

IF YOU REMAIN IN ME AND MY WORDS REMAIN IN YOU, ASK WHATEVER YOU WANT AND IT WILL BE DONE FOR YOU.

JOHN 15:7

ABIDE

A STUDY FROM JERSEY CHURCH
ABIDE



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DEVOTIONALS

ABIDE AND BEAR FRUIT

DAY 1

Colossians 2:6-7

So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him, being rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude.

Paul doesn't tell the Colossians to start something new here. He tells them to continue, to keep walking the same direction they started in when they first received Christ. The Christian life isn't a series of fresh starts; it's one long walk of staying rooted in the same soil.

When we look at Jesus's picture of himself as the true vine it's the same idea Paul is describing here with a different metaphor. Roots don't show. Nobody applauds a plant for having a healthy root system. But everything visible, the leaves, the fruit, the growth, depends entirely on what's happening underground, out of sight.

Being "rooted and built up" isn't passive. It's a daily posture of staying attached to Christ as Lord, even on days when nothing dramatic seems to be happening in your spiritual life. Overflowing gratitude tends to follow, not because life gets easier, but because the root system is doing its quiet work.

- **What's one area this week where you've been relying on your own effort instead of staying rooted in Christ?**
- **Lord, thank You that I don't have to reinvent my faith every morning, only keep walking in the direction I already started. Help me stay rooted in You today, even in the parts of life no one else can see. Let gratitude overflow out of that rootedness, not out of my circumstances. Amen.**

DAY 2

Hebrews 12:10-11

For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness. No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

This Sunday's passage describes a gardener who prunes every fruitful branch so it will bear even more fruit. That word "prunes" is a form of discipline, and Hebrews names exactly what that discipline is for: not punishment, but our benefit, so that we can actually share in God's holiness.

Nobody enjoys pruning while it's happening. Hebrews is honest about that; it calls discipline painful, not pleasant, in the moment. But it also promises a "later on." The pain isn't the point. The peaceful fruit of righteousness on the other side of it is.

If you're in a season right now that feels like cutting rather than growing, this verse offers a different lens. It is not God pulling away from you. It is the gardener's hands, shaping something in you that wouldn't grow any other way.

- **What current difficulty might actually be the Father's pruning rather than His absence?**
- **Father, thank You that Your discipline is for my benefit, not against me. Help me endure the painful parts of pruning without concluding You've let go of me. Train me through whatever this season holds, and grow in me the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Amen.**

DAY 3

John 17:17

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

In the chapter before John 17 Jesus tells His disciples, “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” Here, just one chapter later, praying to the Father on their behalf, He asks for that same cleansing to continue: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

Sanctify simply means to set apart, to make holy. It’s not a one-time scrub that finishes the job. It’s ongoing, ordinary exposure to truth that keeps shaping a life over time, the way water slowly shapes stone. Jesus isn’t asking the Father for a dramatic experience on the disciples’ behalf. He’s asking for continued contact with the truth.

It’s easy to treat Scripture as information to collect or a box to check. Jesus treats it as the actual instrument God uses to make people holy. If abiding in Christ includes abiding in His word, then this ordinary habit, reading it, sitting with it, letting it correct you, is not a small thing.

- **Where do you need truth to do its quiet, cleansing work in you this week rather than just information to note and move past?**
- **Lord, thank You that Your word is truth and that it’s still at work cleansing me. Don’t let me treat Scripture as information I collect instead of truth that shapes me. Sanctify me today through Your word, even in the ordinary reading of it. Amen.**

DAY 4

1 John 5:14-15

This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him.

One of Jesus' most striking promises is "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you." Read on its own, that can sound like a blank check. Read alongside 1 John, it makes more sense. Confident prayer isn't about finding the right formula; it's about asking according to God's will, which is exactly what abiding disciples learn to do.

The closer you stay to someone, the more your wants start to overlap with theirs. That's true in any close relationship, and John says it's true of our relationship with God. Abiding in Christ doesn't just change what we're allowed to ask for; it actually reshapes what we want to ask for in the first place.

This isn't a formula for guaranteeing outcomes. It's a promise about the kind of confidence that grows out of real closeness with God, the confidence that He hears us, not because we said the right words, but because we're actually near Him.

- **How might staying closer to Jesus this week change what you find yourself praying for?**

- **Father, thank You that You hear the prayers of those who are close to You. Shape my wants to match Yours rather than asking me to shape mine and hoping You'll agree. Give me the confidence that comes from actually abiding in You, not from saying the right words. Amen.**

DAY 5

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.

Sunday's passage ends with a purpose statement: "My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples." Fruit was never meant to stop with the person bearing it. It was always meant to point somewhere else, to the vine, to the gardener, to God's own character on display in an ordinary life.

Paul's list here in Galatians is a good picture of what that fruit actually looks like up close. Not dramatic spiritual accomplishments, but love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, the kind of everyday character that grows naturally out of abiding in the Spirit rather than being manufactured by sheer effort.

As we head into Sunday, this is worth carrying with you: fruit isn't something you produce to prove your worth to God. It's what naturally grows in a life that stays close to Him. The goal was never the fruit itself. It was always the vine.

- **Which piece of the fruit of the Spirit do you most want to grow in this season, and what would it look like to pursue closeness to Jesus rather than that trait directly?**
- **Holy Spirit, thank You for the fruit You grow in me that I could never manufacture on my own. Draw me closer to Jesus today rather than letting me chase character traits in my own strength. Let whatever fruit grows in my life this week point clearly back to You. Amen**

ABIDE AND BEAR FRUIT

JOHN 15:1-8

SEPTEMBER 13, 2026

MAIN POINT

A branch cut off from the vine cannot produce a single grape on its own, and we can't produce a fruitful life on our own either. Abiding in Christ, staying close to him through his word, through confession, and through prayer, isn't one more discipline to add to a list. It's the only source of the fruit, and the joy, we're actually looking for.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Think of something you've tried to sustain purely through willpower: a diet, a New Year's resolution, a habit you knew was good for you. Most of us can keep something like that going for a few weeks before it quietly falls apart. There's a real difference between forcing ourselves toward growth and actually staying connected to a source that produces growth in us.

In this week's passage, Jesus is with his disciples on the last night before his arrest, just hours from the cross. Of everything he could say in these final private moments, he chooses to leave them with a picture from a vineyard: a vine, its branches, and a gardener who tends them both. It's one of the most personal, practical things Jesus ever says about what it actually looks like to stay close to him.

- **When have you tried to grow spiritually through sheer effort, and what happened?**
- **What comes to mind when you hear the word "abide" or "remain"? Rest, discipline, something else?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 15:1-8.

This conversation happens in the middle of what's often called Jesus's Farewell Discourse, his last extended teaching to the disciples before the cross. Judas has already left to betray him (13:30). Jesus has washed the disciples' feet, given them a new command to love one another, told Peter he will deny him three times, and promised that he isn't leaving them alone, the Father will send the Holy Spirit as Counselor (14:16-17). Whether Jesus spoke these words still at the table or on the walk toward the Garden of Gethsemane, the setting is intimate: eleven men, hours from losing him, being told exactly how to hold on.

Jesus opens with the last of his seven "I am" statements in John's Gospel: "I am the true vine." The vine was one of the Old Testament's favorite pictures for Israel (Psalm 80; Isaiah 5; Jeremiah 2), and a massive golden vine even decorated the entrance of the Jerusalem temple. But Israel, as that vine, had repeatedly failed to produce the fruit God intended. Jesus doesn't reject the picture, he claims it for himself. He is what Israel was always meant to be: the true, fruitful vine, with the Father tending it as the gardener.

- **Why do you think Jesus chose an image with a history of failure attached to it (Israel as an unfruitful vine) to describe himself?**

Every branch gets some kind of attention from the gardener. Fruitless branches are lifted and cared for so they can grow strong enough to bear fruit, and fruitful branches are pruned, cut back, so they'll bear even more. Neither kind of branch is ignored. Pruning here isn't Jesus threatening to strip away someone's salvation. It's the Father's ongoing, sometimes uncomfortable work of shaping a life that's already his so it becomes more fruitful, not less secure.

- **What has “pruning” (correction, a hard season, a trial) produced in your life that you can only really see in hindsight?**

Jesus tells the disciples they’re already clean, already his, because of his word. Then comes the command at the center of the passage: remain, or abide. A branch cannot decide, on its own, to produce fruit. It can only stay attached to the vine and let the vine’s life flow through it. “Apart from me you can do nothing” isn’t an exaggeration. It’s the entire point of the metaphor.

- **What does “remaining” in Jesus practically look like in an ordinary week, not a crisis week?**

Jesus is honest that not remaining has real consequences: a branch cut off from the vine withers and is eventually gathered up and burned. This verse has been read a lot of different ways, but read alongside everything Jesus has just promised these same disciples, that he will never leave them (14:16-18), it lands less like a threat to their standing with God and more like a warning about becoming useless and fruitless, exactly the kind of life this whole passage is written to help them avoid.

