

FREELY
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*Twelve Invitations to Encounter Jesus
and Engage Your World*

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and Engage Your World*

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“Outreach.” “Evangelism.” “Witness.”
“Sharing your faith.” “Missions.”

These words can feel loaded, especially if you have a history with them. They might feel weighty. They might feel complicated. They might even feel outdated.

At Every Home, we’re on a mission to reclaim the hope of these words. We feel the invitation of Jesus that draws us beyond ourselves, toward one another, and ever nearer to himself. We have experienced the wonder of redemption sparked in the moments we open our eyes to one another. And we want to see more of it—with you.

You were created to know Christ and to make him known. This is a lifelong journey, a daily pursuit, an ongoing process. We never arrive; we only draw closer, and we do so through connection with the world in which we’ve been planted. We journey together. Our personal, spiritual growth in Christ is entwined with our witness in the lives of the people around us.

There is no formula, but there is a pattern. When we experience Christ and we encounter people in the context of his love, somehow, we all end up a little closer to home. We taste healing, dignity, growth, and transformation. The story of the gospel unfolds in souls, communities, and nations in ways big and small. It can be messy, heartbreaking, complex, or awkward. But it is the work of redemption, and we belong to it.

In the tenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus sends his disciples to embody his ministry of healing, deliverance, and resurrection from the dead, saying, “Freely you have received. Freely give.” That two-way generosity—receiving from Christ with empty hands and open hearts and giving all to those he has placed in our lives—is the inspiration for this devotional.

Each entry is designed to guide you through a passage of scripture in an unhurried time of reflection, with suggested applications both inward and outward. Each entry begins with a scripture reference and summary of the passage, and we recommend you look up the reference and read the full passage. If any application feels challenging or unfamiliar, consider how it might still apply to your situation and do whatever resonates with you.

Our prayer is that this devotional will nourish your walk with Jesus and inspire you to pursue meaningful encounters with the people who fill your world: your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and beyond.

Sincerely,
The Every Home USA team

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

JOHN 4:4-30

While passing through Samaria, Jesus rests beside a well and asks a woman to draw water for him. Thus begins a dynamic conversation that includes Jesus miraculously knowing details about the woman's life. The woman is a Samaritan, considered a false sect by any respectable Jew. Further, she has been a wife to four men and lives with a fifth. Jesus honors her with his own attention and reveals himself as the Messiah to her. The disciples return and are shocked to see Jesus conversing with a Samaritan woman, but the woman runs to tell her village about her encounter.

When Jesus invites the woman at the well into conversation, he is doing something radical. Because of her gender and cultural background, not to mention her taboo relationship history, the people of her day would have excluded her from any interaction with the Messiah. Even Jesus's disciples are shocked that he would talk to this woman. On top of this, the woman becomes a powerful witness of Jesus to her own village, bringing a large crowd to come and encounter Jesus for themselves.

As Jesus draws near to us, we might feel a similar surprise. Why would Jesus want to befriend us? We resist his engagement with the parts of our lives that are broken or draw judgment from others. We prefer to cover up and distance our true selves even from God's presence.

Despite our best efforts to hide, Jesus knows us fully and still wants to draw close to us. He engages us and desires to satisfy our deepest longings. He gets to know us on purpose. When we encounter this unconditional love and let it begin to reform the shameful, outcast parts of our lives and hearts, like the woman at the well, we experience joy and freedom, prompting us to go out and tell our communities about the one who knows us fully and loves us without reservation.

Inward Application — Take time to imagine that Jesus is physically sitting with you. Stay in that place. Receive the kind of dignifying attention that he offered the Samaritan woman and notice what comes up in your heart.

Outward Application — What is the most profound or meaningful thing God has done for you? An answered prayer? A feeling of assurance or love? Getting you through a difficult time? Tell your answer to someone else and/or ask them this same question.

JESUS AND MARY AND MARTHA

JOHN 11:17-44

When Jesus arrives in Bethany, his good friend Lazarus has already been dead for four days. Lazarus's sister Martha is upset that Jesus didn't come sooner, but she believes that he still has the power to restore him to life. Jesus promises that her brother will rise again, telling her, "I am the resurrection and the life." Martha's sister Mary is also upset that he didn't come sooner. As Jesus sees the sorrow of his dear friends, he is moved to tears. Then he goes to the tomb, prays, and calls to Lazarus in a loud voice. Lazarus rises from the dead.

