OCHORUS ORIGINALS

2

Rooted

Following Jesus: walking with Jesus from the manger to the empty tomb



Ochorus

Rooted – 30 Days with God for Youth – Book 2

Following Jesus: walking with Jesus from the manger to the empty tomb

Ochorus Originals

First published 2026.

OCHORUS

About Ochorus

"To make the epic classics of the Christian faith free to the Church around the world — in their own language, to the glory of God."

Ochorus is a Christian ministry based in Victoria, Canada, and Kampala, Uganda. Since 2021 we have been finding the great Christian books of the past, editing them carefully for today's readers, and giving them away — free to read and free to keep.

We are not only a website. Books printed in Uganda are placed directly into people's hands across East Africa — at pastors' conferences, and in the churches, schools and prisons we are invited to serve.

Keep reading at ochorus.com

- Hundreds of classics, sermons and biographies — free, with no ads and no account needed.
- Books in many languages, from English and Swahili to Arabic and Hindi.
- Reading plans, highlights and notes that follow you from device to device.
- Listen aloud, or save a book to read offline.
- Free downloads like this one. Share them freely.

"Freely ye have received, freely give."

Matthew 10:8

Table of Contents

About this work 6

Introduction: Come and Meet Jesus 7

Day 1 — The Word Became Flesh 10

Day 2 — No Room 12

Day 3 — Good News for Shepherds 14

Day 4 — Wise Men Worship 16

Day 5 — Jesus at Twelve 18

Day 6 — Growing Like Jesus 20

Day 7 — "This Is My Beloved Son" 22

Day 8 — Tempted but Never Sinned 24

Day 9 — Follow Me 26

Day 10 — Water into Wine 28

Day 11 — Nicodemus at Night 30

Day 12 — Living Water 32

Day 13 — Even the Wind Obeys 34

Day 14 — A Boy's Lunch 36

Day 15 — Walking on Water 38
Day 16 — "What Do You Want Me to Do?" 40
Day 17 — Let the Children Come 42
Day 18 — Lazarus, Come Out! 44
Day 19 — Upside-Down Happiness 46
Day 20 — Salt and Light 48
Day 21 — Look at the Birds 50
Day 22 — The Lost Sheep 52
Day 23 — The Runaway Son 54
Day 24 — The Good Samaritan 56
Day 25 — Zacchaeus Climbs a Tree 58
Day 26 — Hosanna! 60
Day 27 — Washing Feet 62
Day 28 — "It Is Finished" 64
Day 29 — He Is Risen! 66
Day 30 — Go and Tell 68
Conclusion: Keep Following 70

About this work

Rooted is an original Ochorus devotional series for readers aged 9 to 12, and this is its second book. Book 1 planted the roots: who God is, the good news, and how to pray and grow. Book 2 turns to the one those roots grow into, and spends thirty days walking beside Jesus through His life on earth, drawing on all four Gospels.

The five weeks follow His story in order. Jesus arrives: the manger, the shepherds, the wise men, and the twelve-year-old in His Father's house. Jesus begins: His baptism, His temptation in the wilderness, and the fishermen He called to follow Him. Jesus' power: a storm stilled, a boy's lunch that fed thousands, a blind beggar healed and Lazarus called out of the tomb. Jesus' teaching: the Beatitudes, salt and light, the lost sheep, the runaway son and the good Samaritan. And Jesus wins: Zacchaeus, the donkey and the palm branches, the towel and basin, the cross and the empty tomb, ending with the Great Commission.

Every day follows the same short pattern: a passage from the Berean Standard Bible, a teaching that tells the story and asks what it shows about Jesus, a question to think about, one thing to try that day, and a prayer. It can be read alone or aloud together, and it works whether or not a reader has started with Book 1.

Introduction: Come and Meet Jesus

Imagine you could spend a whole month walking beside the most important person who ever lived. You'd hear Him tell stories. You'd watch Him calm a storm with just a few words. You'd see Him welcome kids when grown-ups tried to shoo them away. You'd stand at the foot of His cross, and three days later you'd run to His empty tomb.

That's what this book is about. For the next 30 days, you're going to walk with **Jesus**.

Jesus is the center of everything in the Christian faith. He isn't just a good teacher or a hero from long ago. The Bible says He is God's own Son, who came to earth as a baby, lived a perfect life, died for our sins and rose again. He's alive today. And the best way to know Him is to look closely at His life, the way His first friends saw it.

John, one of those friends, wrote down why he wrote his book about Jesus:

> *"But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."*
> *— John 20:31 (BSB)*

That's our goal too. Not just to know *about* Jesus, but to know Him, trust Him and follow Him.

What's in this book

This is **Book 2** of Rooted. (If you haven't read Book 1, that's okay! You can start right here.) Over 30 days, you'll follow Jesus' whole life:

- **Week 1 — Jesus Arrives.** A manger, shepherds, wise men, and Jesus at twelve years old.
- **Week 2 — Jesus Begins.** His baptism, His temptation, and the first people He called to follow Him.
- **Week 3 — Jesus' Power.** Storms, a boy's lunch, a blind man and a dead man who walked out of his tomb.
- **Week 4 — Jesus' Teaching.** Some of the most famous words and stories ever told.
- **Week 5 — Jesus Wins.** The last week of His life, the cross and the empty tomb.

How each day works

Every day takes about five to ten minutes and has five parts:

1. **The verse.** A passage from one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Read it slowly.
2. **The teaching.** The story behind the verse, and what it shows you about Jesus.
3. **Think about it.** A question to help you think deeper, on your own or with someone else.
4. **Try this.** One small way to follow Jesus that day.
5. **The prayer.** A prayer to pray. Add your own words too!

Tips for the journey

- **Read the whole story.** Each day's verse comes from a bigger story. If you have time, look it up in your Bible and read the verses around it.
- **Picture it.** Try to imagine you're there. What do you see, hear and smell? How do the people feel?
- **Ask, "What is Jesus like?"** Every story shows you something about Him. Look for it.
- **Missed a day? Keep going.** Jesus isn't grading you. Just pick up where you left off.

The disciples didn't understand everything about Jesus right away. It took time walking with Him. The same is true for you. So come along. Let's go meet Jesus.

For parents, grandparents and leaders

Book 2 of *Rooted* walks readers aged 9 to 12 through the life of Christ in roughly chronological order, drawing from all four Gospels, with every Scripture quoted from the Berean Standard Bible. It works well read alone or aloud together. Encourage your reader to look up the surrounding passage in their own Bible. Many of these stories are best read in full. Week 5 covers the arrest, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in a way that is honest but suited to young readers.

Day 1 — The Word Became Flesh

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
— John 1:1 (BSB)
"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
— John 1:14 (BSB)

When does the story of Jesus begin? You might say, "In Bethlehem, when He was born." That's where Matthew and Luke begin their books. But John starts somewhere much earlier. He starts at the very beginning of everything.

"In the beginning was the Word." Do those first words sound familiar? They're the same words that open the whole Bible in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John is telling us that before the world was made, before the first star or the first ocean, **the Word** was already there.

Who is the Word? Keep reading and you'll find out: "The Word became flesh." The Word is Jesus.

Why call Him "the Word"? Think about what words do. When you want someone to know what you're thinking, you use words. Words show what's inside you. Jesus is God's Word, because He shows us exactly what God is like. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

John says three amazing things about the Word. He "was with God," so He has always been close to the Father. He "was God," so He isn't just a messenger or an angel. He is God Himself. And He "became flesh." The God who made everything became a real human being, with skin and bones, who got hungry and tired, who laughed and cried.

John says He "made His dwelling among us." The word John used means He pitched His tent with us. He moved into our neighborhood!

And John had seen it with his own eyes: "We have seen His glory." Jesus was "full of grace and truth." Grace means He was full of undeserved kindness. Truth means everything He said and did was real and right.

That's who we're going to follow this month. Not just a man from history, but God, who came close.

Think about it: Why is it so amazing that the God who made everything would become a human being?

Try this: Read John 1:1–14 in your Bible. Every time you see "the Word," say "Jesus" instead.

