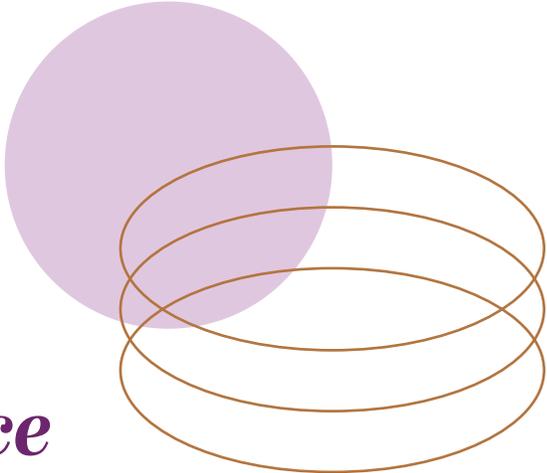


14 Days *with* Jesus

UNEXPECTED STORIES OF HOPE AND HEALING



by Chris Folmsbee



Preface

Every year on Easter Sunday, millions gather in churches worldwide to remember and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus — the central event of Christianity. Some come with deep conviction, others with doubt, curiosity, or even skepticism. The claim that Jesus, both fully man and fully God, was executed by the Romans and then rose from the dead understandably stirs disbelief. And yet, the church welcomes all — the faithful, the questioning, and the uncertain — offering a space where faith and life’s biggest questions can be asked and grappled with.

At its core, Easter is about hope: hope that life can triumph over death, brokenness can be healed, and the world can be restored to wholeness, as God intended. The resurrection reaches far beyond church walls, resonating with anyone longing for hope and healing, whether they ever fully accept the supernatural claims behind it.

What many miss is that Easter is not the end of the story but the beginning of a new chapter in God’s great big story of love for and redemption of humanity. After the resurrection, Jesus’ followers testified to seeing, speaking with, and even touching him, encounters that transformed them and propelled them to spread his message, often at great risk. These post-resurrection moments reshaped the course of history and continue to inspire faith today.

This short book invites you to walk into and through some of those moments, exploring how Jesus revealed himself in life-changing ways after rising from the dead. Whether you come with belief, doubt, curiosity, or skepticism the journey is meant to show why the resurrection matters, why hope endures, and how Jesus’ promise of eternal life is not only about the future but also about transformation in the life we know here and now.

SUMMARY: LIFE OF JESUS, RESURRECTION STORY

(See Appendix A for more context on the life of Jesus and the Resurrection)

Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and began his preaching and healing around age 30. He preached the Kingdom of God, calling people to repentance, faith, and love, often teaching through parables and emphasizing compassion, forgiveness, and personal connection with God. Jesus' ministry included many miracles, which drew large crowds but also stirred opposition from religious leaders who were threatened by his influence and challenges to their authority. In his final days, Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as Messiah, but soon betrayed, arrested, unjustly tried, and crucified under Roman rule, yet he continued to forgive and teach even on the cross. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, appearing to his disciples and confirming his resurrection, which became the foundation of Christian faith.

IMPORTANCE AND MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION

(See Appendix B for more context on the life of Jesus and the Resurrection):

The Resurrection of Jesus is the central event of Christianity, confirming his identity as the Son of God, fulfilling prophecy from the sacred texts that came before him, and demonstrating God's power over sin and death. The Resurrection offers believers enduring hope, the promise of eternal life, and the assurance that death is not the end but the beginning of reconciliation with God. Through the risen Christ, Christians find purpose, meaning, and hope in his continual presence and the ultimate restoration of all things.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR ENGAGING THE DAILY READINGS

Exploring the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus can feel unfamiliar—especially if you’re skeptical about Christianity or unsure what you believe. It is truly okay to be skeptical. Skeptical people are intelligent people.

These daily readings were not written to convince you, convert you, or pressure you in any way. They’re written to help you explore the deeper meaning behind stories of ordinary people, and what they say and teach about hope and healing in a fractured world.

Here’s how to get the most out of each of the daily readings:

START WITH CURIOSITY, NOT CERTAINTY

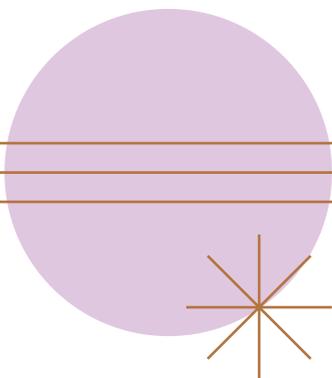
You don’t have to believe the resurrection happened to consider what these stories reveal. When you read, ask yourself: What does this moment say about hope, healing, failure, forgiveness, or belonging? These stories aren’t just ancient claims—they’re windows into the heart of God and the human condition, and the possibility of a world made whole.

READ THE SCRIPTURE AS A STORY, NOT AS A WHITEPAPER

You’ll see Bible verses at the start of each reading. Try reading them like you would a poem, a scene from a movie script, or a moment in a memoir. Don’t worry about “getting it right” or fully understanding the verses. Ask instead: What stands out to me? What surprises me? Who do I relate to in this story?

REFLECT HONESTLY WITH THE EXPLANATION

The simple explanation in each daily reading breaks down what’s happening in the story without assuming you know it or believe it. You may or may not. Either way, let it prompt reflection, not reaction. Consider asking: If I suspend disbelief for a moment, what might this teach me about grace, failure, hope, healing or courage?



TRY THE ACTION STEP WITHOUT NEEDING PROOF IT WORKS

Each reading includes a simple action inspired by how Jesus treated others—with compassion, dignity, and kindness. These are practices you can live out whether you believe in Jesus or not. Try one. Let it be a small experiment in living with deeper intentionality.

USE THE PRAYER AS AN INSTANCE OF BEING, NOT A FORMULA FOR PRODUCTIVITY

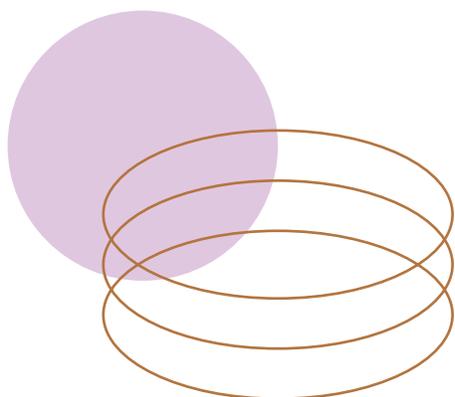
You don't have to believe in God, or the resurrection of Jesus to speak hope out loud. The prayers are simply to provide space to be honest. Use the prayers to center yourself, ask deeper questions, or name what you long for in your life or for the world. The prayers are prompts. You can read them silently, say them aloud, rewrite them, or just sit quietly contemplating their words. The point isn't correctness—it's connection.

