



# VERTICAL

30 DAY DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

BY JEFF HOGLEN

# **30 Day Journey**

Jeffrey Hoglen

## **My House is Your House**

*“...Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” – Joshua 24:15*

Shannon sat in her small group meeting, listening to the week’s announcements. Near the end the speaker paused, “As many of you know, Cammie is moving so we can no longer hold the youth’s small group meeting at her house. We are hopeful that someone will volunteer a place for Thursday nights.”

Shannon thought of her tiny living room. Cammie had a spacious home out in the country. Of course, she could easily share her living space once a week.

“My home is so small, God,” she prayed, “I’m not sure what good it will do to volunteer.”

As the meeting finished, Shannon thought again about the need. Then she remembered the story of the child with five loaves and two fish. She took a deep breath and hurried up to the group leader, “It’s not much but I’m willing to share my living room once a week.”

Discipleship isn’t just about how much you have or how big your home is. It’s about sharing the resources God has entrusted to you. That might look like sharing your tiny living room with a group of hungry teens, or it might mean welcoming the neighborhood kids into your backyard. It’s not about what you have—it’s about what God can do with it when you are willing and obedient!

*God, I want to focus on discipleship this month. Help me to lean into You and live out my faith. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## Reminders of God's Faithfulness

*"In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' Tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord." – Joshua 4:6-7*

After a friend realized his teenage daughter made an error in her bank account and had to pay hefty fees, he sat her down at their kitchen table one evening. He opened his budgeting software and began explaining how he managed the family's income.

"I plan for the various expenses that keep our household running," He explained, "You can see here that I budget money for groceries, the electricity, and car insurance. Some of these expenses you have to estimate, especially when you're getting use to budgeting."

When there was a knock at the door, he left and let his daughter look over the family budget. He came back to table a few minutes later to find her frowning. "Dad, what does this expense mean? It says in remembrance."

"That's money we share with others in need. Your mom and I do that because when you were two days old, I lost my job. It took six months before I was hired again but God provided for our little family. Now, we bless other families because of God's faithfulness to us."

*God, help me to remember Your faithfulness always. Let me tell the generations that come after me about what You have done for our family. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Let Down the Nets

*When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” – Luke 5:4*

Peter is tired from a long night of “work”. He’s spent the past twelve hours trying to fish. As he watches the sunrise, he thinks about the pile of bills on his kitchen table. His family has needs just like everyone else. No fish equals no income.

It wasn’t a case of not enough to go around. There was nothing.

Then Jesus appears on the scene. Peter’s heard of this person from Nazareth, His miracles and His healing. But this guy was supposed to have a background in carpentry... not fishing. The Carpenter tells him to let down the nets once more.

*Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” (Luke 5:5)*

The results made Simon’s eyes bug out. The nets filled to overflowing. He caught so many fish that he had to yell for others to come help him with the haul. He’s amazed and overwhelmed.

Are you standing where Peter was? Have you tried again and again to accomplish something in your own strength? Maybe you’ve been determined to repair the crack in your marriage or overcome an addiction. But no matter what you do, you just can’t seem to get it together.

In the face of hopelessness and despair, Jesus is whispering over you the same thing He said to Peter, “Try one more time but this time hear Me... obey Me.”

*God, I feel so weary and overwhelmed. Give me the strength to let down my net once more. I trust You to provide for me and my household. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## Embracing Community to Lead

*“Solomon had twelve district governors over all Israel, who supplied provisions for the king and the royal household. Each one had to provide supplies for one month in the year.” – 1 Kings 4:7*

The nation of Israel was experiencing an incredible time of prosperity. God’s chosen people were in the land He had prepared for them and they were multiplying rapidly.

As the chosen king, Solomon’s job was to run the entire country. He was responsible for everything and everyone. But rather than trying to do it on his own, Solomon selected governors.

Each governor was entrusted with big responsibilities including gathering provisions for Solomon and the royal household. Because he had people in place that he could trust, Solomon was able to focus on his own duties.

There’s a dangerous myth about leadership that suggests effective leaders are “lone wolf” types who do everything themselves.

*“God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.” (1 Kings 4:29)*

But Solomon was wise enough to reject this belief. Instead, he built a community around himself so that he could lead the people effectively.

