

The background is a solid red color. It features several large, stylized white shapes that resemble the numbers 20 and 22. These shapes are filled with a pattern of horizontal, wavy white lines. The shapes are positioned in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right corners of the page. In the center, there is a white text block.

TWENTY ONE | **20**
DAYS OF PRAYER | **22**



There is a powerful transaction that takes place when we intentionally put time aside to seek God.

Prayer aligns us with heaven's agenda.
Prayer changes natural circumstances.
Prayer breaks the bonds that hold us.
Prayer gives guidance when we don't know the way. Prayer conquers the captivity of the enemy.

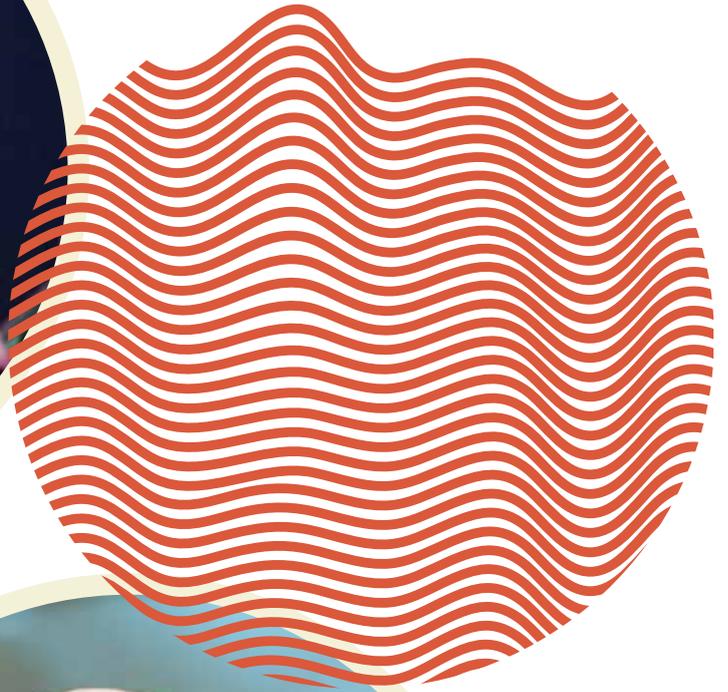
“The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results”
James 5:16b (TLB).

We would like to acknowledge Joy Hooker from Joy in the Word (www.joyintheword.org) for writing all the amazing devotionals in this booklet that we know will encourage and challenge you.

Elim family, now is the time to PRAY!

God bless!

Boyd & Sharon Ratnaraja
National Leaders Elim New Zealand





WELCOME

Over the next 21 days, we are going on a journey. It's the final journey Jesus took with His disciples before going to the cross.

In fact, forty percent of the Gospel of Luke follows this journey or 'travel narrative' (Luke 9:51-19:44). It's where Jesus and His disciples leave Galilee, the place where Jesus has spent most of His time teaching and ministering, to travel to Jerusalem and all that awaits there.

Luke seems to deliberately set this up, not so much as a geographical journey but as a journey of **discipleship**. Along the way, Jesus will be teaching His disciples what it means to live daily as members of God's Kingdom family. He will reveal truths that have the potential to transform their daily lives and reshape them according to Heaven's values. The disciples will find they are increasingly able to release God's Kingdom to those around them.

This is the journey we are going to take over the next 21 days.

Just as the disciples needed to experience Jesus' teaching and grow through this journey, so do we. You will notice this book consists of a daily devotional, a response, some prayer points, plus room to record your own thoughts along the way.

Let's be expectant as we set out on this amazing journey together.

DAY 1 | SEEING GOD'S GLORY

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:28-36, 51

I'm sure you can think of times when God has specifically spoken to you or shown up in some way to draw you further on in your journey with Him. These times stick in your memory because they are significant and special. God Himself stepped into your world in a way that was unique to you, and you remember it.

One ordinary day, the disciples had an encounter with Jesus like no other. God opened up the heavenly realm, which is outside of time and space. They saw Jesus as He really is, in glorious splendour, talking with Moses and Elijah. The disciples were standing in Galilee, yet they saw into Heaven. And they had no idea what to do!

This encounter with the heavenly realm, the associated change in focus to Jesus' death, burial and ascension, and the sudden voice of God saying, "This is my Son... listen to him," would begin a new trajectory in the lives of Jesus' disciples. They were about to leave their Galilean home and begin a journey to experience the horror of the cross and the glory of the resurrection. They would need to know how to navigate both of these events because both were ordained by God, and both would be victorious and glorious.

2022 is going to be an amazing year. God is going to show up in ways that will surprise us. And sometimes, we will find that we have little frame of reference for His glory and the things we are going to see Him do.

Like the disciples, God is changing our trajectory. He is calling us to leave our 'home territory' where we've been fairly comfortable and follow Him into new territory to embark on new things. You've probably already felt the beginnings of this change through 2020 and 2021.

In order to appreciate the magnificence of God's unfolding glory and navigate the things that are to come, we need to learn to see from a different perspective. We're going to have to listen to Jesus and follow Him closely, just as the disciples endeavoured to do.

RESPONSE

If you are still feeling battered by the experiences of 2020 and 2021 and are not ready to face further change, bring your thoughts and feelings before God. Take specific time to work through any lingering grief, anger and anxiety now so that you don't carry them forward into this year. You might like to pray with a friend or seek guidance from someone you trust as to how to process what's happened.

PRAY

Place the rest of 2022 into God's hands. Ask God to reveal Himself to you and adjust your perspective where needed. Commit to following Jesus wholeheartedly, no matter what eventuates.

DAY 2 | OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:51-56

Up until now, the disciples have been in their 'home territory' of Galilee and have been reasonably comfortable there. They know the towns and are familiar with the Galilean way of life. They were mostly among 'their kind of people'...Then everything changed.