BRING YOUR WHOLE SELF—DOUBTS AND ALL

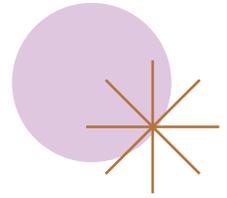
These readings were written for people like you: intelligent, thoughtful, questioning, maybe even distrustful or suspicious. You don't have to leave your brain, baggage, or background at the door, so to speak. Bring it all. Some of the most earnest doubters, were Jesus' first disciples. This isn't about blind belief—it's about open exploration, wrestling with doubt, and the possibility of a new perspective on faith and life.

FINAL THOUGHT:

Faith isn't always a leap. Sometimes it's a step, or even just a glance in the direction of possibility, of hope. Let these readings meet you where you are. You're not being asked to arrive anywhere—just to walk a little further and deeper into the stories. Enjoy the walk.



Day 1 / HOPE IN THE FOG OF SADNESS



Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabbouni” (which means Teacher) ... “I’ve seen the Lord.” **John 20:16**

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE | John 20:11-18

¹¹ Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. ¹² She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. ¹³ The angels asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” She replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” ¹⁴ As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.” ¹⁶ **Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabbouni” (which means Teacher).** ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Don’t hold on to me, for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I’m going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, **“I’ve seen the Lord.”** Then she told them what he said to her.

Mary is grieving. The man in whom she’d put her hope, and belief has died a violent death. She comes to the tomb expecting to mourn, not to meet a risen Jesus. At first, she doesn’t even recognize him—until he calls her by name. That simple act changes everything.

This moment is not flashy or dramatic. It’s quiet. It’s personal. It’s deeply human. Whether one believes in the resurrection or not, the power of someone knowing your name—your story, your struggle, your hurts, your hopes—is transformative.

Everyone wants to be known. Everyone wants to be loved.

You don’t have to be religious to understand the weight of grief or the longing to be known, seen, and loved. Mary’s story resonates because it’s about a personal encounter, not a religious argument. In a world of noise and confusion, what if hope doesn’t come with fanfare, but in the quiet whisper of someone who truly sees you?

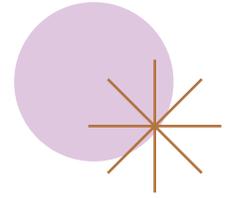
Jesus doesn’t scold Mary for her confusion. He meets her in it. That’s an invitation for all of us—Christians, doubters, skeptics alike—to consider: if love is real, could it still speak your name, even through the fog of sadness and sorrow?

Action Step: Today, seek to be present with someone in their grief, angst, fear or uncertainty. There is no need to offer advice. Just listen and be present. Let them know they are seen and loved.

PRAYER

God, help me to notice the quiet ways love shows up in my life. Help me see and let me be seen by others. And if hope is calling my name, even now, give me the courage to turn and face it. Amen.

Day 2 / DON'T BE AFRAID; GO AND TELL



"...Jesus met them and greeted them. They came and grabbed his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers that I am going into Galilee. They will see me there." **Matthew 28:9-10**

JESUS APPEARS TO THE OTHER WOMEN | Matthew 28:1-10

¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. ² Look, there was a great earthquake, for an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. Coming to the stone, he rolled it away and sat on it. ³ Now his face was like lightning and his clothes as white as snow. ⁴The guards were so terrified of him that they shook with fear and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He isn't here, because he's been raised from the dead, just as he said. Come, see the place where they laid him. ⁷ Now hurry, go and tell his disciples, 'He's been raised from the dead. He's going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' I've given the message to you." ⁸ With great fear and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ **But Jesus met them and greeted them. They came and grabbed his feet and worshipped him.** ¹⁰ **Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers that I am going into Galilee. They will see me there."**

In a culture where women's voices were often ignored (and for as much progress as we think we've made, the same is still often true today), Jesus appears first not to religious leaders or powerful people, but to ordinary women. They are not only witnesses of resurrection and the hope it formed in them—they are commissioned to carry it. Jesus honors their courage and trusts them with the message that hope is alive.

It's a striking detail: Jesus chooses the unlikely to be some of the first to speak of something entirely new. These women, filled with fear and joy, become some of the first bearers of good news—not because they were qualified or highly regarded by their culture, but because they were present and willing.

If you've ever felt like your story doesn't matter or your voice isn't heard, this appearance is for you. Among Jesus' first few post-resurrection acts was to affirm the dignity and role of those society mostly overlooked.

You don't have to be religious to live like Jesus.

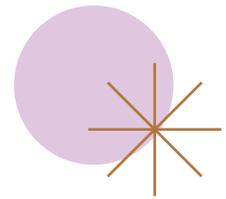
You simply need to be open to the idea that truth and transformation don't require a stage or platform—just presence and bravery. The women didn't fully understand what had happened. They moved forward anyway. Maybe that's the kind of faith we all need—not certainty, but a child-like faith marked by trust, a willingness to be open.

Action Step: Affirm someone today whose voice is often ignored. Whether it's a coworker, family member, or friend—listen deeply, and encourage them to share more of who they are.

PRAYER

God, if resurrection shows up first to the forgotten, then maybe I can believe there's a place for me too. Give me courage to move forward, even when I don't have all the answers. Help me listen, speak truth, and honor others like Jesus did. Amen.

Day 3 / RECOGNIZING THE STRANGER



“They were prevented from recognizing him... Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.” **Luke 24:16,31**

ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS ON THE EMMAUS ROAD | Luke 24:13–35

¹³ On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. ¹⁶ They were prevented from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” They stopped, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ The one named Cleopas replied, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?” ¹⁹ He said to them, “What things?” They said to him, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. ²⁰ But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. ²² But there’s more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ and didn’t find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn’t see him.” ²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. ²⁶ Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷ Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets. ²⁸ When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. ²⁹ But they urged him, saying, “Stay with us. It’s nearly evening, and the day is almost over.” So, he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight.

Two followers of Jesus are walking away from Jerusalem, talking about everything that’s just happened. Their world has collapsed. They’re confused, disappointed, and possibly wondering if they were fools to believe in the first place. A stranger joins them and listens. He walks with them. He explains things. Still, they don’t recognize him and see him as a stranger—until they share a meal, that is. In the breaking of bread, they suddenly realize who the stranger is -- it is Jesus. It’s not in a miracle or a sermon, but in a moment of simple hospitality and shared humanity that everything changes.

