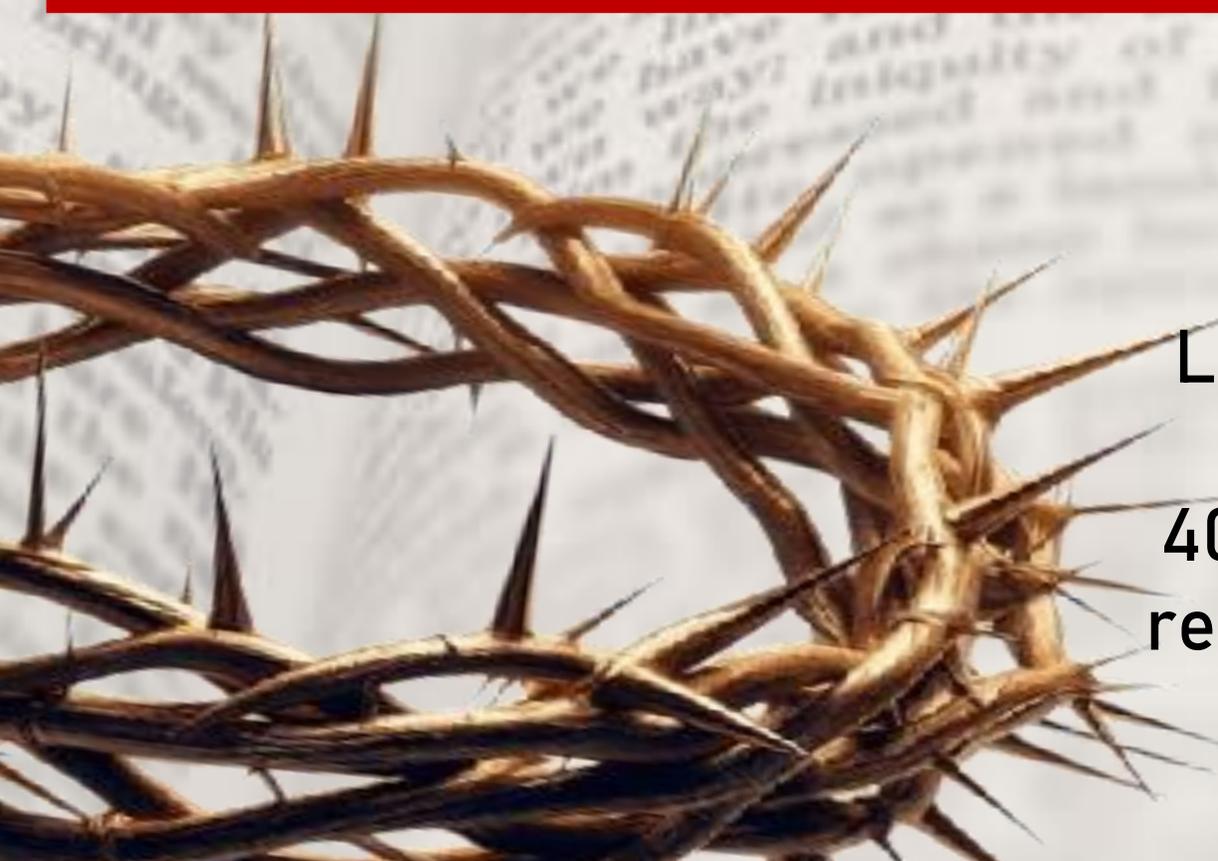




RED

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40 DAY DEVOTIONAL



Let Jesus
Speak!
40 Days of
reading His
words.

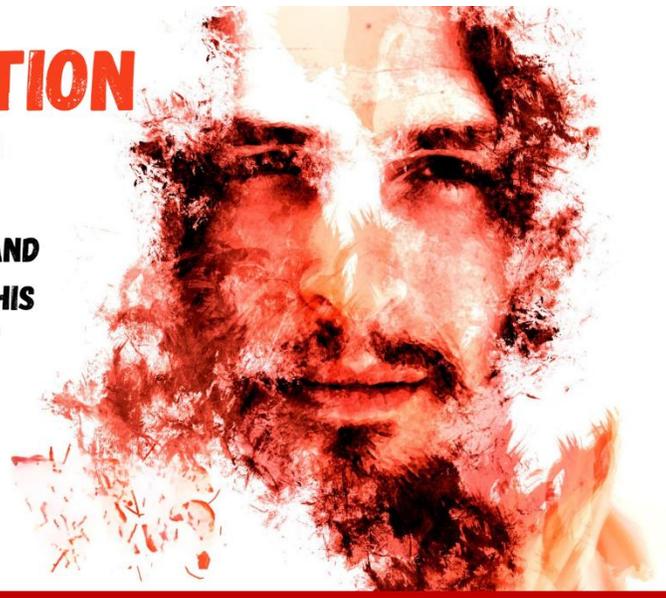
RED – LETTER REVOLUTION

40 Days with the Words of Jesus

**“THEREFORE WHOEVER HEARS THESE SAYINGS OF MINE, AND DOES THEM, I WILL LIKEN HIM TO A WISE MAN WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE ROCK:
MATTHEW 7:24**



www.strongtower906.com/blog



The Red-Letter Revolution

40 Days with the Words of Jesus

Jesus started a revolution. His ministry began when He stood up in his home congregation and upon reading from the prophet Isaiah, He said He was to preach good news to the poor, freedom for prisoners, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

During Jesus ministry crowds marveled at His teachings because He was “one who taught with authority.” The apostles chose to stick with Jesus because His words are “words of eternal life.” You are wise when you put into practice the words of Jesus. Like the wise man who built his house upon a rock, the winds may blow and the storms waters may surge but your faith will not fall.

Jesus started a revolution. And it's still going strong. There is no stopping “the Word made flesh.”

Over the next 40 days, you will immerse yourself in the words of the Living Word, Jesus Christ. You can be a part of the Red-Letter Revolution. As you spend time with the words of Jesus, may you begin to live a red-letter life.

- Doug Trudell, Senior Pastor Strong Tower Church

"Walking With Jesus: A 40-Day Journey Through His Teachings"

February 25 - April 5, 2026 (Easter Sunday)

WEEK 1: THE BEGINNING (Feb 25 - Mar 3)

1. Day 1 (Feb 25): "The Plunge" — Jesus' baptism & identity
2. Day 2 (Feb 26): "When You're Hangry" — First temptation
3. Day 3 (Feb 27): "The Spectacular Stunt" — Second temptation
4. Day 4 (Feb 28): "The Shortcut Trap" — Third temptation
5. Day 5 (Mar 1): "Follow Me" — Calling the disciples
6. Day 6 (Mar 2): "The Kingdom Has Arrived" — Repentance & Kingdom
7. Day 7 (Mar 3): "Blessed Are the Unlikely" — Beatitudes Part 1

WEEK 2: SERMON ON THE MOUNT (Mar 4 - Mar 10)

8. Day 8 (Mar 4): "More Unlikely Blessings" — Beatitudes Part 2
9. Day 9 (Mar 5): "Salt That's Lost Its Flavor" — Salt & light
10. Day 10 (Mar 6): "Heart Surgery Required" — Anger & reconciliation
11. Day 11 (Mar 7): "The Second Look" — Lust & purity
12. Day 12 (Mar 8): "Just Say What You Mean" — Oaths & integrity
13. Day 13 (Mar 9): "The Other Cheek" — Non-retaliation
14. Day 14 (Mar 10): "Love Your Enemies" — Radical love

WEEK 3: KINGDOM LIVING (Mar 11 - Mar 17)

15. Day 15 (Mar 11): "Secret Giving" — Giving in secret
16. Day 16 (Mar 12): "The Prayer Template" — The Lord's Prayer
17. Day 17 (Mar 13): "Forgive to Be Forgiven" — Forgiveness link
18. Day 18 (Mar 14): "Where's Your Treasure?" — Treasures in heaven
19. Day 19 (Mar 15): "Don't Worry, Be Happy?" — Anxiety & trust
20. Day 20 (Mar 16): "Judge Not" — Judging others
21. Day 21 (Mar 17): "Ask, Seek, Knock" — Persistent prayer