- **What tends to disconnect you from Christ day to day: distraction, self-reliance, unconfessed sin, something else?**

Abiding disciples pray differently, not because they’ve learned a formula, but because staying close to Jesus reshapes what they actually want to ask for. And the fruit that results doesn’t just benefit the branch. It glorifies the Father and shows a watching world what a real disciple looks like.

- **How might your prayers change if they came from a place of already remaining close to Jesus, rather than reaching out to Him only when you need something?**

A vine and its branches share one life. Jesus isn't asking the disciples, or us, to work harder at producing fruit. He's asking us to stay close enough to him that fruit becomes the natural result, not the exhausting goal.

- **What would it look like for you to treat abiding in Christ, not effort or performance, as the actual starting point for growth this week?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **What's one specific way you can "remain" in Christ's word this week, not just reading it, but letting it shape a decision?**
- **Where do you sense the Father pruning something in your life right now? How might you cooperate instead of resist?**
- **Is there anything currently disconnecting you from Christ that needs to be confessed and set down?**

PRAY

Thank God that fruitfulness starts with him, not our effort. Ask for grace to keep remaining in Christ through his word, through confession, and through consistent prayer, even on ordinary, unremarkable days. Pray for anyone in the group currently in a season of pruning, that they would trust the gardener's care even when it's uncomfortable. Ask God to produce fruit in each life that clearly points back to him.

JOHN 15:1-8

Jesus speaks these words during the Farewell Discourse, likely either still in the upper room or on the walk toward the Kidron Valley and the Garden of Gethsemane, hours before his arrest. Ancient sources describe a massive golden vine adorning the entrance to the Jerusalem temple, and if the disciples were walking past it as Jesus spoke, the imagery would have been impossible to miss.

The vine was a familiar image for Israel throughout the Old Testament (Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15; Hosea 10:1), almost always tied to a story of failure, a vine God planted and cared for that still didn't produce the fruit he intended. When Jesus declares "I am the true vine," he makes one of his boldest claims in John's Gospel: he is what Israel was always called to be, succeeding exactly where the nation as a whole did not.

The Greek word behind "remain" (*meno*) appears eleven times in this short passage alone, and dozens more throughout John's writings. It's the same word Jesus uses to describe his own relationship with the Father (14:10) and the Spirit's presence in the believer (14:17). Abiding isn't a special tier of Christian experience reserved for the spiritually advanced. It's the ordinary, expected posture of anyone who belongs to Christ: staying close through his word, through confession and obedience, and through prayer.

Verses 2 and 6 have generated real debate among interpreters, particularly around what happens to branches that don't bear fruit. It's worth being clear about what this passage is not saying: it isn't teaching that a genuine believer can lose their salvation through a fruitless season. Scripture elsewhere is emphatic that those who belong to Christ are kept by the Father's power (John 10:28-29) and will be brought safely to glory (Romans 8:38-39). What this passage does teach is that fruitlessness has real consequences, whether that's discipline meant to restore (Hebrews 12:5-11), the loss of usefulness and reward, or both. The Father's pruning is not evidence he's letting go of a branch. It's evidence he's still tending it.

The passage closes on prayer and fruit (vv. 7-8), tying the whole metaphor together. An abiding disciple's prayers are shaped by ongoing closeness to Christ, not by a formula for getting what they want, and the fruit that results doesn't stop with the individual believer. It glorifies the Father and becomes evidence, to a watching world, of what it actually looks like to belong to Jesus.

DEVOTIONALS

WHERE ARE YOU?

DAY 1

1 Peter 1:18-19

For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.

John the Baptist points at Jesus and declares, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” It’s easy to hear that title so often that it stops landing. Peter’s words here put a price tag on it: not silver, not gold, but the precious blood of a lamb without blemish.

Peter also names what that price bought back: an “empty way of life,” the kind of existence that keeps busy without ever actually going anywhere. Redemption isn’t just rescue from punishment. It’s rescue from emptiness, from a life spent chasing things that were never going to satisfy in the first place.

Old Testament sacrifices required a lamb without defect, because something offered to God on behalf of sin had to be perfect. Jesus met that standard completely, which is exactly why John could point at him and call him the Lamb without qualification.

- **What “empty way of life” has Jesus actually redeemed you from, and do you still live like it’s true?**
- **Jesus, thank You for being the spotless Lamb who paid what silver and gold never could. Help me remember today that I was redeemed from emptiness, not just from guilt. Let that truth actually change how I spend this day. Amen.**

DAY 2

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John the Baptist doesn't cling to his own disciples when Jesus appears. He points at Jesus a second time, and two of his own followers leave to follow Christ instead. This verse, spoken by John a little later in the same Gospel, is the philosophy behind that moment made explicit: he must increase, but I must decrease.

That's a hard sentence to actually live, not just admire. Most of us want to be needed, noticed, the one people come to. John had built something real, a following, a ministry, a reputation as a prophet after centuries of prophetic silence. And he was glad to watch it shrink so that Jesus could grow.

This is the same posture Andrew models a few verses later, going straight to find his brother and bring him to Jesus instead of keeping Christ's attention to himself. Decreasing isn't losing. It's making room for the only one worth increasing.

- **Where in your life is God asking you to decrease, to step back, so that Christ can increase in someone else's view?**
- **Lord, it's uncomfortable to pray this, but I ask You to increase in my life, even where it means I decrease. Show me where I've been protecting my own importance instead of pointing people to You. Make me glad, like John was, to make room for Your glory. Amen.**

DAY 3

Psalm 27:8-9

My heart says this about you: 'Seek his face.' Lord, I will seek your face. Do not hide your face from me; do not turn your servant away in anger. You have been my helper; do not leave me or abandon me, God of my salvation.

When Jesus turns to the two men following him John 1, his first question is “What are you looking for?” It’s the same question underneath David’s prayer here, centuries earlier: what am I actually seeking? David’s answer is direct. Not comfort, not rescue from his enemies first, but God’s own face.

There’s an honesty in this psalm. David doesn’t pretend seeking God is easy or automatic. He asks God not to hide, not to turn him away, not to abandon him, the language of someone who knows how tempting it is to seek anything but God’s presence when life gets hard.

Jesus’s two disciples answered his question with their own, “where are you staying?” It’s the same heart as David’s psalm in a different shape: not looking for information about God, but wanting to actually be near him.

- **If you’re honest, what have you been seeking harder than you’ve been seeking God’s face this week?**
- **Lord, my heart says what David’s said: I will seek Your face. Don’t let me settle for information about You when what I actually need is nearness to You. Be my helper today, and don’t let me wander toward lesser things. Amen.**

DAY 4

Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!

When the two disciples asked Jesus where he was staying, he didn't hand them an explanation. He said, "Come and you'll see," and let them spend the rest of the day in his presence. Some things about God aren't meant to be argued into belief. They're meant to be tasted, experienced firsthand.

That's exactly what this psalm invites. "Taste and see" is an invitation to experience, not just to agree with a doctrine. David isn't asking readers to accept a fact about God's goodness secondhand. He's inviting them to actually take refuge in God and find out for themselves.

There's something freeing about this kind of faith. You don't have to have every question answered before you come close to Jesus. The two disciples didn't get a theology lecture before they were invited in; they got an afternoon in his presence, and that was enough to start.

- **What would it look like this week to "come and see" rather than waiting until you have every question resolved?**
- **Lord, thank You that You invite me to taste and see rather than demanding I understand everything first. Help me take refuge in You today, not just agree with facts about You. Let me experience Your goodness firsthand, not secondhand. Amen.**

DAY 5

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

Sunday's passage ends with Jesus looking at Simon and renaming him Cephas, Peter, "the rock," long before Simon had done anything to earn that identity. Jesus saw who Simon would become and spoke to that future, not to the impulsive fisherman standing in front of him.

Paul's words to the Corinthians describe the same kind of transformation for anyone in Christ: the old has passed away, and the new has come. This isn't a slow improvement project where you gradually become slightly better. It's a genuinely new identity, one Jesus assigns the moment you belong to him, whether or not you feel like it yet.

Simon spent years growing into the name Jesus gave him; he was still impulsive, still prone to failure, long after that first meeting. But the name stuck, because it was never based on his performance. It was based on what Christ said was true.

- **What "old" identity are you still living out of that Jesus has already called new?**
- **Jesus, thank You for seeing who I'm becoming instead of only who I currently am. Help me live out of the new creation You've already declared me to be, not the old way of life I'm tempted to default to. Grow me into the name You've given me. Amen.**

WHERE ARE YOU?

JOHN 1:29-42

SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

MAIN POINT

When life feels distant from God, our instinct is to ask, “Jesus, where are you?” as an accusation, why aren’t you here fixing this? But the first disciples asked a different version of the same question, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” and Jesus’s answer was an open invitation, not an argument: come and see. God’s nearness was never something we had to go hunting for. It’s something Jesus offers to anyone willing to come close.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Most of us have asked some version of “God, where are you?” during a hard season, in a hospital waiting room, after a loss, in the middle of a problem we couldn’t fix. It’s a fair question, but it’s usually asked as a complaint: why aren’t you doing something?