The tragedy of Lazarus's death evokes several familiar responses to great loss. Seeing our own expressions of grief reflected in the characters of this story may even bring us solace. Here we see hope mingled with grief, faith tempered by disappointment. Mary and Martha both question Jesus's timing, wondering why he didn't come sooner. Their phrasing is full of longing—"If you had been here..."

Jesus's response does not directly address Mary and Martha's deeper question, "Why were you gone when we needed you?" However, he does offer them three things: he reminds them of the hope of the final resurrection, he shares in their grief and weeping, and he raises Lazarus from the dead. This incredible miracle is not the main point. The healing of Lazarus is a sign that the ultimate resurrection is real and worthy of our hope, and Jesus demonstrates that when we don't understand his delay, he is not far from us.

In times of loss and grief, we often wonder why God didn't show up in the way we expected. He doesn't always answer our questions. And yet, God is not far off. He is not detached and callous. Jesus loves us so much that he shares in our pain and carries our grief with us. In the face of death and loss, he reminds us to hope in the coming resurrection.

Inward Application — Have you recently experienced a loss? Perhaps you are unsure how to grieve? Picture Jesus with you, sharing in your sorrow and feeling your pain. He is with you.

Outward Application — Communicate care and sympathy for someone who is going through loss or grief—without offering answers or reasons to stay positive. Simply be present; offer tangible care if you can.

JESUS AND THE TEN LEPROUS MEN

LUKE 17:11-19

As Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem, ten men with leprosy stand at a distance and cry out for mercy. Jesus sees them and tells them to show themselves to the priest. As they go, they are healed. Only one of the men, however, turns back and falls at Jesus's feet, loudly praising God. Jesus is surprised that only one man, who happens to be a foreigner, responds with praise. He tells him to rise and go, saying, "Your faith has made you well."

Throughout Luke's gospel, we see that the people who feel most entitled to God's blessing—the rich, the powerful, and the religious elite—often fail to respond with gratitude to Jesus's actions in their lives. Meanwhile, outcasts like this man with leprosy, run to Jesus and bow at his feet, full of joy and thanksgiving. They are aware of what a great and undeserved gift they have been given. So, these "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3) become exuberant evangelists to those who are still in need.

The Gospels reveal a God who makes the sun rise for the good and the evil alike (Matthew 5:45). We have a father who is generous, but that's easy to miss or forget if we are blinded by entitlement. If, however, we practice awareness of God's presence and gratitude for his gifts, we will be filled with joy and overflow with worship. Evangelism is the natural outflow of a heart that has felt the goodness of our heavenly Father.

Inward Application — How has Jesus been generous to you lately? Write down ten things you are grateful for and see how your joy grows.

Outward Application — Think of a neighbor, co-worker, or classmate that you are grateful for, but have never told. Tell or write them about your gratitude for their presence in your life.

JESUS AND BARTIMAEUS

MARK 10:46-52

A blind beggar, Bartimaeus, hears that Jesus is passing by and cries out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many in the crowd tell him to be silent, but Bartimaeus cries out louder. Jesus stops and tells them to call the man forward. When Jesus asks what he can do for him, Bartimaeus responds that he wants to recover his sight. Jesus tells him that his faith has made him well. Immediately, Bartimaeus’s sight is restored, and he follows Jesus.

How desperate would you have to be to cry out for mercy on a crowded street? What if people tried to silence you? Would you cry out even louder? When we are most desperate, the world is divided into two groups, those who can help us, and those who cannot.

For Bartimaeus, Jesus was his only hope, and he knew it. Though blind, he sees the reality of his situation much more clearly than others who interacted with Jesus and were unaware of their own spiritual blindness. (Perhaps even some in the crowd silencing Bartimaeus didn’t believe Jesus to be capable of healing a beggar. They didn’t truly see who Jesus was.) Bartimaeus, however, raises his voice to be heard by the one who can save him.

Jesus responds to courageous vulnerability. He draws near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18), and he is quick to answer those who acknowledge their own need.

Inward Application — For centuries, Christians have prayed “The Jesus Prayer,” which is closely related to Bartimaeus’s words. As a meditation practice, find a quiet place and repeat this prayer: “Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Outward Application — Introduce yourself to a neighbor you’ve never met before and learn a few things about them.