WEEK 4: POWER & AUTHORITY (Mar 18 - Mar 24)

22. Day 22 (Mar 18): "Build on the Rock" — Wise & foolish builders
23. Day 23 (Mar 19): "Just Say the Word" — Centurion's faith
24. Day 24 (Mar 20): "Calming the Storm" — Peace in chaos
25. Day 25 (Mar 21): "Your Sins Are Forgiven" — Healing the paralytic
26. Day 26 (Mar 22): "I Desire Mercy" — Calling Matthew
27. Day 27 (Mar 23): "The Harvest Is Plentiful" — Sending the twelve
28. Day 28 (Mar 24): "Freely Give" — Instructions to disciples

WEEK 5: PARABLES & TEACHINGS (Mar 25 - Mar 31)

29. Day 29 (Mar 25): "The Sower" — Parable of the soils
30. Day 30 (Mar 26): "Mustard Seed Faith" — Small beginnings
31. Day 31 (Mar 27): "The Pearl of Great Price" — Kingdom value
32. Day 32 (Mar 28): "Who Do You Say I Am?" — Peter's confession

33. Day 33 (Mar 29): "Take Up Your Cross" — Deny yourself

34. Day 34 (Mar 30): "The Transfiguration" — Glory revealed

35. Day 35 (Mar 31): "Seventy Times Seven" — Unlimited forgiveness

WEEK 6: THE FINAL WEEK (Apr 1 - Apr 5)

36. Day 36 (Apr 1): "The Triumphal Entry" — Riding into Jerusalem

37. Day 37 (Apr 2): "The Greatest Commandment" — Love God, love others

38. Day 38 (Apr 3): "The Last Supper" — This is My body

39. Day 39 (Apr 4): "Gethsemane" — Not My will

40. Day 40 (Apr 5 - Easter): "Go and Tell" — The Great Commission

Series Summary:

- 40 complete devotionals with biblical depth, and practical application
- Chronological journey from baptism to resurrection
- ~2-minute reads
- NKJV Scripture references
- Consistent voice: conversational, challenging, grace-filled

40 DAYS
WITH
THE WORDS
OF *Jesus*

By: Pastor Doug Trudell Jr.

WEEK 1: THE BEGINNING

Day 1 (February 25): "The Plunge"

Have you ever watched someone cannonball into a pool and thought, "Why would anyone voluntarily do that?" The shock, the cold, the complete disruption of a perfectly calm day. Yet there's something about taking the plunge that changes everything.

Read: Matthew 3:13-17

Picture this scene: Jesus, the sinless Son of God, standing in line with sinners waiting to be baptized. John the Baptist is having an identity crisis, basically saying, "Jesus, You've got this backwards. I should be getting baptized by You!" But Jesus insists. Why? Because He's about to show us something revolutionary about identity and obedience.

When Jesus goes under that water, He's identifying with humanity. He's saying, "I'm all in." And when He comes up, heaven itself can't stay silent. The Father speaks, the Spirit descends, and the Trinity puts on a show that would make any church production team jealous.

But here's what we often miss: the Father doesn't say, "This is My beloved Son who is about to do amazing things." He says, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—before Jesus preaches a single sermon, heals a single person, or performs a single miracle. God's pleasure in Jesus isn't based on performance; it's based on identity.

The same is true for you. Before you accomplish anything today, before you check off your spiritual to-do list, before you prove yourself worthy—God looks at you in Christ and says, "This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased." Your identity isn't found in what you do; it's found in whose you are.

Taking the plunge into following Jesus means accepting this identity. It means letting heaven open over your life and hearing the Father's voice of approval not because you've earned it, but because you belong to Him.

Day 2 (February 26): "When You're Hangry"

You know that feeling when you've skipped lunch, it's 3 PM, and suddenly everyone around you is the worst person on the planet? We've all been there—hangry, irritable, and ready to make poor decisions over a candy bar. Now imagine being hungry for forty days. Forty. Days.

Read: Matthew 4:1-4

The devil's timing is impeccable, isn't it? He waits until Jesus is at His weakest physically. Forty days without food. No meal prep Sundays. No drive-thru runs. Just wilderness, hunger, and stones that probably looked like fresh-baked rolls.

And Satan's temptation is brilliant in its simplicity: "If You are the Son of God..." Notice he's not questioning whether Jesus is the Son of God; he's questioning whether Jesus will act like it on his terms. "Prove it. Use Your power. Meet Your legitimate need in an illegitimate way."

But Jesus doesn't take the bait. He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, reminding us that there's something more important than physical bread—the Word of God. He's saying, "I'd rather starve physically than disobey spiritually."

Here's where this hits home: We all have legitimate needs. We need food, security, relationships, purpose. But Satan's favorite trick is getting us to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate ways. Need companionship? Here's a relationship that will compromise your values. Need financial security? Here's a shortcut that requires you to bend the rules. Need significance? Here's a platform that will cost you your integrity.

Jesus shows us that obedience to God's Word is more nourishing than satisfying our immediate cravings. He's not saying physical needs don't matter—He's saying they're not the most important thing. When we feed on God's Word, we find strength to resist the shortcuts and trust God's provision.

The next time you're tempted to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate way, remember: you're not just hungry for what you think you need. You're hungry for God Himself. And He satisfies in ways that bread—or anything else—never can.

Day 3 (February 27): "The Spectacular Stunt"

Social media has made us all stunt coordinators. We calculate the perfect angle, the ideal lighting, the most impressive backdrop. We want people to see us at our best, doing something spectacular. And if we're honest, sometimes we want God to do something spectacular too—something that proves He's real, that He's paying attention, that He cares.

Read: Matthew 4:5-7

Satan gets creative with the second temptation. He takes Jesus to the highest point of the temple—we're talking a 450-foot drop into the Kidron Valley. And then he does something sneaky: he quotes Scripture. Psalm 91, to be exact. "God will protect You, Jesus. His angels will catch You. Jump! Show everyone You're the Son of God!"

It's the ultimate spectacular stunt. Imagine the crowd below, the gasps, the angels swooping in for the rescue, the instant viral moment. Jesus would trend worldwide (if Twitter existed in 30 AD). But Jesus sees through it. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:16: "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."

Here's the thing: Satan can quote Scripture too. He just takes it out of context and twists it to serve his purposes. The Psalm he quoted is about trusting God in the path of obedience, not testing God with presumptuous stunts. There's a massive difference between trusting God and testing God.

We trust God when we obey Him and believe He'll be faithful. We test God when we deliberately put ourselves in danger or make foolish decisions and expect Him to bail us out. Trust says, "God, I'll follow You wherever You lead." Testing says, "God, I'll do what I want, and You better show up."

How many times have we demanded that God prove Himself? "God, if You're real, make this happen." "God, if You love me, fix this situation." We want the spectacular, the miraculous, the undeniable sign. But Jesus shows us that faith doesn't need God to perform on command. Faith obeys even when there's no safety net, no spectacular rescue, no viral moment.

God isn't impressed by our attempts to manipulate Him into proving Himself. He's looking for simple, steady obedience—even when it's not spectacular.

Day 4 (February 28): "The Shortcut Trap"

We love shortcuts. Fast food, express lanes, life hacks, get-rich-quick schemes. If there's a faster way to get what we want, we're interested. And Satan knows this about us. He's been offering shortcuts since the Garden of Eden, and business is still booming.

Read: Matthew 4:8-11

This is Satan's final offer, and it's a doozy. He takes Jesus to a high mountain and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world—the power, the glory, the influence, the authority. Everything Jesus came to redeem, Satan offers on a silver platter. "It's all Yours, Jesus. No cross necessary. No suffering required. Just one little bow. One moment of worship. Skip the hard part and get straight to the crown."