Today’s passage sits at the very beginning of Jesus’s public ministry, and it includes a completely different version of that same question. Two men, curious about who Jesus is, ask him something that sounds almost identical on the surface but comes from an entirely different place: “Where are you staying?” One question demands an explanation. The other just wants to be near him.

- **When you’ve asked God “where are you,” was it more often a complaint or genuine curiosity?**
- **What would change about your walk with God if you asked “where are you” the way these two disciples did?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 1:29-42.

By this point in John's Gospel, John the Baptist has already told the priests and Levites sent from Jerusalem that he is not the Messiah, not Elijah, not "the Prophet," just a voice preparing the way for someone greater (1:19-28). This passage is where John stops describing that someone in the abstract and starts pointing directly at him. It's the handoff from John's ministry to Jesus's own, right at the outset of the Gospel.

John identifies Jesus with a title he'll use twice in these verses: "the Lamb of God." It's a loaded phrase, calling back to the Pass-over lamb and to Isaiah's suffering servant "led like a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7).

- **What does it mean to you that Jesus is described as the Lamb who takes away the sin of "the world," not just one nation or group?**

John explains that he only recognized Jesus because God had given him a sign in advance: the Spirit descending like a dove and remaining on him. John didn't figure this out on his own. He needed a testimony beyond what he could see with his own eyes, and once he received it, he didn't hesitate to declare what he'd been shown.

- **John relied on someone else's testimony (God's own sign) to recognize Jesus. Where in your walk with Christ are you still leaning on someone else's testimony rather than your own experience of him?**

Two of John's own disciples hear him point at Jesus a second time, "Look, the Lamb of God," and immediately leave John to follow Jesus instead. That's exactly what John's ministry was for. He never asked people to stay loyal to him. His whole purpose was to hand people off to someone greater.

- **Who in your life pointed you toward Jesus the way John pointed his own disciples toward Christ, even if it cost that person something?**

Jesus turns and asks the two men following him a simple question: "What are you looking for?" These are the first words Jesus speaks in John's Gospel, and they're not small talk. It's a question that goes straight to what these men, and every person who starts following Jesus, actually wants out of life.

- **If Jesus turned and asked you that same question right now, how would you honestly answer?**

Instead of answering directly, the two men ask where Jesus is staying. It's a modest, almost shy question, but Jesus doesn't brush it off. He says, "Come and you'll see," and they spend the rest of the day with him. God's nearness in this passage isn't a lecture. It's an afternoon spent in the same room.

- **Contrast a self-focused "Jesus, why aren't you here doing something" with the disciples' Christ-centered "where are you staying, can we be near you." Which version of that question do you tend to ask God?**

One of the two men, Andrew, immediately goes and finds his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus. When Jesus sees Simon, he doesn't just greet him, he renames him: Cephas, Peter, "the rock." Jesus already knew who Simon would become before Simon had done anything to earn that identity.

- **Jesus renamed Simon based on who he would become, not who he currently was. Where do you need to trust who God says you'll become more than what you currently see in yourself?**

From John's testimony to two curious disciples to a brother brought along almost as an afterthought, this whole passage is a chain of ordinary people pointing other ordinary people toward Jesus. Nobody in this story is impressive yet. They're just willing to come and see.

- **Who is someone you could invite to "come and see" this week, not with an argument, but with an honest invitation to be near Jesus?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **Who pointed you to Jesus, and have you thanked them or told them what that meant to you?**
- **What's one relationship where you could play John's role this week, pointing someone toward Christ instead of holding their attention on yourself?**
- **When you next find yourself asking "God, where are you," can you try reframing it as "Jesus, where are you staying," an invitation to nearness instead of a complaint?**
- **Is there an area of your identity where you're still living out of who you used to be instead of who Jesus says you're becoming?**

PRAY

Thank God that Jesus isn't hiding from those who seek him honestly, he invites us to come and see. Ask him to soften any complaint hiding inside your own "where are you" questions this week and turn them into genuine nearness instead. Pray for someone specific you could point toward Jesus the way John and Andrew did, without needing credit for it. Ask God to help you trust who he says you're becoming, the way Simon had to trust the name Jesus gave him.

JOHN 1:29-42

This passage takes place near Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John had been baptizing (1:28), likely in the region east of the river near its southern stretch toward the Dead Sea. John's ministry there had already drawn attention from religious leaders in Jerusalem, and it's in that charged setting that John shifts from denying he's the Messiah to openly identifying who is.

The title "Lamb of God" is unique to John among the four Gospels, and it carries the weight of the whole Old Testament sacrificial system behind it: the Passover lamb whose blood protected Israel's firstborn (Exodus 12), and Isaiah's suffering servant, silent "like a lamb led to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7). John combines both pictures into a single phrase that tells his hearers exactly what kind of Messiah Jesus would be: not a conquering political liberator, but a substitute for sin.

John's recognition of Jesus depended entirely on a sign God had promised him in advance, the Spirit descending and remaining on the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. All the other disciples in this passage, by contrast, come to recognize Jesus through a human witness: John's testimony, then Andrew's testimony to his brother. This becomes a pattern throughout John's Gospel: one person's honest witness leading another person to Jesus.

Jesus's question "What are you looking for?" is the first thing he says in this entire Gospel, and its placement is intentional. Before Jesus gives any teaching, any miracle, any claim about himself, he asks a question that gets at the deepest thing in a person's life: what are you actually seeking? The disciples' answer, asking where he's staying, uses a Greek word (*meno*, "to stay" or "abide") that John will return to again and again throughout his Gospel, most notably in Jesus's teaching on the vine in chapter 15. Staying close to Jesus in this small, ordinary moment previews the larger call to abide in him that runs through the whole book.

Andrew's role in this passage sets a pattern that continues every time he appears in John's Gospel (6:8; 12:22): he brings someone else to Jesus. Simon's renaming to Cephas, "rock," anticipates who he will become through years of following Christ, not who he was as an impulsive Galilean fisherman on the day they met. Jesus saw the finished work before Simon had taken a single step toward it.

DEVOTIONALS

DO YOU KNOW ME?

DAY 1

Psalm 139:1-4

Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I stand up; you understand my thoughts from far away. You observe my travels and your rest; you are aware of all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you know all about it, Lord.

In John 1 Jesus tells Nathanael he saw him under a fig tree before Philip ever called him over, a small detail that convinces Nathanael he's standing in front of someone who knows him completely. David describes that same reality centuries earlier: God knows his sitting and standing, his thoughts from far away, even the words not yet on his tongue.

It's worth noticing what David does with this truth. He doesn't run from it. He turns it into worship, into a psalm instead of a complaint. Being fully known by God could feel invasive, like having no privacy left at all. David treats it instead as the safest possible place to be, because the one who knows him completely is also the one who loves him completely.

Nathanael's shock, "How do you know me?" is really just David's psalm playing out in real time, one person's surprised discovery that God's knowledge of him was never distant or clinical. It was personal all along.

- **Is there a part of your life you've been hiding from God, forgetting he already knows it completely and loves you anyway?**
- **Lord, thank You that You searched me and knew me long before I ever sought You out. Help me stop hiding the parts of myself I think might disqualify me from Your love. Let Your complete knowledge of me feel like safety today, not exposure. Amen.**

DAY 2

Matthew 4:19-20

*‘Follow me,’ he told them, ‘and I will make you fish for people.’
Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*

Jesus’s call to Philip in John 1 is just two words: “Follow me.” No lengthy explanation, no negotiation. Matthew records that same short call given to another set of fishermen, and their response matches its simplicity: immediately, they left their nets and followed.

It’s tempting to imagine we’d need more information before making a move like that. But notice what Jesus doesn’t do here. He doesn’t lay out a five-year plan or answer every objection in advance. He simply says “follow me,” and trusts that knowing him is reason enough to leave everything else behind.

Most of us have a version of “nets” we’re holding onto, security, control, a plan we’ve built for ourselves. Following Jesus doesn’t always come with a full explanation of what’s next. Sometimes it just comes with an invitation and the question of whether we trust the one giving it.

- **What “nets” are you still holding onto that Jesus might be asking you to leave immediately rather than gradually?**
- **Jesus, thank You for calling me even without giving me the full plan in advance. Forgive me for wanting every detail settled before I’ll follow. Give me the same immediate willingness those fishermen had, and help me trust You with what I leave behind. Amen.**

DAY 3

1 Corinthians 1:27

Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael’s question wasn’t unreasonable by the standards of his day. Nazareth was small, overlooked, absent from any messianic expectation. And yet the Messiah came from exactly there.

Paul describes this as God’s actual pattern, not an exception to it. God chooses what the world calls foolish to shame the wise, what the world calls weak to shame the strong. Nazareth wasn’t a strange detour from how God usually works. It was precisely how God usually works.

This should change how we look at the overlooked places and overlooked people in our own lives, including ourselves. God has never needed impressive raw material to do something significant. He tends to prefer the opposite.