Jesus deliberately initiates a journey towards Jerusalem with His disciples (Luke 9:51). Yet He leads them directly through Samaria, rather than skirting around it, as Jews travelling from Galilee to Jerusalem would normally do. Jews and Samaritans had a mutual hatred for one another. Jesus and the disciples are therefore travelling through hostile territory. Jesus is therefore not welcomed in some of the Samaritan villages.

Notice how James and John react to being taken outside of their comfort zone and how Jesus responds. Where the disciples see enemies, Jesus sees a harvest (Luke 10:2). That's why Jesus rebukes James and John. They did not realise that in wanting revenge, they were partnering with a wrong spirit — one that was against the priorities of God's Kingdom.

It's when change happens, or we are taken outside of our comfort zone, that 'fleshly' reactions often come to light. Like James and John, emotions rise that can cloud our thinking.

Journeying with Jesus is going to require us to examine our reactions and be willing to let go of some of our skewed attitudes and beliefs. We certainly don't want to be guilty of partnering with the wrong things or possibly moving against God's purposes.

If you have been taken out of your comfort zone recently, rejoice. It could be the ideal opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit to transform some attitudes and reactions.

And sometimes, we do falter. Even though Jesus rebuked James and John, He did not dismiss them, and they continued to walk with Him. In fact, John went on to become known as the disciple of love, writing a gospel, three letters and the book of Revelation.

RESPOND

Think about the last time you reacted to something. Was it because you were taken outside of your comfort zone? What does your reaction reveal about your underlying attitudes or beliefs? You might like to ask God to shine His light on any areas that need to be transformed.

PRAY

If you have messed up somehow, remember that you are not excluded in any way by God. Ask for His forgiveness, make the necessary change, and then continue the journey. He is with you and will continue to be with you every step of the way.

DAY 3 | FOLLOW HIM

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:57-62

As Jesus and His disciples travel along the road, they encounter three different people. The first is probably a teacher of the law (Matthew 18:19-20) who expects Jesus to follow the pattern established by other rabbis. The second seems to be in the midst of a year of mourning after his father's death and asks to complete the family obligations. The third loves his family very much and finds he is conflicted about following Jesus.

In fact, the men seem to raise valid points. If you or I were to stand in their shoes, we would probably say similar things. Surely Jesus ought to take their circumstances into consideration? From a human standpoint, that would seem to be the most compassionate thing to do.

But Jesus isn't speaking from a human standpoint. He isn't calling them to follow the normal human way of doing things. He is calling them to follow Him and to be reframed by Heaven's perspective.

Jesus' responses to those who want to follow Him are not as callous as might appear at first reading. He is actually addressing sentimental motives and values that lie at the root of what these three people are proposing, and He is calling them to greater things.

Right at the beginning of the journey, Jesus calls these followers, firstly, to exchange human expectations for Kingdom possibilities; secondly, to prioritise following Him over all other obligations; and thirdly, to be willing to have their allegiances transformed.

We should, therefore, not be surprised when He does the same with us! The thing is, it's not really about us at all — it's about Jesus. As His followers, human sentiment or any other human-oriented perspective cannot be our ultimate guide. He has to come first in everything.

RESPONSE

Have you allowed sentiment or some other human perspective too much say in the past? Ask God's forgiveness and seek His help in putting this right. What 'greater thing' is Jesus calling you to consider today?

PRAY

Ask God to transform your human expectations into Kingdom possibilities. To shift areas of limited perspective and enable you to see from His unlimited perspective.

DAY 4 | CARRY PEACE

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:1-12, 25-37

Imagine what it would be like to head away on a trip without taking a suitcase, any extra clothing or provisions. That is what Jesus instructs those He sends out ahead of Him on the road. To our way of thinking, this directive is strange and even unwise. But that's not the point.

The point is that there is one vital possession that transcends all others. Every follower of Jesus must carry it into every situation they face — and that is peace. The New Testament word for peace has its roots in the Old Testament understanding of shalom. Shalom means wholeness, wellbeing, completeness and peace – far more than our English word “peace” conveys.

Peace (Shalom) exemplifies the priorities and values of the Kingdom of Heaven. It crosses every boundary and brings wholeness wherever it manifests. When we carry peace, it comes out in our attitudes and actions. We clearly see this in the parable of the Good Samaritan that follows.

Peace is also incredibly powerful. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14-22). In sending the disciples ahead of Him, Jesus says He is sending them out “like lambs among wolves” (verse 3). But they were not defenceless. They possessed the powerful gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15).

The first mention of peace (shalom) in the Bible is in the story of Gideon. God appears to Gideon, who is hiding from the marauding

Midianites, saying, “Peace be with you” (Judges 6:23). This revelation of God's wholeness, completeness and peace so impacted Gideon that he built an altar and named it Jehovah Shalom. Yet the first act of ‘peace’ God calls Gideon to take is to cut down his father's altars to Baal. God's peace empowered Gideon to take a stand, break the stronghold of idolatry and bring God's wholeness to the nation of Israel.

Jesus instructed the disciples to carry peace into the Samaritan villages, some of which were hostile to them and their Kingdom message.

What are you carrying with you? The thing is that you cannot carry His peace if you are burdened down with other things. When you carry peace, you carry and release God's victory wherever you go.

RESPONSE

Is there anything you are carrying that is weighing you down so that you are unable to carry peace and release it to others? Sometimes, checking the results of our speech and actions to see whether they bring wholeness to others can be a good indication of whether we are carrying God's peace.

PRAY

Recognise that peace is yours to carry. So rather than praying for peace, or more peace, declare that you are now taking up peace and wholeness as a priority and that, like Jesus' disciples, you will carry it into every situation from now on.

