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10 DAYS OF PRAYER


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DAY 1: ENCOUNTERING THE I AM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Scripture Reading: Exodus 3:13-15

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God furthermore said to Moses, "This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is the name for all generations to use to call upon Me."

In all the cultures of the world, names are important, and their meanings often carry great significance. Several times in the Old and New Testaments, God changed people's names to reflect a new identity, calling and relationship with Him and with people.

We also see throughout the Bible various names for God, each steeped in meaning and representing important attributes or interactions between God and people. God revealed Himself in names, and in turn, people gave names to God based on their experiences of Him.

For some reason, God chose to name Himself by something far more foundational than any specific action He could perform on their behalf.

Uniquely, this was not just the revelation of a new name, but also a command to remember this name from generation to generation. It is therefore no surprise that Jesus revealed his divinity using this name several millennia later, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am" (Jn. 8:58).

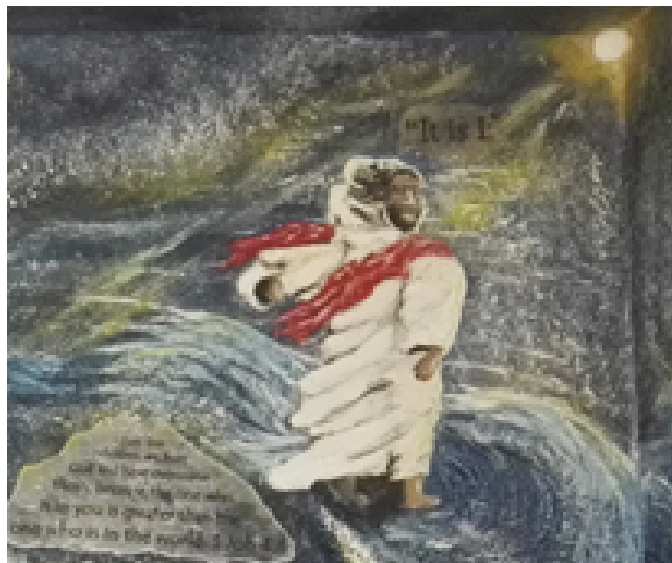
One of the greatest revelations in the Old Testament was made to Moses as he tended sheep in the wilderness. The same I AM still hears, still comes, and still burns brightly in our wildernesses today.

Reflection: How do you perceive God's revelation of Himself in your context today? By what name are you encountering the I AM? Take a moment to thank him for the unique ways he has revealed Himself to you this year. "Thank you that I have come to know You more deeply as _____."



Let's come before God and pray: Great I AM, our Father, Lord Jesus and Holy Spirit, thank you for revealing yourself to us, the people of God. We can't imagine life without knowledge of You. We praise You as the self-existent One. You need nothing from us or anyone else. You are complete and perfect. We praise You as the eternal One; our minds can't grasp it.

We humbly worship You as the One who is eternally the same, unchanging in your love, righteousness and power. We adore and revere You as the sovereign One. Thank you for the security of knowing You are eternally in control, reigning over all things in justice, mercy, truth, grace and love. We confess the ways we do not honour You as I AM. We worry about _____. We are reluctant to release to you control of _____. We do not rest in your care for us; instead we _____.



Forgive us for the ways we fall short in representing You to others as the great I AM. Help us to repent of our resistance to your will and ways in our lives and joyfully rest in your sovereign love and care for us.

Today, we pray for communities in our country of service that have yet to hear of You as I AM and for those communities who are still resistant to humbly acknowledging You as I AM. [Name communities.] We want them to know You as the self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal, and sovereign One who loves them and wants to reveal Yourself to them.

LORD, it is 10 days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You, the I AM, known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 2: ENCOUNTERING THE I AM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Scripture Reading: John 8:48–59

The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not rightly say that You are a Samaritan, and You have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; on the contrary, I honor My Father, and you dishonour Me. But I am not seeking My glory; there is One who seeks it, and judges. Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone follows My word, he will never see death." The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets as well; and yet You say, 'If anyone follows My word, he will never taste of death.' You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died, are You? The prophets died too. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him. And if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you; but I do know Him, and I follow His word. Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced." So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and left the temple grounds.

