





Sequoias



mightiest of the trees they've reigned



undisputed as the largest living organisms



over the vegetal kingdom for millennia



their trunk can reach 30 feet wide



and their non resinous



and spongy bark



can be as thick as 3 feet at their base



providing them with a natural shield



against one of nature's greatest adversaries



the great force of a wildfire



destructive in nature



they carry the potential of decimating



all life in its wake



yet for the sequoias



fires are a necessity for the forest life cycle

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to truly live

01

ALTARS

In Scripture, altars mark the places where something was laid down. Noah built one the day he stepped off the ark. Abraham built one on Moriah with his son beside him. Elijah repaired a broken one on Carmel before the fire fell. Every altar cost somebody something, and every one of them marked a life reordered around God.

Altars is our week for that. From August 30 to September 5, we'll fast during the day and gather every evening for worship and prayer. Seven days, set apart before fall picks up speed, to put first things back first.

This journal begins three weeks earlier, on August 9, because a week like this deserves preparation. Daily Scripture, stories from our own church, and space to write, so that when the week arrives, we come ready.

COME AND DIE
TO TRULY LIVE

Jesus told the crowd exactly what following him would cost: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:24–25).

A cross had one use in the first century. Nobody carried one as a metaphor. The people listening understood: he was talking about death.

That sounds like bad news until you hear the whole sentence. The one who loses their life for his sake finds it. Jesus is describing how life actually works in his kingdom. A grain of wheat stays a single seed until it falls into the ground and dies; then it produces many seeds (John 12:24). In God's economy, dying is how things grow.

Most of us aren't trying to lose our lives. We're managing them. Protecting them. Optimizing them. And Jesus' words expose what that project costs us: the self-protected life shrinks. Grabbing at your life is precisely how you lose it.

So this year's invitation is blunt. Come and die. Die to the version of yourself you've been curating. Die to the sin you've negotiated a truce with. Die to comfort as your compass, approval as your fuel, control as your security. God isn't against you in this. Everything he wants to give you sits on the other side of that death.

Paul wrote about it in the past tense: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Crucified, and more alive than he'd ever been. That's the trade this journal is after.

For three weeks we'll prepare: hearing Jesus' call to die, naming what the old life is made of, and following the pattern of baptism down into the water. Then for seven days we'll fast, gather, and ask God to make the second half of the sentence true of us. Truly live.

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

A FAST UNTO HIM

Fasting fits this theme because a fast is a small, voluntary death. The body asks and we say no, so a deeper hunger can get our attention.

We don't fast to earn anything from God. We fast because appetite runs deeper than food, and a week of directed hunger shows us what we've actually been living on.

From August 30 to September 5, we'll fast during the day and gather each night. Choose your fast prayerfully (Section 02 will help), then hold it simply and without fanfare. Your empty plate is a small altar. What gets laid on it is between you and him.

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

August 9–29 is preparation.

A daily reading, a story from someone in our church, and space to write. The three weeks move through three movements: the call to die, what must die, and through the water.

August 30–September 5 is Altars.

The fast, the evening gatherings, and pages to track what God is doing in you as the week unfolds.

September 6 is for looking back and deciding what you'll carry forward.

Don't treat this journal like an assignment. If you miss a day, skip it and rejoin; there's no catching up to do. Read slowly. Write what you notice. Do what he says. The writing matters far less than the obeying.



02

THE ESSENCE

Fasting makes space. It's a spiritual act with physical implications, a quiet but radical declaration: God, you are my first pursuit.

Fasting is hunger directed. When we fast, we train our bodies to submit to the Spirit. We lay aside what is good for the sake of what is better. And in that space we encounter him, with our whole selves and not just our minds.

Fasting doesn't earn us more of God; it makes us more aware of him. It sharpens attention, softens the heart, and clears out the noise so we can hear his voice.

This year the practice carries the theme in miniature. Come and die to truly live is what a fast rehearses three times a day: an appetite laid down, a comfort surrendered, a small death chosen so that something truer can live.

This guide gives language, wisdom, and practical steps to something both deeply personal and deeply biblical. Whether this is your first fast or your fiftieth, let it be about one thing: drawing near.

Use it as a reference, not a rulebook. The method may vary. The heart is the same. We fast unto him, not for outcomes.

WHAT FASTING IS

Fasting is a spiritual discipline.

Jesus practiced it (Matthew 4:2) and assumed we would too (Matthew 6:16). Throughout Scripture, fasting is always from food and always for the sake of seeking God.

Fasting is a physical act with spiritual implications.

It humbles us (Psalm 35:13), awakens hunger (Isaiah 58), and trains our desires toward the eternal.

Fasting is worship.

It offers God something that costs us something. A declaration: "You are my portion."

"The aim of fasting is to pierce through the veil of the visible in order to touch what is eternal." — Michael Dow, Fasting Vol. II

WHAT FASTING ISN'T

It's not a diet.

The goal is surrender, not self-improvement.

It's not a performance.

God isn't grading your hunger.

It's not for show.

The audience is God, not the room.

It's not effective without prayer.

Fasting is a vessel; prayer is what fills it.

"Fasting without prayer is just a diet." — Jentezen Franklin

HOW TO FAST

STEP 1: BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Ask:
“Jesus, what kind of fast are you inviting me into?”

“Is there anything in my life crowding out your voice?”

“How can I set myself apart for you this week?”

Let your fast be Spirit-led, not guilt-driven.

STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR FAST

Full Fast — Drink only water for the duration of the fast.

Partial/Intermittent Fast — No food during the day. Break the fast at dinner or at a chosen time in the day.

Daniel Fast — No meat, no sweets and no bread. (There are many variations of this fast, but whatever you do, keep it simple. Remember — we want to think less about food, not more.)