DAY 5 | ONE THING

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:38-42

Many things shape our culture and values. Sometimes, it's difficult to navigate the inevitable clash between human culture and Kingdom values.

Martha's world seems to be primarily framed by the culture of her day — to provide hospitality, work hard behind the scenes, and not intrude on the men's domain. She expects her sister Mary to prioritise these things too, but Mary refuses to be defined by these cultural norms, which causes Martha immense frustration.

Do you realise that Martha actually had a legitimate argument? By sitting and listening to Jesus the Rabbi, Mary is defying what was seen as 'right.' Women should be out the back, serving food. They were not meant to be around when men were discussing business. On top of this, men were generally the only ones instructed by a rabbi, not women. In sitting at Jesus' feet, Mary stepped way beyond the boundaries of culture and social expectation.

While Martha allowed cultural norms and values to decide her priorities, Mary made a deliberate choice to prioritise the values of discipleship. Rather than the "many things" which consumed Martha (verse 41), Mary had prioritised "one thing" (verse 42).

The Gospel of Luke clearly shows that discipleship is very costly in terms of the things of this world. Mary is now facing something of the cost — in the anger and censure from her older sister. She may even have experienced disdain from the men when she joined them to listen to Jesus. So there is more going on than simply choosing to sit at Jesus' feet compared to working in the kitchen.

This story highlights the depth of the challenge that all of us who decide to follow Jesus are inevitably going to face. Investing in discipleship will be counter-cultural. We may face misunderstanding and even censure — sometimes by those closest to us. But Jesus proclaims that Mary has chosen that which is "better."

RESPONSE

What is the "one thing" Jesus is calling you to prioritise today? Decide what needs to change in order for you to prioritise what Jesus is saying to you. Who are the "Martha's" and the "men" in your world that you need to show grace to as you navigate this pre-prioritisation?

PRAY

Pray in line with your commitment to the "one thing" Jesus is calling you to.

Pray for everyone else who is doing this journey that they would also have the strength to stand in the face of misunderstanding or even ridicule.

DAY 6 | THE PRACTICES OF PRAYER

Scripture Reading: Luke 11:1-13

How is your prayer life going? Most of us would probably give a negative answer to this question, saying we ought to spend more time praying. I wonder why we do that? After all, prayer is essentially a conversation with God and fundamental to our Christian walk.

However, it seems that what was uppermost in the disciples' minds when they asked Jesus to teach them to pray was not some kind of 'how to' for prayer. Instead, they wanted to be shown a distinctive set of practices that would mark them out as Jesus' followers, just as the prayer practices of John the Baptist's followers marked them as his followers.

Prayer is a personal relationship with our good Father, and that's what Jesus wants to draw the disciples' attention to. So He gives them an example of a prayer that focuses on God as our Father. Our Father reigns from Heaven, with Heaven's abundant supply and limitless resources. Secondly, He tells them a parable that reveals God as a Father who will never turn anyone away. And thirdly, He provides an insight into God the Father's open-handed and abundant response to their asking and seeking. He tells them that the Father always meets their asking with His abundant giving.

So, according to Jesus, these are the prayer practices that mark out His followers. They pray for relationship with God their Father, and they pray from Heaven's perspective. They pray for total dependence on their heavenly Father, inviting His rule and reign to envelop the earth, bringing His abundant resources and

provision. Jesus' followers pray for forgiveness as they forgive others. They pray for God to take care and look after them.

Followers of Jesus are close friends of the Father and are not afraid to continually ask, seek and knock. They know they will not be turned away. And followers of Jesus have every expectation that the good Father gives good gifts to His children. He is not stingy and will abundantly pour out His blessing from His overflowing resources.

According to Jesus, prayer flows from relationship and dependence. We can overcomplicate prayer by our inattention to what Jesus taught.

What about the times when God does not seem to answer our prayer? Again, it comes back to relationship and dependence. Could it really be that simple (eg. Luke 18:17)? That's what Jesus taught His disciples.

RESPONSE

If prayer has been a struggle, or you have overcomplicated it, ask God to teach you to pray, as Jesus taught His disciples. Take some time to read back through today's scripture reading and devotional, asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you.

PRAY

Pray as you normally would, making sure you prioritise relationship with your good heavenly Father and dependence on His resources, just as Jesus taught His disciples.

DAY 7 | PHARISEE TENDENCIES

Scripture Reading: Luke 11:37-54

As we follow Jesus, we will face many different kinds of obstacles. Sometimes kindly-meant advice can be wrong advice, particularly if it confuses us or causes us to stumble in some way.

Many of the Pharisees and teachers of the law gave bad advice and put stumbling blocks in people's way. They put burdens of outward expectancy on them but ignored the need for inward change. Jesus deliberately challenges their behaviour, reveals the underlying issues and creates space for them to repent.

While Luke's Gospel tends to portray the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders in a very negative light, we have to be careful. Whenever we point the finger at someone, there are always three fingers pointing back at us! Sometimes we can be guilty of having the same tendencies as the Pharisees.

Jesus' response to the Pharisees and teachers of the law demonstrates how seriously He takes each of these things. So we ought to watch for them in our own lives as well.

- Being overly concerned with our outward appearance and prioritising how we come across to other people.
- Going through the motions of doing all the right things, simply for show.
- Being selfish and taking the best for ourselves.
- Giving advice that causes people to stumble and then leaving them to founder.
- Judging others.

On the flip side, Jesus also reveals the values that align with His Kingdom:

- Prioritising our inner life, such as our character and motives.
- Tithing and giving to God.
- Ensuring that love and justice are the main motivating factors for all that we do.
- Humbling ourselves in order to love and honour others.
- Coming alongside those who are finding things difficult or have been given wrong advice.
- Listening rather than judging.