Dear Jesus, You were there in the beginning, and You are God. Thank You for becoming a human being and coming to live among us. Help me see what God is like by looking at You. Over these 30 days, help me know You better. In Your name, Amen.

Day 2 — No Room

"While they were there, the time came for her Child to be born. And she gave birth to her firstborn, a Son. She wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."
— Luke 2:6–7 (BSB)

If a king were going to be born today, where would it happen? Probably in the nicest hospital in the country, with doctors and nurses rushing around, reporters waiting outside and a golden crib ready at the palace.

But when the King of kings was born, it didn't happen that way at all.

Mary and Joseph lived in a town called Nazareth. But the Roman emperor ordered everyone to go to their family's hometown to be counted. Joseph's family came from Bethlehem, so they had to travel there, about 90 miles, mostly on foot, while Mary was about to have a baby.

When they arrived, the town was packed. Every place was full. "There was no room for them in the inn." So Jesus, the Son of God, was born in a place where animals were kept. Mary wrapped Him in strips of cloth and laid Him in a **manger**, which is a feeding box for animals.

Think about that. The one who made the stars slept in a feeding trough. The one who owns the whole world had no room of His own.

Why would God do it this way? Because Jesus didn't come to be served by important people in palaces. He came for everyone, including the poor,

the ordinary and the overlooked. From His very first night, Jesus showed that no one is too low for Him to reach.

It also shows us how humble Jesus is. The Bible says that though He was rich, He became poor for our sake (2 Corinthians 8:9). He gave up the glory of heaven to be born in a stable.

There's a question in this story for us too. In Bethlehem, there was no room for Jesus. Is there room for Him in your life? Sometimes our days get so packed with school, games, screens and activities that we squeeze Jesus out. But He's knocking, and He wants to come in.

Think about it: What might be crowding Jesus out of your life right now?

Try this: Make room for Jesus today. Choose one thing you'd usually spend time on, and spend that time talking with Him or reading about Him instead.

Dear Jesus, You are the King of everything, but You were laid in a manger where animals ate. Thank You for being so humble and for coming to ordinary people like me. Please help me make room for You in my life every day. In Your name, Amen.

Day 3 — Good News for Shepherds

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid! For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord!'"
— Luke 2:10–11 (BSB)

On the night Jesus was born, a group of shepherds was out in the fields near Bethlehem, watching their sheep. It was dark and quiet. Maybe they were telling stories around a fire, or trying to stay awake.

Suddenly an angel appeared, and the glory of the Lord shone all around them. The shepherds were terrified! But the angel said, "Do not be afraid! For behold, I bring you good news of great joy."

Then the sky filled up with a huge crowd of angels, praising God: "Glory to God in the highest!"

Here's something surprising. If you were God and you wanted to announce the birth of your Son, who would you tell first? Kings? Priests? Rich and famous people? God chose **shepherds**.

In those days, shepherds weren't important people. They were poor. They smelled like sheep. They lived outdoors and worked long, lonely nights. Some people looked down on them. But God sent His angels to them first.

That tells us something important: the good news about Jesus is "for all the people." Not just for the popular kids, the smart kids or the kids with the nicest clothes. For everyone.

Look at what the angel called Jesus:

- **A Savior.** Someone who rescues. Jesus came to save us from our sins.
- **Christ.** This means the Chosen One, the King God had promised for hundreds of years.
- **The Lord.** The one in charge of everything.

What did the shepherds do? They didn't just say, "Wow, cool," and go back to sleep. They hurried to Bethlehem and found the baby, just as the angel said. Then they told everyone what they had seen, and they went back to their fields praising God.

That's what happens when you meet Jesus. You can't keep it to yourself.

Think about it: Why do you think God announced Jesus' birth to shepherds first instead of to kings?

Try this: The shepherds told everyone about Jesus. Tell one person today something you love about Jesus.

Dear God, thank You for sending good news for all the people, including me. Thank You that Jesus is my Savior, the Christ and the Lord. Help me be like the shepherds, who hurried to find Jesus and then told everyone about Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 4 — Wise Men Worship

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with great delight. On coming to the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh."
— Matthew 2:10–11 (BSB)

Far away in the east, some very wise and learned men, called **Magi**, noticed a special star in the sky. They believed it meant a great King had been born. So they packed up and began a long journey, probably hundreds of miles, to find Him.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked, "Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." Wicked King Herod heard about it and got very worried. He didn't want anyone else to be king!

But the Magi kept searching. The star went ahead of them and stopped over the place where Jesus was. By now, Jesus was no longer a newborn in a manger. He was a young child living in a house with Mary and Joseph.

Look at how the wise men reacted: "They rejoiced with great delight." They had traveled so far, and at last they found Him! Then these important, educated men did something amazing. They "fell down and worshiped Him." They bowed low before a little child, because they knew He was the King.

Then they gave Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were expensive, precious gifts. Many Christians have seen special meaning in them. Gold is a gift for a king. Frankincense was burned in worship to God. Myrrh was used when someone died. Together, they point to who Jesus is: the King, God Himself, and the Savior who would die for us.

The wise men teach us three things about following Jesus:

Seek Him. They didn't give up until they found Him.

Worship Him. They knew He deserved to be honored.

Give Him your best. They didn't bring leftovers. They brought treasure.

You probably don't have gold to give Jesus. But you can give Him something even more precious: your heart, your time and your whole life.

Think about it: What is the best thing you could give to Jesus?

Try this: Think of one "treasure" you can give Jesus today: your time, your kindness, a talent, or something you own that could help someone else. Then give it.

Dear Jesus, You are the King, and You deserve my worship. Like the wise men, help me seek You until I find You. Help me give You my very best, not my leftovers. I give You my heart today. In Your name, Amen.

Day 5 — Jesus at Twelve

> *"Finally, after three days they found Him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astounded at His understanding and His answers... 'Why were you looking for Me?' He asked. 'Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?'"*
> *— Luke 2:46–47, 49 (BSB)*

The Bible doesn't tell us much about Jesus as a kid. But it does tell us one story from when He was **twelve years old**. That might be about your age right now!

Every year, Jesus' family traveled to Jerusalem for a big celebration called the Passover. People traveled in large groups of family and friends, walking together for days. When the celebration was over, Mary and Joseph headed home. They thought Jesus was somewhere in the crowd with relatives or friends.

But after a whole day of walking, they couldn't find Him anywhere! Can you imagine how scared they must have been? They rushed back to Jerusalem and searched for three days.

Finally they found Him in the temple, the house of God. Jesus was sitting with the teachers of God's law. He was listening to them and asking them questions. And everyone was amazed at how much He understood.

Mary said, "Child, why have You done this to us? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You." And Jesus answered, "Did you not

know that I had to be in My Father's house?"

Jesus already knew something very important: God was His Father, and He loved being near Him. Even at twelve, Jesus wanted to listen to God's Word, ask questions about it and understand it.

Then the Bible tells us Jesus went home with His parents and **obeyed** them. Even though He was God's Son, He respected Mary and Joseph.

Here's what this story means for you. You're not too young to love God and to want to know Him. You're not too young to ask big questions about the Bible. Jesus asked questions too! And loving God goes together with obeying your parents, not against it.

Think about it: What is a question you have about God or the Bible? Who could you ask?

Try this: Write down one question about God or the Bible. Ask a parent, a pastor or a teacher at church about it this week.

Dear God, thank You that Jesus was once a kid like me. Help me love being close to You the way He did. Give me a hunger to learn about You and to ask good questions. And help me honor and obey my parents too. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 6 — Growing Like Jesus

"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."
— Luke 2:52 (BSB)

Do you have a spot at home where someone marks your height on a wall or a door frame? Every so often you stand against it, someone draws a line, and you can see how much you've grown.

After the story of Jesus in the temple, the Bible skips ahead about eighteen years. We don't know much about what happened. But Luke gives us one verse that sums it all up: "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

Jesus didn't arrive on earth as a grown-up. He grew up, just like you. He learned to walk and talk. He learned to work, probably in Joseph's carpenter shop. He had to grow.

