

# Stay on Mission

**Not even death could alter the mission of the life of Christ.**



7 -Day Guide  
to Jesus' Final Days



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# WELCOME



If you knew you only had one week to live what would you be doing? Who would you be with? Where would you go? What words would you speak? Whatever those answers, it would say a lot about your life, your love and your priorities.

We can see these same answers in the last week of the life of Jesus. A careful look at the people he was with and places he spent time will put his heart and mission on display. This guide will go through his final week, pausing each day to briefly reflect on what was most

important to Jesus as he turned his focus to the cross. His priorities and mission were surprisingly unchanged even in the face of death itself. And those priorities are unchanged even today. He still cares about the same kind of people and the same mission he walked out in his final days on earth.

Let's head to the cross together and find out what those were.

*Alli*

# The Last Week

*What Jesus cared about on his way to the cross*

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### Living on Mission

*At Gates of Hell Jesus reminded his disciples of the mission and invited them to take part.*

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*Jesus faced the unthinkable by staying close to his Father in his worst and final hours.*

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*Jesus cared about finishing what he was sent to do, no matter the suffering or the cost.*

# The Gates of Hell

Cave of Pan

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18

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Jesus offered

# ...invitation to his mission

on his way to the cross.

Before Jesus faced his final week in Jerusalem which would lead to the cross, he took his disciples on one last retreat together up north to an area called Caesarea Philippi. They were in the center of the area where the pagan god of Pan was worshipped. Ancient Greeks believed that Pan lived in caves, connecting with the underworld. The cave of Pan is pictured here from a trip I took to Israel. It was thought to be the entrance - the literal "gates of hell."

This may have been a surprising place for a retreat, but Jesus wanted to communicate some specific things with his disciples before going on to the cross. He brought them here to affirm their *identity* and their *mission*. Jesus began by asking them about the rumors of his own identity. Then he asked them who THEY said he was, and Peter answered boldly:

***"the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*** Matthew 16:16

Peter saw who Jesus really was. Jesus affirmed Peter in this revelation and said it was only his Father who reveals his Messiah to anyone. That's when Peter got a new identity: Jesus called him "Rock;" part of the identity of God Himself like Psalm 18 affirms: *"The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge..."*

When YOU see Jesus as the Messiah and receive the Holy Spirit, that's the moment you begin to share in the identity of God because you share in his life. You become part of his Body.

And you're invited to go into the earth on the same mission to which Jesus called Peter that same day:

*..."on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..."* Matthew 16:18-19

Standing right there in front of what was thought to be the gate to hell - the stronghold of evil - Jesus called Peter to go **towards** hell and tear down the barriers that were holding people there. He gave Peter the authority of heaven to overcome darkness and said he'd build a whole group to help - the Church.

You are called to be part of that people today. You are part of expression and glory and strength of God, the Rock, here on earth through his Body, the Church. You are invited into the mission that Jesus affirmed again post-resurrection. We call it the Great Commission:

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

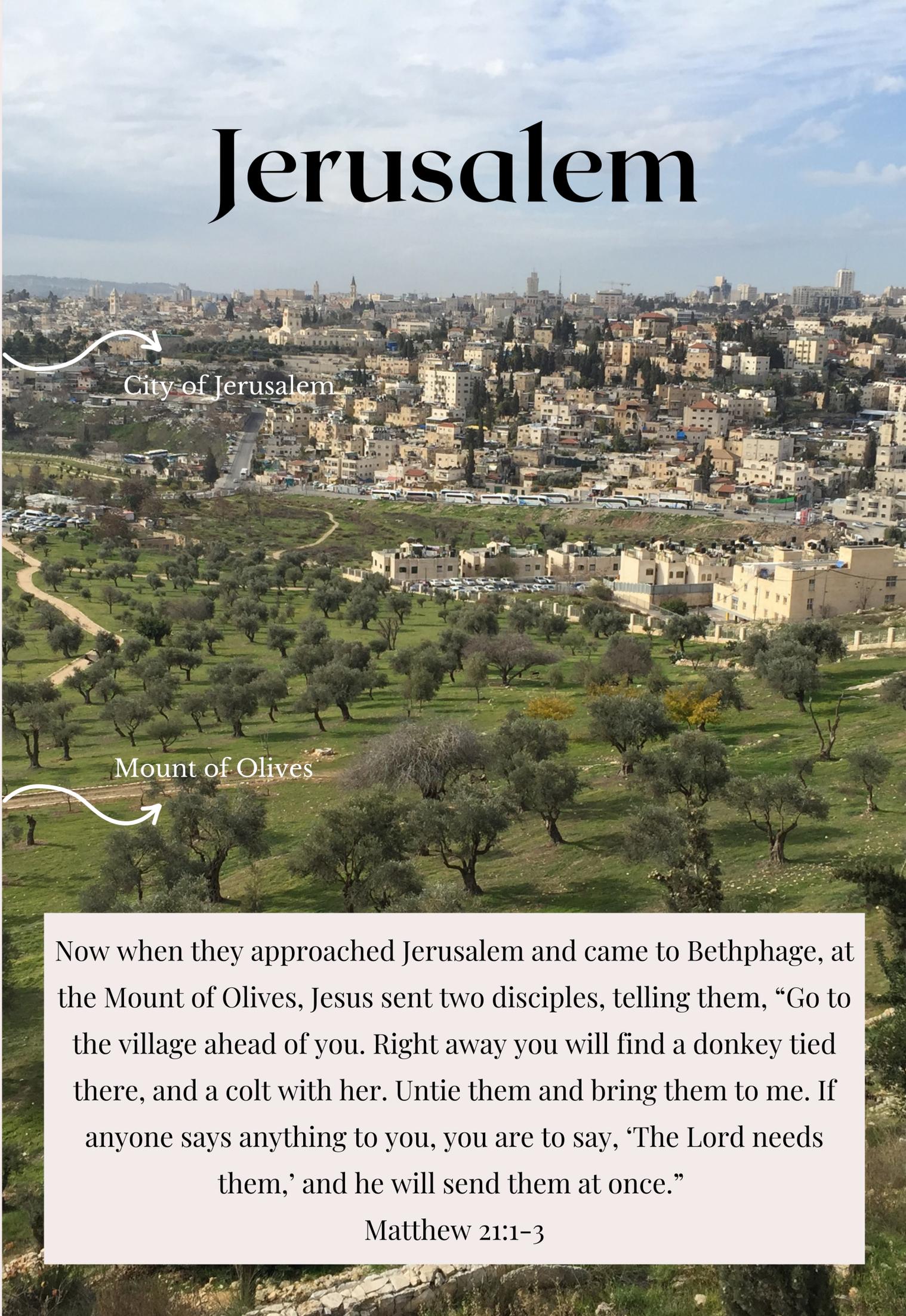
Before Jesus went to the cross he offered his disciples an invitation to a life of mission. You have that offer today. Just like Peter, you can receive the identity of Christ and use his authority to fight against all the powers of evil and darkness in our world today - in all its forms. Jesus has people in every corner of the globe still to be welcomed into the Kingdom of God, so there's more than enough mission and adventure to go around!

**TODAY:** Receive his invitation to your identity in Christ! Tell Jesus you want to be part of his mission!

**Answer this:** How are you equipped to go get people out of the darkness?

He is with you. Even the power of hell can't stop you.

# Jerusalem



City of Jerusalem

Mount of Olives

Now when they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, telling them, “Go to the village ahead of you. Right away you will find a donkey tied there, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you are to say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.”

Matthew 21:1-3

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Jesus stayed focused on

# ...his Father's purpose

on his way to the cross.

*"Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" - Matthew 20:18-19*

Jesus predicted his own death three times before he arrived in Jerusalem. He knew the purposes of his Father and was determined to follow them through. He knew the cross was waiting for him. And he came anyway.