JESUS AND THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN

LUKE 8:26-39

Jesus meets a man who is oppressed by demons so intensely that he could not be constrained. He lived among tombs, naked and isolated. As Jesus approaches, the man falls down before him. Jesus commands the demons to leave the man. When the townspeople go out to see what has happened, they find the formerly possessed man sitting at Jesus's feet. He is clothed and in his right mind. Though the man asks to go with Jesus, Jesus sends him home to tell his community what God has done for him.

The spiritual aspects of this story may seem foreign or extreme, but many of us experience this man's symptoms to varying degrees. Like this man, we may be socially isolated or estranged from loved ones. We may be stripped of our dignity, without a home or stability. We may feel compelled to self-harm. We may suffer from mental illness or be tormented by forces outside our control.

When Jesus sees us suffering under the weight of oppression (spiritual, mental, social, or otherwise), his compassionate gaze gives us back our humanity. He reminds us of who we truly are and rebukes the harmful influences that would destroy us. When we are lost in deep despair and filled with anxiety, his presence is with us, making a way to safety. He upholds our dignity and delivers us from evil, even restoring us to our right minds. Amazingly, God's healing work in our lives becomes our witness to help others encounter his healing power themselves.

Inward Application — Are there areas that feel overpowered by darkness? Invite Jesus to bring freedom and restoration. Remember that God usually uses other people to bring us healing. If you need to seek professional help, don't hesitate.

Outward Application — Is there a person in your life who is isolated, mentally ill, addicted, or suffering in a pronounced way? Check in on them and communicate how you notice and care about them.

If you or someone you know is in emotional crisis, call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.

JESUS ON HYPOCRISY

MATTHEW 7:1-6

Jesus ascends a mountain and gives his most famous teaching—the Sermon on the Mount— revisiting the Law of Moses in light of Christ’s coming kingdom. He teaches his disciples not to judge others, lest they be judged. To illustrate his point, he invites his listeners to imagine a ridiculous situation: a man with a log in his eye, trying to remove a splinter from another’s eye. He says that the hypocritical man should first remove the log from his own eye so that he can see clearly to take care of his friend.

The word “hypocrisy” has its origin in theater and playing a role (often wearing a mask) on stage. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus rebukes the religious leaders for this very thing—putting on a front of righteousness—playing the part—while, on the inside, they are failing like everyone else. These wicked religious leaders have the audacity to nitpick the smallest shortcomings in others.

In our age of social media and curated profiles, it has never been easier to present a false image of ourselves. We can filter out our brokenness and sin while judging others and griping about their flaws.

Jesus teaches us to take stock of our own glaring hypocrisy before passing judgment on anyone else. We must confess our own shortcomings and settle the discrepancies between what we pretend to be and who we really are. Only then can we have clear vision to minister to those around us.

Inward Application — Is there a person in your life whose shortcomings you have complained about or tried to fix? Take time to acknowledge and repent of your blindness to your own shortcomings. Reach out to apologize if you feel the need.

Outward Application — Ready to be brave? Ask a trusted friend, counselor, or pastor if there is a “log in your eye” that the Holy Spirit might help bring to light. Take time to confess and be renewed.

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

LUKE 19:1-9

A rich tax collector named Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus, but Zacchaeus is too short to see over the crowds. He runs ahead through the mass of people and climbs a tree (which was an embarrassing thing for a grown man to do). Jesus notices him and invites himself over for dinner. Though Zacchaeus is glad to host Jesus, others criticize Jesus for dining with a wicked man. Tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Roman occupation and profited personally by extorting and cheating money out of their own people. Zacchaeus is moved by Jesus to give half of his wealth to the poor and to repay anyone he has robbed. Jesus announces that Zacchaeus is saved and that he is exactly the kind of lost person Jesus came to find.

Zacchaeus was likely the most hated man in his community, but he was so compelled by Jesus that he shamelessly climbed a tree to see him. Jesus reacted in a similarly shameless way, seeking out the company of a man with such a bad reputation. Jesus freely offered his presence and friendship to Zacchaeus. The gesture is so moving that Zacchaeus decided to give up a large portion of his wealth in an act of restitution for all those he has wronged.

In Jesus's interaction with Zacchaeus, we see the reality that Paul would later write about in Romans 2:4: "God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance." Repentance means to change direction, to change one's ways, and Jesus doesn't manipulate or coerce people into repentance. Rather, he shows up with a heart full of love and joyfully shares a feast with us wherever we are—in a tree, in our homes, in our doubt, in our curiosity. He has the utmost confidence that a revelation of his love will naturally lead us to turn toward him.