Are there areas in your life that could benefit from community? Are there responsibilities you need to be sharing with others?

*God, help me to lead with wisdom. I know I can’t do it all myself, so I ask You to send me Godly men and women. Make them disciples after Your own heart. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## Faith through the Storm

*“A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.” – Luke 8:23*

Normally, the rocking rhythm of a boat on the water would put Peter right to sleep. You see, Peter was fisherman before he gave it all up to follow Jesus. He was used to rough nights on the water.

But there was something different about this storm. There was an eerie feeling in his gut that Peter just couldn't shake. He glanced around to see the other disciples talking among themselves.

Through the driving rain, Peter began to wonder where Jesus was. When he'd looked everywhere, Peter was astounded at what he saw. There was his Jesus, sleeping as peacefully as a baby! Didn't He see what was happening?!

I can just imagine, He wastes no time, grabbing onto Jesus' shoulder. He shakes him and with a panicked voice screams “We're about to drown here!” His urgency is unmistakable.

Jesus immediately rises and calms the storm. “Where is your faith?” he asks in the sudden silence.

When we encounter storms in life—like a serious diagnosis, the death of a friend, or the abandonment of a loved one—it can feel like we're going to drown. The pain is threatening to take us under, and we doubt we'll survive one more wave.

It's in these moments that we're tempted to doubt and say, “Are you asleep at the wheel, Jesus?”

But just as Jesus proved He was in control of the wind and waves that night, He's in control of your storm, too. The pain won't last forever, and the skies will clear again. God is holding onto you today, beloved.

*God, help me when I'm tempted to freak out. Sometimes, I focus on the storm rather than on Your power. Help me to rest in knowing that You are more than able today and always. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## A Double Portion

*When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?”*

*“Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied. – 2 Kings 2:9*

“My summer internship fell through,” the younger woman said, her eyes focused on the floor. “I know it’s short notice, but do you have a place for me?”

Annette studied the college freshmen before her. She didn’t feel like she had time to take on anything else. As the ministry leader at the megachurch, training the younger woman would take hours of her time.

She was tempted to say ‘no’. The girl didn’t look like she’d put up much of a fight if she were rejected. *Take her in*, a voice in Annette’s spirit urged.

“Where will I find the time?”

*She is precious to me*, the spirit urged again. Annette gave Leslie her best smile, “I’ll give you a trial internship. If we work well together, you can stay on through the rest of the summer.”

From that day forward, Leslie closely shadowed Annette. Every summer, she’d come home from college to work at the church. When she graduated, she was offered a position as Annette’s personal assistant.

As years passed, Annette’s health worsened, and she knew she would need to step down. But when she looked at Leslie, she knew God had already prepared the woman who would become her replacement.

“God let your first internship fall apart because He knew you’d be needed here,” Annette said. “Now, what kindness can I show you?”

Leslie smiled, “The only thing I want is a double portion of your spirit.”

*God, help me to be willing to invest in others. When I’m tempted to think about how many hours it will take, let me remember that all my time comes from Your hand. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



## **Farming Your Seeds**

*“Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed.” - Mark 4:3*

In Mark 4, Jesus shares the parable of the farmer. The farmer went out with his seeds and planted them. The birds ate some of the seeds. Some of the seeds didn't have enough soil and never took root.

Still, some seeds fell in a good place. These seeds did make roots and became healthy plants that yielded abundant harvests.

In many ways, each Christian is a farmer. Your seeds are the Gospel of Christ. You plant those seeds by doing acts of kindness for others, loving them, and forgiving them when they've wronged you.

But it's important to understand that the farmer can't assume responsibility for everything. All you can do is plant those seeds. Some of them may never take root. Some may be taken away before they can make a difference.

However, there will be some seeds that fall to the good ground and take deep root. The result is changed lives as more people discover the amazing love of Jesus.

Spread the word but don't feel overwhelming pressure like it's all on you. Your job is merely to plant seeds. Let God handle the rest!

*God, sometimes, I'm tempted to believe I'm responsible for everything and everyone. But that's my way of trying to control the world. Help me to take my hands off the wheel. You're in charge and I choose to rest in that knowledge. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Chosen

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” – John 15:16*

Susan’s mother had gotten pregnant out of wedlock. In her era, when a woman was pregnant, she married the baby’s father.

