

HOW I GROW

14 Day Devotional



HOPE
CHURCH

DAY 1

The life of a Jesus follower is a life on a Spiritual Journey

"By faith [Abraham] went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents...For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:9, 10)

When you think about living the life of a Jesus follower, what do you think of? Maybe you think about going to church, reading the Bible, or praying. While all those should be part of the life of a Jesus follower, following Jesus is more than what we do! Following Jesus is about living life on a spiritual journey. **This spiritual journey is a lifelong, all-encompassing journey of faith.** So, what does this journey look like?

Regarded as the "Father of Faith," Abraham's life of obedience, faith in God's promises, and journey towards the promised land offers us an example of the spiritual journey. God called Abraham to leave his family and homeland for a foreign land he didn't know, while trusting in God's promise to bless the nations through a son Abraham didn't have, that God would bring blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:1-4). "By faith" Abraham journeyed throughout the promised land "living in tents" as a foreigner waiting to receive his inheritance. Though he lived in the land, he was not seeking to live in tents or even build an earthly city but was looking

forward towards a greater heavenly city made by God (Heb. 11:10). Abraham's faith consisted of more than a single moment or demonstration of belief, but was marked by a lifelong journey of faithfulness to God. Like Abraham, Jesus followers are to live by faith while on their spiritual journey throughout this world.

FURTHER STUDY

Hebrews 11:13-16; Philippians 3:20; 1 Peter 2:11-12

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does viewing the life of a Jesus follower as a lifelong, all-encompassing journey of faith impact how you view following Jesus?

2. When looking at the life of Abraham, what do you think was the most difficult moment or aspect of his life on his journey of faith towards the promised land? What has been yours?

PRAYER

Ask God to grant you the faith you need

Pray something like this: "God, show me where I lack faith. Help me to be faithful in..."

DAY 2

The journey begins by receiving the Gift of Salvation

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15)

Every journey, no matter the distance, begins with one step. **The first step in a Jesus follower's journey is to accept God's free gift of forgiveness and salvation, made available through Jesus Christ.** This first step marks the beginning of a new life and a relationship with Jesus. So how do you receive God's gift and begin a relationship with Jesus? Through repentance of sin and placing faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Jesus' public ministry began with an announcement that *"the time is fulfilled,"* meaning that God's historical promises of salvation had arrived in the person of Jesus. Through His ministry and mission as Messiah, Jesus initiated a new way for people to experience relationship with God. The kingdom of God would be made available to those who *"repent and believe in the gospel."* To *"repent"* means to acknowledge your sins and agree with God about them, turn away from your sins, and turn toward God. To *"believe"* means to know who Jesus is, trust in what He has done through His life, death, and resurrection, and receive God's gift of forgiveness of your sins. *"The gospel"* is the good news that Jesus lived the life we could not live, died the death we deserved to die, and rose from the

grave accomplishing salvation for all who would repent and believe.

FURTHER STUDY

Acts 20:21 Romans 3:23-28 Galatians 2:16

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Think back to your moment of receiving God's gift of salvation. What was your life like when you discovered Jesus and placed your faith in Him? How has it changed now that you are living the life of a Jesus follower?

2. Repentance and faith are not only the starting point for a relationship with Jesus, but they also mark our ongoing relationship with Him. What are some areas in your life that you need to repent of today? What are some areas where you need more faith?

PRAYER

Thank God for your Salvation

Pray something like this: "God, thank you for saving me when..."

DAY 3

The journey is towards Becoming like Jesus

*“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” (Romans 8:29)*

Like all journeys, there is a beginning and there is a destination. For the Jesus follower, the destination of a journey with Jesus is to become like Jesus. From the moment we surrender our lives to Jesus, placing our faith and trust in Him alone, we are saved from our sins! We do not journey to find, earn favor or friendship with Jesus, but because of our relationship with Jesus, God has promised that we will all *“be conformed to the image of his Son.”*

This means everything that happens in the life of a Jesus follower has a purpose: to transform our heart and life to become like Jesus.

We are reminded of this precious truth in Romans 8:29 after the Apostle Paul exclaims that *“for those who love God all things work together for good...”* (Rom. 8:28). How can he say that *“all things work together for good”* when so many things we experience in our lives are not good? As Jesus followers, we can have hope and rest no matter what we go through because God is at work accomplishing His good purpose in our lives (Rom. 8:29-30). Be encouraged! God set His love on you before the creation of the world and loved

you so much that He sent His Son to live and die for you. If you are a Jesus follower, He promises to bring you to future glory in heaven, and has a purpose for you right now to be conformed to the image of His Son by being transformed in this life.