In this story, a conversation between Jesus and the religious leaders rapidly turned to a dispute about the Father. Jesus' explanations did not register with the learned pharisees. Entrenched in the fortress of their learning, they were unable to truly learn from the source of all learning. They proudly claimed their heritage: "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"



How ironic that the very people set free from Egypt, the remnant restored from exile in Babylon and Assyria, the people who, at that very moment, suffered under the oppression of Rome, stood before the One who gives freedom and said, "We have never been enslaved." No wonder Jesus had to point out that all who sin are slaves of sin. These slaves stood before a pure and holy God without realising they should remove their sandals and hide their faces.

Instead of penitent and humble hearts like Moses before the burning bush, the arrogant elites claimed: "We were not born as a result of sexual immorality; we have one Father: God." When Jesus told them that if God were their Father, they would love Him, they accused Him of being possessed by demon.

As the pharisees foolishly argued their case, the I AM revealed Himself on the stage of life: "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." The shockwaves must have stunned, for at the very place and moment he was accused of having a demon, He revealed Himself as the I AM. The man they knew as Jesus of Nazareth, the Galilean, had just declared Himself to be eternal, self-existent God!

While God's self-revelation to Moses as the I AM inspired worship, Jesus' revelation to the Jews as the I AM inspired fury and hatred. Moses bowed before the I AM as he was commissioned to speak to the children of Abraham; now the descendants of those children gathered stones to kill the I AM.

They did not condemn Jesus for His good works — no, the world loves our good works — but for teaching and declaring plainly the hard and difficult truth. They said, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." If the Jews of His day had accepted Jesus' words and worshipped the I AM in their midst, then they would have been acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah. All of this was just too much for them; they declared Him a blasphemer and worthy of death.

Reflection: By what name are you encountering Jesus each day? In what ways are we like the pharisees: professing a godly identity yet not loving Jesus or His message, professing to have knowledge yet unable to learn, professing freedom yet enslaved to sin? How can we repent of the proud fortresses we have willingly or unwillingly built up in our hearts?

Let's come before God and pray: Holy Spirit, we need You as we search our hearts. Uncover the layers of pride. Expose our self-deception. Help us to repent of our secret sins, stubbornness and self-justification. Remind us that our confessions do not lead us to condemnation but instead restore us to fullness of life, love and joy in Jesus. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You understand our frailty. We thank You, Father, for the grace that welcomes us home with open arms.

We praise You, Jesus, as the eternal I AM, son of the Most High. We rejoice that You have freed us from slavery to sin and given us access to God, so that we too can call Him, "Father." We love You and want to continually draw near to You.

Father, we bring to You family members and friends who do not yet love your Son. [Name those on your heart.] We pray for believing family and friends who need the Spirit's work in their lives to bring them back to a place of abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in them. [Name them.] Thank you that You desire all to come to repentance.

LORD, it is nine days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.



DAY 3: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 6:22-59

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

48 I am the bread of life.

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

One day, a crowd returned to the spot where Jesus had fed 5000 of them the day before, but Jesus wasn't there. Commandeering boats, they sailed across the lake to Capernaum and found Him. Outwardly they seemed to be ideal followers who were zealous for the truth. But Jesus began to expose their motives: "You seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you."

They responded with apparent godly enthusiasm, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered that the "work of God" was to believe in Him whom God sent. However, though yesterday the crowd would have crowned Him king for feeding them, today they demanded a new sign. They reminded Jesus of the bread (manna) that fell from heaven in the wilderness, so Jesus taught them that the bread came from his Father, not Moses, and that "the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world," in other words, Jesus is that bread. He pointed out that those who ate manna died, but that Jesus, the bread from heaven, gives eternal life. Like the Samaritan woman by the well who enthusiastically demanded the living water, this crowd cried, "Lord, always give us this bread."

So Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."



While the Samaritan woman and her people were not disappointed to learn that by "living water", Jesus meant Himself, this crowd was very disappointed and questioned Jesus' authenticity. Jesus simply laid out more facts they needed to know: No one comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him, Jesus will raise up his people in the last day, and believers will have eternal life. Then He repeated, "I am the bread of life... if anyone eats of this bread, he will live then forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

The crowd responded with more grumbling and disbelief, but Jesus leaned in harder: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves ... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me."