Inward Application — Imagine hosting Jesus in your home. Does his presence with you in your living room or at your dinner table make you want to change your life?

Outward Application — Think of something you can give—it can be a financial gift or an offering of your time or skills—to those who are in need in your city.

JESUS AND THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

JOHN 8:1-12

An angry mob drags a woman caught in adultery before Jesus and demands judgment. Instead of condemning her, Jesus confronts her accusers, challenging them to consider their own sinfulness. As they leave one by one, he turns to the woman and addresses her face to face. He says that he does not condemn her, and he invites her to go live in freedom.

Imagine the impossible situation this woman finds herself in as she is brought to Jesus. Vulnerable and defenseless, she is exposed before a crowd with no opportunity to defend herself. She cannot hide or escape. Her life hangs in the balance.

Jesus meets this woman in her overwhelming shame. In response to a theological question posed by the Pharisees, Jesus does not offer a sermon about forgiveness or unpack the finer points of the Law of Moses. Instead, he gets to the heart of the matter. Jesus creates an opportunity for repentance in the Pharisees and the crowd. Then, he extends dignity and compassion to the woman. He gives her back her life.

In our moments of shame Jesus is present to us with this same compassion. When we are at our most vulnerable, enduring scorn and condemnation, we can trust that Jesus looks at us with kindness and mercy. When we don't expect it, he defends us before our accusers and invites us to shed our shame and live in freedom.

Inward Application — Take a moment to receive Jesus's words: "I do not condemn you." Stay with Jesus as those words settle in your heart and mind.

Outward Application — Think of a person you know who may have experienced judgment or shame (or someone who is isolated or outcast in some way.) Through a kind word, or an act of compassion, extend Jesus's acceptance and dignity to them.

JESUS AND THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

LUKE 23:32-43

As Jesus dies on the cross, the crowd mocks him, demanding that he save himself. Meanwhile, two criminals hang on either side of Jesus. One joins in the mockery, the other has a moment of revelation. Recognizing his own guilt and Jesus's innocence, the second criminal asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. Jesus responds, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

We are often surrounded by suffering and death. In moments when it seems as if Jesus's presence does nothing to alleviate the pain, we must choose between two responses. We can join those who mock Jesus: *If God is so powerful, why doesn't he step in to relieve our suffering?* Like the first criminal, we can disdain Jesus's radical act of self-giving love, and miss out on God's generous mercy.

The second criminal shows us a better way. Somehow, this man recognizes the face of God and utters a gasping prayer: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." In response, Jesus does not offer any requirements for the man to get right with God. In fact, Jesus doesn't comment on the man's moral condition. Instead, he offers the man paradise—without qualification. Jesus answers last-minute prayers from undeserving people.

When God's presence does not seem to relieve our suffering, we can still turn to him and receive the promise of his kingdom—a kingdom that the brokenness of this world cannot touch. He promises that whoever comes to him will not be cast out.

Inward Application — Is there an area of suffering in your life that you have not yet given to Jesus in prayer? Jesus is with you in it, sharing your pain. Visualize him in the room with you. Take a moment to be honest with him.

Outward Application — Knowing that everyone has their own spiritual history, even if they don't follow Jesus, ask someone you don't know well about their history with God. Have they experienced God or know anyone who has? Do they every pray? Be curious and listen.

JESUS AND MARY MAGDALENE

JOHN 20:11-18

Just after Jesus's resurrection, he appears to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons (see Luke 8:2). Mary is troubled by the empty tomb and, when Jesus first speaks to her, she mistakes him for a gardener. Then he says her name, and in a shock of joyful recognition, she embraces him. Mary runs to the disciples to proclaim Jesus's resurrection. They do not believe her until the Lord appears to them as well.

Mary's first-century context was very biased against women, not accepting women's testimony in court and believing their intelligence and virtue were lesser than that of men. On top of this, Mary Magdalene had been delivered by Jesus from demons. Imagine the stigma and insecurity that must have plagued her. Surely there were times when she experienced shame or even fear. Even so, she boldly followed Jesus as one of his disciples, traveling with him and learning his ways.

After his resurrection, Jesus chose to reveal himself to Mary first. The title "apostle" was used by those who followed Jesus, witnessed his resurrected body, and were sent to announce the good news. For these reasons the Catholic Church refers to Mary Magdalene as the "Apostle to the apostles." Jesus clearly loved and honored Mary.