Jesus prioritises inward change and always opposes those who neglect this in favour of outward things. Discipleship is very much an inner journey. As we allow our inner life and character to be shaped and strengthened by God's Kingdom values, we will increasingly be able to release freedom and peace to those around us.

RESPONSE

Take time to examine yourself for any Pharisee tendencies. Repent, and make any needed changes immediately.

Also, take note of the values that Jesus promotes. Go through each of the points listed, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you do.

PRAY

Pray for your pastors and leaders — that God would continue to anoint and bless them. That He would speak to them and through them. That He would give them wisdom and insight as they navigate the pressures of leadership.

DAY 8 | FOCUS ON HIM

Scripture Reading: Luke 12:13-34

What is closest to your heart? What is the thing, or person, you hold most dear? Whatever it is will ultimately define you. It will guide your decision making and your future. What you let into your heart and set your heart on really matters.

How do we know what is closest to our hearts and if God really does have first place in our lives? It comes down to what we choose to focus on in our everyday lives.

The man in the parable was a crop farmer. Instead of sharing his abundance, he was solely focused on gathering as much as he could for himself and his future (verse 21). He had no consideration for anyone other than himself. Jesus observed that unbelievers (or pagans, verse 30) focus on the outward things of this life — what they eat and what they wear. For all these people, the thing closest to their hearts was themselves.

In fact, even today, the pattern of this world is to follow after anything that is oriented towards ourselves. Following Jesus requires us to redefine ourselves according to God's Kingdom. And God's Kingdom is definitely not focused on us. It's focused on God and others (Luke 10:27). As such, God's Kingdom is incredibly counter-cultural.

Being counter-cultural or opposite to the culture of this world, God's Kingdom has a different atmosphere. It actively opposes everything that would seek to take our focus away from the Almighty God.

We align ourselves with God's Kingdom by seeking first His Kingdom (verse 31). When we do this, we change our focus away from ourselves, and in a practical way, we are bringing Heaven to Earth (Luke 11:2). We are also bringing God's Kingdom atmosphere into our everyday lives and extending His Kingdom rule. What an incredible thought!

So, what we focus on matters. It has Kingdom repercussions. It aligns us with either the Kingdom of Heaven or the kingdoms of this world. And when we seek God's Kingdom, we gain everything else as well (verse 31).

RESPONSE

What has your focused attention right now? What is Jesus saying to you about this?

PRAY

Pray that God would use you to extend His Kingdom through your counter-cultural focus. Pray for those you regularly rub shoulders with, that they would be impacted by God's Kingdom through you.

DAY 9 | READY TO SERVE

Scripture Reading - Luke 12:35-48

I'm sure you can imagine the scene. The master returns from an event and finds his servants waiting at the door, ready to serve him. They are dressed for action, everything is prepared, and he can sit down to a lovely meal, with his servants busily seeing to his every need.

But when Jesus is telling the story, you know there will be a twist. Something absolutely unthinkable takes place when the master returns. Household order is completely overturned as the master tells his servants to take his place at the table. He then puts on the servants' clothes and begins to serve them!

What is Jesus up to? Firstly, and most obviously, in telling this story, Jesus is pointing out to His followers that a true disciple is one who is always attentive to the master and ready to act at any time (verses 35-36). But then He presses deeper. There is something beyond readiness that they need to grasp, and that's Kingdom character, which the master exemplifies (verse 37). In this case, it's the character trait of humility. (Note that Paul stressed the same idea in Philippians 2:3-8).

Kingdom character turns human values on its head, which can offend us. For instance, Peter was certainly offended when Jesus took up a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:3-9). At first, he refused to have Jesus wash his feet!

How you serve matters. A follower of Jesus needs to treat others like Jesus would treat them — whether at work, at home, in church, or in our general interactions with others. That's a huge ask, isn't it? It's going to require us to do a bit of soul-searching and character building.

We have a high calling — to be faithful and wise managers of the message He has entrusted to us. To live up to this high calling, we need to follow Him and seek to imitate Him in every possible way. Remember, when we align ourselves with His Kingdom, we extend His Kingdom rule. God's Kingdom comes to Earth through you!

RESPONSE

Think about whether your speech and behaviour reflect Kingdom character, particularly the character trait of humility. Ask God to highlight changes you need to make in the way you talk to others and how you behave.

PRAY

Pray for specific opportunities at work, at school, and in your community to practice these changes and extend God's Kingdom by extending humility. Then be prepared to step out and take these opportunities when they arise.

DAY 10 | EXPECT THE KINGDOM

Scripture Reading: Luke 13:10-21

Wherever God's Kingdom manifests, His order, rule and reign dominate, and God loves to bring His order, rule and reign into situations that are out of order. Those in the synagogue on the Sabbath day that Jesus was teaching did not recognise God's Kingdom was at work among them. Why? Because they had a wrong expectation of what it would look like.

The prophet Isaiah had foretold what it would be like when God's Kingdom came among them. The poor would hear the good news, prisoners would be set free, the blind would see, those who were oppressed would be released from their oppression, and God's favour would be proclaimed (Isaiah 6:1-2; Luke 4:18-19).

Now, right in front of their eyes, the Kingdom of God (God's order and His rule and reign) came among them, as a poor, socially ostracised woman was set free from the prison of demonic oppression — and they totally missed it!

I wonder how often we miss what God is doing because we have wrong expectations. The first parable Jesus tells is centred in some man's back garden where he sows some common mustard seed. The second parable is in the kitchen of someone's house, where a small portion of yeast is placed in a very large amount of flour and left for some time. Both parables suggest we can easily overlook the ordinary, everyday mustard seed or yeast of the Kingdom of God simply because we are looking for something grand and impressive.

