

IMPACT

A 21 DAY READING PLAN TO
ENCOURAGE CAMANO CHAPEL FAMILIES
TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

The readings in this 21 day booklet are adapted from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. They are written in memory of Rev. Billy Graham. May we all pick up the baton of the gospel witness so that our world would come to know Jesus.

DAY 1: THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL STORY

God dwelling among us. Jesus, taken to the cross on behalf of our brokenness and raised to life. The hope of the nations. The light in our darkness. The only answer for those crushed and bruised by a world that moves too quickly, tempting us to doubt and cling only to what is fleeting and passing.

This is what the gospel is.

When we dreamt up Our Gospel Story, it started with this question: If Christ-followers don't show & share the only love that heals all, who will? If we don't reach out to friends and neighbors, family and strangers, who are journeying this life without the knowledge of a God who loves them, then how will they ever hear?

If you were to stop and think about how many people you shared the gospel message with this year, what would you say? 20? 10? 5? 1? 0?

A Lifeway Research survey showed that 79% of unchurched people would engage in a faith conversation if a friend asked them. Yet only 39% of Christians said that they shared with someone how to become a Christian in a 6-month period.

So although many still need to hear of a God who loves them unconditionally, too many of us aren't talking.

Our Gospel Story began with the understanding that no matter how much we read our Bibles or how deep our own walk with God is, our theology only comes to life when we put it into action.

DAY 2: DEFINING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (PART 1)

In the Greek New Testament, the word gospel is the translation of the Greek noun euangelion, “good news,” and the verb euangelizo, meaning “to bring or announce good news.” Both terms come from the noun angelos, which means “messenger.”

In classical Greek, an euangelos was one who brought a message of victory or other political or personal news that caused joy. In addition, euangelizomai (the middle voice form of the verb) meant “to speak as a messenger of gladness, to proclaim good news.”

So if the gospel is “good news”, what is the good news? Luke 2:10-11 declares this upon the birth of Jesus Christ into our world:

“And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’ ”

DAY 3: DEFINING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (PART 2)

So the good news is about the birth of Jesus. But why was this birth different from any other? Who was this Jesus?

Matthew 3:17 answers, “And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.’”

So Jesus was the Son of God, okay. But what else?

Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

He was the sinless Son of God who took our sin upon Himself so that we can be reconciled to God.

In John 10:30, Jesus says of Himself: “I and the Father are one.” And John 1:1-2 adds, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

But what does Jesus actually do? Isaiah 53:5 says, “But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”

DAY 4: DEFINING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (PART 3)

John 3:16 says “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

In its simplest form, the gospel is God sending His perfect Son into the world for our sake, taking our sin and shame upon Himself, so that we could be reconciled to God both now and for all eternity.

And this good news—this gospel—is for all: “...God our Savior...wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2:3b-4)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

DAY 5: THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our fear of failure, chastisement, or mockery may be high. These things may in fact halt us in our tracks before we take the first step in telling others about Jesus. But one thing we must remember: God is already at work in the lives of people before we even get there.

Our faith conversations have already been paved by the path of the Holy Spirit, who seeks to woo all people to God. Consider the difference this makes as you approach the idea of evangelism.

So God has gone before us, preparing the hearts of others. That means that He is also the one who will open or close their hearts. John 6:44 reminds us, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.” Whether or not people say “yes” or “no” when we ask them to trust in Christ is not up to us, nor is it a reflection of how well we showed & shared God’s love with them.

We can finally breathe a sigh of relief knowing that as we throw our seeds out there in love, God will do with them what He will.

DAY 6: THE ROLE OF PRAYER

The foundation of prayer cannot be overstated when it comes to showing & sharing the love of Jesus with others. We are treading on territory that can be jarring and unsettling— parts of life that are not yet claimed by Christ and are in need of restoring.

This requires a deep connection with the Lord we love, and His guidance and wisdom in next steps.

Matthew 9:37-38 says, “Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.’”

We ask God for help as we, His workers, go out.