Sadly, Susan grew up knowing she was unwanted. Although her father never said it, she felt his rejection again and again. He didn’t show up to her dance recitals, her soccer games, or even her high school graduation.

When Susan was in college, she volunteered to help a local organization that took meals to elderly residents and shut-ins. They would also sometimes do basic tasks and errands that the disabled couldn’t do.

The owner of the organization was Gracie, a kind woman in her fifties. She loved Jesus and frequently talked about her faith.

Susan had grown up in church, and she was a believer. But she didn’t understand much of the Bible or how it applied to her day-to-day life.

When she shared about her father’s rejection, Gracie gave her a warm smile, “Your earthly father may have rejected you, but God chose you. He loves you deeply and wants to be the Father you never had.”

*God, when I face rejection, remind me again that I’m Yours. You call me Your child even when I mess up again and again. Help me to remember my identity is secure in You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## What Discipleship Means

*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." – Mark 10:35*

Jesus has just finished predicting his death again. He's gone into detail with His disciples about the awful things that are about to come to pass. He's warned them and done his best to prepare them.

After he's done talking, James and John pull Jesus aside quietly. They request to be front and center next to Jesus when His glory comes. Their request is proof these two disciples missed the message entirely. They want power. They want glory. They want prestige. They wanted to be recognized and get attention.

Can you relate? When someone is unjust to you, do you shake your fist with rage and wish you were powerful enough to stand up to that bully? When you get overlooked, do you long to be the smartest or best-looking person in the room?

The truth is we've all had those moments. But as Jesus explained, His Kingdom was upside down. In it, discipleship is really another word for denial of self. It's becoming less so that God can shine even brighter.

*Oh, Father, sometimes my pride and ego get in the way of Your plans for me. I start thinking about power and prestige. I get caught up in all the trappings of the world. Restore my focus to You. Let me remember that discipleship is really about servanthood. I want Your name to receive all glory and honor. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Are You People Driven?

*When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” – John 4:7*

It's noon, and the sun is high in the sky. Jesus has been on His feet for hours already, and He's tired. He sits down at the well and waits.

A few minutes later, a Samaritan woman appears. Jesus asks her for a drink and she's shocked. She's used to most Jews looking down on her. When she confesses that she doesn't have a husband, she waits again for rejection.

But it never comes.

There's only grace.

As they continue to talk, she says, “I know the Messiah is coming.”

Then Jesus declared, *“I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” (John 4:26)*

Of all the people He could have revealed His true identity to, Jesus chose a lowly regarded Samaritan woman. Of all the tasks that Jesus could have been doing, He made time for a conversation with a lonely woman.

It's right and good to accomplish a task when God commands it. But in today's world, it's easy to become task driven. You're so focused on checking the next item off your to-do list that you miss people. They become numbers, figures on a spreadsheet or simply a bother to our busy schedule.

Being a disciple of Christ means that sometimes we must put down our predetermined to-do list and serve those in front of us.

Maybe that means making time for conversation at your local grocery store. Perhaps that looks like taking a homemade meal to a sick friend. It could also mean listening to your pre-teen share her latest drama, even though there's a stack of dishes waiting in the sink.

*Father, help me to be focused on loving and serving those around me. I confess sometimes I get wrapped up in my lists. Please put someone in my path this week that I could slow down and love on. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Stepping Out in Faith

*“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” – Matthew 6:31-32*

Sandra and her husband, James, had spent months praying and asking God to show them how to be genuine disciples and live out their faith. As time went on, it became clear that God was calling the couple to welcome in foster children.

They were both nervous. They already had two children of their own, and they worried about changing their family dynamic. Although they had some money, they were still paying off school loans, and they wondered how they would provide for additional children.

But neither could shake the conviction that God wanted them to become foster parents. Not long after they were approved, Sandra received a call from a caseworker.

She had three children that needed to be placed in a home immediately. Their previous living conditions had been so terrible that the kids weren't able to bring anything. They only had the clothes on their backs.

So, Sandra and James put out a call to their community. They wanted a few hand-me-down outfits and extra bedding. But they were overwhelmed with what happened next.