Yet Jesus saw the woman and set her free. Where is the Kingdom of God showing up in your world today? I wonder where God is quietly working at your house or your work? Where does He want to bring good news, freedom and release to those who you will rub shoulders with this week?

As Jesus' followers, we carry His message and His mandate. Like the 72, we have been sent to carry the gospel of peace to release His Kingdom into people's everyday lives. Let's not miss where God is working because we are blinded by wrong expectations or simply looking in the wrong direction.

RESPONSE

Ask God to open your eyes to where He is working. You might be surprised who He draws your attention to.

PRAY

Pray for those who are unsaved in your family, at your work and in your local community — that God would use you and others in their world to release God's Kingdom into their everyday lives. You might like to do a prayer walk around your workplace or your neighbourhood as you pray these things.

DAY 11 | THE JOURNEY OF THE CROSS

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:51; 13:34; 19:41, 44

Jesus and His disciples are now partway through their final journey to Jerusalem, and we are halfway through our 21 Days of Prayer journey.

Suffering and rejection seem to be uppermost in Jesus' mind as He leaves His home in Galilee and travels to Jerusalem for the last time. Luke specifically writes about it at the beginning, middle and end of Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jesus resolutely or determinedly sets out on the journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). He longs to gather people who He knows have already rejected Him (Luke 13:34), and when He finally arrives, He weeps for them (Luke 19:41).

What is the first thing you think of when you remember Jerusalem, particularly the horror of the cross? It could be Jesus' aloneness and abandonment by the disciples and even the Father. It might be the incredible pain He endured from the whip, thorns and nails. Or perhaps the crushing weight of humanity's sin that Jesus bore on our behalf.

This final journey toward Jerusalem must have been heart-wrenching for Jesus. And yet, just before He departs from Galilee, He says, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it" (Luke 9:23-24). In other words, Jesus tells all who want to follow Him that they have to take the same journey — the journey of the cross.

This is the journey of discipleship. And this is the journey we are currently undertaking.

Notice that the journey of the cross was not only about suffering and the cost. It was also "the time of God's coming" (Luke 19:44). As we continue on this intentional journey with Jesus and the disciples, expect God to come. Expect Him to meet with you. Expect to hear Him continue to challenge, encourage and speak to you about 2022 and what is to come.

That's because as you press into the journey of the cross, you are also pressing into the glory of His presence.

RESPOND

Look back over the notes you have made over the last ten days of this journey. Is there a recurring theme? What is the main thing you feel God has been speaking to you about? What are the key action points you need to take now?

PRAY

If you haven't already done so, begin to pray into 2022 — that God would lead you and unfold His purposes in your life. That He would use you to reach out to others by releasing His Kingdom atmosphere into your everyday activities.

DAY 12 | HUMBLE YOURSELF

Scripture Reading: Luke 14:7-24

Many of us like to be seen and heard, whether it's on social media, at work, when we're out with friends, or even at church. We thrive on recognition and would definitely pick a good seat at the table where we can be in the midst of everything that's happening. I wonder how we would handle being asked to move to a quiet corner table instead, in front of everyone?

Others of us prefer to be in the background. We'd rather not draw attention to ourselves. Perhaps we don't feel worthy, which is actually a form of false pride if you think about it because it also focuses all our attention on ourselves.

Jesus wants to teach all His followers of the need to deal with pride by humbling ourselves before God. This is often outworked in daily events and our relationships with other people, as seen in today's passage.

Humility is the opposite of pride. Humility simply does what is best for others, not what is best for us. This requires a different way of thinking and a different perspective. It means looking at the seating arrangements at the table and intentionally choosing to honour someone else with the best seat. Or taking the wedding invite and saying yes because it will bring pleasure to the host family.

Humility does not make excuses, like those in Jesus' parable who were focused on themselves. Humility puts God first and ourselves last. And as such, it cuts to the root of pride and ego.

Humility is also incredibly practical and has to be outworked somehow, such as taking the lower seat at the table (verse 10). It requires us to take some kind of action. We actually have endless possibilities for putting humility into action every day!

RESPONSE

What practical step of unseen humility can you take today? (The key is that it is unseen, or you could be tempted to do it for show. Pride and ego are incredibly devious!).

PRAY

Ask God's forgiveness for areas of pride and ego. You might like to name specific incidents where you have put yourself and your own interests first.

Ask for the Holy Spirit's help to change your perspective and thought patterns, away from yourself, in order to put God first — to love Him and to love others more fully.

DAY 13 | GIVING EVERYTHING

Scripture Reading: Luke 14:25-35

When we first make a commitment to Jesus Christ, I'm not sure that any of us fully understand what this really means.

We have been transferred from the domain of darkness into God's Kingdom (Colossians 1:13). We have been born again. We have become members of the family of God.

But does this mean we now have to hate the members of our own family (verse 26)? While this terminology sounds very strange to us, it is actually a statement of contrast. It means that love for our family is to be so far surpassed by our love for Jesus that love for them will seem, in comparison, to be like hatred. Jesus must have first place in our lives, even when it comes to our closest relationships.

This is incredibly challenging, isn't it? Particularly for those of us who have grown up in an environment centred around family life.

As with the would-be followers of Jesus at the beginning of the journey (see Day 3), Jesus wants us to examine our hearts for anything that competes with having Him as Lord of our lives. In particular, the obligations and allegiances associated with family life.

Yet Jesus does not want to have disciples who do not know what they have let themselves in for. Counting the cost is important, and it's not something we can do in a hurry. Jesus knew what He was in for at the cross, and He wants each of us to understand that we also need to give up everything for Him.

If you are finding the thought of giving up everything very difficult, then you are right on track! You are doing exactly what Jesus asked you to do — counting the cost. So don't stop now. Keep going.