FURTHER STUDY

Romans 12:2 2 Corinthians 3:18 Colossians 1:9-10

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does knowing that you have been *“predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son”* encourage you on your journey towards becoming like Jesus?

2. What does Romans 8:29 tell you about who God is and His love for you?

PRAYER

Praise God for who He is

Pray something like this: “God, I praise You because You are...”

DAY 4

Everyone is somewhere on this journey.

Where are you?

*“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
(Philippians 1:6)*

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul encourages his readers to continue in their journey with Jesus because God will continue to work in their lives until the day when they will live with Jesus. Paul emphasizes with certainty that “[God] who began a good work” in every Jesus follower is committed to completing that work. What is the work that God has begun? Salvation!

Salvation refers to God’s entire work in redeeming the whole person back into a right relationship with Him through the work of Jesus Christ. For Jesus followers...

God **has saved** us from the penalty of sin. We have been **justified**. God **is saving** us from the power of sin over our lives. We are being **sanctified**. God **will save** us from the presence of sin altogether. We will be **glorified**.

While justification is instantaneous the moment we begin a relationship with Jesus, sanctification is a progressive, ongoing process of becoming like Jesus.

Just like there are stages of growth in our physical lives, there are stages of growth in our spiritual lives. Some people are just beginning to learn what it means to believe,

others are growing in their faith, and some are helping to lead others. Before we can grow and move forward in becoming like Jesus, we must know what stage we are in now. Where are you on your journey towards becoming like Jesus?

FURTHER STUDY

Ephesians 2:8-10 Titus 2:11-14 Philippians 2:12-13

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

There are different stages and steps in the journey of faith towards becoming like Jesus. These stages include:

- **Seeking** – Someone who is searching for purpose and needs a relationship with Jesus.
- **Believing** – Someone who has a relationship with Jesus and needs to be discipled.
- **Growing** – Someone who is learning, serving, and maturing as a Jesus Follower and should disciple others.
- **Leading** – Someone who is influencing others to multiply Jesus Followers

1. If you had to place yourself in one of these four stages, where do you think you are right now? What do you think God is leading you to do as a result?

PRAYER

Ask God to help you on your journey

Pray something like this: "God, please help me to clearly identify where I'm at spiritually. Help me to move forward in becoming more like Jesus."

DAY 5

How do we grow on our journey?

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

Peter ends his second letter with the command to "grow" which means that the life of a Jesus follower is a life of growth. To grow in the "grace and knowledge" of Jesus, we begin by going to the source. Jesus is the Giver and source of both grace and knowledge. By grace, which is God's unearned and undeserved favor, we grow into a deeper understanding and knowledge of Jesus and deeper into a relationship with Him. But what are we to grow into and how do we grow? The answer to both questions is Jesus. All Jesus followers are to grow into becoming like Jesus. This happens as we surrender and let the life of Jesus by His Spirit lived out through us. Just as Jesus lived His life in relationship with the Father, His disciples, and the world, we become more like Jesus the more we grow in those relationships. We grow by God forming us through intaking **biblical truth**, habituating **spiritual practices** into our daily rhythms, and living these things out in the context of **gospel community**. As we take steps towards growing in those areas, we make space for the Holy Spirit to transform us, from one stage to another becoming more mature in

our faith and further along in our journey. We grow and are formed into becoming like Jesus as we take the truth of God's Word and practice it in our lives within a community of Jesus followers.

FURTHER STUDY

Ephesians 4:20-24 1 Pet. 2:21 2 Peter 1:5-8

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which area of your life with Jesus (biblical truth, spiritual practices, gospel community) do you feel is lacking? Which area are you doing well in?

2. What practical steps can you take today to grow in each of those areas?

PRAYER

Thank God for His enabling grace

Pray something like this: "God, thank You for your grace. Please help me to grow in..."

DAY 6

We Grow as we Abide in Christ...through spending time in God's Word

*"And as for the resurrection of the dead, **have you not read what was said to you by God:**" (Matthew 22:31)*

When Jesus corrected the Sadducees concerning the resurrection, He asked them, *"have you not read what was said to you by God?"* While the point of Jesus' rebuke was their error about the Scriptures and the power of God, the basis of His response was the Sadducees' accountability to the Scriptures that were spoken to them by God! Jesus knew the Scriptures to be the very words spoken by God. This means the Bible is the Word of God and our ultimate authority. Therefore, it is all true and to be trusted.