A quick note: this passage does not mean we just pray for others to go. God has called all of us to show & share His love with those around us. But this begins with and is covered in prayer, whether that’s a whisper of help or an hour set aside for interceding for another before we go.

PERSONAL REFLECTION



DAY 7: MOVING PAST FEAR (PART 1)

For many of us, the unknown can be terrifying—and as creatures who are highly social and connected to each other, the unknown of how someone will respond to something we say can even cause us to say nothing at all.

When it comes to the gospel, silence is never satisfying. Even as our hearts can burn within us to tell others about the loving heart and forgiving nature of Jesus, our fears often win out. Whether real or perceived, fear is our enemy when it comes to evangelism. The Bible tells us much about how to deal with fear.

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” - Isaiah 41:10

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 4:6-7

PERSONAL REFLECTION

DAY 8: MOVING PAST FEAR (PART 2)

More verses to encourage us to move past fear:

“Peace is what I leave with you; it is My own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.” - John 14:27

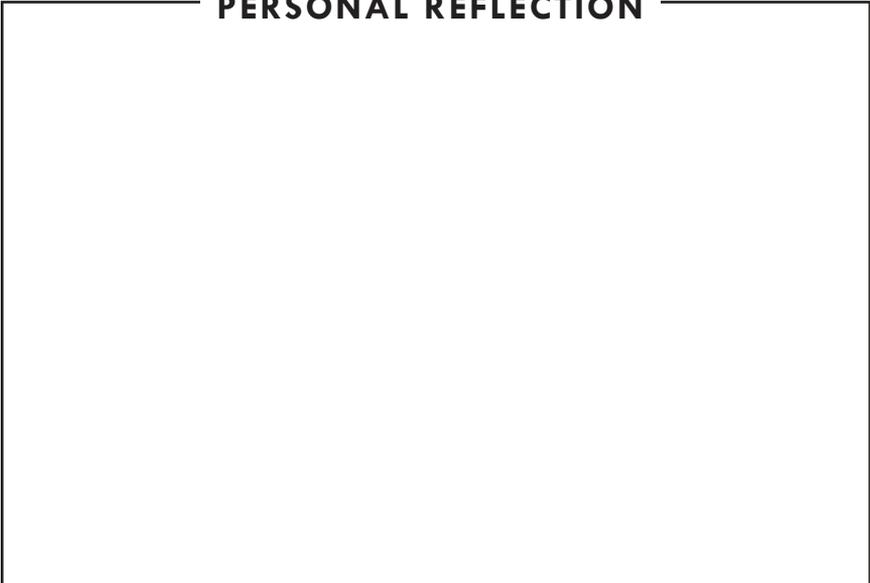
“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” - 2 Timothy 1:7

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” - 1 John 4:18

“When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.” - Psalm 94:19

Take a moment and consider what role fear plays in your life, especially when it comes to evangelism. Now re-read the verses above, knowing that God has called us to move past fear into faith. After all, the unknown may include realities and responses more positive and responsive than you could imagine.

PERSONAL REFLECTION



DAY 9: MOVING PAST COMPLACENCY

It is not uncommon that there are moments when our love for God wanes. Each morning, we wake up and must work to keep God at the center of our lives. This world clamors to get our attention and take our eyes off the One who matters most of all. Some of these are very good things, like family, friends, and work. Others are either neutral or harmful.

Regardless, when our lives get so full that days pass without even a moment when we are concerned about reaching others with the love of Jesus, something has gone wrong. The eternal has been crowded out by the temporal.

When you consider evangelism, are you complacent? Apathetic? Does the thought of evangelism not excite or interest you? There can be many reasons this is the case, including poor examples of others doing it wrong, inexperience of what it's like to lead another to Jesus, or biblical illiteracy concerning either the importance of showing & sharing the love of Jesus on a regular basis or our missional mandate. The Bible has much to say about the singular importance of our faith and witness.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with endurance the race set out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”
-Hebrews 12:1-3

PERSONAL REFLECTION

DAY 10: WHY GOD MADE US EACH DIFFERENT

No two people are the same. We take in—and offer out—emotions, processing, and thoughts in an infinite number of ways. When 1 Corinthians 12 tells us about the “gifts of the Spirit” and the “parts of the body,” it isn’t simply a recognition of how we serve fellow believers. Our gifts are given to us for the good of both the church and the world.