Have you ever looked back on a moment and realized it meant more than you thought at the time? This story suggests that meaning isn’t always obvious when you’re in it. ***Sometimes, we’re walking with someone in the sacred, even a stranger, and we don’t even know it.***

You don’t have to be religious to relate. The idea that someone could walk beside us in our grief, listen without judgment, and help us reconnect the pieces of our story—that’s deeply human.

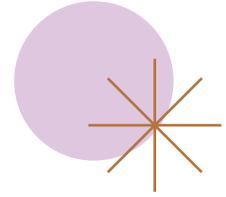
What if the divine isn’t found in certainty or ritual, but in humble presence? In the stranger who listens? In the meal you share with family and friends? In the walk through the neighborhood? In the hike up the mountain? In the joy of a game?

Action Step: Practice presence today. Slow down enough to listen to someone—or yourself. Share a meal with intention. Be fully there. Look for the sacred in the ordinary – I bet you’ll find it.

PRAYER

God, it is said by Christians that you walk with people like me—uncertain, tired, wondering what comes next. If that’s true—then walk with me now. Help me see what I might be missing. Open my eyes to beauty, to meaning, to connection. Even if I don’t recognize you, don’t stop walking beside me. Amen.

Day 4 | GRACE AFTER FAILURE



“The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon.” **Luke 24:34**

JESUS IS PRESENT WITH PETER | Luke 24:33-35

Author's note: this is the continuation of the story in Day 3

³² They said to each other, “Weren’t our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?” ³³ They (the disciples Jesus walked the road to Emmaus with*) got up right then (after recognizing the person they thought was a stranger was Jesus*) and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying to each other, “The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon (also known as Peter*)!” ³⁵ Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

*Italics added by author

Peter had denied Jesus three times. He failed publicly and painfully. Yet one of Jesus’ first appearances is to Peter—personally and privately. The Bible doesn’t record their conversation, but the silence speaks volumes and shouts grace. I doubt very much that Jesus shamed him. Jesus seeks Peter out and Peter must have felt so relieved after what he had done in denying Jesus, his friend.

As you will see on Day 8, we will further explore how Peter’s story didn’t end in failure because grace found him first, and there was healing. And from that moment on, Peter moves forward—not as a perfect man, but as a forgiven one. He becomes a voice of hope because he knows what it’s like to fall, be forgiven, and be lifted back up.

We’ve all had moments we wish we could take back. Mistakes we carry, even if no one else knows. Religion often paints people like Peter as heroes—but the truth is, he was broken first. That’s what makes his restoration so powerful. ***There is hope in forgiveness and restoration.***

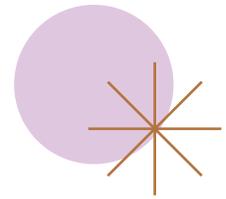
What if grace isn’t about rules or rituals—but about being seen, forgiven, and sent back into life with a new perspective? If Jesus would go out of his way to visit with, and eventually restore a denier, maybe there’s hope for anyone who’s ever felt disqualified, not enough, or made a bad decision.

Action Step: Is there someone you need to forgive—or perhaps, a place you need to forgive yourself? Take one step toward healing today. Send a text, write a letter, comment on social media, make a call. Or simply speak kindness inward instead of shame and humiliation.

PRAYER

God, I’ve messed up more than I want to admit. But if Peter got another chance, maybe I can too. Help me believe that failure isn’t the end. Show me how to forgive and be forgiven. Let grace be more than an idea—let it change me from the inside out. Amen.

Day 5 / PEACE BEHIND LOCKED DOORS



“It was still the first day of the week... Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” **John 20:19**

JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES IN A LOCKED ROOM | John 20:19-21

¹⁹ It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.”

²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.”

The disciples are hiding. They’re afraid! They fear the Romans will come looking to imprison or even kill them next. They’ve locked the doors, trying to shut out the danger, the disappointment, and probably their own disbelief. And yet, somehow, Jesus shows up. Not with condemnation, but with peace.

It’s important to note: Jesus meets them right where they are—fearful, uncertain, isolated—and offers them peace before anything else. No demands. No rigid doctrine. Just a greeting packed full of presence and peace.

We all have locked rooms—places in our lives where fear or disgrace keeps us shut in. Maybe it’s fear of failure, being hurt again, or embarrassing ourselves. And maybe, like the disciples, we assume that whatever good or divine exists out there won’t bother showing up behind our locked door. But what if real love can pass through locked doors?

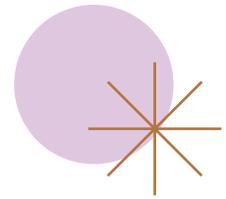
For skeptics, this story might not be about supernatural intrusion, but emotional honesty: the idea that presence and peace are possible even when we think we’ve sealed ourselves off. What if hope doesn’t wait for your door to open—but enters anyway?

Action Step: Identify one “locked door” in your life—an area where you’ve shut others (or yourself) out. Take one step toward opening it: send a message, speak your truth, or simply name it honestly in a journal or by telling a friend. In authentic sharing with others there is freedom from disgrace.

PRAYER

If there’s peace, God, that can reach me even behind the walls I build, let it come. I don’t always know what I believe, but I know what fear feels like. Let something good find its way to me today, anyway. Amen.

Day 6 / PERMISSION TO DOUBT



“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here...No more disbelief. Believe!’ Thomas responded to Jesus, ‘My Lord and my God!’” **John 20:27**

JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS AND THE DISCIPLES | John 20:24-29

²⁴Thomas, the one called Didymus, one of the Twelve, wasn’t with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵The other disciples told him, “We’ve seen the Lord!” But he replied, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won’t believe.” ²⁶After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷**Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!”** ²⁸Thomas responded to Jesus, “**My Lord and my God!**” ²⁹Jesus replied, “Do you believe because you see me? Happy are those who don’t see and yet believe.”

Thomas missed the first appearance of Jesus. The others tell him, “We saw the Lord!” But Thomas in his honest grief and doubt says: “Unless I see it for myself, I won’t believe it.” A week later, Jesus comes again—specifically for Thomas. He doesn’t reprimand him for doubting. He meets his doubts head-on and invites him to touch, to see, to feel for himself.

Jesus honors the struggle. He doesn’t demand blind faith; he invites honest exploration and engagement. That says something powerful about the kind of relationship Jesus offers to each of us.