Today, many follow Jesus because they hope He will be the source of some earthly blessing. They don't want relief for their spiritual hunger and thirst; their enthusiasm is only the size of a loaf of bread. How deep is our desire for Jesus Himself? Are we like the crowd who demanded earthly bread, or are we like the Samaritan woman and her people who responded with faith in the One who offered living water?

Let's come before God and pray: We praise You, Bread of Life, as the One who satisfies our every need and truest desire. You met our need of salvation, giving us eternal life. Feeding on You satisfies our deepest desires to be known and loved and to belong. In You, we find sustenance in every area of life. You feed us spiritually. You provide for us physically. Your presence assures and heals us emotionally. We worship You.

Forgive us, You who sustain our souls, when we focus on and grumble about temporal conditions that displease us. We confess sometimes our prayers only revolve around an earthly comfort we crave. We want You to fix our circumstances more than we want to grow in a trusting relationship with You. Have mercy and turn our hunger for fleeting satisfactions towards the only One who can satisfy.

Lord, so many communities have yet to hear of You, the Bread of Life. We ask You to send more workers. [Pray for workers needed in your country of ministry.] We pray for the Faithful Witness teams, for workers, financial provision, and fruit. [Pray for a team on your heart: Middle East, Mali, Thailand, Northern Nigeria, Eastern Chad, North Africa.] Give them strength and grace to share the Bread of Life in communities where you are least known. And for our SIM workers sent out from less affluent countries, please provide all they need to serve You in the communities to which You have called them.

LORD, it is eight days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You, the Bread of Life, known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.



DAY 4: I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Scripture Reading: John 8:1-12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The Apostle John tells a story of amazing grace that shines like a light into every heart. Early one morning, Jesus came into the temple and began to teach the people. As he was teaching, the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman to him.

They said, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" (vs. 4, 5). Something here was incomplete. The law required both the man and the woman to be put to death (Lev. 20:10, Deut. 22:22). Though the accusers said she was "caught in the act," they had brought only the woman. Clearly the accusations against her were just a steppingstone to accusations against Jesus.

Jesus said nothing, but He stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. The Pharisees persisted. Then Jesus straightened up and made the now famous statement, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." This was not what the accusers were expecting. They wanted Jesus to weigh in on one side of the law. If He condemned her, they could accuse Him of acting outside his authority, and if He exonerated her, they could accuse Him of tolerating sin and insulting the law of Moses.



Jesus chose neither; rather, He stooped and wrote on the ground again. While we can only speculate what He wrote — it seems the accusers became the accused — we do know that they began to leave, one by one, until only the woman remained. Jesus said, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." Then Jesus declared, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Light is a prominent theme in John's Gospel. The world is lost and hopeless in darkness (John 1:4-14). Darkness cannot change its own condition; light must invade it to transform it into light.

In addition to the many themes of light in scripture, there was likely an association with light occurring that very day in the temple. A ceremony called the "Illumination of the Temple" took place during the Feast of the Tabernacles and involved lighting four large golden oil lamps. These lamps may have stood up to 23 meters (75 feet) high and illuminated the entire city of Jerusalem during the night, reminding the Jews of how God led them with the pillar of fire through the wilderness. With this ceremony in the minds of the Jews that day, Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world."

Notice that Jesus did not justify the woman's sin; rather, He illuminated both the law and the darkened hearts of her accusers. Jesus had eternal outcomes in mind for everyone involved in the situation forced upon him. Those who sought to fling her at the feet of a judge brought her face-to-face with her Redeemer. Instead of reproach for the woman, the pious hypocrites tasted reproach themselves. In the temple court before the light of the world, a sinner found not death, but life; not contempt, but unmerited grace; not the finger of God raised in anger against her, but lowered before her to trace words in the sand.

Let us all avail ourselves of this pure grace every day. With Jesus, there is always the opportunity for repentance and a new beginning. Is there any area of your life where Jesus is saying, "Go and sin no more"? Or perhaps there are areas where you are like the accusers, desiring some earthly consequences to unfold in situations around you, but unable to see an eternal perspective or hear the voice of the Spirit. How can the Light of the world shine more brightly in and among us today?