Yes, Jesus is asking us to give Him everything (verse 33). He is asking us to put aside all competing securities and allegiances so that we can be fully aligned with the Kingdom of God. And it is a glorious, victorious Kingdom. So we need to recognise we gain abundantly more than we 'lose.' In fact, we gain everything because we gain Him!

RESPONSE

Take whatever time you need to count the cost of fully following Jesus, as He suggests. Don't be afraid to face the difficult questions with your loving heavenly Father.

If, as you have been reading this, the Holy Spirit has been highlighting to you any areas of competing allegiance, bring these before Him now. Give Him permission to make the necessary adjustments in your heart.

PRAY

Ask God to help you grasp a fresh understanding of all that you have to gain by giving up everything for Him. Ask Him for courage and boldness to let go of those things He is asking you to give to Him in order to follow Him more closely.

DAY 14 | SEEING AS GOD SEES

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-32

The Pharisees cannot understand why Jesus spends so much time with “sinners.” Jesus seems to constantly reach out to them, not just welcoming them, but eating with them too! In response to their criticism, Jesus tells three parables.

These parables are incredibly challenging, even for us today. The man abandons his 99 sheep in the “open country” (i.e. the wilderness, or in a lonely, desolate, uninhabited place) to spend precious time looking for the one that has wandered off and may have even died in the process. Who would do that? You would think that looking after the remaining 99 would be more important than going after the one.

Then there’s the woman who can’t find one of her coins, which is worth about a day’s wages. But instead of simply hoping it will turn up somewhere along the line, she lights a candle and spends most of the night turning her entire house upside down, looking for the missing coin. That seems like a lot of effort for a single coin.

Finally, there’s a son who squanders his inheritance, has insulted his father and does not deserve reinstatement into the family. But the father reinstates him anyway and, in the process, risks alienating his other son, who has his own issues with his father and is angered by how his father is treating his brother.

In fact, Jesus welcomes and eats with sinners because God the Father is willing to do whatever it takes to seek and find the lost. The question is, will we follow Him and do the same? Or will we side with the Pharisees who murmur at Jesus’ friendship with “sinners”?

It’s easy to get comfortable with those who are like us, isn’t it? These parables remind us to see as God sees. We’ve already noted that God’s Kingdom has different values than human society and culture.

Like the people in the parables He tells:

- Jesus sees the person who is on their own and goes to find them. Do you?
- Jesus makes an effort to search for the one who is lost, even in dark and hidden places. Would you?
- Jesus values relationships and will forgive insults, misbehaviour, and even accusation to see breaches healed and families restored. Could you?

RESPONSE

In what ways could you “welcome and eat with sinners” as Jesus did this week? What might this look like in your everyday life?

PRAY

Pray that God will continue to open your eyes so that you can see as God sees.

DAY 15 | PAY ATTENTION

Scripture Reading: Luke 17:1-4

Have you ever been really offended by something someone else has said or done? Offence is a really horrible thing. It has jagged edges and often carries a lot of pain and hurt that can penetrate very deeply. And it's really hard to overcome and get rid of. That's because taking offence at something or someone puts us in a trap.

The primary meaning of the word "offences" (NKJV), "things that cause people to stumble" (NIV), or "temptations to sin" (NLT) in verse 1, has to do with a trap or snare. Specifically, an "offence" is the baited trigger of a trap. In the New Testament, it is used for anything that is placed in the way of a person that causes them to stumble, fall or be caught in a trap.

Here, Jesus specifically warns His disciples that they must not be responsible for causing others to be caught in the trap of offence. In fact, He takes it so seriously that He says it would be better for the person who causes this to be drowned! Then He says, "So watch yourselves" (verse 3), or "pay attention."

If Jesus takes something seriously, then we should also take it seriously. We cannot be guilty of causing someone Jesus loves to be caught in a trap.

What's more, all the way along the journey, Jesus has been drawing His disciples' attention to the types of things that cause other people to be caught in a trap. For instance,

if you give wrong advice, judge people, show pride and ego, have wrong allegiances or are unwelcoming of others. Being a follower of Jesus requires us to love others and not put stumbling blocks in their way. We really do have to be careful.

Jesus also says that it is inevitable that offences will come (verse 1). So what do we do when somebody offends us? We recognise what is happening and simply refuse to take the bait! In that split second of decision, if we allow ourselves to get offended, the trap springs shut on us. We need to decide in advance that we will not get offended. We will be "unoffendable." Instead of taking offence, give forgiveness. That's what Jesus would do.

RESPONSE

If you have taken the bait of offence somewhere along the line, go back to the point when the offence happened and give it to God. Ask God's forgiveness for taking the bait, and decide to forgive the person(s) involved. Ask God to heal your wounds and set you completely free.

PRAY

Ask the Lord to raise your awareness of His love for those around you. In particular, ask God to increase your love for anyone who has caused you offence or hurt you in any way. Pray that God would bless them and reveal His goodness in their life.

DAY 16 | THE POWER OF THANKFULNESS

Scripture Reading: Luke 17:11-19

When was the last time you said “thank you” to someone who did something for you? You may have done it quite recently, or perhaps you are struggling to remember when you last uttered these words.

Have you noticed how often the person you say “thank you” to will respond or smile back? That’s because true thankfulness creates its own microclimate. It produces an environment for love, joy and peace to sprout and grow.

Whether we are thanking another person or thanking God, thankfulness opens the door to connection. When we thank God, it also opens the door to faith.

Something remarkable happened in the life of the Samaritan, who received healing from Jesus and returned with thanks. Jesus used this foreigner to teach His followers about the power of thankfulness.

I’m sure that all ten who were healed were very thankful, but only one put action to his gratitude. The others simply continued on their way. Note that he did far more than just thank Jesus — he fell at His feet in an act of submission and reverence.