Luke mentions **four ways** Jesus grew. They're four ways God wants you to grow too.

Wisdom: your mind. Jesus grew in understanding. He learned God's Word and learned how to make good choices. You grow in wisdom when you learn at school, read your Bible and listen to wise people.

Stature: your body. Jesus grew taller and stronger. Your body is a gift from God too. Taking care of it with good food, exercise and sleep honors Him.

Favor with God: your spirit. Jesus' relationship with His Father grew. You grow closer to God when you pray, read His Word and obey Him.

Favor with man: your relationships. People liked Jesus and trusted Him. You grow in this way when you're kind, honest and helpful to your family, friends and neighbors.

Sometimes we only care about one or two of these. Maybe you work really hard at sports but never open your Bible. Or maybe you're great at school but unkind to your little brother. Jesus grew in all four ways, and He wants you to grow in all four too.

Growing takes time. You can't see yourself getting taller from one day to the next, but over a year the change is huge. The same is true inside. Keep growing, a little every day.

Think about it: Of the four ways to grow (wisdom, body, God and people), which one do you most need to work on right now?

Try this: Draw four boxes in your notebook labeled Wisdom, Body, God and People. In each one, write one thing you can do this week to grow.

Dear God, thank You that Jesus grew up just like me. Help me grow in wisdom, in my body, in my friendship with You and in my relationships with others. Make me more like Jesus every day. In His name, Amen.

Day 7 — "This Is My Beloved Son"

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. Suddenly the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!'"
— Matthew 3:16–17 (BSB)

When Jesus was about thirty years old, it was time for His work to begin. His cousin, John the Baptist, was preaching near the Jordan River. He told people to turn away from their sins and get ready, because the King was coming. Crowds came to be baptized by him in the river.

One day, Jesus came too. John was shocked! He said, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" John knew Jesus had never sinned. But Jesus said it was the right thing to do. Jesus was showing that He was one with the people He came to save.

As Jesus came up out of the water, three amazing things happened at once. The heavens opened. The Holy Spirit came down on Him like a dove. And the voice of God the Father spoke from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"

Did you notice? In this one moment, we see the **Father** speaking, the **Son** being baptized and the **Holy Spirit** coming down. One God, in three persons, all together.

Now think about the words the Father spoke. When did He say them? *Before* Jesus had preached a single sermon, healed a single person or done a

single miracle. Jesus hadn't done any of His famous work yet. But the Father already said, "I love You. I'm pleased with You."

The Father's love came first. Jesus didn't have to earn it.

This matters for you too. If you have trusted Jesus, you are God's child, and God loves you because you belong to Jesus, not because of how well you perform. You don't have to earn His love with good grades, winning games or being perfect. You get to live *from* His love, not *for* it.

Jesus heard those words from His Father, and then He went out to do the hardest job anyone has ever done. Knowing you're loved gives you strength.

Think about it: How would your life be different if you believed God loves you before you do anything, not because of what you do?

Try this: Read Matthew 3:13–17. Then write down: "Because I belong to Jesus, God loves me. I don't have to earn it."

Dear Father, thank You for loving Jesus, and thank You that because I belong to Him, You love me too. Help me stop trying to earn Your love and start living from it. Give me strength to follow You today, knowing I am loved. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 8 — Tempted but Never Sinned

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, 'If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' But Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."'"
— Matthew 4:1–4 (BSB)

Right after His baptism, Jesus went out into the wilderness, a hot, dry, lonely place. For forty days He didn't eat anything. You can imagine how hungry He was!

That's exactly when the devil showed up. The devil always looks for the moment when we're weakest: when we're tired, hungry, lonely or upset.

The devil tempted Jesus three times. First, he said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus could have done it easily. But using His power just for Himself, outside of His Father's plan, would have been wrong.

Then the devil took Jesus to the highest point of the temple and told Him to jump, so angels would catch Him. Finally, he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and promised to give them all to Him, if Jesus would just bow down and worship him.

Each time, Jesus said no. And look at *how* He said no. Every single time, He answered with words from the Bible: "It is written..." Jesus fought the

devil's lies with God's truth. And finally, the devil left.

Here are three things to remember from this story.

Being tempted is not a sin. Jesus was tempted, and He never sinned. Feeling tempted to lie, cheat or be unkind doesn't make you bad. What matters is what you do next.

God's Word is your weapon. Jesus didn't argue or try to be clever. He used Scripture. When you know God's Word, you can use it too.

Jesus understands. The Bible says Jesus was tempted in every way, just like us, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). When you're tempted, you can go to Him for help. He knows exactly how it feels, and He won.

And because Jesus never sinned, He could be the perfect Savior who took the punishment for *our* sins.

Think about it: When do you feel most tempted? Are you more likely to give in when you're tired, bored, hungry or upset?

Try this: Pick one thing you're often tempted to do. Find a Bible verse that answers it (a parent or pastor can help), and memorize it.

Dear Jesus, thank You that You were tempted just like me, but You never sinned. When I'm tempted, help me remember Your Word and say no. Thank You that You understand, and that I can always come to You for help. In Your name, Amen.

Day 9 — Follow Me

"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow Me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' And at once they left their nets and followed Him."
— Mark 1:16–18 (BSB)

Simon and his brother Andrew were ordinary fishermen. They got up early, threw their nets into the Sea of Galilee and hauled in fish to sell. It was hard, smelly work. They probably expected to do it for the rest of their lives, just like their fathers had.

Then one day, Jesus walked along the shore and said two words that changed everything: "Follow Me."

Notice who Jesus chose. He didn't go to the best schools to find the smartest students. He didn't go to the palace to find important leaders. He went to the beach and called fishermen. Later He would call a tax collector, someone most people hated. Jesus chose ordinary people, with all their mistakes, and turned them into world-changers.

Jesus also made them a promise: "I will make you fishers of men." They knew how to catch fish. Now Jesus would teach them to bring *people* to God. Notice who does the work: "I will make you." They didn't have to figure it out on their own. Jesus would train them.

And look at how they answered: "At once they left their nets and followed Him." They didn't say, "Let me think about it for a few years."

They didn't say, "Maybe after I'm done fishing." They went right away.

Following Jesus is more than believing true things about Him. It means going where He goes, learning from Him, and letting Him change you. That's what a **disciple** is: someone who follows a teacher so closely that they become like him.

Jesus still says, "Follow Me," today. He says it to kids too. You don't need to leave your family or your school to follow Him. But you might need to leave some "nets" behind: habits, attitudes or things that keep you from Him.

Simon, later called Peter, would go on to tell thousands of people about Jesus. And it all started with two words by a lake.

Think about it: What might be a "net" you need to leave behind to follow Jesus more closely?

Try this: Ask Jesus today, "What do You want me to do?" Then listen, and do the first thing that comes to mind that you know would please Him.

Dear Jesus, You called ordinary fishermen to follow You, and You call me too. I want to follow You. Help me leave behind anything that gets in the way. Make me into the person You want me to be. In Your name, Amen.

Day 10 — Water into Wine

"His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever He tells you.'"
— John 2:5 (BSB)
"Jesus performed this, the first of His signs, at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."
— John 2:11 (BSB)

Have you ever been to a wedding? There's music, dancing, lots of food and a happy celebration. In Jesus' day, a wedding party could last a whole week! And it was the family's job to make sure there was plenty for everyone.

Jesus, His mother Mary and His disciples were at a wedding in a village called Cana. But partway through, something embarrassing happened: the wine ran out. The family was about to be ashamed in front of the whole town.

Mary went to Jesus and told Him about the problem. Then she said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."

Nearby stood six big stone jars, each one big enough to hold twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then Jesus said, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

When the man in charge tasted it, the water had become wine, and not just any wine. It was the best wine of the whole party! He was amazed.

John calls this "the first of His signs." A sign points to something. This miracle pointed to who Jesus is. Only the Creator can change water into

something new. And John says, "He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."

This story shows us that Jesus cares about everyday problems. Running out of wine wasn't life or death. It was an embarrassing problem at a party. But Jesus cared, and He helped. You can bring your everyday problems to Jesus too, even the ones that seem small.