In Ephesians 1:4, Paul writes that God "chose us before the foundation of the world." Regardless of our gender, race, economic status, or even our history, one of the truest things that can be said of us is that we are chosen as God's beloved. This truth can change how we live, giving us the confidence to own our unique calling and strengths, and to tell others about the God who singled us out for his love.

Inward Application — Ask Jesus to highlight what specific things he loves about you. Write down three things you love about yourself.

Outward Application — Write an encouraging card to a neighbor, including something you like about them, and give it to them.

JESUS AND SAUL

ACTS 9:1-20

Saul is on his way to Damascus to find and imprison followers of Jesus when a light shines on him from the heavens. Blinded and knocked off his horse, he hears a voice say to him, “Saul, why are you persecuting me?” The voice is Jesus’s, and he tells Saul to go into the city and await further instructions. There, a man named Ananias meets him after receiving instructions from the Lord in a vision. Ananias lays hands on him, and God restores Saul’s vision and fills him with the Holy Spirit.

It is impossible to say how close someone is to encountering Jesus. Saul was well-known for seeking out Christians to hurt and kill, and even Ananias feared to approach him. Yet, Jesus called Saul by name and changed the course of his life in a moment. This man, who had devoted himself to persecuting Christians, became one of the most influential witnesses to Jesus’s in history.

No one is too far off, too misguided, or too hard-hearted for Jesus to encounter them and turn their life around. Even the person who seems least likely to respond to Jesus may be one experience away from a radical transformation.

Life-changing encounters with Christ can happen more than once. Followers of Jesus can continually experience him in ways that challenge and re-direct their lives. When Christ reveals himself, it provokes us to trade lesser ways of living for his better way. We see the value and the beauty of emulating him in our daily lives. This is not a motivation that we muster up ourselves; it is the natural result of seeing Jesus afresh.

Inward Application — Pause and notice the ways that Jesus has been revealing himself to you this week—big or small. Respond to what he has been saying to you.

Outward Application — Is there someone in your life who seems too far off to receive a revelation of Jesus? Pray for their eyes to be opened and their heart to be softened.

JESUS AND PETER

LUKE 22:31-34; JOHN 21:1-19

At the last supper, Jesus says that Peter will deny that he knows Jesus. Peter insists that he would never do such a thing. But that very night, he denies Jesus three times and then runs into the night, weeping bitterly. When Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection, he asks Peter three times if he loves him. Peter responds each time, “You know that I love you.” Jesus commands Peter to feed his sheep. Then he once again talks to Peter about his future. This time, rather than foretelling a betrayal, he confirms that Peter will stay faithful even unto death.

Peter is bold and confident, but underneath his strong image is human frailty. We can only imagine the shame and regret Peter must have felt when he abandoned Jesus in his darkest hour. Of all people, Peter—a leader, set apart for great things—had done the unthinkable.

In the wake of this failure, Jesus opens his arms to Peter, full of love and forgiveness. Because Peter’s betrayal was in public, Jesus’s restoration is also in public, in front of the other disciples Jesus invites Peter to affirm his love three times, re-writing his three painful denials. Then, Jesus reinstates his ministry to the Church.

Like Peter, we can be slow to recognize our own shortcomings—until they are exposed in glaring moments of failure. Jesus is not surprised. He was never under any illusions about our strength or perfection. So, in the wake of our shortcomings and betrayals, he reminds us of our identity as beloved children and calls us back into relationship with him.

Inward Application — How are you attempting to prove yourself to Jesus? What would it take to lay down that performance and receive Jesus’s affirmation of love in your weakness?

Outward Application — Next time you witness a moment of failure—whether it is your child, a friend, or a family member—pause to consider whether it might be an opportunity to remind them of their beloved identity.



Every Home USA exists to empower and equip the Church to carry Christ to their world and leave no one behind. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost, and we are the ones he has found. Somehow, he uses our messy stories and small acts of obedience to radiate his redemption into the world around us.

Every Home USA is part of Every Home for Christ, a 77-year-old global ministry active in 155 nations. While that is grand in scope, we know that God moves on the smallest scale. He knows the heart of all 335 million souls in America today, and he loves each one. He has called the Church to discern the needs of their communities, and by his grace, to meet those needs as a sustained, healing witness of Christ in our nation.

We want to hear about your encounters with Christ, about your journey of carrying Christ to your world, and we want to do it with you!

Connect with Every Home USA, and find additional resources here:

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