It's the ultimate shortcut. Why go through betrayal, beating, crucifixion, and death when You can have it all right now? But Jesus sees what Satan is really offering: the right thing in the wrong way. Yes, Jesus came to receive all authority and every kingdom. But God's plan required the cross. There was no shortcut to resurrection that didn't go through death.

Jesus responds with finality: "Away with you, Satan!" He's done negotiating. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:13, reminding Satan—and us—that worship belongs to God alone. No compromise. No shortcuts. No deals with the devil.

Here's where we need to pay attention: Satan still offers shortcuts. Want a successful ministry? Compromise your message to attract bigger crowds. Want financial security? Cut a few ethical corners. Want that relationship? Lower your standards. Want influence? Worship at the altar of public opinion.

The shortcut always costs more than it promises to save. It might get you where you want to go faster, but you'll arrive as someone you never wanted to become. Jesus chose the long, hard road because He knew that God's way—even when it leads through suffering—is always better than Satan's shortcut.

God's plan for your life might not be the fastest route, but it's the only one that leads to true glory. Trust the process. Reject the shortcuts. Worship God alone.

Day 5 (March 1): "Follow Me"

Job security is a beautiful thing. Steady income, predictable routine, knowing what tomorrow looks like. The disciples had that. They were fishermen—not glamorous, but reliable. They knew the sea, they knew their trade, they knew their future. And then Jesus showed up and wrecked everything with two words: "Follow Me."

Read: Matthew 4:18-22

Notice what Jesus doesn't say. He doesn't give them a detailed job description, a benefits package, or a five-year plan. He doesn't promise safety, comfort, or success. He just says, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." And somehow, that's enough.

They immediately left their nets. Not after they finished the day's work. Not after they trained their replacements. Not after they had a family meeting to discuss the pros and cons. Immediately. They walked away from everything familiar and followed a rabbi they barely knew.

What did they see in Jesus that made them willing to risk everything? What did they hear in His voice that made job security suddenly seem insignificant? Whatever it was, it was compelling enough to trade fish for people, boats for dusty roads, and predictability for adventure.

Here's what Jesus is still saying to us: "Follow Me." Not "Admire Me from a distance." Not "Add Me to your already full schedule." Not "Believe the right things about Me." Follow Me. It's an invitation to leave behind whatever we're clinging to and step into a life of radical obedience.

And notice the promise: "I will make you fishers of men." Jesus doesn't ask us to figure it out on our own. He doesn't demand that we already have the skills, the training, or the experience. He says, "You follow; I'll do the making." Our job is to follow. His job is to transform us into who He's called us to be.

What nets are you holding onto? What boat are you refusing to leave? What familiar, comfortable, predictable thing is keeping you from following Jesus fully? He's still walking by, still calling, still saying, "Follow Me." The question is: will you immediately leave your nets, or will you negotiate for a more convenient time?

Day 6 (March 2): "The Kingdom Has Arrived"

There's something about a grand opening that gets people excited. Balloons, banners, free samples, maybe even a celebrity appearance. Everyone wants to be there when something new launches. But what if the grand opening wasn't what you expected? What if instead of confetti and fanfare, someone just showed up and said, "It's here. Change your life."

Read: Matthew 4:17

Jesus' first sermon wasn't long. No three-point outline, no PowerPoint, no altar call with seven verses of "Just As I Am." Just seven words in English, even fewer in Greek: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That's it. That's the message that launched the greatest movement in human history.

Let's unpack this. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" means it's not coming someday—it's here, now, within reach. Jesus is announcing that God's reign has arrived in His person. The King is here, so the Kingdom is here. But here's the kicker: you can't enter this Kingdom without repentance.

We've turned "repent" into a scary word. We picture angry street preachers with signs or guilt-inducing altar calls. But the Greek word "metanoēō" literally means "to change your mind" or "to turn around." It's not about feeling bad about yourself; it's about changing direction. You're walking one way, and Jesus says, "Turn around. There's a better way."

Repentance isn't God's way of making you miserable; it's His invitation to stop going the wrong direction. It's like someone yelling, "Stop! You're about to walk off a cliff!" The loving response isn't to keep walking and feel guilty about it. The loving response is to turn around.

The Kingdom of heaven isn't just a future destination; it's a present reality. But you can't experience it while walking away from the King. Repentance is the U-turn that puts you on the path where God's reign becomes real in your life. It's not about perfection; it's about direction. Are you walking toward Jesus or away from Him?

Day 7 (March 3): "Blessed Are the Unlikely"

If you were launching a new kingdom and needed to recruit followers, you'd probably look for the strong, the successful, the influential. You'd want people who had it all together, people who could make things happen. Jesus did the opposite. He looked at the broken, the mourning, the meek, and said, "You're blessed." Wait, what?

Read: Matthew 5:1-6

The Beatitudes are Jesus' upside-down manifesto. Everything the world says leads to happiness, Jesus flips on its head. The world says, "Blessed are the self-sufficient, the happy, the powerful, the satisfied." Jesus says, "Not even close."

"Blessed are the poor in spirit"—those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy. The Kingdom belongs to people who know they have nothing to offer God except their need. "Blessed are those who mourn"—not just over personal loss, but over sin and brokenness. God comforts those who grieve over what grieves Him. "Blessed are the meek"—not the weak, but those who have strength under control, who trust God instead of forcing their own way.

And then, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Not those who have arrived, but those who are desperately hungry for more of God. Those who aren't satisfied with spiritual mediocrity. Those who crave righteousness like a starving person craves food.

Here's the revolutionary truth: God's Kingdom isn't for people who think they have it all together. It's for people who know they're broken and need a Savior. It's for people who mourn over sin, who humbly depend on God, who are desperate for righteousness. The world calls these people weak. Jesus calls them blessed.

WEEK 2: SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Day 8 (March 4): "More Unlikely Blessings"

Yesterday we saw Jesus flip the script on what it means to be blessed. Today, He keeps going—and it gets even more radical. If you thought being poor in spirit and mourning sounded counterintuitive, wait until you hear who else Jesus calls blessed. Spoiler alert: it's not the people you'd expect.

Read: Matthew 5:7-12

Let's break this down. "Blessed are the merciful"—those who extend grace instead of judgment. You want mercy? Give it. "Blessed are the pure in heart"—not those who fake it on the outside, but those whose motives are clean. They're the ones who actually see God, not just talk about Him.

"Blessed are the peacemakers"—not peacekeepers who avoid conflict, but peacemakers who actively pursue reconciliation. They look like God's children because that's exactly what God does. And then Jesus drops the bomb: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

Persecution? Blessed? Jesus, are You feeling okay? But He doubles down: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you... Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." This isn't masochism; this is Kingdom math. When you're persecuted for following Jesus, you're in good company—the prophets were treated the same way. Your reward isn't here; it's in heaven.

Here's what Jesus is saying: Don't expect the world to applaud your faithfulness. Don't be surprised when living for Jesus costs you something. Don't think something's wrong when people mock your values, question your choices, or exclude you for your faith. You're blessed because you're aligned with God's Kingdom, not the world's approval.

The question isn't whether you'll face opposition for following Jesus. The question is: will you rejoice when you do?

Day 9 (March 5): "Salt That's Lost Its Flavor"

Have you ever accidentally used sugar instead of salt? Or grabbed the decaf instead of regular coffee? There's nothing more disappointing than expecting one thing and getting something that looks the same but doesn't deliver. Jesus says that's exactly what happens when Christians lose their distinctiveness.

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus doesn't say, "Try to be salt" or "Work on being light." He says, "You ARE salt. You ARE light." It's your identity, not your aspiration. But here's the problem: salt can lose its flavor, and light can be hidden.

In Jesus' day, salt was used for preservation and flavor. It made food last longer and taste better. But if salt got contaminated or diluted, it became useless—good for nothing but to be thrown on the road and walked on. Ouch. Jesus is saying, "You're supposed to preserve what's good and add flavor to the world. But if you become just like everyone else, what's the point?"