Soul Fast (in addition to food) — Lay down media, entertainment, or distractions. A soul fast is a supplement not a substitute.

This is not an exhaustive list, but simply a few suggestions that have been a blessing to many during their seasons of fasting. You may have another approach and that is perfectly okay. The heart to draw near to God is of first priority, the method can vary.

When you fast, please do so with wisdom, prayer and your health in mind. If you have underlying health conditions, a history of eating disorders or an unhealthy view of your body, please be prayerful and seek counsel from a medical professional.

STEP 3: PLAN THE WEEK

Decide before August 30, not day by day. Tell your household what you’re doing. Look at your calendar and plan around the work lunch, the birthday dinner, the travel day.

Then decide what fills the space. A skipped meal that becomes prayer is a fast; a skipped meal that becomes scrolling is just a missed meal. Give your emptied mealtimes a plan: a psalm, a walk, the day’s reading, prayer for someone specific.

WHAT TO EXPECT

PHYSICALLY

Potential detox symptoms in the first few days (fatigue, headaches, irritability). By midweek: clarity, lightness, renewed focus.

SPIRITUALLY

Resistance may rise — that’s normal.

Don’t be surprised if you feel distracted, discouraged, or even disconnected in the early days. Fasting is disruptive; not just to your routine, but to the spiritual atmosphere around you. The flesh resists what strengthens the spirit. That’s formation, not failure. Press through the resistance because it often means you’re on the right path.

Fasting often reveals what prayer needs to resolve.

Fasting brings things to the surface. Patterns, attachments, fears, even wounds that have been hiding beneath the noise can start to show up. Treat it as an invitation, not a setback. Let these things rise, not to shame you, but to be met by the presence of Jesus. Bring it all to Jesus in prayer.

Expect deeper dependence, clearer hearing, and a refined hunger.

As your body quiets and your spirit awakens, you may begin to sense God’s nearness more acutely. His voice may come with new clarity; though not always loud, it’s unmistakable. You may notice your desires shifting, your priorities simplifying, and your awareness of his presence increasing. This is the deeper work of fasting: not just removing distraction, but rekindling desire.

BREAKING THE FAST

End gently. Start with light portions (fruit, broth, cooked vegetables).

Resist the urge to overindulge — stay centred and reflective.

Make time to journal reflections and resolutions.

*What did God speak?
What new rhythm or insight
am I carrying forward?*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I have to tell people I'm fasting?

This is a corporate fast, and our whole church is participating. So no, you don't need to keep it secret. But your posture still matters. Fast without fanfare. Share for the sake of support and unity, not attention (Matthew 6:17–18).

Can I fast if I have health issues?

Yes, but do so with wisdom. A full fast isn't for everyone. Choose a method of fasting that still honours the spirit of sacrifice without harming your health.

Is it okay to drink coffee or juice during a fast?

That depends on the type of fast the Lord leads you into. Some fasts include only water, others allow light liquids. The key is consistency and surrender.

What if I slip up or break my fast?

Don't quit. Fasting isn't about perfection, it's about returning. Reset your focus and keep going.

Can I fast from things besides food?

Yes, but that's an addition, not a replacement. Biblically, fasting involves food. Unless medically necessary, we encourage you to include some element of food fasting in your week. Soul fasts (like media or entertainment) can enhance your focus and deepen your devotion.

Should my kids fast?

Don't put growing bodies on food fasts. Invite kids into the week another way: a screen fast, a sweets fast, praying together at dinner, coming to the gatherings. Fasting is chosen, never imposed. Let them take a step that's theirs.

What about my medications?

Keep taking them, on schedule, every time. Never pause a prescription to fast. If your medication requires food, choose a fast that includes what you need, and talk to your doctor. Obedience never requires harming yourself.



03

A GUIDE TO ENGAGING DAILY SCRIPTURE

Every time we open Scripture, we're stepping into a conversation with God. The Greek word *logos* refers to God's eternal, unchanging, and foundational word — what he has already spoken and established. It grounds us, providing stability and clarity in our faith. The Greek word *rhema*, however, describes God's timely, personal, and specific spoken word to us right now, breathing fresh insight, encouragement, and direction into our lives.

Scripture anchors us in the *logos*, shaping and framing our ability to recognize his *rhema* voice today. Without this grounding, we risk drifting into subjective experiences disconnected from truth.

Yet, without openness to God's present voice, we risk reducing our relationship with him to mere religious routine. Religiosity settles solely for what God has said (*logos*). Relationship actively pursues what God is saying today (*rhema*). One without the other leaves us incomplete.

Remember, your daily reading doesn't have to be mind-blowing to be meaningful. Like food, sometimes you vividly recall what you've eaten; other times you don't. Yet every meal nourishes your body, just as each engagement with Scripture nourishes your soul.

Each day, you'll read a passage of Scripture and take a moment to listen. As you read daily, consider these practical steps:

PRAY

Begin by asking God to speak to you through his Word.

READ SLOWLY

Take your time, focusing on words, phrases, or ideas that stand out to you.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Engage with Scripture through two key actions:

Recognize: Notice and write down what God is highlighting or speaking to your heart. (What is God revealing about himself? What is he saying to me today?)

Respond: Identify and note practical steps or actions you feel prompted to take. (How can I obey? How is he leading me?)

APPLY

Act on what you've recognized and responded to in your journaling.

Lean in with expectation. Allow God's timeless written words to become timely spoken words to your heart.