So, how do we abide in Christ and grow through God's Word?

We grow through the daily spiritual practice of engaging with the Scriptures. Whether we read, study, meditate, or memorize the Scriptures, we must do so daily and meaningfully. While our next step of spiritual growth may differ and depend on what stage we are in, we all have a next step to take in our engagement with Scripture and time with God. If you currently aren't spending any time in God's Word, your next step is to start today and start small. Set a time and place, prioritize that time, and begin to develop a daily habit of reading God's Word, maybe starting with

one of the four Gospels: the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. If you are reading daily, perhaps your next step is to dig a little deeper and start studying the Scriptures. No matter what spiritual stage you find yourself in today, it's the best next step in your journey as a Jesus follower.

FURTHER STUDY

2 Timothy 3:15-17 2 Peter 1:19-22 Proverbs 30:5-6

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does knowing that the Scriptures are the very words of God impact how you view the Bible?

2. How are you currently engaging with God's Word? What is your next step in growing in this spiritual practice?

PRAYER

Thank God for His Word

Pray something like this: "God, thank You for your Word. Help me to love it, understand it, and live it."

DAY 7

We Grow as we Abide in Christ... through Prayer

"Make me to know your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long." (Psalm 25:4-5)

The Wisdom books of the Bible can be seen as "how to" books. Lamentations: How to Mourn. Ecclesiastes: How to Deal with Life's Questions. Proverbs: How to Live Wisely. In the same way, we can consider Psalms as How to Pray. It's within these honest cries for God's help that we can learn to converse with our Creator and *"approach his throne of grace with confidence"* (Hebrews 4:16). We receive mercy and grace there. We can be honest with God. The writer of Psalm 25, David, asks for specific help in his prayer, i.e. to be taught and led by God. To be teachable is to be humble. A Jesus follower is a *student* – an apprentice – of Christ's. His paths are steadfast love and faithfulness (Psalm 25:10). Truth is Jesus Himself and His Word. The theme here is trust. We trust in the Lord to lead us well and to be our salvation. We trust the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. We can rest assured that God will teach us everything we need to know in order to be a faithful follower of Jesus *"in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* (Colossians 2:3)

FURTHER STUDY

Matthew 6:6; Psalm 25:20-21

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of “wait-er” are you? What makes it difficult to practice patience as we wait for God’s response in prayer?

2. The writer of this psalm is very direct in what he’s asking of the Lord. What would it look like for you to grow bolder in your asking (“supplication”)?

PRAYER

“God, I want to know you. Help me patiently wait. I trust you to lead me. Today, I am trusting you for _____, and I need_____.

Be my Teacher! Lead me. I am Yours.”

(Be direct in your asking of the Lord)

DAY 8

We Grow as we Abide in Christ... through Silence and Solitude

"And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. So Jacob called the name of the place, Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.'" (Genesis 32:24 & 30)

It's in the quiet places, especially our hearts, that God seems to speak the loudest to us in prayer. When we get alone with Him, we are presenting ourselves as a ready listener – ready to receive whatever He wants to tell us. We also follow the example of Jesus himself who made it a practice to go away from the crowd and meet with the Father by himself (Mark 1:35).

As we make space to listen, God is faithful to show up (James 4:8). Not every encounter we have with the Risen Savior will be as dramatic as Jacob's, but each experience will change us. Why? Because we become what we behold (2 Corinthians 3:18). When we get alone with the Lord, focus on His Presence (Face), and honestly grapple with whatever is troubling us, God moves. He molds. We are changed. He is our Rock, Refuge, and Deliverer (Psalm 18:2). Silence and solitude is a significant practice in our journey as a Jesus Follower.

FURTHER STUDY

Exodus 14:14; Ecclesiastes 5:1-3

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What has been your experience with intentional silence as a way to draw close to God? Do you find it difficult or fairly easy? Why?

2. What are one or two ways you can create some space in your day to get alone with the Lord (even if for a minute or two at first?)

PRAYER

“Lord, I want to meet with you. Your voice is the one I need most. It’s not always easy for me to get away and get quiet, but I want to! I want to be changed into your likeness. God, I am wrestling with _____ in my life lately. Help me. Will you speak your truth in love to me? I’m here. I’m listening.”