The same with light. You don't light a lamp and then cover it up. That defeats the purpose. Light is meant to shine, to illuminate, to help people see. When Christians hide their faith—when we blend in so well that no one can tell we follow Jesus—we're covering our light with a basket.

Here's the challenge: Are you salty? I'm not talking about annoyed, bitter or a sore loser kind of salty either. Are you shining? Or have you become so much like the culture around you that you've lost your distinctiveness? Being salt and light doesn't mean being obnoxious or weird for the sake of being different. It means living in such a way that people notice something different about you—and that difference points them to God.

Day 10 (March 6): "Heart Surgery Required"

We love checklists. Did I pray? Check. Read my Bible? Check. Didn't murder anyone today? Check. We're really good at external obedience. But Jesus is about to mess with our checklist religion. He's not interested in behavior modification; He wants heart transformation.

Read: Matthew 5:21-26

The religious leaders had reduced God's law to a behavior checklist. "Don't murder? Got it. Check." But Jesus says, "Not so fast. Let's talk about what's happening in your heart." He equates anger with murder, insults with violence. Why? Because murder starts in the heart long before it reaches the hands.

Jesus isn't saying anger is as bad as murder in terms of consequences. He's saying they come from the same root: hatred, contempt, devaluing another person made in God's image. You can obey the letter of the law and still violate its spirit. You can avoid murder while harboring murderous thoughts. And God cares about both.

Then Jesus drops a bomb: if you're on your way to worship and remember you have unresolved conflict with someone, stop. Leave your gift at the altar. Go make it right. Then come back and worship. In other words, God isn't interested in your religious performance if your relationships are broken. Reconciliation comes before ritual.

This is uncomfortable because it's easier to show up to church than to humble ourselves and seek reconciliation. It's easier to sing worship songs than to apologize. It's easier to check the "good Christian" boxes than to do the hard work of heart transformation.

Jesus isn't lowering the bar; He's raising it. He's saying the Kingdom isn't about external compliance; it's about internal transformation. God wants your heart, not just your behavior.

Day 11 (March 7): "The Second Look"

Let's be honest: this is the devotional nobody wants to read. We'd rather skip this one and move on to something more comfortable. But Jesus doesn't let us off the hook. If He cared enough about our purity to address it head-on, we need to care enough to listen.

Read: Matthew 5:27-30

Once again, Jesus takes the law deeper. The Pharisees said, "Don't commit adultery." Jesus says, "Don't even look with lust." The issue isn't just the physical act; it's the heart attitude. Lust is adultery in the heart—it's treating another person as an object for your gratification rather than a person made in God's image.

And then Jesus gets radical. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. Is Jesus advocating self-mutilation? No. He's using a hyperbole to make a point: take radical steps to protect your purity. The problem isn't your eye or your hand; it's your heart. But if something is leading you into sin, remove it. Cancel the subscription. Delete the app. Change your route. Whatever it takes.

We live in a culture that says, "It's just a look. It's just a thought. It's not hurting anyone." But Jesus says lust does hurt—it hurts you, it dishonors the other person, and it damages your relationship with God. Purity isn't about legalism; it's about protecting something precious.

Here's the truth: you can't play around with temptation and expect to win. You can't feed lust and expect it to starve. You need radical measures—not because God is a killjoy, but because He knows that sin destroys what it promises to satisfy.

Day 12 (March 8): "Just Say What You Mean"

We live in a world of fine print, loopholes, and "I had my fingers crossed." We've become experts at saying things we don't mean and finding ways out of commitments. But Jesus calls us to something radically simple: just tell the truth.

Read: Matthew 5:33-37

In Jesus' day, people had developed an elaborate system of oaths. They'd swear by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by their own head—anything to make their words sound more credible. The problem? They'd created loopholes. If you swore by the temple, you had to keep your word. But if you swore by the gold in the temple, you could wiggle out of it.

Jesus cuts through the nonsense: don't swear at all. Just let your yes be yes and your no be no. In other words, be so consistently truthful that you don't need to add extra weight to your words. Your character should be your credibility.

Think about it: why do we feel the need to say, "I swear" or "I promise" or "Honestly"? Because we've been dishonest enough times that people don't automatically trust our words. We've trained people to question whether we mean what we say.

Jesus is calling us to a higher standard: integrity. Be the kind of person whose word is enough. Don't exaggerate. Don't make promises you can't keep. Don't say yes when you mean no. Don't commit to things you have no intention of following through on. Just be honest.

This is harder than it sounds. It means saying no to things you want to say yes to because you know you can't deliver. It means admitting when you're wrong instead of spinning the truth. It means being the same person in private that you are in public.

Day 13 (March 9): "The Other Cheek"

We live by the law of retaliation. Someone cuts you off in traffic, you honk and tailgate. Someone insults you, you fire back. Someone wrongs you, you make sure they pay. It's only fair, right? Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. But Jesus is about to redefine what strength looks like.

Read: Matthew 5:38-42

The "eye for an eye" law was actually a step forward—it limited retaliation to equal justice, not escalating revenge. But Jesus takes it further: don't retaliate at all. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other. If someone sues you for your shirt, give them your coat too. If someone forces you to go one mile, go two.

Is Jesus saying we should be doormats? That we should let people abuse us? No. He's talking about personal insults and inconveniences, not criminal violence. A slap on the right cheek was a backhanded insult, not a physical assault. Jesus is saying, "When someone disrespects you, don't retaliate. Absorb it. Respond with grace."

This is radically countercultural. The world says, "Stand up for yourself. Don't let anyone push you around. Get even." Jesus says, "You're secure enough in My love that you don't need to defend yourself. You're strong enough to absorb the insult without retaliating."

Going the second mile, giving your cloak, turning the other cheek—these aren't acts of weakness. They're acts of strength. They say, "You can't control me with your hatred. I'm free to respond with love." This is how Jesus lived. When insulted, He didn't insult back. When threatened, He didn't threaten. He entrusted Himself to God and loved His enemies.

Day 14 (March 10): "Love Your Enemies"

If yesterday's teaching was hard, today's is impossible. At least, it's impossible in our own strength. Jesus is about to give the most counter-cultural, counter-intuitive, counter-everything command He's ever given. And if we're honest, it's the one we most want to skip.

Read: Matthew 5:43-48

Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who persecute you. This isn't natural—it's supernatural. Everything in us screams, "But they don't deserve it!" Exactly. That's the point. God's love isn't based on what people deserve; it's based on who He is.

Jesus explains: God makes the sun rise on the evil and the good. He sends rain on the just and the unjust. God's kindness isn't reserved for people who earn it. If you only love people who love you back, what's special about that? Even tax collectors—the most despised people in Jewish society—do that. Jesus is calling us to a higher standard: love like God loves.

And then He drops the mic: "Be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Perfect? Jesus, have You met us? But the word "perfect" here means "complete" or "mature." It's about wholeness, not flawlessness. God's love is complete—it extends to everyone, even enemies. Our love should be the same.

This doesn't mean we're naive or let people abuse us. It means we refuse to let hatred control us. We pray for those who hurt us. We bless those who curse us. We do good to those who hate us. Not because they deserve it, but because we're children of a Father who loves His enemies—including us when we were His enemies.

WEEK 3: KINGDOM LIVING

Day 15 (March 11): "Secret Giving"

Social media has turned generosity into performance art. We post our mission trips, our volunteer work, our charitable donations. We want people to know we're good people doing good things. But Jesus says the best giving happens when nobody's watching—not even your other hand.

Read: Matthew 6:1-4

The religious leaders of Jesus' day loved public displays of generosity. They'd literally have trumpets sound when they gave alms so everyone would notice. "Look at me! I'm so generous!" Jesus calls them hypocrites—actors playing a role. They got what they wanted: human applause. But that's all they got.

Jesus says when you give, do it so secretly that even your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing. That's a hyperbole, obviously—your hands share the same brain. But the point is clear: give without seeking recognition. Give without needing applause. Give because you love God and people, not because you love attention.