Let's come before God and pray: Lord Jesus, we praise You as the embodiment of the full glory of God. We are so deeply thankful that You, the long-awaited light, shone on our darkness. You came to earth and redeemed us from our sin. Hallelujah for your grace!

We also thank You for the grace that calls us to daily cleansing. We confess our judgmental spirits, our critical tongues, our inconsistent calls for justice. We acknowledge that we are often slow to hear your Spirit's voice because it conflicts with our desires. We recognise our need to grow more like Jesus in perspective and character.

You have said that we, too, are the light of the world. We commit to letting our light shine brightly before all people so they will glorify our Father. Today we intercede for [name co-labourers in the gospel] who serve in challenging environments where You are not yet known.

LORD, it is seven days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You, the Light of the world, known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.



DAY 5: I AM THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP

Scripture Reading: John 10:1-10, Psalm 118:19, 20

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."

Previously Jesus healed a man born blind, and this sparked controversy between Him and the Pharisees. Jesus declared, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

According to the Nelson Study Bible, "Shepherds guided their flocks into stone enclosures each night to protect them. These structures had no doors. The shepherd would sit or lie in the opening to prevent predators from attacking. Thus Jesus was describing his care and constant devotion to those who are his."

Others have noted that, in this passage, Jesus is also speaking about various people who claimed to be the Messiah before and after His arrival. This particular reference, however, applied to the current rulers in Jerusalem – the evil shepherds of Israel. Jesus demonstrates how the Pharisees were all robbers who came "only to steal and kill and destroy." He alone "came that they may have life and have it abundantly," as evidenced by the man born blind who was now seeing and saved.



The Pharisees claimed authority over people's lives and faith by insisting, "We are disciples of Moses." They regulated the religious life of the people and dictated the norms of worship. Their claim indicates that they considered themselves the door or gate into God's grace. Yet, not only did they ignore their own need for a shepherd, they also represented the hired hands who did not truly care for the sheep.

Jesus Himself is the door. Whoever enters through Him will find refuge (be saved) and sustenance (true life resources). Only those who go through Jesus will be saved; they will go out and find pasture. This statement reinforces what Jesus said in John 14:6 about being the only way to the Father. The only way to get into God's "sheepfold" or "family" or "dwelling" is to go through Jesus – the door.

Psalm 118 was likely sung by pilgrims at the Feast of Tabernacles as they celebrated the greatness and goodness of God. "Open the gates of righteousness to me; I will enter through them, I will give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous will enter through it" (Ps. 118:19, 20). In this psalm, Jesus is the very gate that the people of Israel, and indeed all people, are praying to have opened to them, so they can enter into God's presence, God's grace and God's Kingdom. Jesus is the door to the true worship of God and life eternal.

Let's come before God and pray: How grateful we are, Good Shepherd, that in sacrificing your life for us, You opened the gates of righteousness to us! You became the open door to our Father's grace and holy presence. We celebrate the privilege of entering God's Kingdom as a holy people because You have washed us clean.

We honour You as the One and only door to salvation. Thank you for giving us every spiritual blessing and all of life's sustaining resources. We praise You for your faithful devotion as You care for us, your attention to the smallest detail, your incomprehensible delight in us. Thank you for protecting us from the evil one and our own wandering ways.

Guard us as a mission from ever drifting from the truth that in Jesus alone we enter God's Kingdom. Regardless the pressure that may come, help us personally to proclaim You boldly and resolutely as the only door that leads to eternal deliverance and peace with God.

We pray today for our brothers and sisters who suffer for proclaiming this truth. We think of [Name communities, countries or individuals], who are paying a high cost to follow and proclaim You as the only way to God. Give them strength to endure and bless those that persecute them. Help them to remain in your love and experience deep joy as they fellowship in your sufferings.

LORD, it is six days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make you, the one and only Door, known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.



DAY 6: I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Scripture Reading: John 10:11-21

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me.

My wife is an identical twin, and one thing about twins, besides their physical resemblance, is their matching voice. Many people, even their own children, have mistaken the voice of one twin for the other. Not so with the voice of Jesus, our Shepherd!