Their town rallied around the foster kids—donating furniture, clothes, gift cards, toys, and more. They received so much that they couldn't take it all in.

When James came home from work and saw the supplies, he laughed and said, “Where God led us, He has provided.”

*God, when You call me to step out in faith, help me to trust You. I know You can provide for all of my needs. You know exactly what I need before I even ask! Thank You for what you're about to do for my family and me. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## He Sees You and Knows You

*Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” – John 1:45*

The day was hot and muggy. Nathanael was lounging under a fig tree, waiting for his brother. They’d taken a rare day off and had plans to go fishing together this afternoon.

But when his brother appeared over him, Nathanael noticed he didn’t have his fishing rod or his bait. Curious, he sat up as his brother doubled over, panting from the midday jog across the orchard.

“I’ve found Him!” Philip said triumphantly as soon as he could speak.

Nathanael frowned, pushing his glasses up on his nose, “Found who?”

“The Messiah! The One we’ve been searching for! He’s from Nazareth!”

Nathanael snorts out this suggestion, “Nothing good comes out of Nazareth.”

“Then come and see for yourself,” Philip urges.

*When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” (John 1:47)*

Now, Nathanael is more curious than skeptical. “How did you know who I am?”

*Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” (John 1:48)*

Just as Jesus saw His disciple under the fig tree, He also sees you. He knows your personality, your past, your hurts, your hunger, and your needs. He knows you completely, inside and out.

Nothing is hidden from Jesus’ perfect vision. Just like He welcomed Nathanael into His circle of disciples, Jesus invites you, too.

*God, thank You for seeing me! Please help me grow closer to You during this season. I want to follow in Jesus’ footsteps just like Nathanael did! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## **Breaking Bread Together**

*“While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.” – Mark 2:15*

When Janet was growing up, there was a new face at dinner almost every night. This was such a common practice in her house that the meals with only her parents stand out in her mind.

As a teenager, this habit embarrassed Janet. “My mom was the type of person who could strike up a conversation with the person in line behind her at the grocery store and two minutes later; they’d be chatting like they’d been friends for years!”

She asked her mom once about the strangers at the table. “Mom told me that’s what Jesus did. That He was always inviting others to break bread with Him, so she figured that welcoming people to share a meal was the Gospel thing to do.”

When Janet heard that her mother had a heart attack, she rushed to her bedside.

The doctor said it was a minor heart attack and that she’d make a full recovery. But they received dozens and dozens of casseroles, gifts, and help during that time. She never realized her mom’s impact until she saw how many people were eager to help her.”

*God, help me to prioritize hospitality. Show me how to be intentional about showing Your love in practical ways. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## Embracing the Present

*“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.” – Luke 10:38-39*

While Mary sat, Martha stewed. She marched around the kitchen, gathering the ingredients for the Thanksgiving size feast she was preparing.

I can imagine her muttering under her breath. How was it that no one could see what was happening? She was doing all the work yet she was being overlooked. It just didn’t seem fair!

So, Martha gathered all of her self-righteous anger and stormed over to where Jesus was reclining in her plush recliner, “Jesus, tell my sister to come help! It’s not right that all of the work should fall on my shoulders.”

The look Jesus sent her way was filled with compassion, “Martha, Martha,” He said in a soft tone. *“Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:42)*

Martha was doing a good thing, but she was doing it for the wrong reasons. She wanted to create the perfect dinner. Her sister, Mary, chose to embrace the presence of Jesus, rather than the perfection of a party.

As a “doer” and serial goal setter, I have been guilty of this on numerous occasions. Can, you relate? Have you ever prioritized your to-do list instead of soaking in the presence of Jesus?

*God, when I’m tempted to rush around, let me remember to pause in the presence of Jesus. I want to focus on the most important before I focus on the seemingly urgent. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



## Two by Two

*“Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.” – Mark 6:6-7*

During His ministry, Jesus sent out His disciples to preach to the surrounding towns. He explained that He wanted them to take nothing but a staff and the shoes on their feet. Everything else would be provided along the way.

But that’s not the only interesting thing about how Jesus commanded them to go. He also wanted them to travel and preach in groups of two.

It’s mentioned in the text that Jesus gave the disciples power over impure or demonic spirits as well as the supernatural ability to heal the sick (Luke 9:1). But for all the power He gave, He still wanted them to minister together.