And don't miss Mary's words: "Do whatever He tells you." That's still the best advice anyone can give. The servants didn't understand why Jesus wanted them to fill jars with water. But they obeyed, and they saw a miracle.

Think about it: What's an everyday problem you could bring to Jesus that you haven't prayed about yet?

Try this: Make Mary's words your motto for today: "Do whatever He tells you." When you have a choice to make, ask what Jesus would want, and do it.

Dear Jesus, thank You that You care about my everyday problems, not just the big ones. Help me bring everything to You. Like the servants, help me do whatever You tell me, even when I don't understand why. In Your name, Amen.

Day 11 — Nicodemus at Night

"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs You are doing if God were not with him.' Jesus replied, 'Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'"
— John 3:1–3 (BSB)

Nicodemus was an important man. He was a **Pharisee**, part of a group that studied God's law very carefully and tried hard to keep every rule. He was also a leader of his people. If anyone seemed good enough for God, it was Nicodemus.

But Nicodemus had questions about Jesus. So he came to see Jesus at night, maybe because he didn't want the other leaders to see him.

Nicodemus started politely: "We know that You are a teacher who has come from God." But Jesus went straight to the heart of things: "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is **born again**."

Nicodemus was confused. "How can a man be born when he is old?" he asked. He was thinking about being born as a baby a second time, which is impossible!

But Jesus wasn't talking about that kind of birth. He was talking about being born of the Spirit. When you were born the first time, you received

physical life. When you are born again, God gives you **new spiritual life**. The Holy Spirit comes to live in you, and you become a child of God.

Jesus compared it to the wind. "The wind blows where it wishes. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going." You can't see the wind, but you can see what it does to trees and kites. It's the same with the Spirit. You can't see Him, but you can see how He changes people.

Here's the big lesson. Nicodemus was religious. He knew the Bible. He kept lots of rules. But that wasn't enough. Being good on the outside can't give you new life on the inside. Only God can do that.

A few sentences later, Jesus told Nicodemus the most famous verse in the Bible: John 3:16. God gives new life to everyone who believes in His Son.

Think about it: Why wasn't being very religious and keeping lots of rules enough for Nicodemus?

Try this: Read the rest of the conversation in John 3:1–16. Notice how it ends with a verse you probably already know.

Dear God, thank You that You give new life to everyone who believes in Jesus. I know I can't make myself right with You by being good on the outside. Thank You for sending Your Spirit to make me new on the inside. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 12 — Living Water

"Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a fount of water springing up to eternal life.'"
— John 4:13–14 (BSB)

Have you ever been really, really thirsty? Maybe after running around outside on a hot day? A cold glass of water is the best thing in the world. But a few hours later, you're thirsty again.

One day Jesus was traveling through a region called Samaria. He was tired from walking, so He sat down beside an old well. A woman came to get water, and Jesus asked her, "Give Me a drink."

She was shocked. She said, "You are a Jew. How can You ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" In those days, Jews and Samaritans didn't get along at all. They avoided each other. Most Jewish teachers wouldn't even speak to a woman like her in public. But Jesus didn't care about those walls. He cared about her.

Then Jesus told her about a different kind of water: **living water**. "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst."

What was He talking about? Jesus knew this woman was thirsty on the inside. She had tried to find happiness in relationships, but her life was full of hurt, and people in town looked down on her. She was thirsty for love, for acceptance and for something that would really satisfy.

Lots of people are thirsty like that. They try to fill up with popularity, stuff, winning, followers or fun. Those things can feel good for a while. But then you're thirsty again. Only Jesus can satisfy the deepest thirst of your heart. He gives new life that keeps springing up, like a fountain that never runs dry.

The woman was so excited that she left her water jar behind and ran back to town. She told everyone, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did!" And many people came to believe in Jesus because of her.

Jesus crossed every wall to reach one thirsty woman. He will cross every wall to reach you too.

Think about it: What do people your age try to "drink from" to feel happy or important? Does it last?

Try this: Every time you drink water today, say a quick prayer: "Jesus, You are the only one who satisfies me."

Dear Jesus, thank You that You crossed every wall to reach the woman at the well. Thank You for Your living water. When I try to fill up on things that don't last, remind me that only You can satisfy my heart. In Your name, Amen.

Day 13 — Even the Wind Obeys

> *"Then Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the sea. 'Silence!' He commanded. 'Be still!' And the wind died down, and it was perfectly calm. 'Why are you so afraid?' He asked. 'Do you still have no faith?' Overwhelmed with fear, they asked one another, 'Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'"*
> *— Mark 4:39–41 (BSB)*

It had been a long day of teaching. That evening, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us cross to the other side" of the lake. So they got into a boat and set off.

Then a violent windstorm came up. The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by hills, and sudden storms can sweep down on it without warning. Huge waves crashed over the sides of the boat. Water poured in. Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen, and even *they* were terrified. They were sure they were going to drown.

And where was Jesus? He was in the back of the boat, **sound asleep** on a cushion.

The disciples woke Him up and shouted, "Teacher, don't You care that we are perishing?"

Jesus got up. He spoke to the wind and the waves the way you might speak to a barking dog: "Silence! Be still!" And instantly, the wind stopped. The waves flattened out. Everything was perfectly calm.

Then Jesus turned to His disciples and asked, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

The disciples were even more amazed now than they had been scared before. They asked each other, "Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

That's the big question, isn't it? Only God controls the weather. Only the Creator can tell the sea what to do. This story shows us that Jesus is God.

It also shows us something about storms in our lives. Following Jesus doesn't mean you'll never face storms. The disciples were in the boat *because* they obeyed Jesus, and the storm still came. You might face storms too: a scary diagnosis, a family problem, a friendship falling apart.

But remember who was in the boat with them. When Jesus is in your boat, the storm can't win. He might calm the storm around you. Or He might calm the storm inside you. Either way, He is in control.

Think about it: What "storm" in your life right now do you need to trust Jesus with?

Try this: The next time you feel afraid, remember the question the disciples asked: "Who is this?" Then answer it: "Jesus is the one even the wind obeys."

Dear Jesus, You are so powerful that even the wind and the waves obey You. When storms come in my life, help me not to panic, but to trust You. Thank You that You are always in my boat. In Your name, Amen.

Day 14 — A Boy's Lunch

"'Here is a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish. But what difference will these make among so many?' 'Have the people sit down,' Jesus said. Now there was plenty of grass in that place, so the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the loaves and the fish, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted."
— John 6:9–11 (BSB)

A huge crowd had followed Jesus up onto a hillside. They wanted to hear Him teach and see Him heal people. There were about five thousand men, plus women and children. And now it was getting late, and everyone was hungry.

Jesus turned to His disciple Philip and asked, "Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?" Philip did the math and panicked. Even a huge amount of money wouldn't buy enough for everyone to have a little bite!

Then Andrew spoke up. He'd found a boy with a lunch: five small barley loaves and two little fish. Barley bread was the cheap bread that poor people ate. It was a kid-sized lunch. Andrew himself said, "But what difference will these make among so many?"

But Jesus took that boy's lunch. He thanked God for it. Then He started handing it out, and it kept going and going. Everyone ate "as much as they wanted." When they were done, the disciples gathered up the

leftovers, and there were **twelve baskets full**. There was more left over at the end than there was at the start!

We don't know the boy's name. But think about what he did. He had only a little, and it probably didn't seem like it would help. He could have kept it for himself. Instead, he gave it to Jesus.

That's how Jesus works. He takes small things and does great things with them. You might think, *I'm just a kid. What difference can I make?* But when you give what you have to Jesus, whether it's a little money, a little time, a small talent or a kind word, He can multiply it far beyond what you could imagine.

Your job isn't to feed five thousand people. Your job is to give Jesus your lunch. He'll take care of the rest.

Think about it: What "small lunch" do you have that you could give to Jesus? It might be a talent, your time, your money or something else.

Try this: Give something small today: share a snack, give some of your allowance, help someone with homework, or write a kind note. Offer it to Jesus as you do.