Here's the uncomfortable question: why do you give? Is it to help people, or to be seen helping people? Is it to honor God, or to build your reputation? Is it generosity, or is it image management?

When you give in secret, you're saying, "God's approval is enough. I don't need human recognition." And here's the beautiful promise: your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Not might reward you—will reward you. God sees. God knows. And God rewards those who give from pure motives.

Day 16 (March 12): "The Prayer Template"

Prayer can feel complicated. How long should I pray? What words should I use? Am I doing it right? The disciples watched Jesus pray and said, "Teach us." So Jesus gave them—and us—a template. Not a formula to recite mindlessly, but a pattern to follow.

Read: Matthew 6:9-13

Notice how Jesus starts: "Our Father." Not "The distant deity" or "The cosmic force." Father. Prayer begins with relationship, with intimacy, with knowing you're talking to someone who loves you. But He's not just any father—He's "in heaven," holy, set apart. "Hallowed be Your name" means "May Your name be treated as sacred." We're approaching someone both intimate and awesome.

"Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is surrender. We're not demanding God do what we want; we're asking to align with what He wants. We're inviting His rule into our lives and our world.

"Give us this day our daily bread." We're dependent. We need God's provision every day. Not just for physical needs, but for everything. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We're asking for grace while committing to extend grace. More on this tomorrow.

"Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." We're acknowledging our weakness and our need for protection. We can't fight spiritual battles in our own strength.

This prayer covers everything: worship, surrender, dependence, forgiveness, and protection. It's not meant to be recited robotically; it's meant to shape how we pray. Start with who God is. Surrender to His will. Ask for what you need. Seek forgiveness and give it. Request protection. That's prayer.

Day 17 (March 13): "Forgive to Be Forgiven"

Here's a verse we wish wasn't in the Bible. We'd love to skip it, ignore it, or explain it away. But Jesus won't let us. He doubles down on it immediately after teaching the Lord's Prayer. And it's uncomfortable because it links our forgiveness from God to our forgiveness of others.

Read: Matthew 6:14-15

Wait, what? Our forgiveness depends on forgiving others? Isn't salvation by grace through faith, not works? Yes. But Jesus is talking about the ongoing experience of forgiveness in our relationship with God, not the initial salvation that brings us into relationship.

Think of it this way: when you refuse to forgive someone, you're holding onto bitterness, resentment, and judgment. You're saying, "They don't deserve forgiveness." But here's the problem: neither do you. None of us deserve God's forgiveness. We all stand guilty before a holy God. The only reason we're forgiven is because of God's grace.

When you withhold forgiveness from someone else, you're essentially saying, "I deserve grace, but they don't." You're putting yourself in God's position as judge. And Jesus says, "If you're going to judge others by the law, I'll judge you by the law too. But if you want grace, you need to extend grace."

This doesn't mean you have to trust someone who's hurt you or put yourself back in a harmful situation. Forgiveness isn't the same as reconciliation or trust. Forgiveness is releasing the debt, letting go of the right to revenge, and entrusting justice to God. It's saying, "I won't hold this against you anymore."

Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. It hurts you more than it hurts them. When you forgive, you're not saying what they did was okay. You're saying, "I'm not going to let what they did control me anymore."

Day 18 (March 14): "Where's Your Treasure?"

If you want to know what someone truly values, don't listen to what they say—look at their bank statement and their calendar. Where you spend your money and your time reveals where your heart is. Jesus knew this, which is why He talked about money more than almost any other topic.

Read: Matthew 6:19-21

Jesus isn't saying money is evil or that we shouldn't plan for the future. He's saying, "Be careful what you treasure." Earthly treasures are temporary. Moths eat them. Rust corrodes them. Thieves steal them. The stock market crashes. The house floods. The car breaks down. Everything on earth is subject to decay and loss.

But treasures in heaven are permanent. What are heavenly treasures? Relationships with God and people. Character that reflects Christ. Investments in the Kingdom. Acts of love, service, and generosity. These things last forever.

Here's the key insight: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Notice Jesus doesn't say, "Where your heart is, there your treasure will be." He says it the other way around. Your treasure leads your heart. If you invest in earthly things, your heart will follow. If you invest in heavenly things, your heart will follow there.

Want to change your heart? Change where you invest. Start giving generously. Serve sacrificially. Invest in people and Kingdom work. Your heart will follow your treasure. You can't out-give God, and you can't take earthly treasure with you. But you can send it ahead by investing in what lasts forever.

The question isn't whether you have treasure. Everyone treasures something. The question is: what are you treasuring? And is it worth it?

Day 19 (March 15): "Don't Worry, Be Happy?"

Anxiety is the background noise of modern life. We worry about money, health, relationships, the future, the past, things we can control, and things we can't. We're professional worriers. And then Jesus shows up and says, "Stop worrying." Oh, is that all? Thanks, Jesus. Super helpful.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34 (NKJV)

Jesus isn't being flippant. He's pointing us to a better way. Look at the birds—they don't worry, and God feeds them. Look at the flowers—they don't stress about their wardrobe, and God clothes them beautifully. If God takes care of birds and flowers, won't He take care of you?

Worry doesn't add a single hour to your life. It doesn't solve problems; it multiplies them. It doesn't prepare you for tomorrow; it robs you of today. Jesus says worry is a faith problem. It's trusting yourself more than you trust God.

The antidote to worry isn't positive thinking; it's right priorities. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

When God's Kingdom is your priority, He takes care of the rest. When you trust Him with today, you don't need to worry about tomorrow.

Day 20 (March 16): "Judge Not"

This might be the most misquoted verse in the Bible. "Judge not!" people say, usually right after you've pointed out something they're doing wrong. But is Jesus really saying we should never make judgments? Or is He saying something more nuanced?

Read: Matthew 7:1-5

Jesus isn't saying, "Never make moral judgments." He's saying, "Don't be a hypocrite." Notice He doesn't say, "Don't remove the speck from your brother's eye." He says, "First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

The issue isn't whether we help others with their sin; it's the attitude and condition we're in when we do it. If you've got a two-by-four sticking out of your eye and you're trying to perform eye surgery on someone else's speck, you're not helping—you're a hypocrite.

Here's the principle: the measure you use to judge others is the measure that will be used to judge you. If you're harsh, critical, and unforgiving toward others, don't be surprised when people treat you the same way. If you're gracious, patient, and merciful, you'll receive the same.

This doesn't mean we ignore sin or pretend everything is fine. It means we deal with our own sin first. We approach others with humility, not superiority. We speak truth in love, not condemnation. We remember that we're all sinners saved by grace, and we extend the same grace we've received.

Day 21 (March 17): "Ask, Seek, Knock"

Prayer can feel like talking to a wall. You ask, nothing happens. You seek, you don't find. You knock, the door stays shut. So you start to wonder: is God even listening? Does He care? Jesus answers with a resounding yes—and He invites us to keep asking, seeking, and knocking.

Read: Matthew 7:7-11

Notice the verbs: ask, seek, knock. These are present tense in Greek, meaning keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking. Jesus isn't talking about one-and-done prayers. He's talking about persistent, ongoing prayer. Don't give up. Keep coming to God.

And notice the promise: everyone who asks receives, everyone who seeks finds, everyone who knocks has the door opened. Not some people. Everyone. God isn't playing favorites. He's not ignoring you. He hears every prayer.

But here's the key: God isn't a vending machine. You don't insert a prayer and get exactly what you want. Jesus uses the analogy of a father and son. If your son asks for bread, you don't give him a stone. If he asks for fish, you don't give him a snake. You give him what he needs, even if it's not exactly what he asked for.

God is a good Father. He knows what you need better than you do. Sometimes He gives you exactly what you ask for. Sometimes He gives you something better. Sometimes He says, "Not yet." But He always gives good gifts to His children.

The question isn't whether God hears your prayers. The question is: are you praying? Are you asking, seeking, knocking? Or have you given up?