Think about the obstacles this man would have had to overcome. Firstly, he would have had to travel back down the road he had already come from. Secondly, he may have had to work his

way through the disciples and others who were crowding around Jesus. Thirdly, he was a Samaritan, literally bowing before a Jew! This was unheard of, and at the very least, he would have risked ridicule from his fellow Samaritans. Fourthly, all the way along, he was drawing attention to the miracle Jesus had performed by loudly praising God and then falling at Jesus’ feet.

Yet every obstacle was overcome by the power of thankfulness and gratitude. This opened the door to faith, which in turn led to his salvation (verse 19).

Could it be that we have missed additional blessings because we have taken God’s goodness for granted and continued on our way rather than returning with gratitude and thanks? Let thankfulness become one of the intentional characteristics of your journey.

RESPONSE

Make a decision to begin your time with God each day this week by being thankful. It will open the door to faith and further blessing. Look for opportunities to create positive microclimates of thankfulness by saying “thank you” to people you encounter today. Then go one step further and pray that the Holy Spirit would grow something good in their hearts as a result.

PRAY

Write a list of all the ways He has blessed you this past week. Invest time in thanking God for these blessings.

DAY 17 | COMING TO GOD

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:9-17

Righteousness, or doing what is right, is incredibly important to God. In fact, God's throne, or His rulership, is founded on righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14). So when Jesus comes across some people who are pretending to be standing in God's righteousness but are, in fact, standing in their own self-righteousness, He confronts them head-on.

In the parable Jesus tells, the Pharisee did what was right. He ticked all the right boxes. He was quite aware that he had done these things and was rightly pleased that he had accomplished them well. But he elevated or "exalted" them beyond the place they should have been, and therefore they became an idol that he stood on to promote himself. He no longer needed God, as he was founded on his own righteousness. Self-righteousness became his 'throne.'

From this self-righteous vantage point, he looked down on other people. His focus was on how high he was, compared to them.

The tax collector knew he was a sinner. He did not tick any boxes at all. He did not even look up. Such was his guilt. All he did was humbly acknowledge his guilt and ask for mercy. He did not even see the Pharisee or any other person. His whole focus was on seeking and finding God. And he received God's righteousness (verse 14). He went away standing in the righteousness and justice of God.

As Christians, we also tick many, if not all, the right boxes. We pray, tithe, serve, and we might even fast. We're not outright "sinners" as such. So how do we ensure we're not relying on these things in any way like the Pharisee did? How do we know we are not becoming self-righteous in our attitude towards God or others who are not doing these things?

The key is in what we choose to stand on and where our focus is. If, in any way, we choose to stand on or exalt the right things we do, like the Pharisee, we will end up standing in self-righteousness. Continuing to humble ourselves, like the tax collector, ensures we stay in God's righteousness.

The choice is ours.

RESPONSE

Ask God if there are any areas of your life where self-righteousness has become your foundation. Repent and ask Him how you can humble yourself in this area.

PRAY

Imagine yourself coming to Father God as a child would, with confidence, freedom and faith that He is in total control of absolutely everything. Now, pray from this viewpoint regarding whatever is on your heart today.

DAY 18 | SEEING WITH KINGDOM EYES

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:31-43

The journey of discipleship has far-reaching implications. The more we allow ourselves to be transformed along the journey, the more we will be able to release God's Kingdom to others and leave a lasting legacy for the generations to come.

For the disciples, the journey they began with Jesus back in Luke 9:51 is nearing its end. Yet even at this point, the disciples still fail to grasp Kingdom concepts. Jesus' word is hidden from them, and they do not know what He is saying.

But Jesus is not deliberately playing tricks on them. They simply cannot comprehend because, as of yet, they have not fully embraced the counter-cultural nature of the Kingdom of God. They have yet to embody and internalise its seemingly upside-down values. Therefore, they cannot see with Kingdom eyes. They cannot comprehend because they haven't allowed the journey to completely change them on the inside.

We see this clearly on display as they approach Jericho. "Those who led the way," who are most probably the disciples, as they are the ones who go before Jesus, rebuke the blind beggar, telling him to be quiet. The disciples only see a beggar. He is of little to no importance to them, so he ought to be kept out of the way. They are not seeing him from Jesus' perspective and are not seeing with Kingdom eyes.

Yet we dare not point the finger at the disciples for their lack of perception. I wonder how often we, too, have been unable to see with Kingdom eyes? Particularly in the areas we have yet to allow the Holy Spirit to fully transform us.

The irony in this Jericho story is that the blind man was the one to see, be saved and follow Jesus on the road. His life was immediately transformed. Yet the disciples, even though they were following Jesus, were still somewhat in the dark.

RESPONSE

Think about your relationships with family, friends and work colleagues. In what ways have you been able to see and relate to them with renewed Kingdom eyes over the last couple of weeks?

PRAY

Pray for your own ongoing inner transformation — that you would not be like the disciples but would be open to embracing the needed changes in order to see with Kingdom eyes. Pray regarding any specific areas that God has highlighted to you today.

DAY 19 | JESUS AT YOUR HOUSE

Scripture Reading: Luke 19:1-10

What if Jesus was coming to have a meal at your house today? What would be your first thought on hearing this news? Would it be horror or delight?

Zacchaeus really wanted to see Jesus, with little expectation of anything more. However, he had a lot of difficulty accomplishing his wish. One of the reasons for this was that Zacchaeus worked for the Romans as a chief tax collector. Even though he was a very wealthy man, he was excluded from society. His fellow citizens described him as a “sinner.” But Jesus didn’t see a tax collector, and He didn’t see the wealth — He saw Zacchaeus. And Jesus didn’t just stop to have a few words with him; He wanted to come and spend some time with Zacchaeus at his house.