04

DATEREADINGTHREAD

WEEK 1 — THE CALL

AUG 9	Mark 8:27–38 Philippians 3:4b–11	The call stated; Paul counts everything as loss
AUG 10	Luke 9:57–62 Genesis 12:1–9	No looking back; Abram leaves everything, builds altars as he goes
AUG 11	John 12:20–26 2 Corinthians 4:7–12	The grain of wheat; death at work in us, life in you
AUG 12	Luke 14:25–33 Ruth 1:1–18	Count the cost; Ruth counts it and goes anyway
AUG 13	Matthew 10:34–39 Genesis 22:1–19	Lose your life to find it; the altar on Moriah
AUG 14	Matthew 13:44–46 1 Kings 19:19–21	Joy sells everything; Elisha burns the plow
AUG 15	Luke 18:18–30 Philippians 1:20–26	The rich ruler walks away; to live is Christ, to die is gain

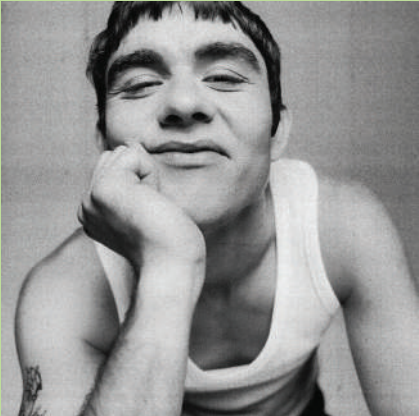
WEEK 2 — WHAT MUST DIE

AUG 16	Genesis 3:1–24 Romans 5:12–21	Where the old life began; in Adam death, in Christ life
AUG 17	Luke 15:11–32 Romans 6:1–14	“Was dead and is alive again”; buried with him
AUG 18	Galatians 2:15–21 John 3:1–15	Crucified with Christ; the old life can’t be renovated, only reborn
AUG 19	Colossians 3:1–17 Matthew 5:27–30	Put to death what belongs to the old self; Jesus’ severity about sin
AUG 20	Galatians 5:16–26 Romans 8:5–13	The flesh crucified; putting it to death by the Spirit
AUG 21	Luke 19:1–10 Ephesians 4:17–32	Zacchaeus dismantles his old life in one evening; put off, put on
AUG 22	1 Kings 18:20–39 Hebrews 12:1–3	Elijah repairs the altar; throw off everything that hinders

WEEK 3 — THROUGH THE WATER

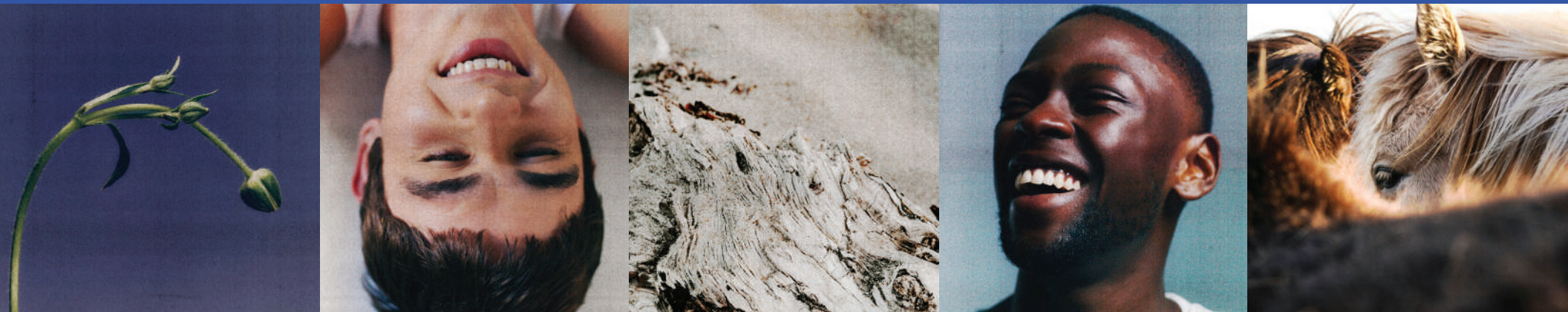
AUG 23	Exodus 14:10–31 1 Corinthians 10:1–4	Through the sea; Paul calls it a baptism
AUG 24	Joshua 3:9–4:9 Colossians 2:6–15	Through the Jordan, stones of remembrance; buried and raised with him
AUG 25	2 Kings 5:1–14 Titus 3:3–8	Naaman’s pride drowns in the river; the washing of rebirth
AUG 26	Matthew 3:13–17 Romans 6:15–23	Jesus goes under the water; freed to belong to another
AUG 27	Jonah 1:17–2:10 Matthew 12:38–41	Down into the depths; the sign of Jonah

JOURNAL PAGES		SECTION 04
AUG 28	Genesis 8:13–22 1 Peter 3:18–22	Noah's first act on dry ground is an altar; the flood and baptism
AUG 29	Matthew 4:1–11 Isaiah 58:1–12	Jesus' fast in the wilderness; the fast God chooses – the eve of ours
WEEK 4 — ALTARS		
AUG 30	Psalms 63 John 7:37–39	The fast opens where David did: my soul thirsts for you. Jesus stands and calls the thirsty to come
AUG 31	Isaiah 55:1–13 John 6:25–35	"Why spend money on what is not bread?" The bread of life, for a week without bread
SEP 1	Psalms 51:10–17 Hosea 6:1–3	The sacrifice God accepts is a broken spirit; he tears, and he will revive. An honest word for the hard early days of a fast
SEP 2	Ezekiel 37:1–14 1 Peter 1:3–9	Midweek: breath returns to dry bones; born into a living hope
SEP 3	John 11:17–44 Ephesians 2:1–10	Lazarus called out by name; dead in sins, made alive with Christ
SEP 4	John 15:1–17 2 Corinthians 4:16–18	Pruned to bear fruit; outwardly wasting away, inwardly renewed day by day
SEP 5	2 Corinthians 5:14–21 Revelation 21:1–7	New creation now; all things new forever. The final night lands on where the whole story goes




the call

Jesus' own words about losing your life. Seven days of hearing the invitation before we respond to it.