In this interaction, Jesus moves the conversation from the blindness of the pharisees (Jn. 9: 41) to their deafness towards the voice of the Good Shepherd. In contrast with Ezekiel's description of the wicked shepherds of Israel (Ez. 34), Jesus presents Himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. Regarding the true shepherd, "The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out." Many in shepherding communities will understand this – sheep do hear their shepherd's voice when He calls.

Jesus also mentions other sheep, which He will bring in. This could refer to the Samaritans, the diaspora Jews, the Gentiles, or to all who will eventually be brought into the fold of this Good Shepherd. The consistent characteristic of these sheep is "they will hear My voice."



Our world is full of noise. It can be difficult to hear and to distinguish the voice of the Shepherd. Sometimes we are like the pharisees, unable to hear because our assumptions and desires scream so loudly. In times of hardship, hearing His voice can be especially difficult. Our needs seem so real and so urgent that they deafen us to the still, small voice. The cares of this world become a distraction, drowning out the Shepherd's call.

It is true that our greatest challenge is not always about the things we do not know, but the things we do know, yet struggle to obey. Our frustration with the voice of the Shepherd is not always that we do not know His words, but that we prefer to hear something different from His revealed voice in the Word and through His Spirit.

Jesus still speaks today, no matter our situation or circumstances. Our Good Shepherd speaks peace into our turmoil and encouragement into our weariness. He speaks rebuke, exhortation, and correction into our sinfulness. He still makes His call heard among His sheep.

Jesus comes not to pile burdens on us but to relieve us and carry them Himself. Jesus comes not to scatter the sheep, but to gather them. Jesus comes not to devour the sheep, but to defend them. Jesus comes to seek, rescue, heal, and feed the sheep. He does so because He loves the sheep and they belong to Him. This is proven and accomplished by Him giving up His life for His sheep.

In Psalm 23, David referred to the Lord God as his shepherd. Jesus refers to Himself as the ultimate Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep and fulfilled His Father's plan of salvation for all people.

My wife and her sister have the same voice, but I still know Joanna's voice. How? By sheer habit. Do we have the same strength of habit to know the voice of our Shepherd? He still calls us by name even in our distress. Can we hear His voice?



Let's come near to God and pray: We worship You, our Good Shepherd, for the extravagant grace that made us your sheep. How amazing that the holy, all-powerful Shepherd became the sacrificial lamb, dying to atone for our sins! Now we are yours eternally. You know us intimately; we belong to You. And now we know You and recognize your voice.

Thank you for speaking to us through your Word and giving us your Spirit to help us clearly know your voice and understand your word. It's astounding that the God of eternal glory would personally speak to us, to guide, teach, rebuke, correct and train us in righteousness.

We confess the times where our actions communicated our lack of interest in hearing your voice. We didn't prioritize time to sit with stillness and listen to You. Our minds wandered to "more immediate concerns" when we heard others speak your word. We confess our recent decisions to listen but ignore your word to us, because it required us to die to ourselves. (Name those decisions before the Lord.) Help us to return to a listening posture and a heart of obedience.

Gracious Shepherd, we love being your sheep. Thank you for your delight to forgive, restore and speak once again. Speak, Lord, we are listening.

LORD, it is five days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You, the Good Shepherd, known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 7: I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 11:17-37

27 Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise from the dead." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."

Jesus' deep personal friendship with two sisters and their brother is the context for this beautiful story. The brother, Lazarus, became very ill, so his sisters, Martha and Mary, sent word to Jesus. Though Jesus was just a day's journey away, He chose to stay two more days. When He finally arrived "late", Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days.

Martha came out to meet the Lord and said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." What statements! They relay both her feelings and her faith. Though His delay meant the tragedy of her brother's death, Martha's faith glowed brightly in her grief-stricken heart. Jesus then used her words as a segue to declare an I AM statement that has reverberated down through the ages:

"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die." When he asked Mary if she believed this, she continued to bless the Lord with her faith, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."



Soon Mary, who in other gospel records sat at the feet of Jesus, fell at those feet again, this time in loud grief. When Jesus saw her and the gathered Jews weeping, he was "deeply moved in spirit" and "troubled." John writes, "Jesus wept." What a poignant moment when Jesus' divinity and humanity united to express His deep affection to the point of tears. Such tenderness caused the Jews to exclaim, "See how He loved him!"