Doubt isn’t weakness. It’s often a sign of intelligence, that we’re still searching, still thinking, still hoping that something might be true enough to trust. Thomas is the doubter of the group (not the only one, just the most vocal one), and instead of being left behind, he gets a personal invitation that none of the others received.

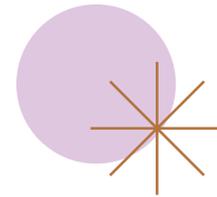
For those who’ve been told faith means shutting down your questions, this story flips the script. If Jesus can welcome the vocal doubter, maybe spirituality isn’t about certainty—but about trust that grows from honesty. What if God isn’t offended by your doubt, but instead honors it?

Action Step: Be honest today about one thing you doubt—about life, about yourself, about faith. Share it with someone you trust, or write it down, or put it on social media. Instead of hiding your questions, give them space to breathe. Be honest.

PRAYER

God, you are big. You can handle my doubts. So here I am—unpolished, unsure, but open. Meet me where I really am, not where I pretend to be. As you speak through honesty, help me to listen. Amen.

Day 7 | BREAKFAST WITH JESUS



“Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’” **John 21:12**

JESUS APPEARS AGAIN TO THE DISCIPLES | John 21: 1-14

¹ Later, Jesus himself appeared again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how it happened: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee’s sons, and two other disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter told them, “I’m going fishing.” They said, “We’ll go with you.” They set out in a boat, but throughout the night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn’t realize it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus called to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶ He said, “Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” So, they did, and there were so many fish that they couldn’t haul in the net. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself (for he was naked) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they weren’t far from shore, only about one hundred yards. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire there, with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you’ve just caught.” ¹¹ Simon Peter got up and pulled the net to shore. It was full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three of them. Yet the net hadn’t torn, even with so many fish. ¹² **Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.”** None of the disciples could bring themselves to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

The disciples go fishing. It’s what they know. After everything—Jesus’ death, the confusion, the fear, and amidst the unknown future ahead—they return to the familiar, their jobs prior to their call and choice to follow Jesus. They caught nothing all night. And then a man on the shore tells them to cast their net on the other side of the boat. Suddenly, abundance. Soon after, recognition of the man on the shore. It’s Jesus. Again.

Jesus doesn't give a lecture or preach a sermon. Instead, he makes breakfast. Bread and fish over a fire. No religious, rigid teaching of the law. Just presence. Food. Community. Renewal.

This scene is quiet but profound. Jesus appears -- not in the temple, not at a podium—but at the water’s edge, cooking breakfast. That says something about the kind of love Jesus shares: down-to-earth, personal, grounded in the everyday.

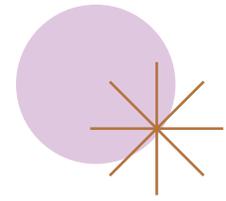
We don’t often think of God as the one who makes breakfast. Maybe we should.

If the sacred is real, it might not show up in lightning or loud thunderous announcements—but in provisions, nourishment, in the chance to begin again, in the gentle invitation: “Come and eat.”

Action Step: Do something small but meaningful for someone else today: cook a meal, give a gift card write a note, ask a person how they are doing, and mean it -- show up for them in some way. Encourage someone with thoughtful and surprising words. Love tangibly, not just conceptually.

PRAYER

God, if grace is as simple as breakfast on a shoreline, then let me receive it. Help me believe that I’m allowed to begin again. Feed me—not just with food, but with hope, with mercy, with peace. And inspire me to become someone who feeds others too. Amen.



Day 8 | SECOND CHANCES: LOVE AFTER FAILURE

(Author's note: This is the continuation of the same appearance as yesterday's reading. However, it is such a profound experience, with such an important purpose that it merits its own reading and time of reflection.)

“When they had finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’” John 21:12

JESUS RESTORES PETER AND GIVES HIM NEW HOPE | John 21: 15-19

¹⁵ **When they finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”** Simon replied, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶ Jesus asked a second time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Simon replied, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Take care of my sheep.” ¹⁷ He asked a third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was sad that Jesus asked him a third time, “Do you love me?” He replied, “Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I assure you that when you were younger you tied your own belt and walked around wherever you wanted. When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and another will tie your belt and lead you where you don’t want to go.” ¹⁹ He said this to show the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. After saying this, Jesus said to Peter, “Follow me.”

Peter had denied knowing Jesus—three times. He failed his friend and teacher. Peter failed himself. After breakfast, Jesus pulls Peter aside and asks three times, “Do you love me?”—mirroring Peter’s three denials. This isn’t punishment or retribution. It’s healing. It’s restoration.

Jesus doesn’t say, “Explain yourself.” He simply gives Peter a new path forward: **“Feed my sheep.”** That’s forgiveness in motion—not just wiping the slate clean but inviting Peter into a new purpose.

We all carry moments we wish we could erase—things we’ve said, ways we’ve failed, people we’ve hurt. For many skeptics, religion feels like a place of judgment. But this story flips that script. Jesus doesn’t use what was likely Peter’s worst moment against him. He uses it to draw him closer.

Restoration isn’t about pretending failure didn’t happen. It’s about facing it with love and being offered the chance to live differently on the other side of it.

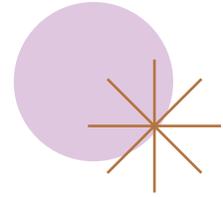
What if being restored isn’t about proving yourself—but being loved enough to change?

Action Step: Reach out to someone you’ve wronged or disappointed—even if just in a small way. Apologize, reconnect, or take a step toward repair. Let love lead. Be like Jesus and love boldly today. You don’t even have to believe to love like Jesus.

PRAYER

God, I’ve messed up plenty. I’ve denied things I care about. I’ve failed to show up. But if love still comes back for people like Peter, maybe it can come back for me too. Show me how to begin again—not with guilt, but with grace. Amen.

Day 9 / THE GREAT COMMISSION, A MISSION BIGGER THAN BELIEF



“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee ... When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Jesus came near and spoke to them, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations... I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.’
Matthew 28:16-20

COMMISSIONING OF THE DISCIPLES | Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ Jesus came near and spoke to them, “I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.”

This appearance is widely considered Jesus’ final teaching moment before scripture says he was taken up into heaven...what the Church calls, the Ascension. Some worshiped him—and some still doubted. And yet, Jesus speaks to all of them, not just the certain or the faithful. He gives them a purpose full of meaning: Go. Teach. Live this out. Make disciples. And he promises, as they do, to be with them, always.

It’s important: the commission isn’t to convert people by force, fear or foreboding—it’s to invite them into a way of life shaped by what Jesus taught: radical love, courageous justice, and deep compassion.