I never felt like I fit the picture of who people thought a Christian should be. In my home country, being a Christian and divorced often comes with judgment. As a result, I carried the weight of other people's opinions for years. Over time, I developed anxiety and even struggled to take a deep breath. Last summer during Altars, I heard the Holy Spirit say, "Let go of your burdens." Honestly, I didn't know what he meant. I thought it was about forgiving those who had judged me. But again and again, the Spirit said, "Let go of your burdens." On the fifth night, I felt something trying to push itself out of me. I tried to hold it in, but I couldn't. I let out a loud shout. Only later, I realized it was the spirit of condemnation leaving my body. My chest immediately felt light, and I was filled with joy. I could finally take a deep breath again.

— Monica, a mom of two, learning that surrender begins with knowing she's fully accepted by God.

READ

Mark 8:27-38 · Philippians 3:4b-11

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

One thing I fear the most is the unknown of the future. “How will it be?” “What will it be like?” “Will I like it?” These are the questions that would bubble up in my mind, and before long, I would start to feel anxious. I would receive encouragement from friends and family, but any comfort I got was quick to fade.

In recent months, God has been asking me to surrender my desire to know what the future holds and to place my trust in him. It was hard to let go of control, but I quickly realized the truth: it wasn't about what I wanted, but about God's will for me. God does have a plan for me, a plan to prosper me, to not harm me, and to give me hope and a future. When these fearful thoughts and voices started to fill my head, I would remind myself of the words of truth that Jesus had spoken over me and feel so much peace, knowing that his promises are yes and amen. During worship and prayer, I would continually lay these fears down at his feet, leading me to experience life through his love and grace. Now, I walk in freedom and confidence, knowing that he is good and trusting that the plans he has for me are unfolding just as he intended.

— Von, a child of God and son desperate for his presence, learning to live from his love.

READ

Luke 9:57–62 · Genesis 12:1–9

RECOGNIZE

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Over the last few months, I felt myself emotionally wading into dangerous waters. I've been treading through years of disappointment and dashed expectations.

One evening a few weeks ago, I cried out to the Lord, “God, I feel deeply dissatisfied with my life. I’m trying so hard every day to feel joyful. When I look around me, every avenue of my life looks bleak! When will my life really begin? When will I have the chance to be a wife and a mum? Will I ever be satisfied with the output of my job and passions?” I know certain states of mind only begin to loosen their grip through the spiritual work of prayer and fasting, so I decided to set aside a week to do just that. Each day, I got on my hands and knees and surrendered my desires to the Lord: “Holy Spirit, open my eyes to see what you want me to see. Open my ears to hear what you want me to hear. Flip my worldview upside down. Change my feelings! Change my thoughts! May I run to worship you first, even in the midst of disappointment!”

The blanket of despair began to lift. For Paul and Silas, the jail cell doors burst open... for me, a spirit of hope and expectancy has lit a flame within me again. May I choose to continue to walk the path of surrender each morning.

— Racquel, a fashionista working in ministry, learning how to receive true joy and contentment.

READ

John 12:20-26 · 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

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How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

The hardest season of my life came when my family and I immigrated to Canada. Being taken out of my comfort zone—away from family and close friends—brought a fear I'd never known. It felt like nothing I had experienced with God before was enough to carry me through.

Around the same time, I was pregnant and diagnosed with a brain tumour that caused me to lose a sight in my right eye. This news pushed me into what felt like the darkest moment of my life. Fear, anxiety, and intrusive thoughts filled my mind. I began to doubt God's existence and his love for me. I stopped caring for myself, my children, and my husband. Every day, I was planning how to end the pain. But I've come to know the truth: even when I doubted him, God never stopped working for me. Day by day, he was writing a new story for me. He began to restore the hope that only he can give. It was a long and difficult process. There were times I thought I wouldn't make it through, but God had other plans.

Today, after coming so close to death, I can say with certainty: there is no valley too deep that God cannot bring flowers to. There is no darkness too heavy that his light cannot break through. My song has changed. Instead of despair, I now sing with gratitude and hope.

— Fernanda, a beloved daughter of the Father, mother and wife, living the abundant life that flows from the inexhaustible source that is Jesus.

READ

Luke 14:25-33 · Ruth 1:1-18

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
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How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

During Altars 2025, I felt the Lord asking me to wake up extra early, at 5:30 a.m. Now, to all the parents out there, that might seem normal, but to the unemployed artist and big-time night owl that I was (and might still be), it was a serious change. I was also coming out of a very anxious year, where I had come to associate being tired with opening a wide open door to anxiety. So, this was pushing me out of my comfort zone.

Still, I listened. I woke up at 5:30 a.m., made myself a cup of tea and took it with me on a sunrise walk. Let me tell you: God blessed me tangibly during those days. He gave me visions and the Word came to life in a substantial way. His peace filled me from morning until evening and my mind was able to rest. Following some late night creative sessions and a short film shoot in the following days, I didn't keep the rhythm much longer, but I intend to use the jet lag coming back to Canada to set a new standard.

As insignificant as it might seem, this was more than an experience or a healthy habit, it was a lesson: to truly live, I had to step out in faith and risk being out of my comfort zone.

— Luc, a humble servant, blessed Multimedia Technician and artist, learning to step out in faith to truly live.