But Jesus knew what they did not know—that he was going to "wake" Lazarus. So why did he weep?

Knowing the plans of the Father did not change the Son's empathy towards those who sorrowed. Knowing Lazarus would be raised did not convert His spirit into a granite-like hardness towards what the family was experiencing. Jesus was present in the moment, fully connected emotionally with Mary and her community. Similarly, though we believers know the end of many of our earthly situations will be redeemed and set right in eternity, we still experience grief and weeping. This does not have to represent lack of faith or a spiritual deficit any more than Jesus' weeping did.

While Jesus saw the weeping (klaiō - sob or wail aloud) of Mary and the Jews, he shed tears or wept silently (dakruō) – tears that grieved with those who grieved, rather than loud wailing because of doom. His were not tears of inconsolable hopelessness, but of a heart that beat to the rhythm of those who He loved.

Martha's feelings did not diminish her faith and her faith did not wipe out her feelings. Acting in faith does not displace or eliminate emotions. Like Martha, we can express both feelings and faith honestly to God, even in the same breath, knowing He welcomes both.

In response, Jesus does not just assure us of what He can do or give; He assures us of who He is. He doesn't just give bread; He is the bread. He doesn't merely reflect light; He is the light. He does not just raise people from the dead, He is the resurrection, the victor over death, the hope of eternal life – an identity He will demonstrate in his own resurrection just a few short weeks later.

This simple phrase, "Jesus wept", is one of the greatest assurances in all of scripture that heaven is moved by earth's sorrows and emotional turmoil. The same Jesus who wept with His friends stands with us both now and until the day He will wipe away all tears (Rev.21:4). We too, in our difficulties, can courageously confess our faith and our feelings to the One whose timing is perfect and tenderness is authentic, the One who is the resurrection and life.



Let's come near to God and pray: Thank you, Lord Jesus, that in all your power and glory as the One who is the resurrection and the life, You are with us in our pain. You see our tears. You hear our cries and weeping. You understand what it is to hurt and grieve deeply. And though You know the glorious end from the beginning, you are glad to patiently be with us in our sorrow.

We praise You and take great hope in knowing that You can do something about our pain and emotional turmoil. You can remove it by changing the situation or give us amazing grace and strength to trust You through it. We praise You as One who will one day abolish all sorrow, sin and death. Hallelujah for such a glorious and sure hope!

Today, we bring You our sorrows. [Name them.] And we bring You the sorrows our brothers and sisters in Jesus are experiencing. [Name those who are in pain.] Help them to know You are with them in their deep sadness. Gently lead them into hope that endures with joy, knowing you are the resurrection and the life.

LORD, it is four days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what you will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You, the resurrection and the life, known in communities where you are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 8: I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 14:1-14

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

The Apostle John spent a significant amount of time describing events of the last night before our Lord's crucifixion. Jesus was on the cusp of accomplishing His purpose on earth, and He set out to encourage his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (vs. 1,27).

Why would Jesus focus on the state of the hearts and minds of the disciples? It was because this was going to be a night of trouble and confusion, with days of pain and uncertainty ensuing. The disciples were about to witness their Lord's arrest and trial. They would watch as their Lord was nailed to a crude cross to die. Jesus was preparing the disciples for what was coming. This led to another I AM statement, a fundamental truth upon which they could anchor their faith: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

In the Old Testament, God prescribed many ways for the Jews to approach, worship, and relate to Him. These involved elaborate systems of sacrifices, temple festivals, the temple curtain, and more. Jesus may have been contrasting Himself to the Levitical law with these systems that merely pointed to God and fulfilled some of God's requirements. But all these would be called into question by the end of the next day when the curtain of the Holy of Holies tore in two. Jesus contrasts Himself to anything before Him that people might have thought led to the Father, yet Jesus was not just the way to the Father; He was also the full revelation of the Father (truth).



Jesus was also reiterating that all roads do not lead to heaven. There are not many paths or religions to God. Jesus is the only way to forgiveness, the only source of truth and knowledge about God, and the only route to eternal life. This statement was for those who tried to gain God's favour through the law and good works. It is significant to us today because we are surrounded by many beliefs and religions that claim access to God and promise a road to earn His favour and eternal life apart from Him alone.