Jesus' 'triumphal entry' into Jerusalem is celebrated the week before Easter with many calling this day "Palm Sunday" because *"A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" - Matthew 21:8-9*

The palm branch is a symbol of victory, triumph, peace and eternal life and "Hosanna" a plea for God's salvation. All the gestures and words indicated that the crowd was welcoming Jesus as the Messiah. As he entered on a donkey to these cries, he fulfilled an ancient prophecy on the coming of the Messiah;

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. - Zechariah 9:9*

Not everyone rejoiced at his coming into the city that day. The Jewish leadership saw Jesus as a serious problem to be handled. He was rejected by the leaders of his people. Together with Rome they made sure Jesus was convicted and condemned to death on the cross.

What the crowd didn't fully understand that day was that Jesus wasn't coming in to Jerusalem as a warrior to defeat Rome and liberate the Jewish people nationally and politically. He came to defeat a much greater enemy. Jesus' suffering on the cross was part of full and final defeat of God's enemy. His purpose in Jerusalem would have reverberations far beyond his own life. Jesus would end the reign of Satan, sin and death over the earth. It would usher in the reign of Grace over sin.

Jesus was fully committed to his Father's purpose, no matter the cost. He submitted willingly to it and came to Jerusalem to suffer and die because it would mean giving you the opportunity for life. Jesus' purpose was for you to have a way to enter His Kingdom. He believed the eternal life of God's people was worth whatever was waiting for him in Jerusalem.

#### **TODAY answer:**

- Is there a mission that you're all-in on?
- Are you living your life on purpose?
- Who are you blessing beyond yourself?

**Final encouragement:** Sometimes being on mission means loss...But in Christ death always gives way to life!

So:

*...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3*

# The Temple

A photograph of the Temple Wall in Jerusalem, showing a massive stone wall with people gathered at its base. The wall is constructed from large, rectangular stone blocks, some of which are weathered and discolored. The sky is a pale blue with light clouds. In the foreground, a group of people, including men, women, and children, are standing and looking at the wall. Some are wearing backpacks, suggesting they are tourists. The ground is paved with large, light-colored stone tiles.

"Then Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all those who were selling and buying in the temple courts, and turned over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. And he said to them, "It is written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are turning it into a den of robbers!"

Matthew 21:12-13

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Jesus loved

...the lowly & humble

on his way to the cross.

The Western Wall, as its known today, is the only remaining piece of the temple structure that was there at the time of Jesus. This is a picture I took in Jerusalem. The wall is 24 courses of stacked limestone. It was part of a retaining wall below the mount of second temple and was constructed in Herod's renovations. In Jesus' day the temple was entirely about the presence of God dwelling with his people. This wall was thought to be as close as possible to the Holy of Holies - the inner chamber of the temple that housed the very presence of God Himself.

When Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, he always spent time at the temple courts among the people, often speaking and teaching there. When he arrived into the city for his final Passover he went there as usual. This time he threw people out, angry at the callous way some were trying to profit from others' worship of his Father.

Jesus also welcomed into the temple some unexpected people, challenging the Pharisees who laid claim to it's holiness because of their superiority and righteousness. In a shocking exchange Jesus insinuated that the blind, the lame and even children were much more welcome and at home in the temple for true worship than the Pharisees: *"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they (Pharisees) asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?" - Matthew 21*

Jesus repeatedly affirmed during his last week and his entire ministry that God looked fondly on the humble, the lowly, the repentant and the sinner. Right up until the end of his life Jesus railed against the brand of religious righteousness accomplished by the Pharisees.

Stuffed in the cracks of the Western Wall are tiny papers containing prayers. The tradition of leaving prayers in the cracks was started by Jews who brought the prayers of those who couldn't be physically present and left them there to be heard and answered by God. People who journey to Jerusalem today come to the wall believing there is still a special presence of God there. Many of these prayers, no doubt, request God's forgiveness for sin. This is exactly the posture Jesus loved: humility before the throne. Jesus affirmed over and over that those who knew they needed forgiveness would find grace in the presence of God every single time.