DAY 9

We Grow as we take next steps of obedience to Jesus.

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22)

As Jesus followers, we are to abide in Christ which means our lives are to be marked by spending time with Him through His Word, prayer, and other spiritual practices. The more time we spend with Him, the more we know Him. The more we know Him the more we love Him. And the more we love Him, the more we desire to obediently follow His lead.

It is impossible for us to spend genuine time with Jesus and not be changed by Him. In the same way, we cannot spend our lives simply hearing the truth of God's Word without ever living it out. To be *"doers of the word"* is to receive what we hear from God's Word and joyfully put into practice all that it says. We demonstrate to the world our faith in Jesus as we live lives in obedience to Jesus out of an overflow of gratitude and love for Him. If being doers of the word refers to doing what God's Word says and living out our faith, how do we grow in obedience to Jesus?

We grow in our obedience to Jesus as we apply His Word in our lives within a community of Jesus followers. For some, the next step of obedience may be baptism or spending more time with Jesus. For others, there may be unconfessed sins which need to be repented or habits that need to be broken.

Regardless of where we are on our journey with Jesus, we all have a next step.

FURTHER STUDY

James 1:22–27 John 15:10 Psalm 1:1-2

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Where are the areas in your life you need to grow as a Jesus follower? What sins do you need to confess?

2. What is the next step you can take in your spiritual journey and how can you practically take it?

PRAYER

Ask God to help you be a doer of the Word


Pray something like this: “God, please show me where I am just being a hearer of Your Word and grant me the grace to become a doer of it.”



DAY 10

We Grow as we connect with other followers of Jesus.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)



We spiritually grow as Jesus followers when we deepen our relationship with Him through spiritual practices such as reading His Word, prayer, and experiencing silence and solitude. However, though our relationship with Him was always meant to be personal, it was never meant to be private. Our God has always existed as one God in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in perfect love and community with Himself. He made us so that we may experience and share in His love, not only with Him but with other people. From the beginning God made us in His image and made us for relationships to reflect His love in community (Gen. 1:26; 2:18).

As Jesus followers, we are commanded to *"love one another"* just as Jesus has loved us. In fact, Jesus said that by loving one another *"all people will know that you are my disciples."* **This means that a defining mark in the life of a Jesus follower is a genuine love for other Jesus followers.** A selfless and sacrificial love like this for others will never develop in isolation. We were always designed to be connected in community with other Jesus followers. As we

live our lives in relationship and community with others, according to God's design, we will grow towards becoming more like Jesus and into a deeper relationship with Him.

FURTHER STUDY

Proverbs 27:17 Romans 15:14 Galatians 6:2

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Honestly look at your relationships with other Jesus followers. Do you see a love for others? If so, what ways can you continue to demonstrate your love? If not, how can you begin?

2. How important has living in community with other Jesus followers been to you? Thank God for those He has brought into your life.

PRAYER

Ask God to Help you Love Others

Pray something like this: "God, help me to love others. Give me your heart for your people."

DAY 11

We Grow as we play our part in the body of Christ.

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:" (1 Peter 4:10)

When you think about receiving a gift, what do you think of? Maybe you think of the reason for, the cost of, or the giver of the gift. Peter says, *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another."* This is meant to remind us that not all gifts we receive are given solely to bless us but to be a blessing to others. Every Jesus follower has been gifted by God with at least one spiritual gift, i.e. a way He expresses His Spirit through you, for the purpose of serving and strengthening the people of God. Recognizing that whatever gifts we possess have been graciously given to us, we are to live the life of a Jesus follower *"as good stewards of God's varied grace."*

If we all have spiritual gifts, how do we use them? By taking the gifts we have been given and meaningfully using them in our relationships with other Jesus followers, in service to our local church and to the surrounding community. Our gifts may be different, which means our part in the body of Christ may look different from others. **But we all have a part to play and a place to serve within the body of Christ.** As we use our gifts, we will grow on our journey towards becoming like Jesus.

FURTHER STUDY

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 Colossians 3:23-24 Galatians 5:13

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What spiritual gifts has God given you?
2. How are you currently using your gifts to serve other Jesus followers, your church, and community?

PRAYER

Ask God to use you for His Glory

Pray something like this: "God, thank you for the ways you have gifted me by Your Spirit. Please show me where and how I can best use them to love and serve others."