Jesus said to his disciples, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also." The gospels repeatedly drove home the same point: to see Jesus is to see God; to accept Jesus is to accept God; to serve Jesus is to serve God.

"If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it" (v.14). The name of Jesus means much more than we usually ascribe to it. The name Jesus or Yeshua means "He saves", and it is a powerful symbol of all that Israel's anointed King is — what He says and what He does. To ask something in the name of Jesus is to ask because of who He is, what He says, and what He does. Indeed, there is power in His name! Let us seek no other name, even in our troubles and fears.

We praise You, Father, for this sure anchor for our faith. In the doubts and fears that assault us when we experience trials, we have the absolute assurance that Jesus is the one and only way. He is the true and perfect image of You, and in Him alone we have eternal life. In knowing your Son, we know You. We give You honour.

We thank You, Lord Jesus, for the access we have to our Father through You, the Son. Thank you that by your powerful name, your full authority, we can cry out to You for deliverance and know that we will receive it. You love to save!

Forgive us for the folly of navigating life's storms in reliance on our own understanding and strength when You invite us to peaceful rest in your great power. Looking at who You are, the promises You have given us and the mighty works You have done, we turn and run to You with our concerns, fears, heartaches [name them before God]. In your mercy, deliver us!

We pray for our SIM leaders today. As they navigate the storms that come with leading, help them to quickly call out to You and, by faith, watch for your deliverance. [Intercede for your country director and team leader.] We pray for the voting process for the International Director and the transition ahead for the Executive Team and International Leadership Team. May your kingdom come and your will be done.

LORD, it is three days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You, the way, the truth and the life, known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.



DAY 9: I AM THE TRUE VINE

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-6

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

The setting for our passage was Jesus's final night on earth. What would you say to your closest friends if it was your last night alive? We know exactly what Jesus chose to say to His closest friends and disciples just hours before His arrest and violent death: He focused them on the kind of identity they should have henceforth. He equipped them to be with Him in spirit, though without him physically.

He said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit." If Jesus is the true, real, genuine vine, it follows that the branches will be true and genuine, benefitting from the health and strength of the primary vine.

Then Jesus turned to the concept of abiding: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me... He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up."



Since ancient times, vines that bear good grapes for wine have been grafted onto the "rootstock" of vines that are resistant to droughts pests and disease. A successful graft is the image of abiding—an organic relationship of dependence and continuity, with life-giving and life-sustaining nutrients flowing from root to branch. The branch cannot create a different agenda from the true vine, rather, it expresses the qualities and traits of the original vine.

Abiding also implies the purpose for the branch: fruitfulness. Jesus' description encompasses both a deep relationship at the point of grafting and a purpose fulfilled at the point of bearing fruit.

Jesus also laid out consequences, both for not abiding and for unfruitfulness. We read, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes (airō - to raise, take up, lift, carry, bear, hoist) away." While this verb could be understood as to throw away, it is possible that Christ's intention was to say that fruitless branches would be exposed (taken up or hoisted) into the sunshine. Could it be that the Father will raise such branches out of the deep shade to experience conditions that will produce fruitfulness in spirit, life and work?

Though translated similarly, Jesus used very different words in verses 2 and 6: "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown (ballō to throw, cast) away (exō - outside) as a branch and dries up." This is the consequence if there is no successful connection or graft between the branch and the vine. Jesus seems to imply two consequences for two conditions: significant corrective hardship for lack of fruit and destruction for not abiding.

As branches abiding in the true eternal vine, we are assured daily of our connectedness and security with Christ no matter our external circumstances. Whether in a pandemic, war, economic crisis, or other upheaval, Jesus remains our true Vine and we His true branches. The question for each of us is, How are we abiding? Are the “pests” of character, negligence, resistance to his voice, and even subtle corruptions from the world eating away at our life-giving link to the vine? If we are branches with healthy grafts, are we branches dwelling in the deep shade or basking in the sun?

Father, we praise You for grafting us into the true Vine, your Son. Thank you that your grafts do not fail, we are securely and eternally connected to Jesus. Thank you for tending and nurturing us so that we receive the fullness of His strength and fruit-bearing capacity.