- **Where have you assumed you, or someone else, are too overlooked or unimpressive for God to use significantly?**
- **Lord, thank You that You’ve never needed impressive people or places to do Your best work. Help me stop underestimating what You can do through what looks small or overlooked, starting with my own life. Use what the world calls foolish to display Your wisdom today. Amen.**

DAY 4

Jeremiah 1:5

I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born. I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

The kind of knowledge Jesus displayed toward Nathanael, seeing him under a fig tree before they'd ever met, wasn't a one-time party trick. It's consistent with how God has always related to people. Long before Nathanael was born, God had already told Jeremiah the same truth about himself: chosen, known, set apart before he ever took his first breath.

This isn't only Jeremiah's story. The pattern holds for anyone God calls. Before you did anything to earn attention, before you had a reputation good or bad, God had already set you apart with a purpose in mind. Your identity was never something you had to build from nothing.

Jeremiah didn't feel ready for what God called him to (he says so in the very next verse). But God's calling was never based on Jeremiah suddenly feeling ready. It was based on a decision God had already made about him long before that moment arrived.

- **What would change about how you see yourself if you truly believed God set you apart before you were even born?**
- **Father, thank You that You knew and chose me before I ever did anything to earn it. Help me stop waiting to feel ready before I trust the purpose You've set apart for me. Remind me today that my identity was settled by You, not by my own performance. Amen.**

DAY 5

John 14:12

Truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

Sunday's passage ends with Jesus telling Nathanael, "You will see greater things than this," promising that a single moment of being known was only the beginning of a much larger story. Later in this same Gospel, Jesus makes an even bolder promise to all who believe in him: greater works still to come, made possible because he was returning to the Father.

It would be easy to treat a powerful moment with God, like Nathanael's, as the peak of the story. Jesus refuses to let it stay there. Being known by him and responding in faith was never meant to be a single high point to look back on. It was meant to be the start of an ongoing relationship that keeps producing more.

As we close this series' opening weeks, this is worth carrying forward: whatever you've already experienced of Jesus, being pruned like a branch, being invited to come and see, being fully known, there is more still ahead. He isn't finished.

- **What "greater things" might God be inviting you to trust him for beyond what you've already experienced of him?**
- **Jesus, thank You that knowing You is never a finished story. Give me faith to expect greater things ahead, not just look back on what You've already done. Keep working through me for Your glory, and help me trust that You're never finished with me. Amen.**

DO YOU KNOW ME?

JOHN 1:43-51

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026

MAIN POINT

Nathanael's skepticism, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" gives way the moment Jesus reveals that he already knew him, seen under a fig tree before Philip ever called him over. The same is true for us. Jesus knows us completely, our doubts, our private moments, our hidden character, and still calls us to himself.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

There's a difference between being known and being merely acquainted with someone. Plenty of people know facts about us, our job, our family, small talk details. Far fewer people actually know us: our real doubts, our private moments, the parts of our story we don't lead with.

Today's passage is about that second kind of knowing. Nathanael meets Jesus expecting, at best, a stranger with a reputation. What he gets instead is a man who already knows him completely, and it changes everything about how Nathanael responds.

- **Who in your life knows you, not just facts about you, but actually knows you? What's that relationship like?**
- **If you're honest, does the idea that God already knows you completely feel more comforting or more unsettling?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 1:43-51.

Last week we watched Andrew leave John the Baptist to follow Jesus, then immediately go find his brother Simon and bring him along too. This passage picks up “the next day,” and the same chain keeps moving: Jesus finds Philip, and Philip goes and finds his friend Nathanael. The pattern holding this whole first chapter together is ordinary people pointing other ordinary people toward Christ.

Jesus’s call to Philip is remarkably short: “Follow me.” No lengthy argument, no negotiation, just an invitation and, apparently, an immediate response. Philip was from Bethsaida, the same hometown as Andrew and Peter, a reminder that this first circle of disciples was a tight web of existing relationships, not strangers randomly assembled.

- **Jesus’s call to Philip is just two words. What tends to hold you back from that kind of immediate response to Jesus?**

Philip goes straight to his friend Nathanael and testifies using the only thing he actually knows: Scripture and plain facts. “We have found the one Moses wrote about... Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.” It’s not a polished sales pitch. It’s simply what Philip has seen and believes to be true.

- **Philip’s testimony wasn’t fancy, just what he knew. What’s the simplest, truest thing you could tell someone about Jesus this week?**

Nathanael’s response is blunt: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nazareth had a forgettable reputation, an insignificant village not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament. Rather

than arguing the point, Philip repeats Jesus's own earlier invitation from last week's passage: "Come and see."

- **What's a "Nazareth" in your own assumptions, something or someone you've written off as unlikely to hold anything good, that God might actually be at work in?**

As Nathanael approaches, Jesus makes a striking pronouncement before any introduction: "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." Stunned, Nathanael asks how Jesus could possibly know him, and Jesus answers that he saw him under a fig tree before Philip ever called him over. This wasn't casual observation. It was the same kind of knowledge only God has access to.

- **Jesus knew Nathanael's character and his private moments before they'd ever met. Does knowing God sees you that completely feel more comforting or more unsettling to you right now?**

Nathanael's response is immediate and total: "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!" A man who moments earlier doubted anything good could come from Jesus's hometown now makes one of the boldest confessions of Jesus's identity in the entire Gospel.

- **What moved Nathanael from skepticism to full confession so quickly? What tends to move you from doubt to trust?**

Jesus tells Nathanael this is only the beginning: "You will see greater things than this." He then promises that Nathanael will see heaven opened and angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man, deliberately echoing Jacob's dream at Bethel (Genesis 28:12). Jesus is telling Nathanael, and telling us, that being fully known by him is just the start of an ongoing relationship, not the end of one.

- **Jesus told Nathanael there was more still to come. Where do you need to trust that God isn't finished revealing himself to you yet?**

Nathanael came expecting, at best, a stranger. What he found was someone who already knew him completely and still called him to follow. That's the same offer standing open to anyone willing to come and see for themselves.

- **What would it look like to approach Jesus this week the way Nathanael eventually did, fully known and still willing to say yes?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **What's one place in your life where you've assumed nothing good could come from it, the way Nathanael assumed about Nazareth?**
- **Like Philip, who is someone you could simply tell the truth about Jesus to this week, without needing a polished argument?**
- **Is there a hidden part of your life, a "fig tree" moment, that you need to remember Jesus already sees and already knows?**

PRAY

Thank God that he already knows you completely, your doubts, your hidden moments, your whole story, and still calls you to himself. Ask him to help you trust his knowledge of you as good news rather than something to fear or hide from. Pray for someone in your life who, like Nathanael, needs a simple, honest invitation to "come and see" rather than an argument. Ask God to keep revealing more of himself to you, trusting that what you've already seen is only the beginning.

JOHN 1:43-51

This passage continues directly from the events of the previous day (1:35-42), as Jesus prepares to leave the region near the Jordan and head north to Galilee. Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from Bethsaida, suggesting these first disciples were already connected through friendship and geography before Jesus ever called them.

Nathanael's identity has generated some debate among interpreters; some identify him with Bartholomew, listed among the Twelve in the Synoptic Gospels, though there is no decisive reason to equate the two names. What's clear is his skepticism toward Nazareth, an obscure village with no messianic pedigree in the Old Testament and, for Nathanael, an unlikely birthplace for the Messiah.

Jesus's declaration that Nathanael is "an Israelite in whom there is no deceit" carries a pointed contrast. Jacob, the patriarch after whom the nation Israel was named, was infamous for his deceitfulness toward his brother and father (Genesis 27:35-36). Jesus is effectively calling Nathanael an Israelite without any Jacob in him, and it's no accident that Jesus goes on, in the very next verse, to allude to Jacob's own vision at Bethel.

The fig tree detail matters more than it might first appear. Devout Jews sometimes used the shade of a fig tree as a quiet place for prayer or study of the law, and Jesus's knowledge of that private moment convinced Nathanael that he was dealing with more than an ordinary teacher. This Gospel later names seven distinct witnesses to Jesus's deity, John the Baptist, Nathanael, Peter, Jesus himself, Martha, Thomas, and the Gospel writer, and Nathanael's confession here is among the earliest and most direct of them.

Jesus's closing promise draws directly on Genesis 28:12, where Jacob dreamed of a stairway connecting heaven and earth, with angels ascending and descending on it. Jesus tells Nathanael that he himself, "the Son of Man," is now that connecting point between heaven and earth. What Jacob only glimpsed in a dream at Bethel, Nathanael and the other disciples would come to see fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

DEVOTIONALS

ARE YOU ABLE?

DAY 1

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Paul closes this section of Ephesians with a doxology built entirely around one word: able. Not able to meet our request exactly. Able to do “above and beyond all that we ask or think.” That’s a much bigger claim than most of us actually live like we believe.

It’s easy to pray small prayers because we’ve already decided what’s realistic. We ask for just enough, because asking for more feels presumptuous, or because we’ve quietly done the math the way Philip did with a crowd of five thousand and concluded the request is out of reach. Paul isn’t describing a God who occasionally exceeds expectations. He’s describing the ordinary shape of how God works, according to a power already at work in us, not according to our own resources.

This doesn’t mean every prayer gets answered exactly as asked. It means the limiting factor was never God’s ability. It was always the smallness of what we thought to ask for in the first place.