DAY 12

We Grow as we Share in the mission...through sharing our story

"For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16)

Regardless of when, where, or from what God has saved you, if you are a Jesus follower that means you have a story! No matter the circumstances, **your life provides a story of God's glory and power in salvation.** While the appearance of our lives may have been different, our position before God without Jesus was the same. We were *"dead [in our] trespasses and sins"* – guilty without any ability on our own to reach out and be reconciled to God (Eph. 2:1). Therefore, every time a sinner is forgiven and brought into a relationship with God, the love and power of God in salvation is on display for the world to see. Your life as a Jesus follower tells a story of God's glory in how He has brought you into salvation through faith in Jesus, is conforming you to become like Jesus, and has given you hope in this life and the life to come.

Sharing our story glorifies God and opens opportunities for gospel conversations. Just as we all have a story, we all have the responsibility to tell the world what God has done for us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Think of the Apostle Paul who did not seek out or ask for his

gospel ministry (Acts 9:15) but was *“compelled to preach”* nonetheless. Let us share our story and God’s story of salvation in the gospel because it is a story worth being shared.

FURTHER STUDY

Ephesians 2:1-10 Acts 9:10-19 Matthew 9:37-38

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does reminding yourself of your story and the story of the gospel cause you to grow in love towards God and others?

2. How often do you share your story or the gospel message? How can you share both more often?

PRAYER

Ask God for Boldness, Courage, and Love to Share

“Pray something like this: “God, please grant me the boldness, courage, and love for You and others that I need to share my story and the hope of the gospel.”

DAY 13

We Grow as we Share in the mission...through multiplying disciples who multiply disciples.

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." (Colossians 1:28)

No matter where we are in our spiritual journey, all Jesus followers are disciples and are expected to make disciples. So, what is discipleship? Simply put, it is apprenticeship to Jesus. Through repeatable, relational stages and steps, **Jesus followers lead other Jesus followers to spiritually grow and mature into disciple-makers who model the life of Jesus.** An apprenticeship like this is what helps us become disciples who make disciples!

The Apostle Paul, perhaps the greatest of all disciple-makers, was not content to just see people decide to follow Jesus. He sought to invest in Jesus followers who would become like Jesus and do what Jesus did, including make more disciples! By proclaiming Jesus, warning, teaching, and sharing wisdom with others at every opportunity, the end goal of Paul's ministry and all discipleship is to *"present everyone mature in Christ."* As we are spiritually formed in our journey towards becoming *"mature in Christ,"* we also are called to multiply our faith in others, making disciples who make disciples.

FURTHER STUDY

Luke 14:25-27 John 15:16-17 Acts 11:19-26

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think participating in the spiritual formation of other Jesus followers would encourage you in your own journey with Jesus?

2. Who is investing in you as a Jesus follower, and who are you investing in?

PRAYER

Thank God for those who disciplined you

Pray something like this: "God, thank you for using _____ to help me become more like you. Help me to lead others in the same way."

DAY 14

We Grow as we Share in the mission...through reaching the nations.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

After His resurrection, Jesus spent his final forty days on earth teaching and preparing His disciples to share in His mission to reach the nations (Acts 1:1-11). Based on His *"authority in heaven and on earth"* (Matt. 28:18), Jesus commands His disciples then and His disciples today to *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."* Due to God's all-powerful saving grace and the obedience of Jesus followers throughout history, the gospel has reached you where you are today. To think, you know Jesus and freely worship Him in a country that did not yet exist during the time when He walked the earth. Still, God's heart for the nations included you.

Today, we benefit from nearly two thousand years of obedient Jesus followers sharing in God's mission of reaching the nations. Though the gospel has gone throughout much of the world, there is much of the world that has never heard the gospel or even the name of Jesus. **God's mission to reach the nations involves every**

Jesus follower, including you. While that truth may be intimidating, the command to make disciples is accompanied by Jesus' promise that He will be with us always. We grow in becoming like Jesus as His heart for the nations is formed in us and we share in His mission of reaching the nations with the gospel.

FURTHER STUDY

Acts 1:1-11 Psalm 67:7 Matthew 24:14

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does seeing God's faithfulness throughout history strengthen our faith in God reaching the nations with the gospel?

2. How are you currently sharing in God's mission of reaching the nations? How can you continue or begin?

PRAYER

Ask God to give you a Heart for the Nations

Pray something like this: "God, please give me a heart like yours for the peoples of the earth and show me how I can share in Your mission locally and globally."

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