The thing is, if Jesus came to your house today, He wouldn’t care about the state of your home or the behaviour of your family. He doesn’t seem to care about outward appearance as much as we are prone to do! Jesus comes to your house because He cares about you. Just as Jesus saw Zacchaeus, who was up a tree rather than standing with everyone else on the road, He sees you, no matter where you are.

Today, Jesus wants to come and spend some time at home with you. He is asking if you would welcome Him in. He wants to become part of every facet of your life. That includes your private spaces and the intimacy of your closest relationships. And while that might make you a little uncomfortable, that’s what Jesus is asking of each one of us.

For Zacchaeus, welcoming Jesus into his home changed his life. His priorities were radically transformed. His whole life was completely reoriented towards God. People might have excluded Zacchaeus, but Jesus declared he was a “son of Abraham” — a fully-fledged member of the people of God. Jesus specifically sought him out and saved him.

Today, know that Jesus sees you, and He cares about you. He knows what’s going on in your world, and He understands. He is asking if He can come to your house. He’s waiting for you to open the door and invite Him into every part of your house and your life (Revelation 3:20).

RESPONSE

Zacchaeus’ priorities were radically transformed through his encounter with Jesus. Do you think Jesus wants to change any of your priorities for 2022? Why not? Ask Him today.

PRAY

Pray, welcoming Jesus specifically into every aspect of your life — your work, friends, family, relationships, and private life. If you begin to feel uncomfortable with any aspect, ask yourself why, and invite God to shine His light in to expose any areas that need to change.

DAY 20 | MOVING FORWARD

Scripture Reading: Luke 19:19-27

I wonder what it felt like as Jesus and His disciples neared Jerusalem. It was just before the Feast of Passover, so many people were coming into the city. The crowds would have been growing around Jesus too, and there was a rising expectation among them that they would soon see Him do something great. Some assumed that Jesus was going into Jerusalem to declare His Messiahship. They assumed that He would subdue their Roman “enemies” and take over politically. But they had it completely wrong.

Despite having spent almost three years with Jesus, watching Him perform miracles of healing and deliverance and listening to His message of the Kingdom of God, the disciples really have little clue regarding what was about to happen. But Jesus knew and has been quite intentional in His discipleship training, particularly as they have taken this final journey together from Galilee to Jerusalem. The disciples are soon to take over stewardship of the message of the Kingdom (Acts 1:8). Are they ready?

To remind them about what was ahead and correct some of their wrong thinking, Jesus tells a prophetic parable regarding a nobleman who is about to go away for some time. He entrusts his servants with some of his money which they are to utilise while he is away.

The first two servants faithfully invest and multiply their master’s money, many times over. They are fully commended for what they have done.

Yet one of the servants does not see the opportunity that is put before him by the master. He allows fear to prevent him from doing anything. When asked to give an account, he refuses to accept responsibility. Instead, fear turns to accusation of the master. He has the audacity to say it’s all the master’s fault that he didn’t accomplish anything!

For some reason, this servant did not know the master as the other servants did. He had a completely wrong idea as to what the master was like, and it showed in how he behaved.

Just as each of the servants was entrusted with their master’s money, so we have been entrusted with the message of the Kingdom. Jesus has given us everything we need in order to do this well. It’s up to each of us to faithfully complete all that He has called us to. There are going to be many things that will arise to try and distract us or stop us from sharing the gospel message and releasing the Kingdom to those around us. But let’s not let anything hinder us. Let’s keep moving forward, no matter what. After all, we’re about the Master’s business!

RESPONSE

Give some thought to practical steps you can take which will enable you to continue in your discipleship journey.

PRAY

Are there any obstacles that prevent you from moving on in your journey? Are there any areas of fear that would hinder you or stop you from moving forward? Bring these before God.

DAY 21 | JESUS IS KING

Scripture Reading: Luke 19:28-40

Have you ever had one of those days that is just amazing from start to finish? Everything falls into place, and you go to bed at the end of the day feeling absolutely blessed. I'm sure that's how the disciples felt the day Jesus entered Jerusalem for the final time. It would have been amazing and felt history-making. Yet I wonder what they were expecting from then on?

The interesting thing is that Jesus wasn't coming into Jerusalem to be made king — He already was King of kings and Lord of lords. Even before the cross, He was, and is, absolutely victorious. (After all, His death on the cross was to make a way for humanity to be joined to Him).

Yet even during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus does not assert His royal status or insist on being acclaimed for who He is. He doesn't have to. Instead, He continues to exemplify Kingdom culture. He comes humbly riding on a donkey (as per the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9).

Notice the reactions to this small display of His kingship. The disciples loudly rejoice. They simply can't help it. He is their King. And the Pharisees (who represent all those who "don't want this man to be our king" (verse 14), and do "not recognise the time of the Lord's coming" (verse 44)) want the praising disciples silenced.

The kingship of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God will always produce confrontation and division with those who oppose His rule and reign. We need to be prepared for this today too. At the same time, people's reactions should not stop us from loudly proclaiming who He is.

Jesus has entered Jerusalem, and we have come to the end of our 21 Days of Prayer journey. And it's been quite a journey, hasn't it? We've been taken out of our comfort zone and been challenged to examine our thoughts and attitudes. We've learnt to humble ourselves and to see with Kingdom eyes. We've discovered how to release the Kingdom of God to others through the power of thankfulness and peace. Yet this is only the beginning of what's to come in 2022 and beyond. As we continue to follow Jesus, let's keep investing in the journey.

RESPONSE

Go back through the 21 days and take note of one or two key things God has spoken to you about during the journey. How has God transformed you over the last three weeks? What do you need to carry forward into 2022?

PRAY

To mark the end of the journey, have communion with your family, a friend, your small group, or even by yourself. Remember what subsequently took place in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) and give God thanks for everything He has done for you.