READ

Matthew 10:34–39 · Genesis 22:1–19

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

Last Altars, I felt a gentle but firm nudge from God to surrender my fear of man and fully step into what he was calling me to. For so long, I found comfort in disappearing into the background. If I stayed quiet, I couldn't get it wrong. But God continued to invite me out of the places I had hidden and into rooms where I felt quite small, asking me to trust that his grace would always be greater than my weakness. Whether it was raising my voice in prayer or leading my team at work, every act of obedience became an invitation to rely on him instead of myself.

Looking back, I can see that he wasn't simply asking me to be brave; he was faithfully and patiently pruning every ounce of fear of man from my heart and moulding me into the person he has called me to be. The process has been uncomfortable, yet deeply beautiful, and I can truly testify to the joy that comes from saying yes to him. Fear still whispers from time to time, but it no longer has the final say. His grace has proven greater than every insecurity and every giant I will ever face.

— Shivangi, a daughter, learning that his grace is greater than her fear.

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

READMatthew 13:44–46 · 1 Kings 19:19–21

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

For a long time, I really cared what people thought about me, like really cared. From how people thought I looked and dressed to if people thought my voice was annoying. This caused me to lose sight of myself and where I got my identity from in the first place. I thought that if I could curate the perfect identity, people wouldn't see how insecure I really was. By doing this, I built up walls, and found myself in a state of constant striving and people pleasing. I would stay silent to preserve peace, thinking that if people liked and accepted me I'd be happy.

Then, I felt God tell me that my identity isn't something I strive to get or create on my own; it is something that is freely given to me by my Heavenly Father. God asked me not only to loosen my grip, but to completely let go of my selfish, self centred way of thinking and to fix my eyes outward on his people. This was not an overnight change; it was months of constant surrender, allowing him to humble me and speak truths over me. He was refreshing my view of him being a loving father and reminding me that I am his daughter.

If you can imagine what being covered in thick clay for years and then being washed clean feels like, that's how it felt to finally die to myself and find freedom in who he calls me to be.

— Anna, someone who is learning to accept love and let go of what she cannot control.

READ

Luke 18:18-30 · Philippians 1:20-26

RECOGNIZE

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How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

what must die

The New Testament never asks us to improve the old self.
Its word is stronger: put it to death. This week we let Scripture
name what that is.



Sophia and I walked through an incredibly focused season leading to the birth of our son, Henrik. God gave clear instructions and kindly brought us through this period with overflowing joy and peace. I had envisioned the finish line being Henrik's birth, but fatherhood has sparked a new chapter of laying down my preferences. Cramming summer full of sun-soaked adventures has been a source of joy, yet when I look at the life of Jesus, postcard-perfect summers were not his priority. Jesus had an unshakable joy that was anchored in his relationship to the Father. The enemy wants me to see laying down my life as a "bummer", but Jesus is showing me that what the Father offers is astounding.

Fatherhood has been a humbling journey. It has brought beauty and revelation, while also highlighting many areas in my life that I have yet to surrender. Despite my attempts to manufacture joy and meaning on my own terms, God hasn't given up on me. With unending patience, he offers me a daily exchange: my anxiety, frustrations, fears, shortcomings, and mistrust in return for his peace, joy, provision, purposes, forgiveness, sonship, and royal inheritance.

When I look at my son Henrik, I feel an incomprehensible sense of love; words don't adequately articulate the feeling. Jesus is graciously teaching me that dying to myself is the way I step into the love that the Father feels when he looks at me (*and that's more fulfilling than any day at the beach!*).

— Matthew, a son, father, and leader, learning to delight himself in the Lord.

READ

Genesis 3:1–24 · Romans 5:12–21

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

For two years, I lived alone in a studio apartment. It was a beautiful season marked by intimacy with God and the joy of practicing hospitality. At the same time, living alone allowed me to control when I was seen by others, especially in my brokenness.

Earlier this year, something broke open in my heart during a time of prayer. Through tears, I admitted, “I don’t want to live alone anymore.” I realized that my independence—something I had often been praised for—was holding me back from the fullness of who God created me to be in family. That revelation led me to ask a family I’ve known since childhood if I could move into their home. After praying together, they joyfully welcomed me in. I moved into the bedroom right in the middle of the house. I didn’t want to hide anymore. But choosing to be seen and to receive love freely wasn’t easy. Day by day, God graciously taught me to release control and to receive love as a gift rather than something I had to earn.

The months that followed changed my life. They were filled with ordinary moments made holy: shared meals, morning coffees, late-night adventures, laughter, disagreements, celebrations, and the sacred gift of being known and loved. God invited me to lay down my independence, my self-protection, and my pride. I'm still learning what it means to surrender these things, but I'm discovering that the places where I die to myself are the very places where he brings new life.

- Keara, a daughter acquainted with the secret place, learning to receive the fullness of God's love through family.

READ

Luke 15:11–32 · Romans 6:1–14

RECOGNIZE

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How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

I tend to overthink things and expect the worst, so I often shrink my desires as a way of protecting myself. I fear disappointment and the unknown, so when God invited me to lay my fears down, dream bigger, and step into the unknown with him, it wasn't easy. Over these past few months, God has been asking me to surrender my desire for marriage and children once again, to fully leave it in his hands and trust him. This time felt harder, as recent events had stirred up a deep dread, whispering I would only ever know the story of heartbreak. Every day I clung to him, sought his presence, and filled my heart with his truth. I poured myself out through tears, worship, and countless journal entries, and he poured into me with overwhelming love and peace.

As I've walked through this process, his voice has become louder than any doubt or anxiety that tries to rise up. He continues to speak of the new things he has prepared for me, and I choose to believe him. Because of who he is, I walk forward with hope and joyful expectancy, confident that the beautiful plans he has been writing all along are unfolding in his perfect timing.