Dear Jesus, thank You that You can take small things and do great things with them. I don't have much, but I give You what I have. Please use me and what I give to help others and show how great You are. In Your name, Amen.

Day 15 — Walking on Water

> *"'Come,' said Jesus. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and took hold of Peter. 'You of little faith,' He said, 'why did you doubt?'"*
> *— Matthew 14:29–31 (BSB)*

It was the middle of the night. The disciples were out on the lake in their boat, rowing hard against the wind, getting nowhere. Jesus had stayed behind on a mountain to pray.

Then, sometime before dawn, they saw someone coming toward them, **walking on top of the water**! They screamed, "It's a ghost!"

But Jesus called out, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid."

Peter, who was always the first to speak up, called back, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

Jesus said, "Come."

And Peter did something no one else has ever done except Jesus. He climbed over the side of the boat, stepped out onto the waves and walked on the water toward Jesus!

But then Peter looked around. He saw how strong the wind was and how big the waves were. He got scared, and he started to sink. He cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him.

What made the difference? When Peter kept his **eyes on Jesus**, he walked on water. When he looked at the wind and the waves, he sank.

That's true for us too. When you focus on your problems, they seem huge and scary, and you start to sink. When you focus on Jesus, you remember that He is bigger than any problem.

And notice two more things. First, Peter was the only one brave enough to get out of the boat. The others stayed safe and dry. Peter's faith wasn't perfect, but he stepped out.

Second, even when Peter sank, Jesus didn't let him drown. The moment he cried out, Jesus caught him. When you fail, when your faith is weak, you can still cry out, "Lord, save me!" He will always reach out His hand.

Think about it: What "wind and waves" are pulling your eyes off Jesus right now?

Try this: Write "Eyes on Jesus" somewhere you'll see it often. When you start to worry today, stop and turn your thoughts to Him.

Dear Jesus, help me keep my eyes on You, not on the wind and the waves. When I'm scared, give me courage to step out in faith. And when I start to sink, thank You that You always reach out Your hand to save me. In Your name, Amen.

Day 16 — "What Do You Want Me to Do?"

"'What do you want Me to do for you?' Jesus asked. 'Rabboni,' said the blind man, 'let me see again.' 'Go,' said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road."
— Mark 10:51–52 (BSB)

Bartimaeus was blind. He couldn't work, so every day he sat by the side of the road outside the city of Jericho and begged for money. People walked past him all day long. Most of them probably didn't even look at him.

One day, Bartimaeus heard a big crowd coming. Someone told him Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Bartimaeus had heard about Jesus. He knew Jesus had healed people. So he started shouting as loud as he could: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

The people around him got annoyed. "Be quiet!" they told him. But Bartimaeus didn't give up. He shouted even louder: "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

And Jesus **stopped**. The whole crowd stopped with Him. Jesus said, "Call him." Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, jumped up and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus asked him a question: "What do you want Me to do for you?"

That's an interesting question. Wasn't it obvious? The man was blind! But Jesus wanted Bartimaeus to ask. So Bartimaeus said, "Let me see again." And Jesus said, "Go, your faith has healed you." Right away, Bartimaeus

could see! And the first thing he did with his new eyes was follow Jesus down the road.

This story teaches us about prayer.

Don't give up. People told Bartimaeus to be quiet, but he kept calling out. Sometimes it feels like our prayers aren't working, but Jesus wants us to keep asking.

Be honest and specific. Jesus asked, "What do you want?" He wants you to tell Him what you really need, in your own words.

Jesus stops for you. In a huge crowd, Jesus stopped for one poor, blind beggar that everyone else ignored. He's never too busy for you either.

And when Jesus answers your prayer, do what Bartimaeus did: follow Him.

Think about it: If Jesus asked you right now, "What do you want Me to do for you?" what would you say?

Try this: Answer Jesus' question honestly in prayer today. Be specific. Then write it down so you can see how He answers.

Dear Jesus, thank You that You stop for people who call out to You. Thank You for asking what I need. Here's what I want You to do for me: [tell Him]. Help me keep asking and never give up. And help me follow You wherever You go. In Your name, Amen.

Day 17 — Let the Children Come

"Now people were bringing the little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them, and the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and told them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'"
— Mark 10:13–14 (BSB)

Have you ever been told, "Not now, the grown-ups are talking"? Or felt like adults were too busy for you?

One day, parents were bringing their children to Jesus, hoping He would put His hands on them and bless them. But the disciples tried to stop them. Maybe they thought Jesus was too important for kids. Maybe they thought He had more serious things to do. They told the parents to go away.

When Jesus saw it, He was **indignant**. That means He was upset, even angry. Jesus doesn't often get angry in the Gospels. But He got angry when people tried to keep kids away from Him!

He said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them!" (*Hinder* means to get in the way.) Then He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.

Can you picture it? The Son of God, the one who calmed storms and healed the sick, stopping everything to hug kids and pray for them.

Here's what this means for you: **Jesus wants you.** He doesn't think you're too young, too small or too unimportant. You don't have to wait until you're a grown-up to follow Him. Right now, today, you are welcome to come to Him.

Then Jesus said something even more surprising: "The kingdom of God belongs to such as these." In other words, grown-ups need to become *like children* to enter God's kingdom.

What did He mean? Little children trust. They depend on their parents for everything. They don't pretend to have it all figured out. They receive gifts with open hands. That's how everyone needs to come to God: not proud or self-sufficient, but trusting Him completely.

So you're not just welcome in God's kingdom. You're an example to the grown-ups of how to come!

Think about it: How does it make you feel that Jesus got angry when people tried to keep kids away from Him?

Try this: Is there a younger kid you could help "come to Jesus"? Maybe you could read them a Bible story, teach them a song or pray with them.

Dear Jesus, thank You that You always have time for kids. Thank You that You welcome me and want me to come to You. Help me trust You like a child, with my whole heart. And help me never get in the way of others coming to You. In Your name, Amen.

Day 18 — Lazarus, Come Out!

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?'"
— John 11:25–26 (BSB)

Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were some of Jesus' closest friends. When Lazarus got very sick, his sisters sent a message to Jesus: "Lord, the one You love is sick." They were sure Jesus would hurry to heal him.

But Jesus waited two more days before He went. By the time He arrived, Lazarus had died. He had already been in the tomb for four days.

Martha ran to meet Jesus and said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Have you ever felt like that? *God, where were You? Why didn't You stop this?*

Jesus answered with some of the most amazing words He ever spoke: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies."

Then Mary came to Jesus. He saw her crying, and the friends who were crying with her. And the Bible says, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). It's the shortest verse in the Bible, but one of the most important. Jesus knew He was about to bring Lazarus back to life, and He still cried. He was sad with His friends. He cared about their pain.

Then Jesus told them to roll the stone away from the tomb. Martha worried it would smell terrible after four days! But Jesus prayed, and then He shouted in a loud voice, "**Lazarus, come out!**"

And Lazarus did. The man who had been dead walked out of the tomb, still wrapped up in burial cloths!

This story shows us that Jesus is more powerful than death itself. Death is the one enemy nobody can beat, but Jesus beat it. And He promises that everyone who believes in Him will live forever, even though their bodies die. For those who trust Jesus, death is not the end. It's like falling asleep and waking up with Him.

It also shows us that when we're sad, Jesus doesn't just tell us to cheer up. He cries with us.

Think about it: Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" How would you answer Him?

Try this: If you know someone who is sad because someone they love has died, pray for them today. You could also send them a kind note.

Dear Jesus, You are the resurrection and the life. Thank You that You are stronger than death. Thank You that You care when I'm sad, and that You cry with me. I believe You, and I trust You to give me life that never ends. In Your name, Amen.

Day 19 — Upside-Down Happiness

> *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."*
> *— Matthew 5:3–9 (BSB)*

One day, Jesus went up on a mountainside, sat down and began to teach. This teaching is called the **Sermon on the Mount**, and it's probably the most famous sermon ever preached. He started with a list of people He called "blessed." *Blessed* means truly happy, deep down, because God is with you and for you.