If you have the gift of service, mercy, teaching, or encouragement, it is for your non-Christian neighbor or friend. It’s for the checkout clerk at the grocery store and the homeless man on the street. It’s for the angry co-worker and the tired and weary mom.

Many of us think that we need to have the gift of an “evangelist” (Eph. 4:11) to engage in evangelism. More of us think that because we aren’t pastors or counselors or “professional” missionaries, we aren’t as capable of showing and sharing the love of Jesus with those around us.

Consider for a moment if all those with the gift of evangelist, pastor, and full-time missionary were suddenly unable to share the gospel with others. This would be a small number—maybe less than 10% of the Christian population. Eliminate these groups and we still have 90% of the Church—you! If everyone had your perspective on evangelism, how far would the gospel reach?

It is not a mistake that God made us each differently. Take a few minutes and consider how God has made you. What are your top gifts, talents, or passions? How can you use them to reach out and share the gospel with non-believers?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

DAY 11: SEVEN FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES (PART 1)

Before we begin a gospel conversation, it is worth considering strategies that can make our conversations more fruitful. Seek to memorize these seven, as they will serve you well when you engage others with the good news.

Strategy #1: Love Jesus. This may seem silly, but it's actually one of the key reasons people either don't engage in evangelism, or do it poorly. We must be so in love with our beloved Savior that not talking about Him would seem very odd since He is our #1 priority. We have found our true love and want to tell the world about Him. Let Psalm 51:15 be your guide: "Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare Your praise."

Strategy #2: Spend a lot of time with God. A lot. Read scripture, pray, maybe even journal. Make these things a priority so that other things don't crowd them out. We must take very seriously what God has called us to and we ought to want to do it with excellence. Let Colossians 3:23 be your guide: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for men..."

Strategy #3: Be bold. No, not bold as in, "Let me tell you how to get out of hell, you who I just met on the street." Rather, bold as in, you are not afraid to speak the name of Jesus or to celebrate His goodness. Ignore the voice of doubt that whispers, "Who are you to tell people about Jesus?" Understand that Jesus is Lord and Savior and the hope of the world, and be unashamed to say so! Let Romans 1:16 be your encouragement: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes..."

PERSONAL REFLECTION

DAY 12: SEVEN FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES (PART 2)

Two more practices for fruitful conversations with non-believers:

Strategy #4: Embrace humility. As followers of Christ who are filled with His Holy Spirit, we never take the credit for leading people to Jesus. It is always God's work. Understand it is God's world, God's field, God's saving grace. Like the Apostle Paul, we can let 1 Corinthians 9:16 be our mantra: "For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

Strategy #5: Be a good reporter. Ask good questions: "So, tell me more about yourself..." or "Do you have a faith background?" Whatever the question, understand that Jesus' modus operandi was often to ask questions to get people thinking. It's a way of engaging others on a deeper and more meaningful level.

DAY 13: SEVEN FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES (PART 3)

Two more practices for fruitful conversations with non-believers:

Strategy #6: Be a good listener. As followers of Christ, we take on the character of Christ, one of which is listening well. Listening = caring. Otherwise, we are just a "clanging cymbal or a resounding gong." We must remember that we have two ears and one mouth for a reason. We must listen intently and ask God for guidance in responding. We can let James 1:19 be our guide: "...Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry..."

Strategy #7: Believe God has called YOU to evangelism. Oftentimes, we "non- evangelist" people see evangelists as better and more righteous and holy than us. We erroneously believe they are closer to God and have it all together. The truth is, the more time we spend with evangelist friends, the more we realize they are just like us. They have fears and uncertainties that occasionally paralyze them. They get bumps and bruises along the way. But they always get back up and continue to live in a manner worthy of what God has called them to. This must be our strategy as well.

