14

"May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord my Rock and my Redeemer."

2 Corinthians 10:5

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ."

Psalm 139: 23-24

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I invite you to pray these scriptures over yourself today. Ask God to point out the branches that need pruning or cutting. Do the hard work of preparing the soil, so that God can plant the seed and you will see the harvest of fruit in your life.

Read John 15:2-8.

By allowing God to be the Master Gardener, you can remain in Him and be aligned with what Jesus wants from you.





## Jesus' Four Petitions

John 17

Christ's High Priestly Prayer in John 17 is only about 650 words. Although the entire chapter is just twenty-six verses, it is worthy of our study, as we seek to learn from and imitate our great co-heir as he prays to the Father. One of the fantastic things about this prayer is that Jesus prays for us! In verse 20, Jesus prays, "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me." It is incredible to contemplate that our Savior prayed for us. Here are four petitions Jesus made on our and the disciples' behalf.

First, Jesus prays that the Father will keep his followers safe.

"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, *but to keep them safe from the evil one*. They do not belong to this world any more than I do." (John 17:15) Jesus offers this prayer because he knows that, while we do not belong to the world, the world will continually tempt us. We need the protection of the Father to withstand the trials of this life.

Second, Jesus prays that his disciples will be one. "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me." (John 17: 20-21) Through the Church's unity, the world will believe in Christ. In the context of John's Gospel, this not only invites the world to believe the gospel but, even more fundamentally, it wants to see the vindication of Jesus. The world despises and hates Jesus so much it will be satisfied with nothing less than a cross. But if Jesus' prayer is answered, the world will learn that God sent him and that God truly loves the world even as he loved his own Son.

Third, Jesus prays that God will sanctify his followers. The Greek word for "sanctify" is *hagiazō*. It means to purify, to separate from the profane, and dedicate to God. We cannot make ourselves holy. By sanctifying himself, Jesus perfectly obeyed his Father and went to the cross to bear our sins in his own body on the tree. That is the good news; that is the gospel. The truth of the gospel is what truly sanctifies us. The result, of course, is that we are no longer "of the world" and that is why we will need protection from the world and the evil one, which brings us back to the first petition.





## Why Not Me?

John 21

We were in the heated playoff game of my fifth grade soccer team, and I sat on the bench, the whole time. I was in the playoffs for my sixth grade basketball team only to have the ball stolen from me at my shot to win the game for us. I was “reassigned” from the second baseman to the scorekeeper of my baseball team. At some point in growing up, I had to realize a simple fact: I am not athletic.

For preteen Sam, this was a hard reality. It came so easily to all of my friends and I had to sit on the sidelines for years while I watched my childhood friends play those games that I was supposed to play with them. I would ask the why questions of God. Why did sports come so easily to my friends and not me? Didn't God want me to be happy? Does God just love them a little more than me? Why was this my life?

Has this ever been you? Social media can often be the killer of joy. Whether it is their body, their child's never-ending list of accomplishments, their glamorous house and car, or just their happiness in their feed while you are in a dark season. Or maybe it is the amount you make, your broken family, your set of skills. If Jesus loves us all the same, then why does it seem like Jesus loves them just a little more?

In the last chapter of John, Peter has received reconciliation from Jesus as he promises that he loves Jesus and to feed His sheep three times, contrasting the three times he had previously denied Jesus. But then there's a catch: Jesus indicated that this call to love Jesus and feed his sheep would end in death. But, he didn't say the same for John. Unfair right? Why would Peter's life end brutally and John's not?

When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” (John 21:21-22)

# i am the...



This final passage of John has become so special for me because at NTS Camp 2021, reading this passage, I was able to sit with three students with tears in their eyes realizing the way God had individually called them to follow him: through ministry. And what was so cool was that the other boys in the group didn't think: "Well God, why didn't you call me?" "Am I less special?" Their response was instead one with communal joy and celebration. They chose contentment in their call and celebration of the call of the other because it was unified under the basic call: follow Jesus.

Here's a simple truth. We all share the same call as that of Peter and John: To follow Jesus, to love him, and to feed his sheep. But what is so cool is that God has masterfully and uniquely created a different pathway for each of us to fulfill that.

Here's another simple truth that I often forget: God loves His whole church but the fullness of the love of God is given to me uniquely, and that is including the call He has on my life and the giftings He has given me.

The enemy wants to breed discontentment and disunity. The Lord simply wants us to follow Him. Today, pray against the stronghold of comparison. Follow him.

**NOTES:**

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The River Church  
759 S Lenfesty Ave, Marion, IN 46953  
(765) 573-5482 . [hello@theriver.cc](mailto:hello@theriver.cc)  
[www.theriver.cc](http://www.theriver.cc)