There are many reasons Jesus may have done this. Perhaps because He knew that when one became discouraged, the other could lift his spirits. Maybe He didn’t want his disciples becoming lonely. Another reason may have simply been that Jesus knows ministry is more fun when you have that sense of community around you.

You don’t have to go it alone any more than the disciples did. If you’re feeling weary in your ministry, ask God to send a friend to help you. You might just be surprised by how God answers your request!

*God, thank You for sending out the disciples in pairs. Just like they needed community, so do I. Please surround me with other Christians who love You and are eager to follow Your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## Faithfully Waiting

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” – Acts 1:8*

As Jesus was ascending into Heaven, He told His disciples that soon the Holy Spirit would come into their lives. So, Peter and the other disciples returned to where they'd been staying.

*“They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” (Acts 1:14)*

Of all the things the disciples could have done, they waited. They gathered in faith, uncertain of when exactly Jesus would send the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes, God promises His followers something, but He doesn't deliver it right away. During these moments, it's easy to fall into doubt. It's tempting to think, “If You don't do this on my schedule, then I'm done. I'm out.”

But that attitude is not only unhealthy but harmful.

God, in His love, desires to give you only the very best. He has a purpose for His timing. In the disciples' case, it may have been that He wanted them to grow closer together during their wait or that He desired to have them know Him on a deeper level.

When God asks you to wait, will you be faithful like the disciples? Will you continue to seek Him even if He doesn't give you what you want?

*God, help me to stand faithful even when it looks like nothing is happening. Though it's hard for me, I trust Your purpose, and I trust Your timing. You are good, and You are using this season in my life. Let me walk with peace and patience. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## When Friends Betray You

*“While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.” – Matthew 26:47*

Walter was a well-known mechanic in his town. When he started his own auto business, he hired several other people to work with him. One of these people was Todd, a young man that seemed lost and lacking direction.

Over the next two years, Walter mentored Todd. He taught him how to change tires, install radiators, and fix worn out brakes. He invited Todd into his home, welcoming him to his dinner table. He even considered the younger man the son he'd never had.

Then came the day Walter discovered his business accounts had been emptied and Todd had left town. Walter was upset about the financial loss but even more that, he grieved for the close relationship he'd lost.

Betrayal is inevitable. At some point, you will be sold out. It might be a friend who gossiped about your marriage troubles. It might be the spouse who cheated on you. It could be the co-worker who took your project and didn't share any credit.

You're not alone. Jesus knows what that betrayal feels because He's stood in your shoes and unlike others, Jesus won't abandon you in your time of need.

*God, I need strength. I've been betrayed and my heart feels bruised and broken. I feel alone and sad. I need You. Please wrap me in Your arms and comfort me. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Ordinary People

*“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” – Acts 4:13*

Peter and John were headed into the local temple (church) one day when they saw a lame man calling out to those passing by. In the name of Jesus, the two disciples healed the man.

For their actions, they're called in front of the religious counsel. They spend the night in jail before being dragged to a large meeting filled with rulers and teachers.

When they ask for an explanation, the Holy Spirit makes Peter bold.

“If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.” (Act 4:9-10)

It's after this speech that the rulers realize the two men have spent time with Jesus. Even though Peter and John weren't learned scholars, their experiences with Jesus had equipped them to do His work.

You may not come from the “right” family. You may not have the best education. You may not be extraordinary. But God can still use you, just like He did with Peter and John!

*God, I want to reflect Jesus. Let me shine His kindness and grace everywhere I go! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## **The Back of the Boat**

*“Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.” – Matthew 14:25-26*

Peter had just started to drift to sleep when one of the disciples nudged his shoulder. “Look at it! I think it’s a ghost, walking right on top the water! What do you think, Peter?”

Before Peter can make a guess, the figure calls out to them. It’s Peter’s Jesus. Eager to be with his friend, Peter asks Jesus to give him permission to walk on the water, too.

Jesus replies with one simple word, “Come.”

In this story of Peter and the waves, most people focus on Peter or Jesus. They’re the central characters.

But did you ever stop to wonder about the other disciples? The ones still in the back of the boat? What did they do when Peter stepped out in faith? Did they encourage or ridicule him? Did they cheer or say, “Don’t get your hopes up”?