But Jesus' list is surprising. If you asked most people who's happy, they'd say: the rich, the popular, the strong, the winners. Jesus turned all of that upside down.

Let's look at a few:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." That means people who know they need God. They don't pretend to have it all together. They know they can't save themselves.

"Blessed are those who mourn." People who are sad, especially sad about sin and the brokenness in the world. God promises to comfort them.

"Blessed are the meek." Meek doesn't mean weak. It means strength under control: gentle, humble and not pushy.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." People who want to do what's right as badly as a starving person wants food.

"Blessed are the merciful." People who forgive and show kindness, even when someone doesn't deserve it.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." People whose hearts are clean and who love God with no pretending.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." People who help others get along and who try to end fights instead of starting them.

The world says, "Push to the front. Look out for yourself. Win at all costs." Jesus says the truly happy life looks very different. It looks like *Him*. Every one of these describes Jesus perfectly.

You can't make yourself like this by trying really hard. But when you follow Jesus, His Spirit starts to grow these things in you.

Think about it: Which one of these "blessed" descriptions is hardest for you? Which one would you most like God to grow in you?

Try this: Be a peacemaker today. If you see an argument starting, at home or at school, try to help calm it down instead of taking sides.

Dear Jesus, Your ways are so different from the world's ways. Help me be poor in spirit, meek, merciful, pure in heart and a peacemaker. Make me hungry to do what is right. Grow Your kind of happiness in me. In Your name, Amen.

Day 20 — Salt and Light

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."
— Matthew 5:14–16 (BSB)

Have you ever been in a room when the power goes out? It's pitch dark. You can't see anything. You bump into furniture. Then someone lights a single candle or turns on a phone flashlight, and suddenly you can see. Even a small light makes a huge difference in the dark.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave His followers two pictures of who they are. First He said, "You are the **salt** of the earth." In Jesus' day, salt was precious. It added flavor to food, and it kept meat from spoiling. Followers of Jesus are like salt. They make the world better and help keep it from going bad.

Then Jesus said, "You are the **light** of the world." Jesus Himself is the Light of the World (John 8:12). When you follow Him, His light shines through you.

Notice that Jesus didn't say, "Try to become light." He said, "You *are* the light." It's who you are if you belong to Him.

But a light can be hidden. Jesus said nobody lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. That would be silly! The whole point of a lamp is to

shine.

How do you let your light shine? Jesus said: "that they may see your good deeds." It's the way you live. Being honest when others cheat. Being kind to the kid everyone ignores. Helping without being asked. Not joining in when others gossip. Forgiving someone who hurt you. When you live like Jesus, people notice.

And here's the goal: not so people will say, "Wow, what a great kid," but so they will "glorify your Father in heaven." Your light should point to *Him*.

You might be the only light some people see. Maybe a friend doesn't go to church and doesn't know much about Jesus. But they know you. The way you live might be the first picture of Jesus they ever get.

Think about it: Where is it hardest for you to let your light shine? At school, online, with friends, or somewhere else?

Try this: Do one good deed today on purpose, to point someone to God. Don't brag about it. Just let it shine.

Dear Jesus, You are the Light of the World, and You have made me a light too. Help me not to hide my light. Let my good deeds point people to You, so they will praise my Father in heaven. In Your name, Amen.

Day 21 — Look at the Birds

"Look at the birds of the air: They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"
— Matthew 6:26 (BSB)

What do you worry about? Maybe it's a test next week. Maybe it's whether people like you. Maybe it's something at home, or something you saw in the news. Everybody worries sometimes, kids included.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about worry. And He did something surprising: He told everyone to go bird-watching.

"Look at the birds of the air," He said. Birds don't plant gardens. They don't harvest crops or store food in barns. They don't have jobs or bank accounts. And yet they don't starve. Why? "Your heavenly Father feeds them."

Then Jesus asked a simple question: "Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Of course you are! God cares about sparrows, but you are His child. If He takes care of birds, how much more will He take care of you?

Jesus also said, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" Worrying doesn't change anything. It's like a rocking chair: it keeps you busy, but it doesn't get you anywhere. Worry can't fix tomorrow. It just steals the joy from today.

So what should we do instead? A few verses later, Jesus says: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). In other words, put God first, and trust Him with the rest.

This doesn't mean you'll never have problems, or that you shouldn't work hard or plan ahead. Birds work hard to find their food! It means you don't have to carry the weight of worry. You have a Father who knows what you need and cares about you.

When worry comes, you can turn it into a prayer. Tell God what you're worried about. Then leave it with Him, and remember the birds.

Think about it: What's one thing you've been worried about lately? What would it look like to trust God with it?

Try this: Go outside and watch birds for a few minutes today. Every time you see one, remember: "My Father feeds them, and I'm worth more to Him than they are."

Dear Father, thank You for taking care of the birds, and thank You that I am even more valuable to You. I'm worried about [tell Him]. I give this worry to You. Help me seek You first and trust You with everything else. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 22 — The Lost Sheep

"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, comes home, and calls together his friends and neighbors to tell them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!' I tell you that in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who do not need to repent."
— Luke 15:4–7 (BSB)

Jesus often spent time with people that others looked down on: tax collectors who cheated people, and others known as "sinners." Some religious leaders complained about it. "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!" they grumbled.

So Jesus told them a story.

Imagine a shepherd with a hundred sheep. One evening he counts them: 97, 98, 99... One is missing! What does he do? He doesn't shrug and say, "Oh well, I still have ninety-nine." He leaves the others safe in the pasture and goes out looking for the lost one. He searches over hills and through valleys, maybe in the dark and the cold, **until he finds it**.

When he finally finds it, he doesn't scold the sheep or drag it home. He joyfully lifts it onto his shoulders and carries it. Then he throws a party and tells his friends, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!"

Jesus explained: that's what God is like. "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents." (*Repent* means to turn away from sin and turn back to God.)

This story tells us three things about God.

Every single person matters to Him. One out of a hundred might seem small. But to the shepherd, that one sheep was worth searching for. You are not just a number to God.

God comes looking for us. The sheep didn't find its way home. The shepherd went after it. That's what Jesus did when He came to earth. He came to seek the lost.

God is happy, not grumpy, when we come back. Some people think God is angry and disappointed with them. But when someone turns to Him, heaven throws a party!

If you've ever felt lost, far from God or like you don't belong, remember the shepherd. He is looking for you, and He won't stop until He carries you home.

Think about it: How does it make you feel to know that heaven celebrates when one person comes back to God?

Try this: Is there someone who seems "lost," maybe a kid who's left out or who doesn't know Jesus? Pray for them by name today, and look for a way to be kind to them.

Dear Jesus, thank You for being the Good Shepherd who goes looking for lost sheep. Thank You for finding me. Help me care about people who are lost the way You do. Thank You that heaven rejoices when anyone comes home to You. In Your name, Amen.

Day 23 — The Runaway Son

"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still in the distance, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him."
— Luke 15:20 (BSB)

Soon after the story of the lost sheep, Jesus told another story, about a father and his two sons.

The younger son was tired of living at home. He went to his father and said, "Give me my share of the estate." In other words, *I want my part of your money now. I don't want to wait until you die.* It was a terribly rude and hurtful thing to say.

But the father gave him the money. The son packed up, moved to a faraway country and spent every penny on "wild living." Parties, fun, whatever he wanted.

Then the money ran out. At the same time, a famine hit the land, and food became scarce. The son was so desperate that he took a job feeding pigs, and he was so hungry that even the pigs' food looked good.

Finally, he "came to his senses." He thought, *My father's servants have plenty of food, and here I am starving! I'll go home and say, "Father, I have sinned. I'm not worthy to be called your son. Just let me be one of your servants."*

So he started the long walk home. And here's the most amazing part of the story. "While he was still in the distance, his father saw him." The father

must have been watching the road, day after day, hoping his son would come home.

And when he saw him, the father **ran**. In those days, older men didn't run. It wasn't dignified. But this father didn't care. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him, before the son could even finish his speech.

Then the father threw a party! He gave his son the best robe, a ring and new sandals. "This son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!"