Jesus spent time with these types until the end - the children, social outcasts, sinners... in other words: you're perfect for him. He was compelled towards people exactly like you and me. He doesn't just tolerate us, he is compelled towards those in need of what he has to offer.

If you want to welcome Jesus into your life you do not have to go to the temple wall, but you do have to come to Him as a sinner in need of forgiveness. Being lowly and in-need is the one requirement to enter his Kingdom. When you seek Him with your whole heart, you find forgiveness, grace and life at the throne every time.

*"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." Luke 11:9-10*

**Today: go to Jesus in need of what only he can give.**

Ask for more of Him.

Ask for a something specific you can't get on your own.

Ask for his forgiveness and grace.

Ask for his presence. Ask for his life. You will find it.

# Anointed



While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. Matthew 26:6-10

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Jesus saw

# ...the unseen & rejected

on his way to the cross.

A few days before the cross an unnamed woman showed up and poured expensive perfume over Jesus' head at a dinner party. This was a wildly extravagant act of worship: the nard was worth a year's wages. This act was her recognition of Jesus' value. It was her way of responding to who he was and his presence in her life. It was true worship. We always want to respond with gratitude when someone sees, values and receives us. That's what she was doing.

But it was also completely inappropriate in this cultural setting. Those around Jesus at the table objected. They said it was about the wasted money and some fake concern for the poor. Their real concerns were getting hold of the money for themselves. I can only imagine the thoughts running through their minds:

*A woman! Touching a Jewish man! A rabbi no less! In this intimate setting! And all that money! Unbelievable!*

But Jesus welcomed her presence. He received and valued her worship. He didn't seem to mind her disruption and embarrassing behavior. Instead he allowed her to respond to who He was...to pour out her heart as she poured out the perfume.

Women often recognized Jesus and followed Him because of the focus, love and value he showed them. Jesus SAW them in ways that culture didn't. He was willing to break social conventions of male/female relationship in Jewish culture to connect.

Many of these women go unnamed in scripture, but Jesus never treated women as less-than. He didn't overlook them the way other men did in a religious setting. He received their presence in shocking situations like the one in the picture on the previous page. That photo is from the wall of a chapel in the town of Magdala in Israel.

The woman reaching out to touch Jesus is commonly known as "the woman with the issue of blood." She was trying to keep her distance to respect the culture, but she desperately needed healing. Jesus received her unclean touch and healed her. We may not know her name but I guarantee He did. Jesus received people that had been repeatedly rejected.

Listen to how Jesus once reiterated the words of Isaiah to describe what his mission on earth really was:

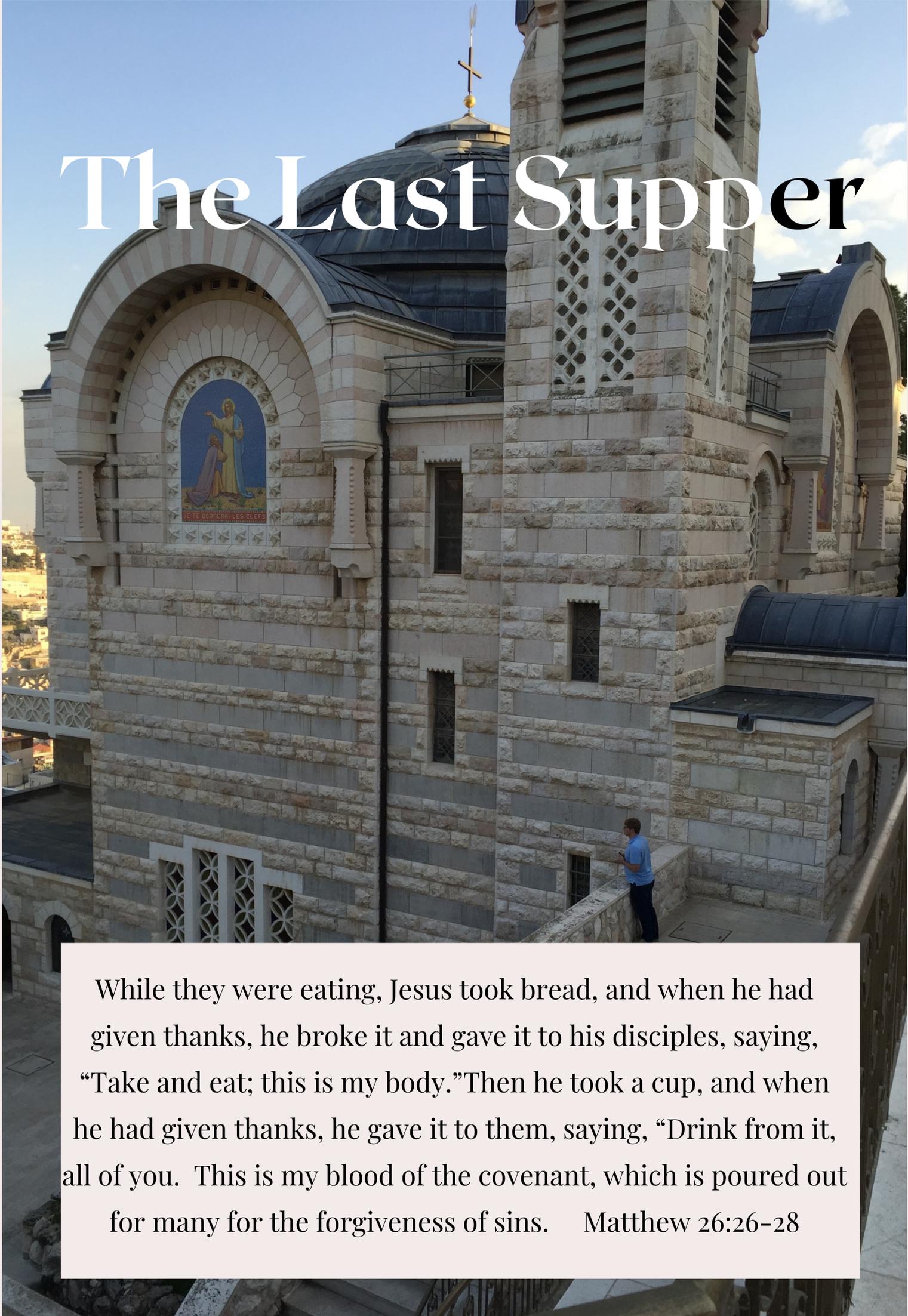
*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,"*

Jesus was good news for the unseen and rejected: the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed. He was still welcoming people during the last days of his life that shocked the culture he was in. Jesus was anointed spiritually, by his Father's authority, to heal and free them. The woman who showed up with a year's salary and dumped it in perfume on his head was actually anointing him physically to complete the fullness of that mission.

When Jesus was on the cross just a couple short days later you can be sure he caught a whiff of his perfumed hair, remembering that this death was part of what he was anointed to do. This cross was good news for every one of us who has ever felt overlooked, unseen or rejected. Jesus stayed true to his mission until his dying breath on the cross.

**Today:** Tell Jesus the place you feel unseen right now. Ask him to show you that he knows you intimately.

The cross means you are known and highly valued.



# The Last Supper

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 26:26-28

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Jesus cared about

## ...connection to his friends

on his way to the cross.

The picture on the previous page is a church built over top of the place where archaeologists and religious tradition says the Last Supper took place. This was the meal that Jesus had with his friends the night he got arrested. His last evening was spent *having dinner with his friends*. Jesus cared deeply for this connection, and it was a big priority his final week. That night he told them it was possible to stay connected even after his death! He explained it over dinner... the answer? The Holy Spirit. That night He tried to explain the Holy Spirit different ways...