We acknowledge our need to depend wholly on Jesus, because apart from Him we can't accomplish anything of lasting value. We confess the sins that keep us from faithfully abiding in You. [Examine your heart.] Help us draw from the strength of the Vine to resist the temptations of the world [What attracts you?], the flesh [What is your weakness?] and the devil [To what does he entice you?]. Help us to reflect the health, beauty and fruitfulness of the true Vine so that we know the full joy of bearing lasting fruit.

You have called us to make disciples, and we pray for them today. [Name those God has put in your life.] Help us to teach them all that You commanded and to model the life of an authentic disciple who abides in Jesus. Help them to abide faithfully in You so they, too, can know the full joy of your love and the delight of producing fruit that brings You glory.

LORD, it is two days before Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we gather to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You, the true Vine, known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.



DAY 10: I AM THE CHRIST, THE MESSIAH

Scripture Reading : John 4:25-26

The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am He, the One speaking to you."

One day, Jesus and his disciples travelled through Samaria and stopped at noon at a town. Jesus sat by a well while his disciples went to buy bread, and then a woman came to draw water. Their interaction started at the immediate, practical level – a Jewish man needed a drink. But as Jesus does, he turned an ordinary situation towards spiritual things. Thus, a conversation about a man in the hot sun needing ordinary water became a conversation about a woman in a sinful life needing living water. The woman could draw physical water from a well, but Jesus could provide living water from Himself.

The woman related the teachings of their ancestors and accused the Jews of marginalising her people by claiming Jerusalem to be the only place God could be worshipped. Jesus' reply surely surprised her. Instead of defending worship in Jerusalem as she would have expected from a Jew, the I AM declared: "A time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."



This response so stunned the woman that her thoughts jumped to things even more profound: the coming Messiah. This sinful woman asserted one conviction that was not debatable in her mind, one certainty among all the conflicting claims over mountains and temples: "I know that Messiah is coming." Moreover, this Messiah would declare all things to them.

Jesus responded with his first clear reference to His identity in John's Gospel: "I am He, the One speaking to you." He declared this to a woman whom religious leaders may have held in contempt, who perhaps could not go to draw water with other women but went alone in the heat of the day. This is the woman who heard the voice of the One declaring Himself to be the long-awaited Messiah, the hope of Israel, the hope of the world, in the flesh.

Eternal God, we worship You for revealing Yourself through Jesus to specific people at different times and places as He lived on earth. We praise you, Lord Jesus, for explaining who You are through common objects and concepts as You personally connected with people. And we honour You, Holy Spirit, for making those explanations meaningful and life-changing for those who came to Jesus.

Thank you, gracious God, for personally disclosing Yourself to us. Thank you for your messengers who connected and shared with us the good news of who You are. [Thank God for them by name.] And now we rejoice at the testimonies of Muslims as you reveal yourself through visions and dreams [JB1], and in the privilege, as your appointed witnesses, to proclaim and reveal You to others in their unique contexts. Help us to follow Jesus' pattern of engaging with people: to take what is familiar, guide the conversation to what is personal, and then share the revelation of Jesus and what that means for them. Teach us to skillfully guide conversations from the external to the internal to the eternal.

In the final book of the Bible, You bless us with this assurance, "I am the Alpha and the Omega ... who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.... Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore..." (Rev. 1:8,17,18). In this confidence, help us to be courageous as we proclaim your revelation to those who live and die without hearing your good news. By your Spirit, give us discernment in knowing how to reveal You to each individual. [Take time to ask God, "To whom do You want me to witness? Quietly wait and listen for His answer.]"

LORD, tomorrow we celebrate Pentecost. Like the believers who gathered to pray in Jerusalem to await the gift of your Holy Spirit, we have gathered these ten days to pray with great anticipation of what You will accomplish. Holy Spirit, revive us again and propel us out of this prayer meeting with renewed hope as we make You, the Alpha and Omega, known in communities where You are least known. In Jesus' name, amen.



SIM INTERNATIONAL

10 DAYS OF PRAYER 2023

CREDITS

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pp.13-14, 16, 20-21. Images taken from <http://freebibleimages.org>

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