WEEK 4: POWER AND AUTHORITY

Day 22 (March 18): "Build on the Rock"

Everyone's life looks great when the sun is shining. Nice house, happy family, successful career. But then the storm hits—job loss, health crisis, relationship breakdown, unexpected tragedy. And that's when you find out what your life is built on. Jesus says there are only two foundations: rock or sand.

Read: Matthew 7:24-27

Notice both builders face the same storm. Rain, floods, winds—the storm doesn't discriminate. Following Jesus doesn't exempt you from life's storms. The difference isn't the storm; it's the foundation.

The wise builder hears Jesus' words and does them. The foolish builder hears Jesus' words but doesn't do them. Both hear. Both build. But only one obeys. And when the storm comes, obedience makes all the difference.

Building on the rock is harder. It takes more time, more effort, more intentionality. Sand is easier—it's right there on the surface. But when the storm comes, sand shifts. Rock holds.

Here's the uncomfortable truth: you can know all the right things, attend all the right services, quote all the right verses, and still build on sand if you're not obeying. Hearing without doing is foolishness. It's building a life that looks good until the storm reveals it was never solid.

Jesus isn't just a good teacher to listen to; He's the foundation to build on. His words aren't suggestions; they're the blueprint for a life that lasts. The question isn't whether the storm will come. The question is: what are you building on?

Day 23 (March 19): "Just Say the Word"

Faith can come from the most unexpected places. You'd think the religious leaders would have the strongest faith—they knew the Scriptures, they led the worship, they were the spiritual experts. But when Jesus marvels at someone's faith, it's not a priest or a Pharisee. It's a Roman centurion—a Gentile, an outsider, an enemy.

Read: Matthew 8:5-13

This centurion gets it. He understands authority. He knows that when someone in authority speaks, things happen. He doesn't need Jesus to show up physically; he just needs Jesus to speak the word. He believes Jesus has authority over sickness the same way he has authority over his soldiers.

Jesus is amazed. "I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" The religious insiders missed it, but this outsider nailed it. Faith isn't about religious pedigree or spiritual credentials. It's about trusting Jesus' authority.

The centurion also displays humility: "I am not worthy that You should come under my roof." He doesn't demand. He doesn't presume. He simply asks and trusts. That's faith—humble dependence on Jesus' power and willingness to help.

Here's the challenge: Do you have centurion-level faith? Do you believe Jesus can speak a word and change your situation? Or are you so focused on the how and the when that you miss the who? Jesus doesn't need to show up the way you expect. He just needs to speak, and it's done.

Day 24 (March 20): "Calming the Storm"

Panic is contagious. When the plane hits turbulence, everyone looks at the flight attendants. If they're calm, you're calm. If they're panicking, you're panicking. The disciples were experienced fishermen—they'd seen storms before. But this storm was different. And Jesus? He was asleep.

Read: Matthew 8:23-27

The disciples are freaking out. Waves are crashing over the boat. Water is pouring in. They're experienced sailors, and they're convinced they're about to die. Meanwhile, Jesus is in the back of the boat, asleep on a cushion. How is He sleeping through this?

They wake Him up: "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" And Jesus' response is fascinating: "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He stands up, rebukes the wind and waves, and everything goes calm. The disciples are stunned: "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Here's what we need to see: Jesus wasn't worried about the storm because He knew He was in control. He could sleep through the chaos because He had authority over it. The disciples' fear revealed their lack of faith—not in Jesus' existence, but in His power and care.

We do the same thing. We panic in the storm and wake Jesus up: "Don't You care that we're perishing?" And He says, "Why are you fearful? Don't you know I'm in control?" The storm doesn't mean Jesus isn't with you. It means you get to see His power in a new way.

Day 25 (March 21): "Your Sins Are Forgiven"

Imagine being paralyzed, unable to walk, completely dependent on others. Your friends hear Jesus is in town, so they carry you to the house where He's teaching. But the place is packed—there's no way in. So they get creative: they climb on the roof, tear it open, and lower you down right in front of Jesus. You're expecting healing. But Jesus says something unexpected.

Read: Matthew 9:1-8

The paralytic came for physical healing. Jesus gave him spiritual healing first: "Your sins are forgiven." The religious leaders were furious. "This Man blasphemes! Only God can forgive sins!" Exactly. That's the point.

Jesus knows what they're thinking, so He asks, "Which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Arise and walk'?" Anyone can say, "Your sins are forgiven"—there's no way to verify it. But if you say, "Arise and walk," everyone will know immediately if you have the authority to back it up.

So Jesus heals the man to prove He has authority to forgive sins. The man walks out carrying his mat, and the crowd is amazed. But here's what we often miss: Jesus addressed the man's greatest need first. The man needed physical healing, but he needed spiritual healing more. Jesus always goes deeper than we ask.

Day 26 (March 22): "I Desire Mercy"

Religious people love rules. We love knowing who's in and who's out, who's doing it right and who's doing it wrong. The Pharisees were experts at this. They had rules for everything—what you could eat, who you could eat with, when you could work, how you could worship. And then Jesus showed up and ate dinner with tax collectors and sinners. The scandal was real.

Read: Matthew 9:10-13

Tax collectors were traitors—Jews who collected taxes for Rome and got rich by overcharging their own people. Sinners were people who didn't follow the Pharisees' rules. Both groups were considered unclean, untouchable, beyond redemption. And Jesus ate with them. Not just a quick hello—He reclined at the table, shared a meal, spent time with them.

The Pharisees were horrified. "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus' response is brilliant: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." He's saying, "I'm here for the people who know they need help, not for people who think they're fine."

Then He quotes Hosea 6:6: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." God isn't impressed by your religious performance if your heart is hard toward broken people. He'd rather see you show mercy to sinners than offer perfect sacrifices while looking down on them.

Here's the uncomfortable truth: Jesus didn't come for people who have it all together. He came for messy, broken, sinful people who know they need a Savior. The Pharisees' problem wasn't that they were too good; it was that they didn't think they needed Jesus. They were so busy being right that they missed the whole point.

Day 27 (March 23): "New Wine, New Wineskins"

Change is hard. We like our routines, our traditions, our comfortable ways of doing things. "We've always done it this way" might be the seven most dangerous words in the church. But Jesus didn't come to patch up the old system. He came to bring something completely new.

Read: Matthew 9:14-17

John's disciples were confused. They fasted. The Pharisees fasted. But Jesus' disciples were eating and drinking, apparently having a good time. "Why aren't Your disciples fasting?" Jesus responds with a wedding analogy: "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" In other words, "This is a celebration, not a funeral. The Messiah is here. Why would we fast?"

Then Jesus gives two illustrations about the incompatibility of the old and the new. You don't patch an old garment with new cloth—the new cloth will shrink and tear the old garment. You don't put new wine in old wineskins—the new wine will ferment, expand, and burst the old, brittle wineskins.

Jesus is saying, "I'm not here to patch up the old religious system. I'm bringing something entirely new." The Kingdom of God isn't an upgrade to Judaism; it's a whole new covenant. You can't contain the new wine of the Gospel in the old wineskins of religious tradition.

This doesn't mean we abandon all tradition or throw out everything old. It means we don't let tradition become more important than transformation. We don't cling to old wineskins when God is pouring out new wine. We stay flexible, open, and ready for what God is doing now.

Day 28 (March 24): "Just Touch His Garment"

Desperation has a way of cutting through social norms. When you're desperate enough, you don't care what people think. You don't care about the rules. You just need Jesus. That's where this woman was—twelve years of bleeding, twelve years of being ceremonially unclean, twelve years of isolation. And she believed that if she could just touch Jesus' garment, she'd be healed.

Read: Matthew 9:20-22

This woman had suffered for twelve years. She'd spent all her money on doctors who couldn't help her. According to Jewish law, her condition made her ceremonially unclean—she couldn't go to the temple, couldn't be touched, couldn't participate in normal life. She was isolated, desperate, and out of options.

But she'd heard about Jesus. And she believed that if she could just touch the edge of His garment, she'd be healed. So she pushed through the crowd, reached out, and touched His cloak. Immediately, she felt the healing in her body. The bleeding stopped. After twelve years, she was whole.