- their Advocate
- the Spirit of truth
- the voice of conviction & judgment
- their guide to what's coming
- the way to hear the words of the Father
- the connection between a vine & its branches.

John 15 records the words he used to describe the branches & vine connection: He was the vine who would deliver life, stability, nutrients and growth. Any good "fruit" in his friends' lives would be a result of this connection:

*Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.* John 15:4

Jesus wanted to stay connected with his friends. He wanted a thriving life for them, and it could only happen through His Spirit. At the end of the meal, Jesus assured them he would send them the Spirit to them. I doubt they understood much of this at all. I think Jesus just wanted them to recognize the Spirit when He arrived at a later point in time.

Jesus also sends the Holy Spirit to you when you receive him in faith. The Spirit keeps you in a privileged connection of friendship to Jesus.

Anything Godly that happens in your heart, character and life is a result of the connection and work of the Spirit. He is the promise you have that one day your life will be fully realized in Christ. He is the seal on you that the promise is good for eternity. He is your guarantee that when you die or Jesus returns you'll be counted among his people...because you are literally part of Him, being sustained by his life; just as a branch connects to a vine; just as a pinky finger is part of a body.

Before dinner was over Jesus told them to do something regularly so they'd remember this connection to his life. Jesus gave them the worship of "communion" or "the Lord's Supper." His Body - symbolized by bread - was about to be broken so their connection never would be. His blood - symbolized by the wine - guaranteed the forgiveness and righteousness before the Father that makes that connection possible for all eternity. His body and blood was about to be used on their behalf - to pay for the sin that made them enemies of God and to purchase them back for eternal friendship.

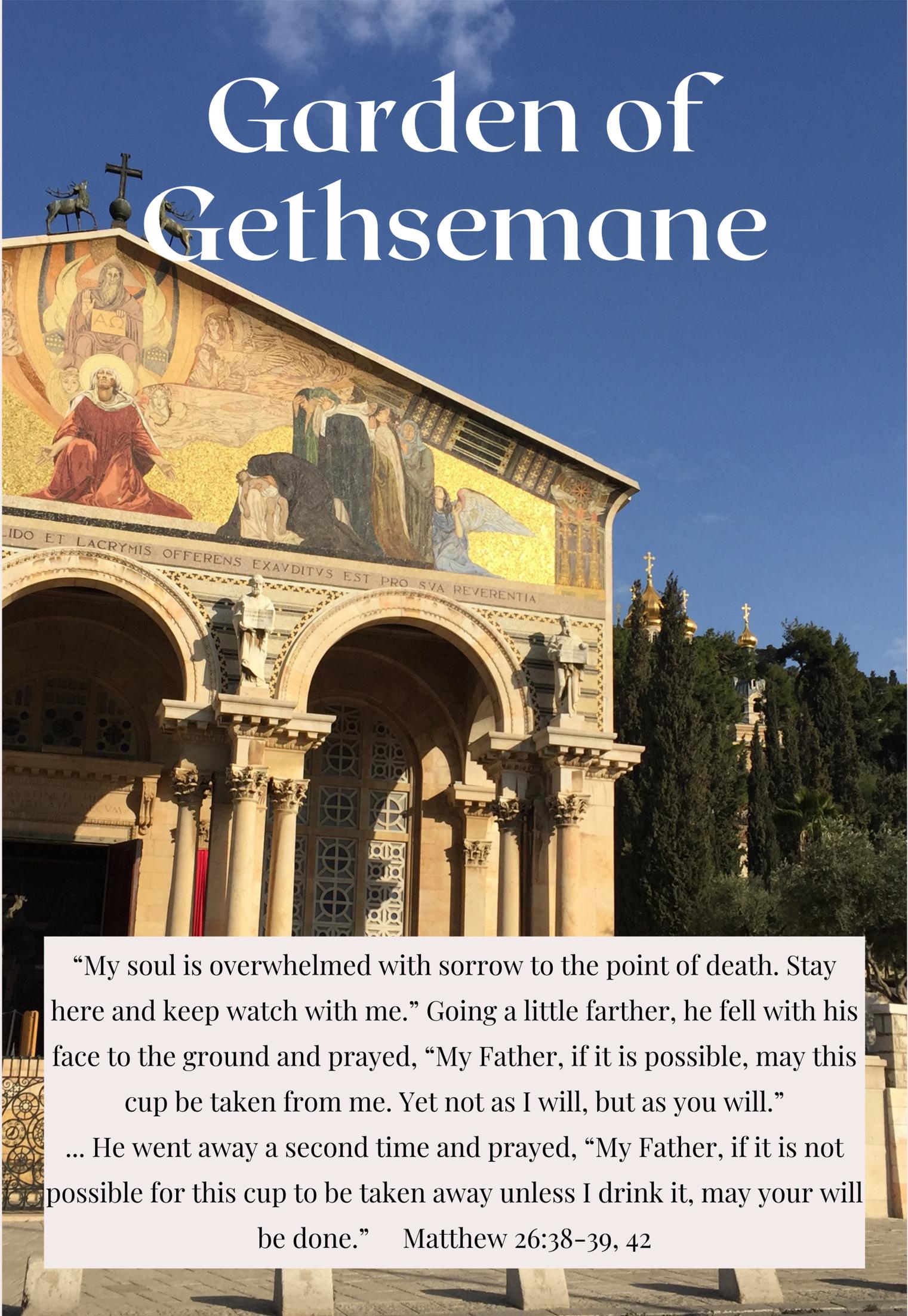
His friends were worth it all. And you can be one of them. John 15 describes life in friendship with Christ today, through the presence of the Spirit in you:

*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.*

### **Today:**

Take a few minutes to think about how you enjoy connecting with your closest friends. Tell Jesus which of those ways you'd like to be able to connect with Him.

# Garden of Gethsemane



“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

... He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” Matthew 26:38-39, 42

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Jesus endured suffering through...

## ...connection to his Father

on his way to the cross.

After his last meal with his friends Jesus took Peter, James and John into the nearby Garden of Gethsemane to pray. He was deep in sorrow as he began to face the pain and darkness that was coming for him right that very moment. Judas left dinner and had betrayed him to the Jewish leaders who were on their way to arrest Jesus right then. He knew what was coming, and this hour in the Garden was the lowest moment in the life of Jesus.

*...he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."* Matthew 26:37-38

Jesus knew he could only endure the suffering of the trial and the crucifixion with his Father's help. The last thing he did before his arrest was connect to his Father in prayer. He was honest with him, asking him to do this all another way if he could. He was also submitted to his will and determined not to break their connection. Jesus ran to his Father in prayer when pain, heartbreak, trauma and ruin was on the horizon.

And you can live the same way. You have a Father available to you any time. He is there, ready and willing to listen and act on your behalf. Prayer is how you live out your belief that you are, in fact, a child of God. Only kids approach their Father asking for comfort, help, intervention and strength to face their life. That's what Jesus did that night in the Garden and it's the only way he could face the suffering coming for Him.

*"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."* These were the words of Jesus that night to his friends who were having trouble staying focused on prayer and connection to the Father. Do you ever feel that way, too? You want to connect to God, but it's hard to stay focused? You believe he could help - in theory - but you just never remember to come and ask? That it's just hard to believe he cares when you're in such a terrible place and facing so much pain?

Jesus felt the same way. He ran to His Father with all the same things and the despair and dread he was feeling. He asked him to intervene some other way.

And then he bowed to his will in ultimate trust for His Father. Jesus knew whatever His Father had determined would ultimately end up in good, in love, in light and life. He was so certain of who his Father was that he could both cry out in *pain* and cry out in *trust* all at once.