- **What’s one prayer you’ve kept small because you assumed anything bigger would be unrealistic?**
- **Father, thank You that Your ability was never limited by my imagination or my math. Forgive me for praying small, cautious prayers instead of trusting the power already at work in me. Stretch what I believe You’re able to do, and let it change what I actually bring to You this week. Amen.**

DAY 2

2 Kings 4:42-44

A man from Baal-shalishah came to the man of God with his sack full of twenty loaves of barley bread from the first bread of the harvest. Elisha said, 'Give it to the people to eat.' But Elisha's attendant asked, 'What? Am I to set this before a hundred men?' 'Give it to the people to eat,' Elisha said, 'for this is what the Lord says: They will eat, and they will have some left over.' So he set it before them, and as the Lord had promised, they ate and had some left over.

Centuries before Jesus fed a crowd of thousands with a boy's lunch, the prophet Elisha faced a smaller version of the same math problem: twenty loaves of barley bread and a hundred hungry men. His own servant did what Philip would later do, pointing out that the numbers didn't work.

Elisha's response wasn't a clever plan for stretching the bread further. It was a promise, spoken with total confidence, that God had already said there would be enough, and more. The attendant didn't need a better strategy. He needed to set the bread out and watch what God did with it.

This pattern runs all through Scripture, long before it ever showed up on a Galilean hillside. Insufficient resources were never the obstacle to God's provision. They were usually the setting he chose to prove it.

- **Where has doubting the math kept you from simply “setting out” what little you have and trusting God with the result?**
- **Lord, like Elisha's servant, I'm quick to point out what won't be enough. Help me set out what I have anyway, trusting Your word over my own calculations. Thank You for a track record, long before Jesus fed the five thousand, of making little into more than enough. Amen.**

DAY 3

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.

Paul isn't describing a God who provides exactly enough and no more. He's describing overflow, every grace, in every way, always having everything you need. It's a strikingly generous sentence for a letter that, in context, is actually about giving money away.

Paul isn't promising abundance so that we can hoard it. He's promising abundance so that we're free to "excel in every good work," including generosity itself. God's overflow was never meant to end with us. It was meant to keep moving, the same way twelve baskets of leftover bread ended up in the disciples' own hands to carry and distribute further.

If you've ever hesitated to give, to serve, or to offer something small because you were worried you wouldn't have enough left for yourself, this verse will challenge you. The math of scarcity isn't the math God actually operates by.

- **What's one place you've been holding back generosity out of fear of not having enough, when God has promised overflow instead of exact sufficiency?**

- **God, thank You for grace that overflows rather than merely meets the minimum. Forgive me for operating out of scarcity when You've promised abundance. Help me hold what You've given with open hands, ready to let it move toward someone else's need. Amen.**

DAY 4

Philippians 4:19

And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Paul wrote this promise from prison, to a church that had just sent him financial support at real cost to themselves. He wasn't offering an abstract theological idea. He was thanking real people for real generosity, and promising that the God who saw their sacrifice would take care of what they needed in return.

Notice the standard Paul uses: not according to how tight the budget looks, not according to what seems reasonable, but "according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." That's an entirely different scale of measurement than the one most of us default to when we're worried about whether we'll have enough.

The disciples handed out bread and fish they hadn't multiplied themselves and watched five thousand people eat their fill. They weren't the source. They were just willing to distribute what Jesus provided. Our needs work the same way. The supply was never going to come from our own resourcefulness in the first place.

- **What need are you currently trying to solve through your own resourcefulness that you haven't actually brought to God yet?**
- **Father, thank You for supplying according to Your riches, not according to my limited resources. Help me stop trying to manufacture provision on my own before I've even asked You for it. I trust You with what I genuinely need today. Amen.**

DAY 5

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.' Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul had begged God three times to remove a specific weakness from his life, and three times God said no. What God offered instead wasn't an explanation. It was a promise that his power works best precisely where our own strength runs out.

This is close to the heart of a boy's small lunch on a Galilean hillside. The loaves and fish were never enough on their own merits, and that was never really the point. Andrew's embarrassed "but what are they for so many" and Paul's own thorn in the flesh land in the same place: weakness isn't a problem God works around. It's often the exact place he chooses to work.

If you're carrying something this week that feels too small or inadequate to bring to God, remember that feeling isn't disqualifying. It might be precisely where his power is about to show up.

- **What weakness have you been hiding from God instead of offering it to him, the way Andrew offered five loaves he assumed weren't enough?**
- **Lord, thank You that Your power is perfected in weakness, not in my own strength. Help me stop hiding what feels small or inadequate and instead bring it honestly to You. Let Your strength be seen clearly in exactly the places I feel least capable. Amen.**

ARE YOU ABLE?

JOHN 6:1-13

OCTOBER 4, 2026

MAIN POINT

When Jesus asked Philip where they could buy bread for a crowd of thousands, he already knew what he was about to do. The question wasn't for his own benefit, it was a test of Philip's faith. Philip did the math and found the problem impossible. Andrew found a boy with five barley loaves and two fish and doubted it was even worth mentioning. Both were right about their own resources and completely wrong about what Jesus could do with them. God is able to meet an impossible need with whatever small, willing thing gets placed in his hands.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Most of us know what it feels like to look at a problem and do the math the way Philip did: not enough time, not enough money, not enough energy, not enough of whatever the situation demands. It's not usually a lack of faith exactly. It's just honest arithmetic. The numbers don't work.

This week's passage puts Jesus right in the middle of that kind of impossible math, a crowd of thousands and a lunch that could barely feed one boy. Before he does anything about it, he asks his disciples a question that's really aimed at their faith, not their calculator.

- **Think of a problem in your life right now where you've already done the math and concluded it's impossible. What does that math actually look like?**
- **When you're honest, do you tend to bring impossible problems to Jesus, or do you quietly assume he's already ruled them out the way you have?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 6:1-13.

Chapters 1 through 5 of John have stayed close to Jerusalem, Jesus in conversation with individuals like Nathanael, Nicodemus, and the woman at the well, and in growing conflict with religious leaders. Chapter 6 moves the setting north to Galilee and widens the lens dramatically. Instead of one person at a time, it's now a crowd numbering in the thousands, and instead of a quiet conversation, it's a public test of whether the disciples actually believe what they've seen Jesus do so far.

- **Over the last few weeks we've watched Jesus meet people one at a time, Andrew, Peter, Nathanael. Tonight it's a crowd of thousands. Does your faith change at all depending on the size of the problem in front of you?**

Jesus asks Philip a direct, practical question, where can we buy enough bread. John is careful to tell us this wasn't Jesus looking for an answer he didn't already have. It was a test, and Philip failed it in the most honest way possible: he did the math. Two hundred denarii, roughly eight months of an ordinary worker's wages, wouldn't buy enough bread for everyone to have even a little. Philip wasn't wrong about the math. He was wrong to think the math was the whole answer.

- **Philip's answer wasn't lazy or faithless, it was accurate. What's the difference between an honest assessment of a problem and treating that assessment as the final word on what God can do about it?**

Andrew offers something, but almost apologetically. He's found a boy carrying five small barley loaves, the bread of the poor, and two small fish, probably meant as a simple relish to go with the bread. Before he even finishes the sentence he's already

discounting it: “what are they for so many?” It’s worth noticing that Andrew still brought it to Jesus even while doubting it mattered. He didn’t need to be confident in the solution. He just needed to bring what he had.

- **Andrew brought something small to Jesus while still doubting it would matter. Is there something in your life you’ve been holding back from God because it feels too small or insignificant to offer him?**

Jesus has the crowd sit down on the grass, thousands of people settling in an orderly way rather than mobbing him for food. Then he does something remarkably ordinary before doing something extraordinary: he gives thanks, the way any pious Jewish household would over a meal, and then simply starts distributing what he has. John doesn’t dwell on the moment of multiplication itself. One minute there are five loaves and two fish, the next everyone has as much as they want.

- **Jesus gave thanks over a meal that, at that moment, still looked wildly insufficient for the need in front of him. What would it look like for you to thank God for a resource that still looks inadequate, before you’ve seen him do anything with it?**

When everyone has eaten and is satisfied, Jesus doesn’t let the leftovers go to waste. He has the disciples gather up what remains, and it fills twelve baskets, more food left over than the boy started with in the first place. Each of the twelve disciples ends up carrying tangible, physical proof in his own hands that Jesus’ provision wasn’t just barely enough. It was abundant.

- **The disciples started with less than one person could carry and ended with twelve baskets of leftovers. Where in your own life have you seen God’s provision turn out to be more generous than the need actually required?**

Jesus never multiplied food out of nothing. He took what was honestly, humbly offered, however small, and made it enough. The lesson wasn't that resources don't matter. It's that resources were never the real question. The real question, then and now, is whether the one holding them is able. He is.

- **What is the “five loaves and two fish” in your life right now, something small you have but have hesitated to actually place in Jesus’ hands because it feels laughably inadequate to the need?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God’s Word.