DAY 14: QUESTIONS TO SEGUE INTO A GOSPEL CONVERSATION (PART 1)

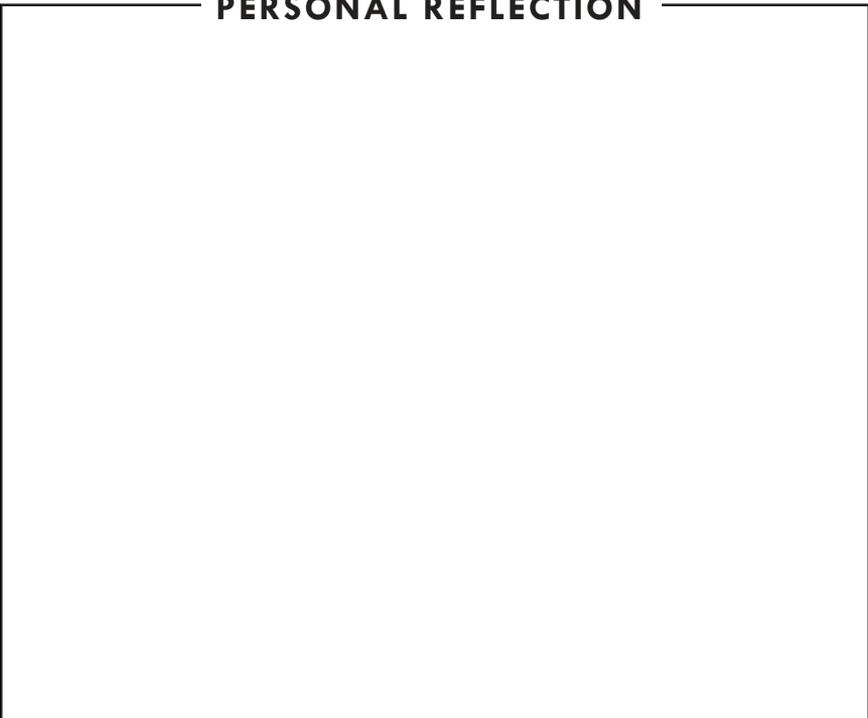
Jesus was the master of using questions to engage His audience. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? What did you go out into the desert to see? Why do you call Me good?

In Mark 10, we read about Jesus engaging the blind man Bartimaeus, who was sitting beside the road as Jesus walked by. As he shouted, people told him to be quiet, but Jesus stopped and engaged the man with this question: "What do you want Me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51).

His question addressed the man's need—and need is often the place where the gospel can penetrate the deepest.

What kind of questions can you use to move your conversations in a spiritual direction?

PERSONAL REFLECTION



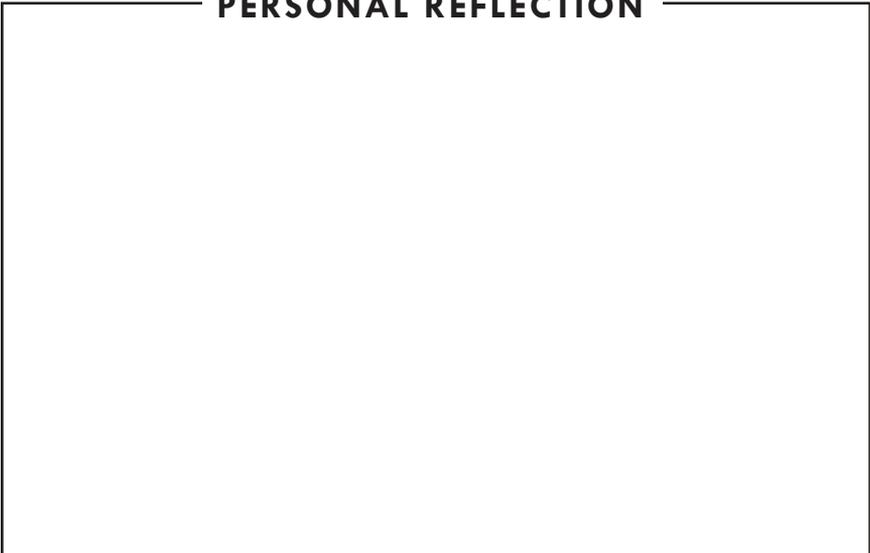
DAY 15: QUESTIONS TO SEGUE INTO A GOSPEL CONVERSATION (PART 2)

Here are a number of questions that are non-confrontational, yet direct:

- Do you have a spiritual background?
- What is your spiritual heritage?
- What one thing would you ask God?
- Would you tell me your story?
- Can I pray for you?
- Where's your hope?
- What's the greatest thing that's happened to you?
- When you hear someone talk about Jesus, what are your thoughts?