— Cairo, a writer and daughter, learning to walk by faith and in freedom.

READ

Galatians 2:15-21 · John 3:1-15

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

For decades, anxiety has been a hidden taskmaster, riding beside me like an unwelcome passenger. Recently, a client asked me to return for a follow-up conversation because they were unhappy about something. Long before I reached their door, my mind had already imagined the worst. I expected conflict, criticism, and possibly losing the client. My gut tightened, my shoulders tensed, and my mind raced with ten different scenarios. I carried the weight of a problem that had not yet revealed itself. Before stepping inside, I took several deep breaths and prepared myself. Then the client simply said, “I just need a couple of small touch-ups, please.” No anger. No conflict. That was it. What anxiety had turned into a mountain was only a molehill.

I am learning to trust the One who created me, who loved me first, and who hems me in behind and before, laying his hand upon me. God is already present before I arrive. He is with me while I am there, and he remains after I leave. Even after decades of knowing my Father, I am still learning to wait, breathe, and focus on him, allowing the facts to arrive before believing the story fear is trying to tell.

— Marc, a small business owner on a decades long journey,
with a philosophy of never-to-old-to-learn.

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

READ

Colossians 3:1-17 · Matthew 5:27-30

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

A year and a half ago, God gripped my heart. I had been living with much bitterness and hardness of heart. A car accident and brain surgery nearly took my life, marking the beginning of a slow death. I had lost the things I identified with: my cognition, my physical health, my ambition, and the time I thought I had. I began idolizing and coping. I didn't want to give control of my life back to God. This slow death and idolatry occurred for another four years, until the day I had destroyed what I idolized most.

I've once heard Job 38:35 paraphrased like this: "Does lightning tap you on the shoulder and ask you where to strike?" That day God commanded his light to strike my heart, and two things died. The first was my presumption of God's mercy. I thought I could turn towards God on my own terms and be entitled to forgiveness. The second came from the first: Thinking I was in control. Yet, his mercy and patience pursued me and his grace empowered me to turn towards him.

I am now surrendering my ambitions, what I think of others, and the fear of being misunderstood — approaching even the closest friends without assuming I know them better than I do, listening to them, and making peace with those I have wronged. He has opened my eyes to his Holiness and what is available to me in Christ. I now live a life compelled by his mercy, love, and grace on the cross.

— Gabriel, learning to live aware of his mercy and through grace.

READ

Galatians 5:16–26 · Romans 8:5–13

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

The Lord has been asking me to lay down the burden of worrying about my family back home. I often find myself thinking about them while also feeling grateful for the life the Lord has built for me here in Vancouver. He has drawn me closer to his heart day by day, and in that place of intimacy, I sensed him inviting me into a deeper level of surrender. He began revealing hidden areas of my heart—places of disbelief, distrust, and fear that I had unknowingly befriended.

He exposed these through two back to back dreams. In the first, I was desperately performing CPR on my dad, pumping his heart with my own hands. In the second, he died. The following week, my dad went for a routine checkup, and unexpectedly, his doctor recommended he receive a pacemaker to help his heart. I realized that although my words sounded like faith, my heart was praying from a place of anxiety. I began to see that repeating the same prayer over and over again was rooted in disbelief—how could I not believe in him? Before my nephew was born, I had dreams of my sister giving birth to stillborn babies. For nine months, I prayed and declared the Spirit of Life—the breath, the *Ruach* of God—over him. Today, he is full of life and joy because of God's gracious hand upon him.

The same God who breathed life into my family before can bring life again. God wasn't only inviting me to pray for my family—he was also healing the hidden places within my own heart. He was inviting me to come and die to my flesh so I can truly live in the full measure of Christ.

— Lori, a pediatric nurse and daughter, discovering the beauty of surrender.

READ

Luke 19:1-10 · Ephesians 4:17-32

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

God asked me to lay down my anxiety and depression. For so long, I thought they were just part of who I was. I believed I'd always feel that way, and I had a hard time trusting God with my future. I knew it was him because he kept reminding me to trust him instead of my fear. Through prayer, worship, and spending time in his word, he kept showing me that he had more for me. It wasn't one big moment—it happened little by little as I chose to surrender. It wasn't easy. Anxiety and depression had become familiar, so letting them go felt scary at times.

On the other side of that surrender, I found hope. I don't live under the weight of depression anymore, and I finally believe there's a beautiful future ahead of me.

For a long time, I didn't think I'd ever have a family of my own because I couldn't see past the darkness. Now I can. I trust that God has good plans for my life, and I'm excited to see what he has in store.

— Cassandra, a registered nurse and daughter, no longer defined by anxiety or depression, but by the hope she has found in Christ.

READ

1 Kings 18:20-39 · Hebrews 12:1-3

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

through the water

Baptism is the pattern: down into death, up into life. All week, Scripture walks God's people through water. On Saturday we stand at the edge of the fast.



I grew up in a Christian home, so I always knew about God, but I didn't truly know him personally until about four years ago. For a long time, I settled for secondhand faith, relying on what others said about him rather than seeking him myself. I held back from fully following Christ because I was secretly ashamed of what people might think of me. Through different experiences, God gently revealed that my fear of judgment had become an idol. He took that deep insecurity and transformed it into an unshakable confidence in him, showing me that what my heart actually longed for was his presence. Finding my confidence in him changed everything.

Today, I genuinely can't imagine living even one day away from his presence, and I want him deeply involved in every area of my life. Walking with him, laying down my own desires, and picking up my cross daily isn't a burden anymore. It's my joy.

— Daniel, a follower of Jesus, finding all his confidence in Him.