- **Name one problem in your life you’ve already concluded is mathematically impossible. What would it look like this week to bring it to Jesus anyway, the way Andrew brought the loaves and fish?**
- **Like Philip, we can be so busy calculating the size of the problem that we forget to ask what Jesus intends to do about it. Where do you need to stop calculating and start praying instead?**
- **What’s one small, ordinary thing you have, time, a skill, a little money, a relationship, that you could actually offer to God this week rather than assuming it’s too small to matter?**

PRAY

Thank God that he is able to meet impossible need with whatever small, willing thing is placed in his hands. Confess the times you’ve done the math on a problem and quietly decided it was outside what God would bother with. Ask him to help you bring your five loaves and two fish, however small they feel, rather than holding them back out of embarrassment. Pray for eyes to notice his abundant provision when it comes, the way the disciples carried away twelve baskets of proof.

JOHN 6:1-13

This miracle, commonly called the feeding of the five thousand, is the only sign of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels, a strong indication of how central the early church considered it to be. John places it in Galilee, on the less populated eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, likely near Bethsaida, shortly after John the Baptist's execution and during Jesus' later, more public Galilean ministry. John also notes that Passover was near, a detail he returns to later in the chapter when Jesus describes himself as the true Bread of Life, the fulfillment of what the Passover meal itself pointed toward.

Philip's presence in this exchange makes sense geographically as well as personally. He was from nearby Bethsaida, so Jesus' question to him about where to buy bread was a natural one to ask a local. Philip's answer, two hundred denarii, roughly eight months' wages, wouldn't be enough for everyone to have even a little, reflects careful, honest calculation rather than a lack of faith. It simply wasn't enough, and Philip knew it.

The boy's lunch that Andrew discovers deserves a second look. Barley bread was specifically the food of the poor in first century Israel, and the small fish were most likely intended as a simple relish rather than a meal on their own. This wasn't an impressive offering by any measure, a detail that seems intentional. Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly works through what the world would call insignificant resources and insignificant people rather than impressive ones. There is also a quiet echo here of an earlier miracle, when the prophet Elisha fed a hundred men with twenty loaves of barley bread and had food left over (2 Kings 4:42-44). Readers familiar with that story would have recognized the pattern immediately: a small, insufficient offering, a doubting assistant, and a prophet who insists it will be enough anyway.

Jesus' instruction to have the crowd sit down "on the grass" recalls Psalm 23, the Lord as shepherd making his sheep lie down in green pastures, and the wilderness imagery would also have reminded a Jewish audience of Moses providing manna in the desert. Jesus giving thanks before distributing the food followed ordinary Jewish table custom, a detail that grounds an extraordinary miracle in an entirely ordinary act of piety. The twelve baskets of leftovers, one for each disciple to carry, make the abundance of the miracle undeniable and personal. Each of the Twelve walked away holding physical evidence, in his own two hands, that Jesus' provision wasn't merely adequate. It overflowed.

DEVOTIONALS

WILL YOU FORGIVE ME?

DAY 1

Philippians 2:5-8

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even to death on a cross.

Paul is describing something almost impossible to picture: the one who existed in the very form of God chose to empty himself and take on the form of a servant instead. This wasn't a temporary costume Jesus put on for effect. It was a real emptying, a real humbling, all the way down to death on a cross.

On the night before that cross, Jesus acted out a smaller version of this same emptying in an upper room. He set aside his outer robe, the garment of a teacher, and picked up a towel instead, the tool of the lowest household servant. The disciples watching him kneel down with a basin of water were getting a preview, in miniature, of exactly what Paul describes here.

It's worth noticing that Paul doesn't just admire this about Jesus, he commands us to adopt the same attitude. Humility like this was never meant to stay a spectator sport.

- **Where could you “empty yourself” of status this week, the way Christ set aside equality with God, in some small, specific act of service?**
- **Jesus, thank You for emptying Yourself for my sake, all the way to death on a cross. Help me adopt Your same attitude instead of protecting my own status and comfort. Show me one concrete way to serve someone today that costs me something real. Amen.**

DAY 2

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

When Jesus knelt to wash his disciples' feet, he described two different kinds of cleansing: a complete bath that happens once, and the ongoing washing needed for the dust that clings to us as we walk through daily life. John's letter here is describing that second kind of washing, the one available to us every single day, not just at the beginning of our faith.

Notice what this promise is grounded in: not our own effort to get clean first, but God's own faithfulness and righteousness. We don't have to scrub ourselves presentable before we come to him. We simply confess, and he does the cleansing.

This is worth sitting with if you've been carrying guilt over something recent, something that happened after you already knew Jesus. That guilt isn't evidence you were never really clean. It's just dust from the road, the ordinary kind Jesus already promised to wash.

- **What sin have you been carrying quietly instead of simply confessing it and letting God do the cleansing he's already promised?**
- **Father, thank You that You are faithful and righteous to forgive, not reluctant or waiting for me to earn it. I confess what I've been carrying instead of bringing to You honestly. Cleanse me now, and help me stop trying to clean myself up first. Amen.**

DAY 3

Colossians 3:12-13

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.

Jesus washed the feet of Judas, fully aware that Judas was about to betray him, alongside all the other disciples he loved. It's one of the most staggering details in the whole Gospel: forgiveness offered before the failure even happened, not after.

Paul's instruction here asks us to extend that same kind of forgiveness to each other, and he's careful to name the standard: "just as the Lord has forgiven you." Not a slightly better version of forgiveness, not forgiveness with conditions attached. The same kind. That's a much higher bar than most of us set for ourselves when someone actually hurts us.

This isn't a suggestion to pretend grievances don't matter. Paul names them plainly, bearing with one another, forgiving when there's an actual grievance. The command isn't to avoid conflict. It's to forgive inside of it, the way Jesus did with a towel in his hands.

- **Is there someone you're withholding forgiveness from until they've proven they deserve it, when Christ's own pattern was to forgive in advance?**
- **Lord, thank You for forgiving me long before I deserved it. Help me extend that same forgiveness to the person I've been holding a grievance against. I can't manufacture this kind of grace on my own, so I'm asking You to grow it in me. Amen.**

DAY 4

Luke 22:24-27

Then a dispute also arose among them about who should be considered the greatest. But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who have authority over them have themselves called "Benefactors." It is not to be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever is greatest among you should become like the youngest, and whoever leads, like the one serving. For who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn't it the one at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.'

This argument about who was greatest happened at the very same table where Jesus would soon get up, tie a towel around himself, and wash their feet. While the disciples were busy ranking themselves, Jesus was quietly preparing to demonstrate the answer with his own hands.

Jesus doesn't just correct their thinking, he redefines greatness entirely. In the kingdoms of this world, status flows upward, toward whoever has the most authority. In Jesus' kingdom, it flows the opposite direction. "I am among you as the one who serves," he says, about himself, the one with every right to be served instead.

Arguments about status aren't harmless. This one was happening in the same room where Jesus was about to kneel down with a basin of water.

- **Where have you been quietly comparing your position, contribution, or recognition to someone else's this week?**
- **Jesus, forgive me for the ways I've measured my worth against other people instead of following Your example of service. Help me become like the one who serves rather than the one who needs to be served. Change what I actually want to be great at. Amen.**

DAY 5

Psalm 51:1-2

Be gracious to me, God, according to your faithful love; according to your abundant compassion, blot out my rebellion. Completely wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin.” Psalm 51:7 (CSB): “Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

David wrote this psalm after being confronted with a sin he had tried to hide for months. There’s no self-justification in these verses, only a raw, direct plea to be washed. He doesn’t ask God to overlook what he did. He asks to be made completely clean.

Centuries later, Jesus would kneel down with an actual basin of water and use that exact image, washing, to describe what he offers his disciples. David could only ask God, from a distance, to wash him white as snow. The disciples in that upper room got to watch Jesus do it with his own hands, and offer that same washing to every believer who confesses honestly since.

Whatever you’re carrying into this week, the specific rebellion, the guilt you’d rather not name directly, David’s prayer is still available to pray. The God he cried out to is the same one who knelt down with a towel.

- **What would it look like to pray David’s exact words this week, “wash me,” instead of trying to manage your guilt on your own?**
- **God, according to Your faithful love and abundant compassion, wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. I don’t want to manage this on my own any longer. Make me clean, truly clean, the way only You can. Amen.**

WILL YOU FORGIVE ME?

JOHN 13:1-13

OCTOBER 11, 2026

MAIN POINT

Before Judas ever left the room to betray him and before Peter ever opened his mouth to deny him, Jesus knelt down and washed both of their feet. Forgiveness here isn't a reaction to failure that hadn't happened yet. It's already in place, offered in advance, by a Savior who knew exactly what was coming and loved his own "to the end" anyway. Jesus sees the dirt on our feet too, and he still reaches for the towel.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Most of us carry around some version of the same fear: if people really knew what we've done, the mistakes, the private failures, the things we're ashamed of, they wouldn't want to be near us. We assume forgiveness has to be earned back after the fact, offered only once we've proven we deserve it.

This passage takes place hours before the worst failures of Jesus' closest friends. Before Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial ever happen, Jesus is already on his knees, washing their feet like a servant. He didn't wait to see if they'd deserve it.