Pray for God to give you an opportunity as you engage with those around you to use the above questions. As you move through conversations, there will inevitably be a good moment to ask one of the above.

PERSONAL REFLECTION



DAY 16: LISTENING TO GOD

Although there is only one gospel, there is no one way to share the gospel. Sometimes, it will feel natural and easy. This can especially be the case if someone is going through a difficult time and there is a felt need for comfort and hope.

Other times, sharing the gospel may be a lengthy process, planting seeds one by one until the time of harvest.

When we are in relationships with people who seem to have it all together and are in “good” seasons of life, it may seem more difficult to talk about Jesus. But regardless of where someone is at in life, there is always an opportunity to praise God for the good things around us.

The key is always listening for God’s promptings—either ones that move us forward, or that tell us when to stop. Severed from the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, we may push too hard—or not hard enough—when it comes to evangelism. Take a few minutes to ask God to guide you as you engage in gospel conversations in the days to come.

DAY 17: TRANSITIONING INTO THE INVITATION (PART 1)

It’s the big moment when we utter the words, “Is there any reason you shouldn’t trust Jesus right now?” Inside, we might be filled with anxiety, and that’s okay. But what we must remember is that the moment is not about us; it’s about following God because He wants to see people come to a knowledge of Himself: “...God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2:3-4)

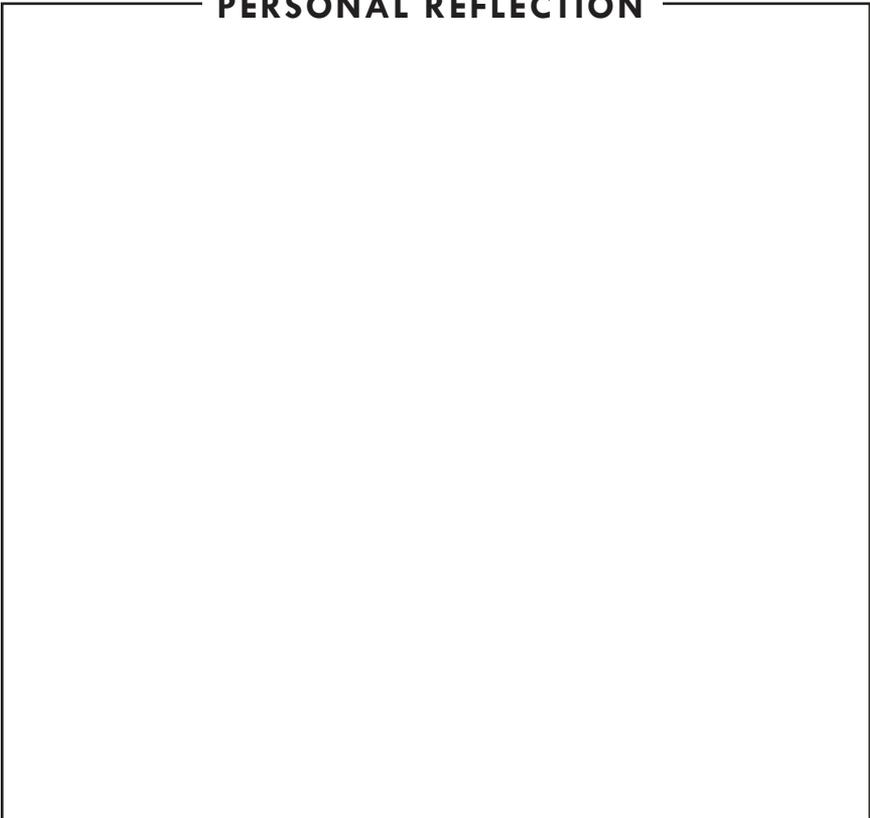
We ask people to trust in Jesus Christ because they need Him. We all do. We ask because we love them and want them to experience new life in Christ both now and forever. We ask because the person hasn’t trusted in Jesus. And he or she needs to.