You don’t have to be religious to recognize this moment. It’s the call to *live for something bigger than yourself*. To turn belief into action. To take what you’ve received—grace, wisdom, healing and hope—and offer it to others.

What’s striking is that Jesus includes the doubters. There’s no test of certainty. No demand to “get it all right” before stepping into the mission. If anything, fear, uncertainty, and clearly doubt, seems to be a welcomed part of the story.

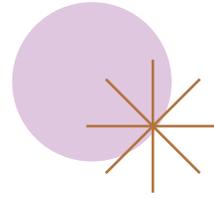
The Great Commission isn’t about building empires. It’s about building community—through love and humility, not power. The Great Commission is less about having all the answers and more about living in a way that helps others find healing and hope.

Action Step: Choose one way to “go” today. Reach out to someone who feels forgotten or overlooked. Share kindness that isn’t conditional. Invite a person to experience community with you and your friends.

PRAYER

I don’t have it all figured out, God. Sometimes I doubt, sometimes I hesitate. But if love includes even the uncertain, then maybe there’s space for me too. Show me how to live with purpose—not to prove something, but to share something real. Amen.

Day 10 / MORE THAN ONE STORY



“...then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at once—most of them are still alive to this day, though some have died.” **1 Corinthians 15:6**

A RESURRECTION RECAP FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL | 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

¹ Brothers and sisters, I want to call your attention to the good news that I preached to you, which you also received and in which you stand. ² You are being saved through it if you hold on to the message I preached to you, unless somehow you believed it for nothing. ³ I passed on to you as most important what I also received: Christ died for our sins in line with the scriptures, ⁴ he was buried, and he rose on the third day in line with the scriptures. ⁵ He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve, ⁶ and then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at once—most of them are still alive to this day, though some have died. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me...”

(See Appendix C for a fuller reading of 1 Corinthians 15)

Paul, one of the early Christian leaders, is writing to a church in the city of Corinth. He’s reminding the church that the resurrection wasn’t just a private vision or merely an inner-circle event. According to this tradition, over 500 people were said to have encountered the risen Jesus.

We don’t get any specific details—no names, no descriptions of people, no specific places. We do get this, however: a claim that whatever happened after Jesus’ death, it was experienced by a growing community who continued to live out the teachings of Jesus, not just a few individuals.

Personal stories are powerful—but shared stories can change the world. Transformation isn’t always just a solo experience. It can be shared, affirmed, and amplified by others.

Whether or not you accept the resurrection literally, it’s worth asking: What would it take for 500 people to stand by the same extraordinary story? And what happens when that many people live as though love, peace, and forgiveness really are stronger than death?

Skeptics often see faith as private belief. But what if faith is also a collective, communal vision of what life can be—and should be—when hope refuses to die?

Action Step: Look for a community—however small—that lives by the values you care about: love, justice, compassion, hope. Join them, support them, or simply let their story shape yours.

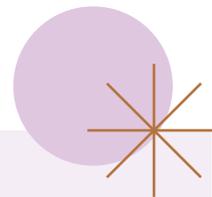
PRAYER

If there’s a truth worth sharing—one that brings people together in hope—let me be part of it, God. I don’t have to have all the answers. Just show me how to walk alongside others who are trying to live with love, courage, and purpose. Amen.

Day 11 / FAMILY AND THE LONG ROAD TO BELIEF

“Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles...” **1 Corinthians 15:7**

(Author’s note: We will explore Jesus’ appearance to Paul in greater detail on Day 13.)



JESUS APPEARS TO HIS BROTHER | 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

³ I passed on to you as most important what I also received: Christ died for our sins in line with the scriptures, ⁴ he was buried, and he rose on the third day in line with the scriptures. ⁵ He appeared to Cephas (*the Aramaic name, Peter*), then to the Twelve, ⁶ and then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at once—most of them are still alive to this day, though some have died. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me (*Paul*), as if I were born at the wrong time.

*Words in italics added by author

This mention is brief, but powerful. James was Jesus’ brother (there is debate among scholars as to whether Paul is referring to James, Jesus’ half-brother in this scripture, but it is generally understood among most, that it is)—and many believe that during Jesus’ lifetime, James didn’t believe. In fact, the Gospels suggest his family thought Jesus was out of his mind (see Mark 3:21 and John 7:5). And yet, something changed. Jesus is seeking out his brother to let him know, **“You matter to me.”**

After the resurrection, James became a key leader in the early Christian movement. What happened in between? Paul suggests a personal appearance—an encounter that changed James’ view of his brother, Jesus.

It’s one thing to convince strangers. It’s another to change the mind of someone who knows your whole story—your awkward years, your everyday habits, your human flaws. Family and friends often see the version of us that’s hardest to reframe or re-narrate.

And yet James becomes a follower of Jesus, not just in a message, but in a person, he thought he already knew. That kind of transformation usually doesn’t come through influence and pressure. It comes through invitation and presence.

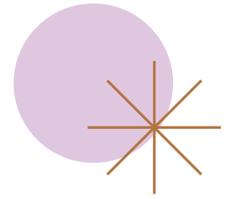
For skeptics, this story isn’t about religious conversion—it’s about openness to change. Sometimes, the people or ideas we’ve dismissed are the ones that surprise us most when we begin to see them differently or as they are in the now.

Action Step: Revisit a relationship with a person or a specific belief you’ve written off. Ask yourself: Is there anything new to see here? Sometimes change begins not with understanding, but with sincerity and with open eyes, ears, hearts, minds and hands.

PRAYER

God, some things are hard to believe—especially those “close to home.” If there’s something or someone in my life I’ve misjudged, help me to see them again. Give me the humility to be surprised, and the courage to change my mind when love leads me there. Amen.

Day 12 / LETTING GO, LIVING FORWARD



“After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going away and as they were staring toward heaven, ... why are you standing here, looking toward heaven?” Acts 1:9-10

JESUS INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLES FOR 40 DAYS | Acts 1:1-11

...before he (*Jesus*) was taken up, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus instructed the apostles he had chosen. ³ After his suffering, he showed them that he was alive with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days, speaking to them about God’s kingdom. ⁴ While they were eating together, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, “This is what you heard from me: ⁵ John baptized with water, but in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” ⁶ As a result, those who had gathered together asked Jesus, “Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?” ⁷ Jesus replied, “It isn’t for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹ **After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going away and as they were staring toward heaven,** suddenly two men in white robes stood next to them. ¹¹ They said, “Galileans, **why are you standing here, looking toward heaven?** This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you saw him go into heaven.”