- **Is there a mistake or failure in your life you've assumed you'd need to "earn back" forgiveness for, rather than trusting it was already offered?**
- **What does it do to your view of God to imagine him extending forgiveness before the failure even happens, rather than only after?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 13:1-13.

Chapter 12 closed with Jesus' public ministry effectively finished: the triumphal entry behind him, growing crowds who had seen his signs, and religious opposition sharpening toward a final confrontation. Chapter 13 turns the camera away from the crowds entirely. From here through chapter 17, John records Jesus alone with his twelve closest friends on the last night before his crucifixion, teaching them what they'll need once he's gone. Everything that follows for the rest of this series happens in this same tightening circle of intimacy.

- **The last four weeks have widened from one person, to a crowd of thousands, and now narrow back down to twelve men in a room. Why do you think some of Jesus' most important teaching happened in the smallest, most private settings rather than in public?**

John tells us plainly what was in Jesus' mind before he ever picked up the towel: he knew his hour had come, he knew the Father had given him full authority, and he knew exactly where he was headed. This wasn't a man caught off guard by his circumstances and reacting the best he could. Every detail of what follows was a deliberate choice, made by someone who understood precisely what it would cost him.

- **Jesus acted out of full knowledge of what was coming, not confusion or desperation. How does knowing Jesus chose this deliberately, rather than stumbling into it, change how you read the rest of the passage?**

Foot washing was the work of the lowest household servant, a job nobody at that table wanted, which is likely part of why the disciples had just been arguing about who among them was the greatest. Jesus takes off his outer robe, the clothing of a teacher and rabbi, and dresses like a slave instead. Before he says a single word about humility, he has already demonstrated it with his own hands.

- **Jesus reversed his position from teacher to servant without any announcement, he simply did it. Where in your life this week could you serve someone in a way that costs you status rather than earns it?**

Peter's objection is understandable. Letting your rabbi kneel down and wash your dirty feet felt completely backward, and Peter says so bluntly. Jesus' answer raises the stakes far beyond foot hygiene: "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me." Whatever this washing symbolized, refusing it meant refusing relationship with Jesus altogether. Peter immediately overcorrects, asking for his hands and head washed too.

- **Peter went from total refusal to total overcorrection in a single breath. Where do you tend to swing between resisting God's work in you and trying to over control it yourself?**

Jesus draws a distinction that mattered enormously to the disciples listening: someone who has already bathed is completely clean and only needs their feet washed from the dust of daily walking. This is a picture of two different kinds of cleansing, the once for all forgiveness that makes us clean before God, and the ongoing, repeated washing we need as sin from daily life clings to us like dust on the road. And then comes the hardest detail in the whole passage: Jesus knew who would betray him, and washed his feet anyway.

- **Jesus washed Judas' feet knowing full well what Judas was about to do. What does it mean for you personally that Jesus' love and service weren't contingent on the disciples' loyalty holding up?**

Jesus finishes, puts his robe back on, and returns to his place at the table before explaining what just happened. "Do you know what I have done for you?" The disciples call him Teacher and Lord, titles he confirms are entirely accurate, and then he lets that authority make the servant's posture he just modeled even more remarkable rather than less. The one with every right to be served chose to serve instead.

- **Jesus didn't lower his identity by serving, he demonstrated it. Is there an area where you've assumed serving someone would diminish you, rather than reveal who you actually are in Christ?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **Is there a specific failure you're still waiting to "earn back" forgiveness for, when Jesus already offered it before the failure even happened?**
- **Like Jesus washing Judas' feet, is there someone in your life whose betrayal or hurt you know is coming, or has already happened, that you're being asked to serve rather than withhold from?**
- **What "dust of the road" sins have accumulated since your last honest confession, the ongoing kind Jesus described, not the one-time bath but the daily washing of feet?**
- **Where could you take on a role this week that costs you status rather than earns it, the way Jesus set aside his robe for a towel?**

PRAY

Thank Jesus that his forgiveness was never a reaction to your good behavior, it was offered in advance, to disciples who were about to fail him badly. Confess whatever "dust of the road" you've been carrying since your last honest confession, and receive his washing rather than trying to clean yourself up first. Pray for someone specific whose failure or betrayal you're being asked to serve rather than withhold from, the way Jesus served Judas. Ask God to show you one place this week to trade status for service, the way Jesus traded his robe for a towel.

JOHN 13:1-13

This scene takes place at the Last Supper, on the night before Jesus' crucifixion, and opens the section of John's Gospel (chapters 13 through 17) devoted entirely to Jesus' private instruction of the Twelve. This whole section is framed by love: it opens with John's statement that Jesus loved his own "to the end," and it closes several chapters later with Jesus praying that the Father's love would remain in his disciples. Everything in between unfolds inside that frame.

Foot washing was ordinary in first century life, since people wore sandals on dusty roads, but performing it was strictly a servant's task, usually left to the lowest household slave. There was no servant present in this borrowed upper room, and none of the disciples volunteered, likely because Luke's Gospel records them arguing that same night about which of them was the greatest. Jesus setting aside his outer robe and taking up a towel was a deliberate, visible reversal of every social expectation at that table.

The exchange between Jesus and Peter turns on two different Greek words for washing that the original readers would have caught immediately. One refers to a complete bath, the kind of thorough cleansing that happens once. The other refers to washing a single dirty part of the body, like feet after a walk. Jesus tells Peter that someone who has already had the full bath only needs their feet washed. Many readers understand this as picturing two realities: the complete, once for all cleansing that comes when a person turns to Christ, and the ongoing, repeated cleansing believers need as the dust of daily life, our sins, our failures, our compromises, continues to cling to us even after we belong to him.

The most striking detail in the passage may be the one easiest to miss. John tells us plainly that Jesus knew exactly who would betray him, and washed his feet anyway, alongside all the others. Nothing in the text suggests Jesus skipped over Judas or treated him any differently. The full weight of what Jesus was about to do for his disciples, humbling himself completely, serving even the ones who would fail him worst, was already on display before a single failure had actually occurred.

DEVOTIONALS

NO MORE QUESTIONS

DAY 1

Luke 5:4-11

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' 'Master,' Simon replied, 'we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I'll let down the nets.' When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear... When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, 'Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!' ... 'Don't be afraid,' Jesus told Simon. 'From now on you will be catching people.' Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed him.

This was the moment Jesus first called Peter, James, and John away from their nets. A fruitless night, a strange instruction to try again, then a catch so large it nearly sank two boats. Peter's response wasn't pride. It was falling at Jesus' knees, suddenly aware of exactly who he was dealing with.

Notice how closely this matches what would later happen after the resurrection: another exhausting night, another empty net, another instruction that made no sense until it was obeyed. Jesus didn't need a new miracle to remind these men who he was. He simply repeated the first one.

Sometimes God reveals himself not through something new, but by doing again exactly what he did the first time we ever trusted him.

- **What was the “first catch” moment in your own faith, the initial way God got your attention, and when did you last remember it clearly?**
- **Lord, thank You for the first moment You called me, however ordinary it looked at the time. Help me recognize when You're repeating that same faithfulness in my life now. Like Peter, I want to leave what I'm holding and follow You. Amen.**

DAY 2

John 15:4-5

Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.

This is where this whole series began six weeks ago, Jesus describing himself as the vine, and us as branches that can do nothing apart from him. It's worth returning to these words now, at the very end of the series, because the disciples' failed night of fishing after the resurrection puts this exact truth on full display. Skilled fishermen, working all night at their own trade, caught nothing.

It wasn't a lack of effort. They knew what they were doing. But apart from Jesus's word, telling them where to cast the net, their own competence produced nothing at all. The moment they obeyed him, even before they recognized who was speaking, the net was suddenly too full to haul in.

Abiding was never about our own skill increasing. It was always about staying close enough to the vine that his life could flow through us, producing fruit we could never manufacture on our own.

- **Where have you been working hard “apart from” Jesus this week, relying on your own competence rather than staying close to him first?**
- **Jesus, thank You for reminding me, all the way back at the start of this series and again now at the end, that apart from You I can do nothing. Help me stay close to You before I try to produce anything on my own. Let my life bear the fruit only You can grow. Amen.**

DAY 3

Psalm 46:10

Stop fighting, and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth.

This psalm was written for people in the middle of real upheaval, nations in turmoil, mountains seeming to fall into the sea. In the middle of all that chaos, God doesn't offer an explanation. He offers a command: stop fighting, stop striving, and know that I am God.

There's a version of this stillness in a fishing boat at daybreak, seven tired men staring at an empty net, when a stranger's voice from the shore gives them one more instruction to try. They could have kept struggling in their own strength. Instead, something in them was quiet enough to obey, and that obedience became the very moment they recognized the Lord.

Most of us fill our lives with noise and effort precisely because stillness feels like giving up. This verse suggests the opposite. Sometimes the only way to truly know God is to stop fighting long enough to actually see him.