DAY 18: TRANSITIONING INTO THE INVITATION (PART 2)

Once we have moved through public questions to spiritual questions and we sense an openness to Jesus, the next logical step is to make the ask. Here is where, too often, people cut bait. We may be in a great conversation only to cut it short. Don't do it! If God has led you to the point of seeming openness on the part of the other person, don't cut off the work of the Holy Spirit. Be a vessel that God wants to use to communicate His full gospel message to that person.

The simple question, "Is there any reason you shouldn't trust in Jesus right now?" allows the person the dignity to answer "yes" or "no." It leaves the door open if more conversation needs to happen, and gives you the peace of knowing that in that instance, it is between God and that person on next steps.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

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DAY 19: WHAT DO I DO IF SOMEONE SAYS 'NO'?

Sometimes things don't go well when we engage in evangelism. We may honestly seek to show & share the love of Jesus to another who may not accept what we are saying. There are many reasons this may be the case:

- The timing may not be right. God may still be working on the person's heart. He may need us to simply continue to witness of His grace and love. We are a stepping stone in that person's faith journey.
- He or she may have unanswered questions when it comes to the Christian faith. The person may be on the road to faith but needs to resolve a few concerns first. Perhaps we can play that role and help him or her discover the answers; perhaps it will be someone else to come alongside the person. Regardless, our efforts are not in vain.
- The person may be hostile to the Christian faith because of past experiences and hurts. This may take time and continual compassion and care in order for the person to begin to open his or her heart to matters related to faith.

Remember, no attempt to share the gospel is a bad attempt. There will be times when people say no, and that's okay.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

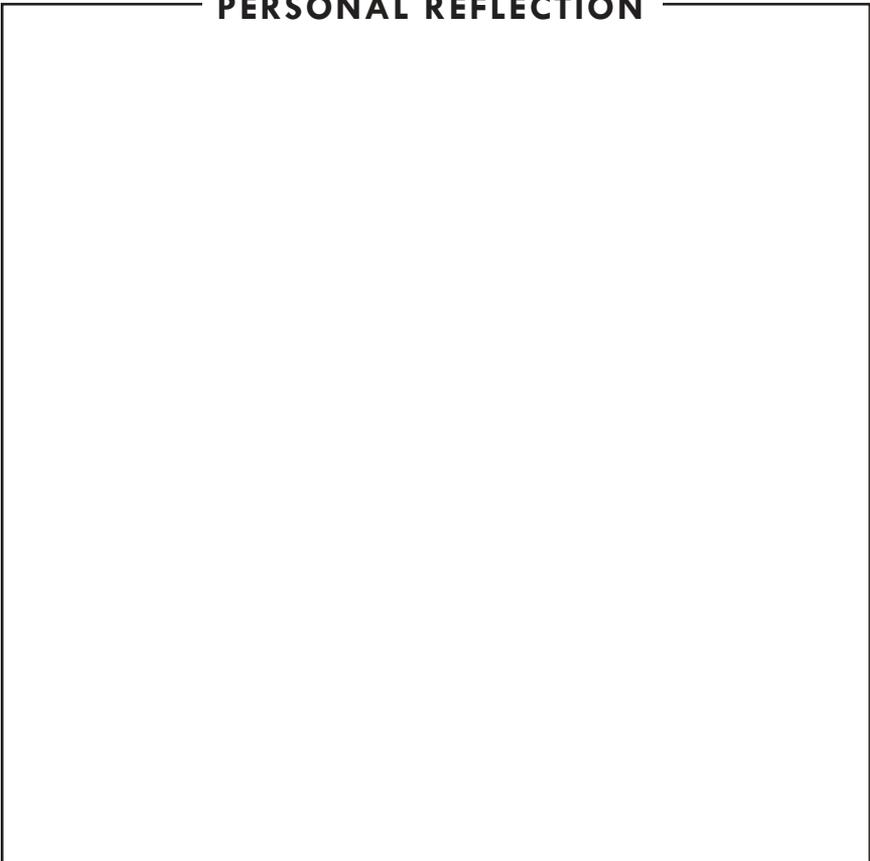
DAY 20: WHAT DO I DO IF SOMEONE SAYS ‘YES’?