**Words in italics added by author*

After forty days of appearances, teaching, and rebuilding, Jesus gathers his friends one last time. He gives them a mission—to carry on what he began—and then ascends. Gone from view, but not from purpose.

Two figures (angels) ask the disciples a pointed question: “Why are you staring at the sky?” In other words, don’t freeze up. ***Don’t just look up. Move forward. Get going ...live it out!***

For many skeptics, the story of the Ascension can feel like mythology, like the resurrection does. A man rising into the clouds, the same man that rose from the dead. It’s easy to dismiss. But beneath the imagery is a universal moment: the challenge of letting go.

Jesus departs not to abandon, but to entrust, to empower. His work continues—not in the heavens, but on earth, in us.

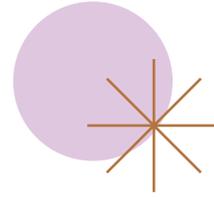
This story isn’t about the miracle of defying gravity. It’s about passing the torch. It’s about the moment when we stop waiting for rescue and start becoming the kind of people who do the rescuing – the healing, loving, forgiving, and welcoming. The sacred doesn’t vanish into the clouds, it gets grounded in everyday people, making people the physical embodiment of the life and ministry of Jesus.

Action Step: Don’t just look up today—look around. Ask: What’s one way I can bring healing, encouragement, or hope into someone’s life or into the world at large? Then take that step. Be the presence you’re waiting for, for someone else.

PRAYER

I want to believe in something bigger, God—but sometimes I just feel lost, staring at the sky. If hope has risen, help me live like it’s true. Make me part of what you’re building. Give me the courage to carry forward what love began. Amen.

Day 13 | THE LAST TO BELIEVE



“Those traveling with him stood there speechless; they heard the voice but saw no one.” Acts 9:7

SAUL (PAUL) ENCOUNTERS THE RISEN JESUS | ACTS 9:1-22

¹ Saul was still spewing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest, ²seeking letters to the synagogues in Damascus. If he found persons who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, these letters would authorize him to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ During the journey, as he approached Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven encircled him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice asking him, “Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?” ⁵ Saul asked, “Who are you, Lord?” “I am Jesus, whom you are harassing,” came the reply. ⁶ “Now get up and enter the city. You will be told what you must do.” ⁷ Those traveling with him stood there speechless; they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸ After they picked Saul up from the ground, he opened his eyes, but he couldn’t see. So, they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind and neither ate nor drank anything. ¹⁰ In Damascus there was a certain disciple named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, “Ananias!” He answered, “Yes, Lord.” ¹¹ The Lord instructed him, “Go to Judas’ house on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias enter and put his hands on him to restore his sight.” ¹³ Ananias countered, “Lord, I have heard many reports about this man. People say he has done horrible things to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ He’s here with authority from the chief priests to arrest everyone who calls on your name.” ¹⁵ The Lord replied, “Go! This man is the agent I have chosen to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” ¹⁷ Ananias went to the house. He placed his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the way as you were coming here. He sent me so that you could see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Instantly, flakes fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. ¹⁹ After eating, he regained his strength. He stayed with the disciples in Damascus for several days. ²⁰ Right away, he began to preach about Jesus in the synagogues. “He is God’s Son,” he declared. ²¹ Everyone who heard him was baffled. They questioned each other, “Isn’t he the one who was wreaking havoc among those in Jerusalem who called on this name? Hadn’t he come here to take those same people as prisoners to the chief priests?” ²² But Saul grew stronger and stronger. He confused the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

Paul (known as Saul before his conversion to being a follower of Jesus) wasn’t just a skeptic—he was an active enemy of the Jesus movement. He saw early Christians as dangerous, and he tried to stop them, kill them. Then, everything changed. Paul claimed Jesus appeared to him in a vision that upended his life and set him on a new path and purpose. He went from persecutor to preacher, from adversary to advocate.

Paul calls himself “abnormally born,” aware that his story is different than the other disciples as he became a follower of Jesus later than the other original disciples. And yet, he was included -- chosen and called.

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DAY 13 CONTINUED

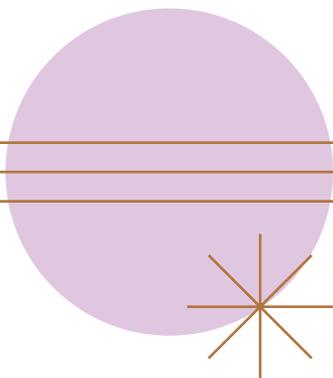
Paul recognizes that his calling was unexpected, undeserved, and based solely on God's grace and not on his own merits—after all, prior to following Jesus, he'd made it his mission to kill those who were following Jesus.

Some people take the long road to transformation. ***Paul is living proof that you can be wrong, loud, angry, violent, arrogant, broken—and still find your way into God's grace.*** In fact, Paul becomes the very person he tried to destroy in others.

You don't have to be religious to see the power of transformation in people. Change is real. People grow. People evolve. Even the most unlikely of us can find ourselves turning toward something better, even if we once tried to silence it.

For skeptics, Paul's story says this: You're never too far. Never too late. Never too broken. You might not even be looking for love—and, yet love can still find you.

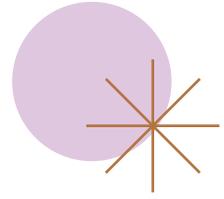
Action Step: Reflect on a part of your past that you've tried to outrun. Ask: *What would it look like if this didn't disqualify me, but prepared me for something new?*



PRAYER

I've made mistakes, God. I've resisted change. I've shut my heart. But if grace still reached Paul—last in line, least deserving—maybe it can reach me. Help me believe that who I've been doesn't cancel who I could become. Amen.

Day 14 / "WHY BOTHER WITH CHURCH?"



“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... All the believers were together and had everything in common... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:42–47

WE DON'T GO TO CHURCH, WE ARE THE CHURCH

The earliest picture of the church is not of a building or a Sunday service, but of a **community**—gathering to learn, eat, share, support, pray and worship. These people weren’t signing up for religion as an institution; they were trying to live differently considering love, grace, and shared hope.

They created a space where no one had to pretend to be perfect. They shared what they had. They faced hardship together. Their lives were transformed not by rituals, but by relationships and passion for purpose and mission.

In its truest form, church is not a presentation or show. Church is a people. Not a place to judge or be judged, but a place to remember we’re not alone and to return God’s love in genuine worship. Christians don’t just go to church; they are the church.

Let’s be honest: for many people, church has felt like a place of exclusion, judgement, hypocrisy, or outdated answers. That’s real. But that’s not what the church was meant to be.