- **What “fighting” or striving would you need to stop this week in order to actually be still enough to recognize God at work?**
- **Lord, help me stop fighting and striving long enough to know that You are God. Quiet the noise I create to avoid stillness. Let me recognize You at work in this ordinary week the way the disciples recognized You on that shore. Amen.**

DAY 4

1 Corinthians 13:12

*For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face.
Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known.*

Paul admits something honest here: our knowledge of God, even as believers, is still partial. A reflection in a mirror, not yet face to face. And yet there are moments, glimpses really, where that partial knowledge suddenly sharpens into something close to certainty.

That's what happened on the shore after the resurrection. The disciples had spent years with Jesus, watched him teach, watched him die, and even seen him raised, and yet in that moment they still needed a friend to say out loud, "It is the Lord." Once they knew, though, nobody needed to ask anything else. "None of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? because they knew it was the Lord."

We won't reach full, face to face knowledge of God until eternity. But this passage's promise is that the trajectory only moves one direction, from partial toward full, from asking toward simply knowing.

- **Where has your knowledge of God moved recently from asking questions toward simply recognizing him, even partially?**
- **Father, thank You that even my partial knowledge of You is real and growing. I long for the day I'll know You face to face, fully known just as I am fully known by You. Until then, help my questions keep turning into recognition. Amen.**

DAY 5

Revelation 3:20

See! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

This series has followed one invitation after another: come and see where Jesus is staying, come and be known even in your hidden places, come and bring what little you have, come and be washed clean. This closing invitation, from Jesus himself at the very end of the New Testament, gathers all of those together into a single picture: a shared meal, a door opened, an ordinary act of fellowship.

It's the same picture the disciples lived out on that shore after the resurrection, Jesus already had bread and fish cooking over a charcoal fire before they'd brought him anything at all, and all he asked of them was to come and sit down with him. He wasn't waiting for them to prove themselves worthy of the invitation. He'd already prepared the meal.

As this series closes, this is the whole point it's been building toward. Abiding in Christ was never primarily about answering every question correctly. It was always this simple: hearing his voice, and opening the door.

- **As this series ends, what would it look like this week to simply open the door Jesus is already knocking on, rather than waiting until you feel ready?**
- **Jesus, thank You for standing at the door and knocking, patiently, even when I've been slow to answer. I open the door now. Come in and eat with me, and let this abiding become the ordinary shape of my everyday life, not just these six weeks. Amen.**

NO MORE QUESTIONS

JOHN 21:1-14

OCTOBER 18, 2026

MAIN POINT

Seven disciples spend a whole night fishing and catch nothing. At daybreak, a stranger on the shore tells them where to cast their net, and the catch is so large they can barely haul it in. The moment John says “It is the Lord!” Peter doesn’t wait for proof, he jumps straight into the water. By the time they’re all sitting down to breakfast, nobody dares ask “Who are you?” because nobody needs to anymore. This is where abiding in Christ eventually leads: not fewer questions because we’ve stopped wondering, but fewer questions because we’ve come to know him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Over the last five weeks we’ve traced a whole series of honest questions people asked Jesus, or asked about him. Where are you staying? Do you know me? Are you able to handle this? Will you forgive me? Every one of those questions came from somewhere real: curiosity, doubt, shame, fear.

Today’s passage doesn’t answer those questions with another explanation. It answers them with recognition. Seven tired, discouraged disciples are fishing again after the resurrection, and a familiar stranger on the shore turns out to be Jesus, doing something they’d seen him do before.

- **Think back over this series. Which of the questions we’ve covered, where are you, do you know me, are you able, will you forgive me, has felt most personal to you these past six weeks?**
- **Have you ever had a moment where you stopped needing an explanation from God because you simply recognized him at work? What was that like?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 21:1-14.

Our journey through this series has followed six very different scenes, John the Baptist pointing two curious men toward Jesus, Nathanael astonished that Jesus already knew him, a crowd of thousands fed from a boy's lunch, and Jesus washing the feet of the men who would betray and deny him within hours. All of that happened before the cross. Tonight we land on the other side of the resurrection entirely. Jesus is alive, and he meets his disciples again in the most ordinary possible setting: a fishing boat, an empty net, and a long, discouraging night.

- **This series has moved through Jesus' public ministry, his private teaching, and now his resurrection appearances. Why might John have chosen to end his whole Gospel with something as ordinary as a failed fishing trip?**

Peter announces he's going fishing, and the others simply follow him. There's real debate about what this meant, whether Peter was giving up on his calling or just doing something familiar while they waited on Jesus' instructions to meet him in Galilee. Either way, the result is a long night of nothing. These men who had walked with the risen Christ himself still came up empty-handed doing the one thing they knew best.

- **These experienced fishermen failed completely at their own trade. Where have you recently come up empty doing something you're normally confident in?**

A stranger on the shore asks a simple, almost embarrassing question: you don't have any fish, do you? They admit it plainly. No. Then comes an instruction that must have sounded absurd to seasoned fishermen: cast the net on the other side. It's the kind of suggestion you'd only follow if something about the voice giving it carried real authority, and they had no idea yet that it was Jesus.

- **The disciples obeyed a stranger's strange instruction before they recognized who was giving it. Where is God currently asking you to obey before you've fully understood or recognized what he's doing?**

The net fills so completely they can't even haul it into the boat. It's at this exact moment, not before, that John recognizes what's happening: "It is the Lord!" Peter doesn't wait for the boat to reach shore. He ties his clothes around himself and jumps straight into the water, more interested in reaching Jesus quickly than in managing the very catch that just proved who was standing on the beach.

- **Peter abandoned the miracle itself in his hurry to get to Jesus. What would it look like for you to prioritize nearness to Jesus over managing whatever blessing or provision he's just given you?**

When the disciples reach the shore, Jesus already has a fire going and breakfast started, even before they've brought in a single fish of their own. He asks them to add some of what they caught, not because he needed it, but because he was inviting them into what he'd already provided. Peter hauls in the net himself, full of large fish, and remarkably, after all that weight and effort, the net holds. Nothing tears.

- **Jesus had already prepared breakfast before the disciples contributed anything. Where in your life is God already providing before you've brought him anything at all?**

The scene ends with a small, quiet detail that's easy to read past. Nobody asks Jesus who he is. Not because they're too polite, but because they simply know. After a whole series of honest, searching questions about where Jesus is, whether he knows us, whether he's able, whether he'll forgive, this final scene shows us where all of that eventually leads: recognition so complete it stops needing to ask.

- **What would it look like for your relationship with Jesus to move from asking questions about him to simply recognizing him at work, the way these disciples did around a charcoal fire?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **Where have you recently come up empty doing something you're usually confident in, the way these experienced fishermen caught nothing all night?**
- **Is there an instruction from God that currently sounds as strange to you as "cast the net on the other side" sounded to these disciples? What would obeying it before you fully understand look like?**
- **Like Peter, is there a place where you've gotten more attached to managing God's provision than to simply getting near to him?**
- **Looking back across this whole six week series, which question, where are you, do you know me, are you able, will you forgive me, still feels unresolved for you, and what would it take to move from asking it toward simply knowing the answer?**

PRAY

Thank Jesus for meeting you in the most ordinary, exhausted moments, not just the dramatic ones. Confess anywhere you've been working hard at something in your own strength and coming up empty, the way the disciples fished all night and caught nothing. Ask him to give you ears to hear his instructions even before you've recognized his voice clearly. Pray that this series would end not with more questions, but with the same recognition the disciples had around that fire: it is the Lord, and you don't need to ask anymore.

JOHN 21:1-14

This chapter functions as an epilogue to John's Gospel, following the clear concluding statement of purpose at the end of chapter 20. Far from being an afterthought, this scene completes the Gospel's pattern of showing Jesus revealing himself progressively to his disciples, and it likely occurred sometime during the roughly forty days between the resurrection and the ascension, back in Galilee where Jesus had instructed his disciples to meet him.

John names five of the seven disciples present, including Nathanael, last seen back in chapter 1 being told by Jesus that he would "see greater things." His presence here, along with the beloved disciple's quick recognition and Peter's characteristic impulsiveness, ties this scene back to personalities readers have followed throughout the whole Gospel. The detail of fishing all night and catching nothing sets up an unmistakable echo of an earlier moment in Luke's Gospel, when Jesus first called Peter, James, and John away from their nets after a similarly fruitless night, using the exact same instruction to let down their nets one more time.

The charcoal fire Jesus has already burning on the shore is a detail worth sitting with. The only other charcoal fire mentioned in this Gospel is the one Peter stood beside in the high priest's courtyard while denying Jesus three times. John's placement of this same detail here, at a meal where Jesus is about to restore Peter fully, was almost certainly intentional. The wound and the healing happen, symbolically, in the same kind of firelight.

The exact number of fish, 153, has generated centuries of speculation, from numerical symbolism to simple eyewitness detail. What's clearer is the significance of the net holding despite the size of the catch, a picture many readers have connected to the sufficiency of the gospel to gather in a great multitude without failing. Jesus' quiet invitation, "come and have breakfast," echoes two earlier invitations in this same Gospel, "come and see" in chapter 1, and "come and drink" in chapter 7, completing a pattern of Jesus inviting people not to an argument or an explanation, but to simple, direct nearness with him.