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

READ

Exodus 14:10–31 · 1 Corinthians 10:1–4

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

Growing up with an abusive father who struggled with addiction created a very chaotic and unstable home. My earthly father would only offer me love when I did something good. This caused me to struggle with feeling unlovable and believing that I needed to always be perfect to be loved by others.

Since I had only known this type of fatherly love for most of my life, when God showed me what it meant to have him as my Abba three years ago, it transformed me. God began showing me that he is my Heavenly Father—safe, consistent, compassionate, gracious, and loving me even in my imperfection. I am his daughter, and there is nothing I can do to earn his love. He continues to expose every area where I have put limits on his love because of my earthly father.

As he continues to lead me to his truth about how he sees me and speaks Ephesians 1:4–8 over me, he washes me with his love and erases every false narrative that had become my “truth.” He has been healing my heart from childhood wounds, blessing me with a sound mind, and restoring my relationship with my dad, which I never thought would happen.

For all my days, he will continue to be a good Father who breaks through every limit I put on him and kindly shows me more of his character. Our Heavenly Father is so beautiful, and I want to be captivated by his beauty for all of my life.

— Jade, a daughter, learning to deny herself and
take up her cross daily to follow him.

READ

Joshua 3:9–4:9 · Colossians 2:6–15

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

Last summer, God set me free from a long struggle with fear that had stifled my desire to have kids and start a family. The fruit of that freedom was finally being able to tell my husband I was ready to start a family! It felt like that part of my story had been made whole —the chapter was complete. Fast forward, and we experienced two miscarriages within four months. I thought, “God, *why would you free me from fear only for this to happen?*” It felt like the testimony had been spoiled. But in the middle of deep grief, God invited me into a greater freedom through surrender. I had to let die the belief that his faithfulness was measured by the outcome I longed for. I had to release my timeline, my plans, and my understanding of what redemption was supposed to look like. It wasn’t a clean or easy surrender, but God drew near, and I began to discover the truth: **He is all I need.**

A line from one of Pastor Ryan’s sermons encapsulated the season we were in: “*When I have no bread, I have the Bread Man. And when I have bread it’s because of the Bread Man*”. When I had no life in my womb, I had the Creator of life. The slain Lamb is seated on the throne. He weeps with me, carries my grief, holds the victory, and is redeeming ALL things. Whether my hands are full or empty, I have everything I need because I have him. What freedom!

Today, we’re expecting a healthy, growing baby! We rejoice in that gift—and yet, it is no greater miracle than the One who met us in our grief and taught us that he himself is enough.

— Rachael, a business leader, pilates instructor and soon-to-be-mom, learning that when she has Jesus, she has all that she need.

READ

2 Kings 5:1-14 · Titus 3:3-8

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

Social settings can be exhausting for me. I’ve always been highly aware of my surroundings and naturally pick up on the emotions and cues of the people around me. I would often scan a room, read people’s expressions and interactions, and subconsciously tie them to my sense of self—to what I imagined others thought of me or how they perceived me. I’ve learned that this hypervigilance was rooted in a deep need to belong, to be accepted, and to be loved.

Somewhere along the way, I learned to protect my image because I believed that if people saw me looking weak, they might reject me. Last year, on night three of altars, as I watched others experience freedom in the room, my soul longed for what they had—but something in me resisted. I wanted to protect my image. I was afraid of looking foolish if I responded the way they did. I decided to go to the rugs at the front, get on my knees, and ask God to kill my pride. But as I knelt, the Holy Spirit gave me these words: “God, I die to my self-consciousness. Kill my self-consciousness.” When I stood up, tears filled my eyes, my hands were lifted, and I realized He had taught me how to worship.

— Spence , a son and artist, continually learning to surrender.

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

READ

Matthew 3:13–17 · Romans 6:15–23

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

Since arriving in Canada from Argentina five years ago, my life has taken a complete 180-degree turn. The identity I thought I had was shattered by circumstances I never anticipated, as I suddenly found myself in a place where no one knew me. I could no longer practice as a cardiologist; I was far away from lifelong friends, and I struggled to express myself in a different language. I endured the hardship of studying and working in fields I did not desire just to provide for my family. I used to believe my profession defined me until I realized that God used every redirection to lead me into full surrender, and to discover that my identity is complete in him.

Each difficult moment in this process led me to give up attitudes, thoughts, concepts, and habits I otherwise never would have let go of. It compelled me to take steps of faith because I knew I could rely on him alone. Moments of intimacy and tears in his presence helped me draw closer to his heart and find peace, regardless of what surrounded me.

I remain in this process, surrendering each moment, no longer desiring to be shaped by what I think is best for myself. Instead, I seek to allow his plan and purpose to be fulfilled without becoming an obstacle to his work.

- Marina, a wife, mother, and healthcare worker, learning to surrender the “perfect map” and let him shape a better picture that involves more than just a profession.

READ

Jonah 1:17-2:10 · Matthew 12:38-41

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

For a long time, soccer was something I couldn't let go of. I put it at the centre of my life so much that a talent God himself blessed me with became the very thing to take his place. Subconsciously, I would exchange time with God for more practice, miss Sundays for games, and let my identity be formed by who I was on my team, and the numbers I put up. This was not a good place for me to be, while sitting on the bench for most of the season and not scoring a single goal. Days went by and I kept training harder with no result, leaving God behind and slowly beginning to lose my will to keep going. Soccer began to be more draining than fulfilling, and this dream that I thought God had placed in my heart became a burden. It was still important to me and felt like the only thing I was good at, even while not feeling "good enough".