Jesus stopped. "Who touched Me?" The disciples were confused—there was a crowd pressing in on all sides. But Jesus knew someone had touched Him in faith. The woman came forward, trembling, and fell at His feet. And Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well."

Notice what Jesus calls her: "daughter." Not "unclean woman." Not "outcast." Daughter. He restores not just her body, but her identity and her place in the community. Her faith—desperate, reaching, believing—made her well.

WEEK 5: PARABLES AND TEACHINGS

Day 29 (March 25): "The Harvest Is Plentiful"

Have you ever driven past a field ready for harvest and thought, "Someone needs to get out there before that crop is ruined"? That's the image Jesus uses when He looks at the crowds. He doesn't see an inconvenience or an interruption. He sees a harvest field—people ready to respond to the Gospel, but there aren't enough workers to bring it in.

Read: Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus is on mission. He's teaching, preaching, and healing everywhere He goes. And when He sees the crowds, He doesn't see a burden—He sees people who are "weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd." His heart breaks for them. They're spiritually lost, directionless, vulnerable. They need a shepherd.

Then Jesus shifts the metaphor from sheep to harvest. "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." There are so many people ready to respond to the Gospel, but not enough workers to reach them. The problem isn't the harvest—it's the lack of laborers.

And here's what Jesus tells His disciples to do: pray. "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Before you go, pray. Ask God to raise up workers. Ask Him to send people into the harvest field. The harvest belongs to God, and He's the one who sends the workers.

But here's the thing: when you pray for God to send workers into the harvest, don't be surprised if He sends you. When you ask God to raise up laborers, you're volunteering. The harvest is plentiful. The laborers are few. And Jesus is looking at you.

Day 30 (March 26): "Freely You Have Received"

Jesus doesn't just talk about the harvest—He does something about it. He calls twelve ordinary men, gives them extraordinary authority, and sends them out to do what He's been doing. No special training. No seminary degree. Just "Go and do what you've seen Me do." And oh, by the way, do it for free.

Read: Matthew 10:1, 5-8

Jesus gives the disciples authority to do what only He had been doing—cast out demons, heal the sick, even raise the dead. This isn't just observation anymore; it's participation. They're not just watching Jesus work; they're joining Him in the work.

But notice the instructions: "Freely you have received, freely give." You didn't earn this authority. You didn't pay for this power. You didn't deserve this calling. It was freely given to you. So give it freely to others. Don't charge for ministry. Don't use God's gifts to build your own kingdom. Give as freely as you've received.

This is the heart of the Gospel: grace freely given, grace freely shared. You didn't earn your salvation—it was a gift. You didn't deserve God's love—it was freely given. So when you share the Gospel, when you serve others, when you use your gifts, do it freely. Not to earn something. Not to get something in return. But because you've freely received.

The Kingdom advances through generosity, not greed. Through giving, not getting. Through freely sharing what we've freely received.

Day 31 (March 27): "Take Up Your Cross"

We've sanitized the cross. We wear it as jewelry, hang it on walls, put it on bumper stickers. But when Jesus said, "Take up your cross," His audience didn't think of jewelry. They thought of execution. The cross wasn't a symbol of hope—it was an instrument of death. And Jesus said, "If you want to follow Me, pick it up."

Matthew 10:37-39

Jesus doesn't sugarcoat discipleship. He doesn't promise comfort, success, or ease. He says, "If you love anyone more than Me, you're not worthy of Me." That's radical. He's not saying don't love your family—He's saying He must be first. Above parents. Above children. Above everyone.

Then He says, "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." In Jesus' day, when you saw someone carrying a cross, you knew where they were going—to their execution. Taking up your cross means dying to yourself. It means surrendering your rights, your plans, your agenda. It means saying, "Not my will, but Yours."

And then the paradox: "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." If you try to save your life—protect it, control it, build it your way—you'll lose it. But if you lose your life for Jesus—surrender it, give it away, let Him lead—you'll find real life.

This is the upside-down Kingdom. You gain by losing. You live by dying. You find yourself by losing yourself in Jesus. It's not easy. It's not comfortable. But it's the only way to truly live.

Day 32 (March 28): "Come to Me

We're tired. Exhausted. Burned out. We're carrying burdens we were never meant to carry—expectations, responsibilities, guilt, shame, fear. We're weary from trying to be good enough, do enough, achieve enough. And then Jesus shows up with the most beautiful invitation: "Come to Me... and I will give you rest."

Read: Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden." Not just some of you. Not just the ones who have it together. All of you. Everyone who's tired, burdened, weary, exhausted. Jesus sees you. He knows you're carrying more than you can handle. And He's inviting you to come.

"I will give you rest." Not "I'll give you more to do." Not "I'll add to your burden." I will give you rest. Real rest. Soul rest. The kind of rest that comes from knowing you're loved, accepted, and enough in Jesus.

But then He says something that sounds contradictory: "Take My yoke upon you." Wait, I thought we were getting rest? A yoke is for work—it's what you put on oxen to plow a field. But Jesus says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." How can a yoke be easy?

Because when you're yoked to Jesus, He carries the weight. You're not working alone. You're not carrying the burden by yourself. You're partnered with Him, and He's doing the heavy lifting. His yoke is easy because He's gentle. His burden is light because He's strong.

The rest Jesus offers isn't the absence of work—it's the presence of Jesus in the work. It's working from rest, not for rest. It's knowing you're loved before you accomplish anything.

Day 33 (March 29): "Who Do You Say I Am?"

It's the most important question Jesus ever asked. Not "What do people say about Me?" but "Who do you say I am?" Because what you believe about Jesus determines everything—your identity, your purpose, your eternity. Peter got it right. And Jesus said, "On this rock I will build My church."

Read: Matthew 16:13-18

Jesus asks what people are saying about Him. The disciples report the rumors: some think He's John the Baptist back from the dead, others think He's Elijah or one of the prophets. People have opinions. But Jesus doesn't care about public opinion. He cares about personal conviction.

"But who do you say that I am?" Not what does the crowd say. Not what do the religious leaders say. Who do you say I am? Peter answers: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Not a prophet. Not a good teacher. The Messiah. The Son of God.

Jesus says this revelation didn't come from human wisdom—it came from the Father. And on this confession—that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God—Jesus will build His church. Not on Peter the man, but on the truth Peter confessed. And nothing—not even the gates of hell—can stop it.

This is the foundation of everything: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Not a good man. Not a moral teacher. God in flesh. Savior. Lord. Everything depends on getting this right.

Day 34 (March 30): "Transfiguration"

Sometimes God pulls back the curtain and lets us see a glimpse of glory. Not because we deserve it, but because we need it. Peter, James, and John got that glimpse on a mountain when Jesus was transfigured before them—His face shining like the sun, His clothes white as light. And for a moment, they saw who Jesus really is.

Read: Matthew 17:1-8

Jesus takes His inner circle—Peter, James, and John—up a mountain. And there, He's transfigured. The Greek word means "metamorphosis"—a complete transformation. His face shines like the sun. His clothes become brilliant white. For a moment, the glory He'd veiled in flesh breaks through.

Moses and Elijah appear, representing the Law and the Prophets. They're talking with Jesus about His coming death in Jerusalem. Peter, not knowing what to say, suggests building three shelters—one for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. He's trying to preserve the moment, to stay on the mountain.

But then the Father speaks: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" The same words from Jesus' baptism, but with an addition: "Hear Him." Not Moses. Not Elijah. Jesus. He's the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Listen to Him.

The disciples fall on their faces, terrified. But Jesus touches them and says, "Arise, and do not be afraid." And when they look up, Moses and Elijah are gone. It's just Jesus. Because Jesus is enough.

Day 35 (March 31): "Forgive Seventy Times Seven"

Peter thought he was being generous. The rabbis taught you should forgive someone three times. Peter doubled it and added one for good measure: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" He expected Jesus to commend his generosity. Instead, Jesus said, "Try seventy times seven."