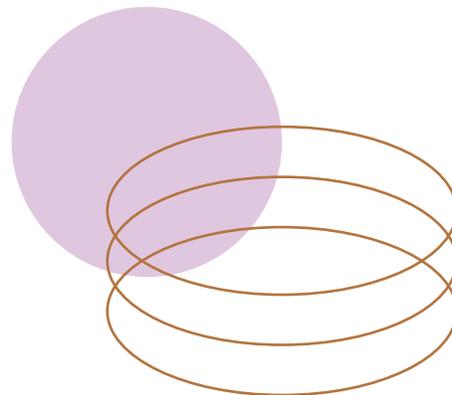
The heart of church is not control or unbending certainty. It’s community. ***Sunday, or weekly worship, is a reminder that we’re part of something bigger than ourselves.*** In a world of loneliness, breakdown, and distraction, church offers a rhythm of belonging, reflection, and reorientation.

You don’t have to believe everything to show up. You just need be open to connection—with others, with your deeper self, and maybe even with God. The church, at its best, is an incubator for love: flawed people trying to live with more grace, more justice, and more joy than we can manage on our own.

Action Step: Visit a church—not to be convinced, but to be curious. Find a church that practices hospitality, values honest questions, and welcomes everyone. Don’t go to consume; go to connect. Start by introducing yourself to one person. Ask one real question. See how it feels. If it feels good, invite a friend.

PRAYER

God, if you are real, then I’m asking for the courage to explore what I’ve avoided or doubted. I don’t want fake answers or forced beliefs. But I do want connection, meaning, and healing. If church can be a place for that, help me find one that’s honest, humble, and human, where no perfect people are allowed. Amen.



Final Challenge

MISSION OF GOD & THE CHURCH

The resurrection of Jesus is not just the conclusion of a dramatic story—it is the beginning of a new one. It redefines reality for those who dare to believe that death is not the end and that life and love cannot be buried. The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus are not random encounters; they are deeply intentional moments of restoration, forgiveness, empowerment, and calling. Each one whispers a central truth: the risen Christ meets people where they are—in their fear, doubt, failure, grief, and hope—and invites them into something greater than themselves.

These appearances matter not simply because they prove a point, but because they reveal a pattern: Jesus is alive, and he's still showing up—in gardens, in locked rooms, on dusty roads, by seashores and by a table. He appears not just to the qualified but to the confused, not just to the faithful but to the doubters. And in every encounter, Jesus gives something away: peace, presence, purpose. The resurrection isn't merely an event to remember—it's a movement to join, a new creation already unfolding, one story at a time.

Christians are Easter people.

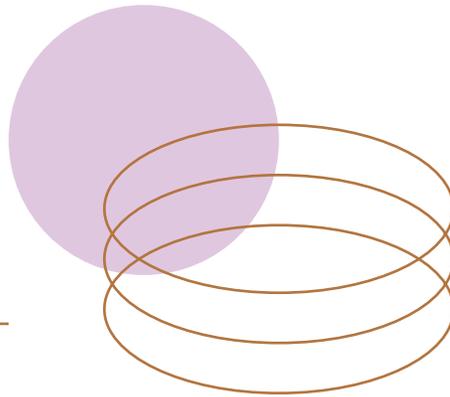
Christians are not called to be spectators of the resurrection but participants in its power. To follow the risen Christ is to become part of God's mission to restore what is broken, heal what is wounded, and bring light where there is darkness. Every act of reconciliation - every choice to forgive, every risk taken for justice, every moment of love in the face of hate—these are resurrection acts. They are the signs that Easter is real. They are signs that Jesus was who he said he was.

So here is the challenge: Don't just admire the resurrection—embody it. Let it shape your imagination for what is possible. Let the resurrection interrupt your ordinary routines with holy purpose. Let it push you to the edges where the world aches most and where Christ still appears through you... yes, You! You are not alone. The same Spirit that raised Jesus is still breathing life into those who say yes to following Jesus and participating in the mission of God. God's will is that the world would be whole. God's way of making it whole, is through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. God work is done through the church – imperfect communities of believers all over the world who choose to participate with God by embodying Jesus' way of life. God is making all things new, through you and through me – through the church. You are invited to join in. Come as you are.

May your life, like those first witnesses, become yet another appearance of resurrection in a world desperate for hope, healing, and wholeness. Welcome to the family.

HAVE QUESTIONS? Need help finding a church in your community? Need more copies of this book to pass off to your friends, family, neighbors and coworkers? Text the author, Chris Folmsbee at XXX-XXX-XXX or email him at chris@14dayswithjesus.com and he'll be glad to help you.

Appendix A



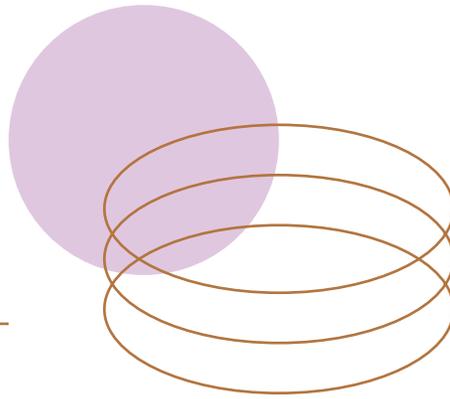
Jesus of Nazareth was born in humble circumstances in Bethlehem and raised in the town of Nazareth. His early life was mostly quiet. Around the age of 30, he began his public ministry following his baptism by John the Baptist and a time of testing in the wilderness. Jesus preached about the Kingdom of God, calling people to repentance, love, and faith. His teachings often came in the form of parables, and he emphasized love, compassion, forgiveness, and a sense of personal connection with God.

Throughout Jesus' ministry he performed many miracles that demonstrated his divine authority—healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, feeding multitudes, walking on water, turning water into wine, and even raising the dead. Jesus gained a large following, but he also faced growing opposition from religious leaders who felt threatened by his teachings and growing influence. Jesus' message often challenged established religious norms and highlighted the spirit of the law over rigid legalism, which caused tension with the Jewish authorities.

In the final days of his life, Jesus entered Jerusalem during the Jewish Passover festival and was greeted by crowds hailing him as the Messiah. However, this period, which today is often called Holy Week, also marked the beginning of Jesus' very public suffering. He was betrayed by one of His disciples, arrested, falsely accused, and subjected to an unjust trial. Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion under Roman authority at the behest of the religious establishment, a punishment he endured cooperatively, teaching even from the cross and offering forgiveness to his executioners.