There is nothing in the world like having the privilege of leading others to trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Any number of emotions can bubble to the surface—joy, relief, praise, even fear.

Yes, even fear. We wonder, What do I do now that _____ has trusted in Christ? You will have now been pushed into Discipleship 101.

The point is this: As much as you are able, continue the journey with them. If it's someone you led to Christ during travels, seek to stay in touch via email, texting, and calling. If it's someone in your area, provide them with tools and community where you live. Like anything else in life, the Christian faith walk is best done in community and companionship.

PERSONAL REFLECTION



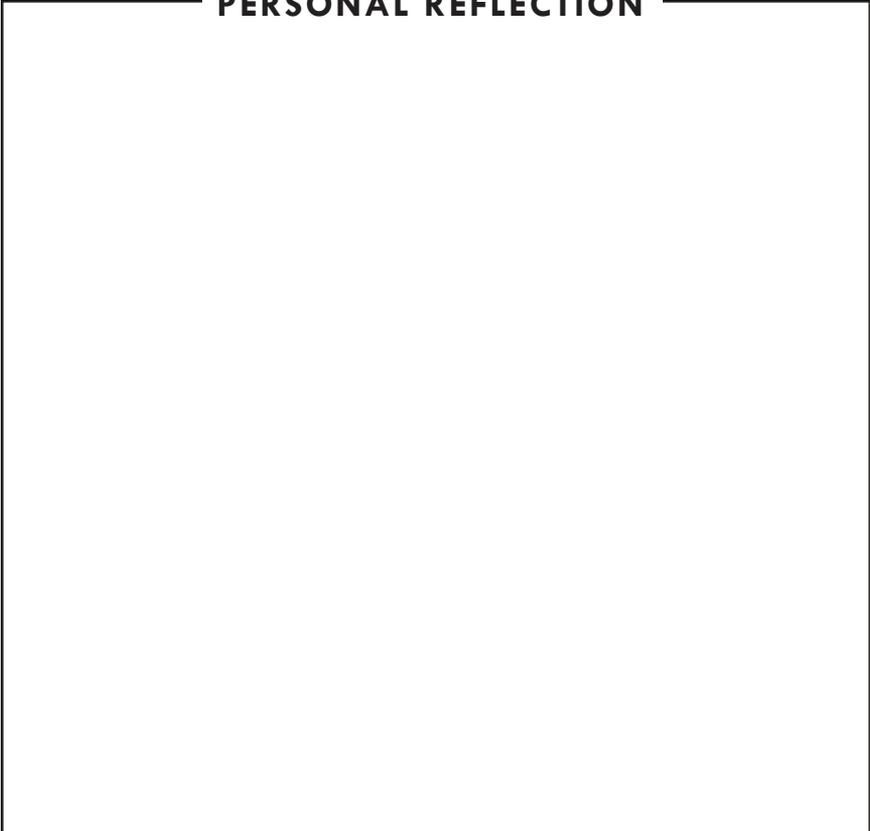
DAY 21: THE ONGOING ROLE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Just as we didn't stop growing, learning, and trusting when we first accepted Christ, so too when others come to faith, it is only the first step in what we pray will be a lifelong love for God, the God who loves them.

Scripture teaches us what it looks like to follow Christ in the easy and the hard places of life. It forces us to ask hard questions that take us deeper in our faith, and it stretches us to live in ways that our carnal nature could never imagine.

Your commitment to discipleship—both your own and others'—is a reflection of your commitment to God Himself. Take a few minutes and ask God to reveal areas where you can grow in your own discipleship, and offer up your heart and life to invest in others' journeys of faith as well.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

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