After many tears and conversations, I started to notice that the problem wasn't me wanting to fulfill a dream, it was that I had forgotten who had instilled that dream within me. I am still a work in progress, but God is teaching me that nothing we want to do is worth doing without Jesus. I've started making more time for Jesus, letting go of who I told myself I was, and letting God show me who I really am. Already, when I am playing, I feel lighter knowing that wherever God leads me in life is exactly where I need to be.

- Emanuel, a son of God, learning to fulfill his purpose by letting go and letting God.

READ

Genesis 8:13–22 · 1 Peter 3:18–22

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

This year, God has been asking me to lay down something I didn't realize I was carrying: self-preservation. For most of my life, I thought guarding my heart meant protecting it from being hurt. I would anticipate disappointment before it happened, assume the worst, and quietly prepare myself for people to leave. If I could detach first, maybe the loss wouldn't feel as painful.

It looked like wisdom. But God gently showed me it was fear. As I sat with him, I sensed him asking me a question I couldn't ignore: "Can you trust Me enough to love without trying to control the outcome?" That terrified me. Because loving bravely means letting people in beyond my curtains of performance and accepting that my heart might be wounded. It means choosing openness over self-protection, knowing there are no guarantees except God's presence.

When I think about Esther in the bible, I don't see her crown first. I see the courage that came out of her surrender. She walked into the king's court without any promise that the sceptre would be extended. She entrusted the outcome to God. I'm beginning to realize that God is asking me to let go of fear as my protector. Most days I still want to retreat into overthinking, but Jesus keeps inviting me to die to the version of myself that believes I am safest when I rely on my own defences and the illusion that I could keep myself safe. And in letting that die, I'm beginning to truly live.

— Julianne , just God's daughter, learning to belong not just behave.

READ

Matthew 4:1-11 · Isaiah 58:1-12

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

RESPOND

How can I obey?
How is he leading me?

altars week

Truly live. Three weeks of dying are behind us. This week the readings feed the fast: hunger and thirst met, breath returning, life that death can't hold.



READ

Psalm 63 · John 7:37–39

The fast opens where David did: my soul thirsts for you. Jesus stands and calls the thirsty to come.

RESPOND

How can I obey?
What is he asking of me?

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

EVENING GATHERING REFLECTIONS

FASTING CHECK-IN

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

DISTRACTIONS OR BREAKTHROUGHS

READ

Isaiah 55:1-13 · John 6:25-35

“Why spend money on what is not bread?” The bread of life, for a week without bread.

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

MONDAY, AUGUST 31

RESPOND

How can I obey?
What is he asking of me?

FASTING CHECK-IN

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

DISTRACTIONS OR BREAKTHROUGHS

READ

Psalm 51:10–17 · Hosea 6:1–3

The sacrifice God accepts is a broken spirit; he tears,
and he will revive. An honest word for the hard early
days of a fast.

RESPOND

How can I obey?
What is he asking of me?

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

EVENING GATHERING REFLECTIONS

FASTING CHECK-IN

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

DISTRACTIONS OR BREAKTHROUGHS

READ

Ezekiel 37:1–14 · 1 Peter 1:3–9

Midweek: breath returns to dry bones; born into a living hope.

RESPOND

How can I obey?
What is he asking of me?

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

EVENING GATHERING REFLECTIONS

FASTING CHECK-IN

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

DISTRACTIONS OR BREAKTHROUGHS

READ

John 11:17-44 · Ephesians 2:1-10

Lazarus called out by name; dead in sins, made alive with Christ.

RESPOND

How can I obey?
What is he asking of me?

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

EVENING GATHERING REFLECTIONS

FASTING CHECK-IN

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

DISTRACTIONS OR BREAKTHROUGHS

READ

John 15:1–17 · 2 Corinthians 4:16–18
Pruned to bear fruit; outwardly wasting away,
inwardly renewed day by day.

RESPOND

How can I obey?
What is he asking of me?

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

EVENING GATHERING REFLECTIONS

FASTING CHECK-IN

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

DISTRACTIONS OR BREAKTHROUGHS

READ

2 Corinthians 5:14–21 · Revelation 21:1–7
New creation now; all things new forever. The final night lands on where the whole story goes.

RESPOND

How can I obey?
What is he asking of me?

RECOGNIZE

What is God revealing about himself?
What is he saying to me today?

EVENING GATHERING REFLECTIONS

FASTING CHECK-IN

PHYSICAL

SPIRITUAL

DISTRACTIONS OR BREAKTHROUGHS

05

REFLECTION & RESOLUTIONS

READ Romans 12:1-2 · John 10:7-10

LOOK BACK What did God put his finger on this month?
What themes or Scriptures kept surfacing?
What surprised you?

LOOK WITHIN What actually died? Be specific. And what feels newly alive?

LOOK AHEAD What are you carrying out of this week?
Write one resolution or prayer — a single sentence you'd be willing to be held to.



in low to moderate intensity fires needles



leaves and underbrush



will be burned to create the right conditions



for seeds to reach the soil beneath



the fire's heat will open up dormant



sequoia cones on the forest ground



liberating their previously captive seeds



triggering another generation



death soon turning to life



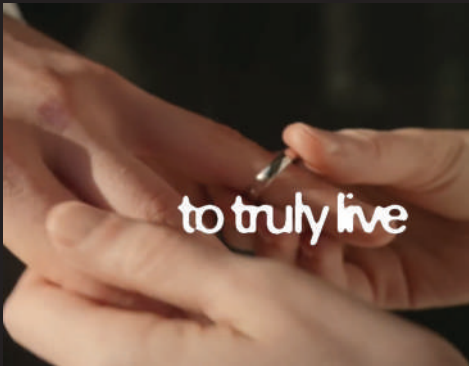
come



come &



come & die



to truly live



to truly live
to truly live
to truly live
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to truly live



ALTARS

church: untitled