Jesus was telling us what God is like. No matter how far you've wandered, no matter what you've done, God is watching the road for you. When you turn back to Him, He doesn't make you earn your way back. He runs to meet you.

Think about it: The son expected to be treated like a servant, but the father welcomed him as a son. What does that tell you about God?

Try this: If there's something you've done that you've been hiding from God, tell Him about it today. He's running to meet you.

Dear Father, thank You that You are like the father in Jesus' story. Thank You that no matter how far I wander, You are watching for me and You run to welcome me home. I'm sorry for the times I've gone my own way. Thank You for loving me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 24 — The Good Samaritan

> *"'Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' 'The one who showed him mercy,' replied the expert in the law. Then Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'"*
> *— Luke 10:36–37 (BSB)*

An expert in God's law came to test Jesus. He knew God's command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But he wanted to find a loophole. So he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Maybe he hoped Jesus would give him a short list, so he wouldn't have to love everybody.

So Jesus told a story.

A man was walking along a lonely road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Robbers attacked him, took everything he had, beat him up and left him lying by the road, half dead.

Soon a **priest** came down the road. Surely he would help! But when he saw the hurt man, he crossed to the other side and kept walking. Then a **Levite**, someone who helped in God's temple, came by. He looked, and he also crossed over and walked on.

Then a **Samaritan** came along. Remember, Jews and Samaritans didn't get along at all. The people listening to Jesus would have expected the Samaritan to be the bad guy in the story!

But when the Samaritan saw the man, "he had compassion." He knelt down, cleaned and bandaged his wounds, put him on his own donkey and

took him to an inn. He took care of him all night. The next day, he paid the innkeeper and said, "Take care of him. If it costs more, I'll pay you when I come back."

Then Jesus asked, "Which of these three was a neighbor to the hurt man?" The expert had to answer, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."

Do you see what Jesus did? The man asked, "Who do I have to love?" Jesus turned the question around: "Who needs *you* to be a neighbor to them?" Your neighbor isn't just someone who lives near you or someone you like. It's anyone who needs help, even someone different from you, even someone you don't get along with.

Being a neighbor costs something. The Samaritan gave his time, his money and his comfort. But that's what love does.

Think about it: Who is someone in your life who needs you to be a "good Samaritan" to them?

Try this: Look for someone who needs help today, and don't walk by on the other side. Stop and help.

Dear Jesus, thank You for showing me what it means to be a good neighbor. Help me not to walk past people who need help. Give me a heart full of compassion, even for people who are different from me. Help me go and do likewise. In Your name, Amen.

Day 25 — Zacchaeus Climbs a Tree

"When Jesus came to that place, He looked up and said, 'Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I must stay at your house today.'"
— Luke 19:5 (BSB)
"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
— Luke 19:10 (BSB)

Zacchaeus was a chief **tax collector** in the city of Jericho. He worked for the Romans, the foreign rulers that the Jewish people hated. And like many tax collectors, he cheated people, charging extra and keeping the money for himself. He was very rich, and very unpopular.

One day, Jesus came through Jericho. Crowds lined the streets. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but there was a problem: he was short, and no one was going to let the town cheater squeeze to the front.

So Zacchaeus did something undignified for a rich man. He ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree!

When Jesus reached that spot, He stopped and looked up. Of all the people in that crowd, Jesus spoke to him. "Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I must stay at your house today."

Jesus knew his name! And out of everyone in town, Jesus chose to go to the house of the most disliked man there.

The crowd grumbled: "He has gone to be the guest of a sinful man!" But Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed Jesus joyfully.

Something happened to Zacchaeus that day. Being with Jesus changed him. He stood up and said, "Look, Lord, half of my possessions I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will repay it fourfold." Nobody told him to do that. When Jesus came into his heart, his greedy heart became a generous heart.

Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house." Then He explained why He came to earth: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

That's the whole reason Jesus came. Not for people who have it all together, but for the lost. For cheaters and liars and people everyone else has given up on. For people like Zacchaeus, and for people like you and me.

Nobody is too far gone for Jesus. He knows your name, and He wants to come to your house today.

Think about it: Why do you think Jesus chose to go to Zacchaeus's house when everyone else disliked him?

Try this: Zacchaeus made things right with people he had hurt. Is there anything you need to make right with someone? Do it this week.

Dear Jesus, thank You that You came to seek and to save the lost. Thank You that You know my name and want to be with me. Change my heart like You changed Zacchaeus's heart. Help me make things right with people I have hurt. In Your name, Amen.

Day 26 — Hosanna!

"The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed were shouting: 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest!'"
— Matthew 21:9 (BSB)

It was the week of the Passover feast, and Jerusalem was packed with visitors. Jesus and His disciples were coming up the road toward the city.

Jesus sent two disciples to a nearby village to bring back a donkey and her colt. Then Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the young donkey.

As He came, a huge crowd went wild! People spread their cloaks on the road in front of Him. Others cut branches from the trees and laid them down too. It was like rolling out a red carpet for a king. And everyone was shouting: "**Hosanna** to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Hosanna is a Hebrew word that means "Save us!" Over time, it also became a shout of praise, like cheering, "Salvation is here!" And "Son of David" was a title for the promised King.

The people were right. Jesus *was* the King! But why would a king ride a donkey? Kings usually rode big war horses.

Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Zechariah had said the King would come "gentle and riding on a donkey" (Matthew 21:5). A king on a war horse comes to fight. A king on a donkey comes in peace. Jesus came as

a humble King, not to conquer Rome with an army, but to save people from sin.

Many in that crowd didn't understand that. They wanted a king who would kick out the Romans and make their lives easier. When Jesus didn't do what they expected, some of those same voices would soon be shouting something very different.

Today, many churches remember this day as **Palm Sunday**, a week before Easter.

Here's a question for you: Is Jesus your King? Not just the King you cheer for when things are going well, but the King you follow when He does things differently than you expect? A real King isn't someone we tell what to do. He's someone we trust and obey.

Think about it: What's the difference between cheering for Jesus and following Him as your King?

Try this: Say or sing "Hosanna!" today as a prayer: "Save me, Jesus! Praise You, Jesus!" Then look for one way to obey your King today.

Hosanna, Jesus! You are the King who came in peace, riding on a donkey. You are the Son of David, the promised King. I don't just want to cheer for You. I want to follow You and obey You, even when I don't understand. In Your name, Amen.

Day 27 — Washing Feet

"So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example so that you should do as I have done for you."
— John 13:14–15 (BSB)

It was the night before Jesus died. He and His disciples gathered in an upstairs room to eat the Passover meal together.

In those days, people wore sandals and walked on dusty, dirty roads. When you came into a house, a servant would usually wash your feet. It was a job for the lowest servant in the house. Nobody wanted it. Feet were dirty and smelly!

But that night, no servant washed their feet, and none of the disciples offered to do it. In fact, Luke tells us that around this time, the disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24).

Then Jesus got up from the table. He took off His outer robe, wrapped a towel around His waist and poured water into a bowl. And He began to wash His disciples' feet, one by one.

The room must have gone completely silent. The Son of God, on His knees, scrubbing the dirty feet of fishermen!

When Jesus came to Peter, Peter said, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet? Never!" But Jesus said, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me." Jesus wasn't just washing their feet. He was giving them a picture of what He was about to do on the cross: wash away their sins.

When He finished, Jesus sat down again and explained. "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."

Jesus turned the world's idea of greatness upside down. The world says the greatest people are the ones who get served. Jesus says the greatest people are the ones who **serve**.

You probably won't wash anyone's actual feet today. But you can serve in a hundred other ways: doing the dishes without being asked, helping a classmate who's struggling, taking out the trash, letting someone else go first. Serving isn't glamorous. But it's what Jesus did.

Think about it: What's a "dirty job" at home or at school that nobody wants to do? Could you do it to serve like Jesus?

Try this: Serve someone in your family today in a way they don't expect, without being asked and without bragging about it.

Dear Jesus, You are the King of everything, but You knelt down and washed Your friends' feet. Thank You for serving me by dying for my sins. Help me serve others the way You did, even when it's not fun and nobody notices. In Your name, Amen.