Read: Matthew 18:21-22

Seventy times seven is 490. But Jesus isn't giving us a new quota to track. He's saying, "Stop counting. Forgive without limits." Why? Because that's how God forgives you. You don't get three strikes with God. You don't get seven. You get unlimited forgiveness through Jesus.

Then Jesus tells a parable about a servant who owed the king an impossible debt—millions of dollars in today's money. The king forgave it all. But then that same servant found someone who owed him a few dollars and had him thrown in prison. When the king heard about it, he was furious and reinstated the original debt.

The point? You've been forgiven an unpayable debt. How can you refuse to forgive someone else's small offense against you? When you withhold forgiveness, you're saying, "My sin against God isn't that bad, but their sin against me is unforgivable." That's backwards.

Unlimited forgiveness doesn't mean you're a doormat. It doesn't mean you trust people who've proven untrustworthy. It means you release the debt, let go of bitterness, and entrust justice to God. You forgive because you've been forgiven.

WEEK 6: THE FINAL WEEK

Day 36 (April 1): "Triumphal Entry"

The crowd is going wild. Palm branches waving, cloaks spread on the road, people shouting "Hosanna!" It's a parade, a celebration, a coronation. Jesus is riding into Jerusalem like a king. But He's not on a warhorse—He's on a donkey. And the kingdom He's bringing isn't what anyone expects.

Read: Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus orchestrates this moment carefully. He sends disciples to get a donkey—fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy about the coming king riding on a donkey. Kings rode horses into battle, but they rode donkeys in times of peace. Jesus is announcing His kingship, but it's a kingdom of peace, not military conquest.

The crowd gets it—sort of. They shout "Hosanna," which means "Save us now!" They call Him "Son of David," recognizing His messianic claim. They spread their cloaks and palm branches, treating Him like royalty. But they're expecting a political messiah who will overthrow Rome. They want a king who will restore Israel's glory. They're celebrating the wrong kingdom.

Within a week, many of these same voices will shout "Crucify Him!" Because Jesus didn't meet their expectations. He came to save them from sin, not from Rome. He came to establish a spiritual kingdom, not a political one. He came to die, not to conquer.

Here's the question: What kind of king are you looking for? Are you celebrating Jesus for who He is, or for what you want Him to do for you? Are you ready to follow a king on a donkey, or are you waiting for a king on a warhorse?

Day 37 (April 2): "The Last Supper"

It's a normal Passover meal—until it isn't. Jesus and His disciples are reclining at the table, celebrating the feast that commemorates Israel's deliverance from Egypt. But Jesus is about to transform this ancient ritual into something new. He's about to give them—and us—a way to remember His sacrifice until He returns.

Read: Matthew 26:26-30

Jesus takes bread—the unleavened bread of Passover—and says, "This is My body." He's about to be broken like that bread. His body will be beaten, pierced, crucified. And just as they're eating this bread together, His body will be given for them.

Then He takes the cup—the cup of redemption in the Passover meal—and says, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The old covenant was sealed with the blood of animals. The new covenant will be sealed with His blood. His blood will accomplish what animal sacrifices never could: the complete forgiveness of sins.

This isn't just a memorial meal. It's a proclamation. Every time we take communion, we're announcing that Jesus' death paid for our sins. We're remembering His sacrifice. We're anticipating His return. "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine... until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

The disciples didn't fully understand what was happening. They were confused, troubled, uncertain. But Jesus was giving them something to hold onto when everything fell apart. When He was arrested, tried, and crucified, they would remember this meal. They would remember His words. And eventually, they would understand.

Day 38 (April 3): "The Cross"

This is the moment everything has been leading to. From the first promise in Genesis to the prophecies in Isaiah, from Jesus' birth to His ministry, everything points to this: the cross. It's the darkest day in history and the brightest hope for humanity. It's where justice and mercy meet, where love conquers death, where God does the unthinkable to save the undeserving.

Read: Matthew 27:45-54

For three hours, darkness covers the land. It's as if creation itself is mourning. And then Jesus cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This isn't just physical suffering—it's spiritual agony. Jesus is experiencing separation from the Father for the first time in eternity. He's bearing the weight of humanity's sin. He's becoming sin for us so we can become the righteousness of God in Him.

Then Jesus yields up His spirit. He doesn't die as a victim; He dies as a victor. He lays down His life willingly. And immediately, the veil in the temple—the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple—tears from top to bottom. God tears it. The barrier between God and humanity is removed. Access to God is now open to everyone through Jesus' sacrifice.

The earth quakes. Rocks split. Graves open. Even the Roman centurion—a hardened soldier who's seen countless crucifixions—recognizes something different about this death: "Truly this was the Son of God!"

This is what love looks like. Not sentimental feelings or warm emotions, but sacrifice. Jesus didn't die because He had to; He died because He chose to. He could have called down legions of angels. He could have stepped off that cross. But He stayed. For you. For me. For the world.

Day 39 (April 4): "Gethsemane"

We like our heroes strong, confident, unshakable. We want leaders who never doubt, never fear, never struggle. But in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see Jesus at His most human—sweating drops of blood, begging the Father for another way, wrestling with the weight of what's coming. And it's in this moment of weakness that we see His greatest strength.

Read: Matthew 26:36-46

Jesus didn't want to go to the cross. He asked the Father if there was another way. "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." The cup represented God's wrath against sin—the full weight of humanity's rebellion poured out on Jesus. He dreaded it. He asked for an alternative. But there wasn't one.

So He prayed, "Not as I will, but as You will." This is the prayer that saved us. Not Jesus' miracles. Not His teachings. This prayer—the surrender of His will to the Father's will. He chose obedience over comfort. He chose our salvation over His own relief.

Meanwhile, the disciples slept. Jesus asked them to watch and pray for one hour, and they couldn't do it. In His moment of greatest need, they failed Him. But Jesus didn't condemn them. He understood: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

This is the Christian life: willing spirits in weak flesh. We want to obey, but we struggle. We want to be faithful, but we fail. And Jesus understands. He's been there. He knows what it's like to wrestle with God's will. But He also shows us the way through: surrender. "Not my will, but Yours be done."

Day 40 (April 5 - Easter): "Go and Tell"

It's Easter morning. The tomb is empty. Death is defeated. Jesus is alive. And the first thing He does? He gives His followers a mission. Not "Celebrate and go home." Not "Build a monument and remember this moment." He says, "Go and tell. Make disciples. I'm with you. Let's change the world."

Read: Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20

The women came to the tomb expecting to anoint a dead body. Instead, they found an empty tomb and an angel with the greatest announcement in history: "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said." Jesus didn't stay dead. Death couldn't hold Him. The grave couldn't contain Him. He conquered sin, defeated death, and rose victorious.

And immediately, the angel gives them a mission: "Go quickly and tell." Don't keep this to yourself. Don't process it privately. Go. Tell. Share the news. Jesus is alive, and everyone needs to know.

Then Jesus appears to them and says it again: "Go and tell My brethren." The resurrection isn't just something to celebrate; it's something to proclaim. It's not just good news for you; it's good news for the world.

Later, on a mountain in Galilee, Jesus gives the Great Commission: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." Because Jesus has all authority, we can go with confidence. Because He conquered death, we have a message worth sharing. Because He's alive, we have hope to offer a dying world.

"Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." This is the mission: go, make disciples, baptize, teach. Not just converts, but disciples—people who follow Jesus, obey His commands, and make more disciples.

And here's the promise that changes everything: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." You're not going alone. Jesus is with you. Every step. Every conversation. Every challenge. Every victory. He's with you always.

This is where your 40-day journey leads: to a mission. You've walked with Jesus from His baptism to His resurrection. You've seen His power, heard His teaching, witnessed His death, and celebrated His victory. Now He's sending you. Go and tell. Make disciples. Change the world. And remember: He's with you always.

The tomb is empty. Jesus is alive. And He's calling you to join Him in the greatest mission in history. Will you go?