It can be hard when we see someone else stepping out in faith. A friend’s finances just aligned so that she can start the side business she’s always dreamed of. A co-worker gets pregnant even though you’ve been trying for months. A relative gets the opportunity to travel the world this year while you’re stuck on bedrest.

These situations can be upsetting when you’re the one sitting in the back of the boat. But it’s important that you take the time to cheer each “Peter” along. Anytime, someone steps out in faith, you can choose to celebrate with them.

That doesn’t mean that you don’t hurt or that you don’t grieve. It simply means that you’re choosing to trust God in the middle of your own stormy seas.

*God, it’s hard when I see other people getting the things I desire. But give me the strength to celebrate with the “Peter” in my life. Grant me the peace of knowing that even though our roads may be different, we are both still held securely in Your hands. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## **Celebrating Children**

*But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” – Luke 18:16-17*

Charlie spent years as a stay-at-home dad. He loved getting to spend every day with his daughters. He enjoyed taking care of them and teaching them.

But some people in Charlie’s community looked down on him for this. They said that he should be busy providing for his family instead of raising strong daughters.

Troubled, Charlie sought advice from an elderly friend. His friend shared Luke 18:15-17 with him.

If you’re not familiar with that passage, it was another busy day in ministry. People were swarming Jesus and His disciples were attempting to make sense of the chaos.

Maybe that’s why the disciples wanted to send away the little children. They even went so far as to rebuke the parents who brought them (Luke 18:15). But while they were busy doing that, they totally missed Jesus’ heart for little ones.

Jesus made time for the children, welcoming them to come to Him. He didn’t mind listening to the coos of a baby or kissing a “boo boo” on the knee of an eager tomboy. He celebrated children and loved on them.

*God, when I’m tempted to dismiss children or parents who are raising them, let me remember the story of Luke 18. I want to embrace kids and parents with the same joy and kindness that Jesus did. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## **Mentor for a Season**

*“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...” – Philippians 1:3-5*

Michael spent six months working as a manager for a local auto dealer. Then he was let go of without warning. The dealership owner was having financial problems and couldn't afford to keep paying Michael's salary.

Even after Michael got another job, he was still curious. “I loved working for that company and I couldn't understand why God let me work there if He didn't intend for me to stay.”

Then one evening when Michael came home from his new job, there was a letter in his mailbox. It was from Denise one of the women he'd mentored in his short time as manager.

“She explained that she was a single mom and living on government assistance when I hired her. She was so grateful that I'd given her a chance to better her life and her family. She told me she prays for me every day. As soon as I read that, I understood. God had called me to mentor her and when my work was done, He called me somewhere new.”

*God, sometimes, I don't understand Your ways. But wherever I find myself, let me be Your faithful disciple. I want to draw people closer to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Letters of Love

*“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.” – Romans 1:8*

When Mary was growing up, her mother insisted that she write one handwritten note a week. “It could be a letter to a friend, a thank-you card to a grandparent, or even just a scribbled missing-you note in my dad’s lunchbox.”

The habit stuck with her in her adult years and she still writes dozens of notes each year. But as time has passed, Mary’s lost track of all the notes she’s written and the words she shared.

Recently, Mary reconnected with a high school classmate on Facebook. The other woman sent her an instant message, thanking her for the note she had received. “You may not remember it,” her friend typed.

“But your words really helped me. On the anniversary of the day my dad died, you slipped a beautiful card into my locker. I had been feeling so alone that day and even when I think about your message today, it brings tears to my eyes. Thank you for taking the time to write me!”

*God, sometimes, I’m tempted to believe that I’m too busy to reach out. Please, help me to slow down and look for opportunities to bless someone else. I want to be Your hands and feet in this hurting world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



## Angel in Disguise

*“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” – John 15:12-13*

Cynthia’s son was just four when he was diagnosed with cancer. Overnight, Cynthia’s world changed. She spent her time taking him to the doctor, fighting the insurance company, and comforting her child.

While she cared for her son, her next door neighbor, Jackie helped out. She took the family meals, cleaned their home, and babysat Cynthia’s other children. When the family van broke down, Jackie loaned out her Sedan without a second thought.