Jesus died and was buried in a grave – what the Bible calls a tomb, but on the third day, he rose from the dead. The Resurrection was first discovered by women who found the tomb empty. Over the following days, Jesus appeared to many of His disciples, offering proof of his resurrection, teaching them, and preparing them for the mission ahead. His resurrection marked the fulfillment of his promises and became the cornerstone of Christian faith.

Appendix B



The Resurrection of Jesus is the central event in Christianity, signifying Jesus' victory over sin and death. It confirms his identity as the Son of God and validates his teachings. Without the Resurrection, Jesus might only be remembered as a good man, moral teacher or prophet; with it, Jesus is recognized as the risen Savior who offers eternal life. The Resurrection also fulfills Old Testament prophecies and affirms God's power to bring life out of death.

For Christians, the Resurrection offers daily, enduring hope and the promise of eternal life. It demonstrates that death is not the end, and that through faith in Christ—which is to say, believing in Jesus and seeking to live his teachings—, individuals can experience spiritual rebirth, initiating reconciliation with God and the restoration of the world. The Resurrection also empowers Christians to live with courage and purpose, knowing that their lives have eternal significance. The risen Christ assures his followers of his continual presence and the eventual restoration of all things.

Appendix C

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-58

¹ Brothers and sisters, I want to call your attention to the good news that I preached to you, which you also received and in which you stand. ² You are being saved through it if you hold on to the message I preached to you, unless somehow you believed it for nothing.

³ I passed on to you as most important what I also received: Christ died for our sins in line with the scriptures, ⁴ he was buried, and he rose on the third day in line with the scriptures. ⁵ He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve, ⁶ and then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at once—most of them are still alive to this day, though some have died. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me, as if I were born at the wrong time. ⁹ I'm the least important of the apostles. I don't deserve to be called an apostle, because I harassed God's church.

¹⁰ I am what I am by God's grace, and God's grace hasn't been for nothing. In fact, I have worked harder than all the others—that is, it wasn't me but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ So then, whether you heard the message from me or them, this is what we preach, and this is what you have believed.

¹² So if the message that is preached says that Christ has been raised from the dead, then how can some of you say, "There's no resurrection of the dead"? ¹³ If there's no resurrection of the dead, then Christ hasn't been raised either. ¹⁴ If Christ hasn't been raised, then our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. ¹⁵ We are found to be false witnesses about God, because we testified against God that he raised Christ, when he didn't raise him if it's the case that the dead aren't raised. ¹⁶ If the dead aren't raised, then Christ hasn't been raised either. ¹⁷ If Christ hasn't been raised, then your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins, ¹⁸ and what's more, those who have died in Christ are gone forever. ¹⁹ If we have a hope in Christ only in this life, then we deserve to be pitied more than anyone else.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead. He's the first crop of the harvest of those who have died.

²¹ Since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came through one too. ²² In the same way that everyone dies in Adam, so also everyone will be given life in Christ. ²³ Each event will happen in the right order: Christ, the first crop of the harvest, then those who belong to Christ at his coming, ²⁴ and then the end, when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he brings every form of rule, every authority and power to an end. ²⁵ It is necessary for him to rule until he puts all enemies under his feet.

²⁶ Death is the last enemy to be brought to an end, ²⁷ since he has brought everything under control under his feet. When it says that everything has been brought under his control, this clearly means everything except for the one who placed everything under his control. ²⁸ But when all things have been brought under his control, then the Son himself will also be under the control of the one who gave him control over everything so that God may be all in all. ²⁹ Otherwise, what are those who are getting baptized for the dead doing? If the dead aren't raised, then why are they being baptized for them? ³⁰ And what about us? Why are

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we in danger all day every day? ³¹ Brothers and sisters, I swear by the pride I have in you in Christ Jesus our Lord, I'm facing death every day. ³² From a human point of view, what good does it do me if I fought wild animals in Ephesus? If the dead aren't raised, let's eat and drink because tomorrow we'll die. ³³ Don't be deceived, bad company corrupts good character. ³⁴ Sober up by acting like you should and don't sin. Some of you are ignorant about God—I say this because you should be ashamed of yourselves!

³⁵ But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have when they come back?"

³⁶ Look, fool! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't come back to life unless it dies. ³⁷ What you put in the ground doesn't have the shape that it will have, but it's a bare grain of wheat or some other seed.

³⁸ God gives it the sort of shape that he chooses, and he gives each of the seeds its own shape. ³⁹ All flesh isn't alike. Humans have one kind of flesh, animals have another kind of flesh, birds have another kind of flesh, and fish have another kind. ⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. The heavenly bodies have one kind of glory, and the earthly bodies have another kind of glory. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of glory, the moon has another kind of glory, and the stars have another kind of glory (but one star is different from another star in its glory).

⁴² It's the same with the resurrection of the dead: a rotting body is put into the ground, but what is raised won't ever decay. ⁴³ It's degraded when it's put into the ground, but it's raised in glory. It's weak when it's put into the ground, but it's raised in power. ⁴⁴ It's a physical body when it's put into the ground, but it's raised as a spiritual body. If there's a physical body, there's also a spiritual body.

⁴⁵ So it is also written, The first human, Adam, became a living person, and the last Adam became a spirit that gives life. ⁴⁶ But the physical body comes first, not the spiritual one—the spiritual body comes afterward. ⁴⁷ The first human was from the earth made from dust; the second human is from heaven. ⁴⁸ The nature of the person made of dust is shared by people who are made of dust, and the nature of the heavenly person is shared by heavenly people. ⁴⁹ We will look like the heavenly person in the same way as we have looked like the person made from dust.

⁵⁰ This is what I'm saying, brothers and sisters: Flesh and blood can't inherit God's kingdom. Something that rots can't inherit something that doesn't decay. ⁵¹ Listen, I'm telling you a secret: All of us won't die, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the final trumpet. The trumpet will blast, and the dead will be raised with bodies that won't decay, and we will be changed. ⁵³ It's necessary for this rotting body to be clothed with what can't decay, and for the body that is dying to be clothed in what can't die.

⁵⁴ And when the rotting body has been clothed in what can't decay, and the dying body has been clothed in what can't die, then this statement in scripture will happen:
Death has been swallowed up by a victory.

⁵⁵ Where is your victory, Death?
 Where is your sting, Death?

(⁵⁶ Death's sting is sin, and the power of sin is the Law.) ⁵⁷ Thanks be to God, who gives us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! ⁵⁸ As a result of all this, my loved brothers and sisters, you must stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn't going to be for nothing in the Lord.