### **Today:**

- Where are you in pain that you need to tell him about?
- What would you say to God if you knew He wouldn't be mad or disappointed in you?
- Where has pain hardened into resentment of God?
- Where have you just lost trust in Him?

Choose one of these verses from Jesus' interaction in the Garden to start an honest conversation with your Father. It's the only way to face whatever is coming.

- *"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*
- *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.*
- *Yet not as I will, but as you will."*
- *"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."*

# Caiaphas' House

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled...The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Matthew 26:57-63



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Jesus was determined to...

# finish well

on his way to the cross.

Jesus was going to finish well. He faced the end of his life, and it was his top priority to finish strong. What would it look like for you to finish strong right now? Whether that's the end of your literal physical life or something else, we all face endings. What are you finishing? Learn from Jesus how to finish well.

**Jesus didn't waste time defending himself to people who weren't going to listen.** He was silent many times through this sham of a trial he faced because he knew the end was coming. He wasn't going to protest and defend and yell and scream. He stayed silent in the face of ridiculous accusation. His confidence was in His Father's will and defense...not his ability to defend himself.

**Jesus stayed calm and respectful in terrible treatment.** Even in the face of leaders who hated him...even in the face of lies...even in the face of beatings and blood and injury...even in the face of being publicly stripped and mocked...Jesus never indulged any sense of indignance, pride or anger.

**Jesus cared for 'his people' to the end.** Up on the cross he connected his friend, John, and his mother. Knowing they'd both be in pain; knowing they both would need family; knowing them both so well Jesus gave them to one another to love and care for as he had each of them: *When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.* John 19:26-27

**Jesus forgave until the end.** Even as the soldiers beat him, gambled for his clothes and nailed them to the cross, Jesus interceded for them with the words; *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* Luke 23:34

**Jesus saved sinners right up until the end.** Even when he was nailed to the cross in unthinkable pain, Jesus had his eyes on others and on their salvation. One criminal who saw Jesus as Savior and humbled himself up on the cross next to Him was saved even when he was already convicted for his sin. He asked Jesus to remember him, and *Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."* Luke 23:43

**Jesus fulfilled his part in the story of God.**

Jesus knew the scriptures were being fulfilled in his life and in his death. He wanted to fulfill exactly the role he'd been given at the very foundations of the world in the story of God. He came willingly to give himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the world and to save all those who would come to Him. He kept his eyes on that story until his last breath. *Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.* Luke 23:46

Jesus was a man of mission, integrity, character and love right up until the end. He never let lies make him a liar. He never let his own pain make him inflict pain on others. He never let his mouth overflow hatred for the very people killing him because he had no hatred in his heart! He loved because he knew this very act of injustice that would allow Him to be the final, merciful judge over all of them.

His verdict is in. You are forgiven. Anytime you're the hard-hearted accuser, the disrespectful or angry crowd, the thoughtless soldier or the one caught in betrayal... Jesus is faithful to you. He is free to forgive you and happy to do it!

**Today, accept it. believe it. receive it.**

**Name one way you want to finish your life like Jesus finished his.**

# The Cross

can change the way you live.

The cross is an invitation to the humble, lowly, unseen, and rejected to step into a life of connection and friendship with the Father through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as your living Lord & Savior.

The Holy Spirit was left for you come fully alive, empowered for eternal purpose and invited into his mission of love.

Jesus lived his last week with one goal:  
to bring you back from the dead with Him.





*It's been an honor to walk through this week with you.*

*You are invited into a life with purpose and power.*

*You are invited into life in connection with a loving Father.*

*In Christ, you are forgiven, covered in grace and equipped for  
an eternal life in His Kingdom that starts now.*

*Say yes to a life of greater mission,*

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“Jesus said to her, “I am  
the resurrection and the  
life. The one who  
believes in me will live,  
even though they die;”

- John 11:25