Now, Cynthia’s son is in remission. He’s a happy sixth grader who loves soccer. “When I think back to that time, I always remember Jackie. She was a true disciple. The moment I brought a need to her, she found a way to meet it.”

When a friend’s child is in the hospital, it can be hard to know what to do. You want to help but you don’t want to add to the burden of stress the family’s already dealing with. Here are a few ideas of what you can do:

- Do check-in regularly. Knowing that someone cares is priceless.
- Do track important dates. If the child has an upcoming medical procedure, mark your calendar so you know when to show up.
- Do listen when they need support. Some parents may need to vent or cry. Reassure them that you’re there and you care.
- Do look out for the other kids. Young children may not understand why their brother or sister is getting all the attention. Even something simple like a stuffed animal or special dessert can comfort a scared sibling.

*God, when I see a family in need, give me the wisdom to know what to say and the courage to take action. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## Disciples as Servants

*“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” – John 13:14-15*

During the Passover meal, Jesus paused to wash his disciples’ feet. This action might seem odd to those of us who live in the Western culture.

But to those living in Biblical times, the act is significant. Many people in Jesus’ day wore sandals while others may have walked barefoot. Given that these areas are prone to dust and sand, a traveler’s feet could become very dirty in the course of a day.

Hosts who welcomed in relatives and other guests would often provide a foot cleansing. Some hosts would offer a bowl of water while others might instruct a servant to do this chore.

By doing it Himself, Jesus sent a message that His disciples were to be humble. That means thinking no task is “beneath” them or that they are worthy of some great honor. Instead, every true disciple of Jesus is to be servant-minded and always ready to care for others.

Are you sometimes tempted to think a certain task or chore is beneath you? Maybe you think you shouldn’t have to load the dishwasher or clean the bathroom. Perhaps you believe you shouldn’t be the one to finish that report at work or pick up litter from the street.

Rather than think this way, embrace a servant mindset. Don’t merely do what’s required of you—go the extra mile! Let your faith be seen in this: that you are willing to do any task no matter how seemingly trivial.

*God, I don’t want to be deceived by pride and arrogance. Help me to be a humble servant that delights in performing even the smallest of chores for Your glory! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## The Great Commission

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." – Matthew 28:18-20*

Brian and his wife bought their first home together last year. He was excited about the tiny house even though it needed a long list of repairs before they could live in it. So, he began making a list of everything to be done.

From the carpet that had to be replaced to the locks that had to be changed, Brian was careful to note every detail. Then he called his friend, Toby, who was a handyman and had previously worked in construction.

Brian expected that he'd give the list to his friend and simply pay him when the work was completed. But rather than accept payment from his friend or do the work, Toby took time to teach Brian how to handle the repairs.

He taught him how to install kitchen cabinets, fix an electrical socket, and set up an alarm system. By the end of the project, Brian had a lot more knowledge about his house and felt equipped to handle future repairs.

What Toby did for Brian is what Jesus wanted His disciples to do. He wants you to take others under your wing and mentor them in faith. Then when they encounter problems later, they'll know what to do because they had a faithful disciple to guide them.

*God, I ask that You send someone I could pour into. I want to be a true mentor and disciple to someone in need. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Preparing Apollos

*“When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.” – Acts 18:26*

Aquila and Priscilla were a husband and wife team who believed in Jesus. They were tentmakers by profession and good friends with the apostle Paul. They had followed him to Ephesus, where they heard of Apollos.

According to the Bible, Apollos was well-educated and he knew the Scriptures. He was always a passionate speaker in the local synagogue (church). But some of Apollos theology wasn't correct.

When Aquila and Priscilla saw that Apollos did not fully understand the Gospel story, they welcomed him close. They invited him into their home and they explained the Scriptures so his message would be accurate and true.

The result of this discipleship is that Apollos would eventually go on to have tremendous Kingdom impact in Achaia.

*“When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.” (Acts 18:27-28)*

When you see a Christian who does not fully understand God's Word, it's important that you humbly correct them. By doing so, you may be preparing the next Apollos.