Day 28 — "It Is Finished"

"When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished.' And bowing His head, He yielded up His spirit."
— John 19:30 (BSB)

After supper that night, Jesus went to a garden to pray. There, one of His own disciples, Judas, betrayed Him. Soldiers arrested Jesus. His other friends ran away.

That night and the next morning, Jesus was put on trial, though He had done nothing wrong. He was mocked, beaten and whipped. A crown made of thorns was pushed onto His head. Then the Roman governor, Pilate, handed Him over to be **crucified**.

Jesus carried His cross to a hill outside Jerusalem called Golgotha, "The Place of the Skull." There, soldiers nailed Him to the cross between two criminals. People walking by insulted Him. The sky went dark in the middle of the day.

Even on the cross, Jesus was thinking of others. He prayed for the people who put Him there: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). He made sure His mother would be cared for. He promised one of the criminals beside Him, who turned to Him in faith, that he would be with Him in paradise.

Then, at the very end, Jesus said three words: "**It is finished.**" And He died.

What was finished? Not Jesus' life. It wasn't a cry of defeat. It was a shout of victory. The word Jesus used means *completed* or *accomplished*. The job He came to do was done.

Remember why Jesus came? To save us from our sins. Every wrong thing we have ever done deserves punishment, a debt we could never pay. On the cross, Jesus took all of that on Himself. He paid it in full. When He said, "It is finished," He meant there was nothing left to pay. Nothing left for you to add. Nothing you need to earn.

That's why Christians call the day Jesus died **Good Friday**. It was the saddest day in history. But it was also the best day, because on that day Jesus finished the work of saving us.

Take a moment to be quiet and think about what Jesus did for you.

Think about it: Jesus said, "It is finished." Why is it such good news that there's nothing left for us to add to what Jesus did?

Try this: Read the story of the cross in John 19:16–30. Then spend a few quiet minutes thanking Jesus for what He did.

Dear Jesus, thank You for going to the cross for me. Thank You for taking the punishment I deserved. Thank You that You finished the work of saving me, and there is nothing left to pay. I love You. Help me live every day thankful for what You did. In Your name, Amen.

Day 29 — He Is Risen!

"But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said! Come, see the place where He lay.'"
— Matthew 28:5–6 (BSB)

After Jesus died, His friends took His body down from the cross and laid it in a tomb carved out of rock. A huge stone was rolled across the entrance. Soldiers were even sent to guard it, to make sure no one could steal the body.

For Jesus' followers, Saturday must have been the darkest, saddest day of their lives. Their friend, their teacher, the one they believed was the King, was dead. They were scared and confused. It seemed like everything was over.

But early on Sunday morning, at dawn, two women named Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb.

Suddenly there was a great **earthquake**! An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled back the stone and sat on it. He shone like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so terrified that they shook and fell down like dead men.

The women must have been terrified too. But the angel said, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. **He is not here; He has risen, just as He said!** Come, see the place where He lay."

The tomb was empty!

Notice the words "just as He said." Jesus had told His disciples many times that He would die and rise again on the third day. They hadn't understood. But everything happened exactly the way Jesus said it would. Jesus always keeps His word.

The angel told the women to go quickly and tell the disciples. So they ran, "in fear and great joy." And on the way, Jesus Himself met them! They fell at His feet and worshiped Him.

This is the most important event in history. If Jesus had stayed dead, He would just be another good teacher who died. But He rose! That proves He is the Son of God. It proves that His death really paid for our sins. And it proves that death has been beaten. Because He lives, everyone who trusts Him will live too.

That's why Christians celebrate **Easter**. It's the best news ever.

Think about it: The angel said Jesus rose "just as He said." Why does it matter that Jesus always keeps His word?

Try this: The women ran to tell others. Tell someone today, "Jesus is alive!" If they ask why that matters, tell them what you learned today.

Dear Jesus, You are alive! You rose from the dead just as You said. Thank You that You beat sin and death. Thank You that because You live, I can live forever with You. Fill me with joy like the women at the tomb, and help me tell others. In Your name, Amen.

Day 30 — Go and Tell

> *"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 all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
> *— Matthew 28:19–20 (BSB)*

After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples many times over forty days. He ate with them. He talked with them. He showed them the scars in His hands. There was no doubt: Jesus was alive!

Then Jesus met His eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee, and He gave them one last big job. He started by saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." In other words, *I am in charge of everything.* Then He said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations."

This is called the **Great Commission**. A commission is an important job given by someone in charge. And look how big this job is! Not just the neighborhood, not just their own country, but *all nations*.

Remember the fishermen from Day 9? Jesus had promised, "I will make you fishers of men." Now it was time. The same ordinary people who had followed Jesus for three years would now go and help others follow Him.

And the job is still going on today. It has been passed down for two thousand years, from one follower of Jesus to the next, all the way to you. Someone told you about Jesus. Now you get to be part of telling others.

How can a kid help with the Great Commission? You can pray for people around the world who haven't heard about Jesus. You can give to missionaries. You can invite a friend to church. You can live in a way that makes people curious about Jesus. And you can tell your friends and family what He means to you.

That might sound scary. But don't miss Jesus' last promise: "**Surely I am with you always**, even to the end of the age." You're never doing it alone. The same Jesus who was born in a manger, calmed the storm, fed the five thousand, died on the cross and rose from the grave is with you, every single day.

This month, you've walked with Jesus from Bethlehem to the empty tomb. Now He says to you what He said to Peter and Andrew at the very beginning: "Follow Me." And He adds: "Go, and bring others with you."

Think about it: Who is one person in your life you would love to see follow Jesus?

Try this: Write down the name of one person you'll pray for every day, asking God to help them know Jesus. Then look for a chance to invite them to church or tell them about Him.

Dear Jesus, thank You for these 30 days walking with You. Thank You that You have all authority and that You are with me always. Help me be part of Your Great Commission. Give me courage to tell others about You, and help me follow You every day of my life. In Your name, Amen.

Conclusion: Keep Following

What a journey! Over the last 30 days, you've walked beside Jesus through His whole life on earth.

You saw Him born in a manger, visited by shepherds and wise men. You met Him at twelve years old, asking questions in His Father's house. You watched Him get baptized and heard the Father say, "This is My beloved Son." You saw Him stand strong against the devil and call ordinary fishermen to follow Him.

You watched Him turn water into wine, calm a storm with a word, feed thousands with a boy's lunch and walk on water. You saw Him stop for a blind beggar, hug children and call a dead man out of his tomb. You heard His stories about a lost sheep, a runaway son and a good Samaritan.

And you walked with Him through His last week: the crowds shouting "Hosanna," the towel and the basin, the cross, and the empty tomb.

After all that, one question matters more than any other. It's the question Jesus asked His disciples one day: "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15).

Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." What would you say?

If you want to follow Jesus

If you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior, you can do that today. Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins, and He rose again. He offers you forgiveness and new life as a gift. You can talk to Him in your own words, or pray something like this:

Dear Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You died on the cross for my sins and rose again. I'm sorry for the wrong things I have done. I want to trust You as my Savior and follow You as my Lord. Thank You for forgiving me and making me Yours. Amen.

If you prayed that, tell someone! A parent, a pastor or a Christian friend will want to celebrate with you and help you grow.

What's next

Following Jesus isn't a 30-day project. It's for life. And as you follow Him, He starts to change you from the inside out.

In **Book 3**, you'll discover how that works. Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John 15:5). When you stay connected to Him, His life flows into you and grows good fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and more. You'll learn about the words you say, the habits you build and the kind of person God is growing you to be.

Until then, keep reading about Jesus. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are full of stories we didn't have room for. Keep talking with Him. And keep following Him, one step at a time.

> *"But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."*
> *— John 20:31 (BSB)*

© Ochorus. An Ochorus Original, written for young readers, free to read and share. Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which is in the public domain.

This edition was prepared by Ochorus, a free library of Christian classics.

Read it online, free, at https://ochorus.com/books/rooted-2/

More free classics at ochorus.com