*God, give me eyes to see those who need someone to disciple them. Let my words be kind and encouraging toward them. Show me how to be a Godly mentor. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## **A Loving Mentor**

*“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children...” – Titus 2:3-4*

Melody and her husband had only been married a few months when he lost his job. They couldn't afford their apartment rent from the money she made as a waitress. So, Melody moved into her in-laws' basement.

This further strained her already tense relationship with her in-laws. No matter what she did, Melody felt like she couldn't do anything right. Her in-laws made decisions for her and treated her like a child.

Finally, the frustration got to Melody. On her break in the employee lounge of the restaurant, she started looking up divorce attorneys. As she debated on dialing the number, Edith, who was the newest employee, came into the lounge.

The older woman asked to sit at Melody's table. The two of them began talking and discovered they liked some of the same activities. When Edith asked Melody about her relationships, Melody blurted out the whole story.

Edith asked to pray for Melody and encouraged her to stand strong. Over the coming months when Melody had a marital problem, she sought out Edith. The older woman was faithful to offer her grace and kindness.

Years later, Melody's thankful she listened to Edith. “My husband and I have both grown a lot. We have two beautiful daughters and our marriage is good. It took a while to get to this place. It was Edith's encouragement that helped me through it all. She was a loving mentor.”

*God, help me to take a genuine interest in my co-workers. Show me how to encourage and love them as Your disciple. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Wisdom from Spiritual Leaders

*“Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day.” – 1 Samuel 12:2*

Samuel had been a prophet of God for years. He had faithfully served the nation of Israel for decades. His hair was gray and his eyes were tired when the people of Israel brought a new request before him.

They wanted a king, just like the surrounding nations had. Samuel is distressed about this and prays to the Lord.

And the Lord told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.” (1 Samuel 8:7)

Samuel goes on to warn Israel about what will happen to them when they have a king. They ignore him until he calls down rain and thunder from Heaven.

Finally, they admit their wrong but they do nothing to fix it. They still pick a king and allow him to reign.

Often, mature spiritual leaders have deep wisdom that they’re willing to share. Don’t be like the nation of Israel and reject their advice. Instead, pray over it and see if God confirms what they have told you.

*God, please surround me with spiritual leaders who are mature. I want to follow Your path and that means listening to wisdom from those You’ve placed around me. Let my heart be humble and willing to hear. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## **Guarding Your Tongue**

*David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" – 1 Chronicles 11:17*

David was safely in a stronghold, looking toward Bethlehem, where the Philistines had set up camp. Then he remarked about the sweet, pure water that came from the well in Bethlehem.

Upon hearing this, David's elite warriors immediately set out on a journey. They travel through enemy areas just to bring a flask filled with water from Bethlehem.

When they present it to him, David refuses to drink the water.

"God forbid that I should do this!" he said. "Should I drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives?" Because they risked their lives to bring it back, David would not drink it. (1 Chronicles 11:19)

It's easy to underestimate the impact of your words. A simple remark, a word muttered under your breath, can influence those around you even if you don't realize it.

Part of being a Christ follower is learning to guard your tongue and speak words of truth and grace. If you mess up, like David did, be quick to own up to it and ask for forgiveness from God.

*God, open my eyes to the impact of my words. Let me speak only truth and grace over myself and those around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Bearing Fruit

*“They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green...” – Psalm 92:14*

Rebekah lived in a small farming town in the Midwest. To attend college, she had to drive almost two hours one way. The commute was hard but Rebekah's mother had arthritis and sometimes needed help at home.

One day as Rebekah was coming from college, she missed the exit on the interstate. At first, she didn't realize there was a problem so she continued on. She finally pulled over when none of the signs were familiar anymore.

She glanced at her GPS device but the cloud coverage was making it difficult for her to get a signal. So Rebekah grabbed her smart phone and called her grandfather instead.

The elderly man had been a delivery man for five decades and he knew the surrounding areas well. So when Rebekah asked for directions, he was able to quickly get her on the right path home.

For Rebekah, the experience was eye-opening. “It was the first time I realized how valuable it is to have a relationship with someone older than me. My grandfather was able to guide me because of his years of experience.”

Is there someone in your life that you could guide? Just because you're aging doesn't mean you're no longer useful. There are many ways that you can bless younger generations!

*God, I want to bless those who are younger than me. Let me be a faithful guide who points others toward You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*