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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Looking Ahead – 04.27.2025 - Your Journey

April 27, 2025

Following Jesus isn't about earning approval or adding pressure - it's about walking with him, one step at a time. As we align our lives with this truth, we start to see how the spiritual foundation impacts everything else: our mindset, relationships, purpose, and how we handle the messiness of everyday life.

Culture and our own opinions often try to take the lead. But when we let Jesus guide us, we begin to discover a life of lasting purpose that stands firm against the world's pressures.

As we look ahead into this week, take a moment to ask yourself: What's one area of my life where I need to stop trying to do it all on my own and start letting Jesus take the lead instead?

He's not asking for perfection - he's asking you to follow him and allow him to be your guide.

## Discussion Questions:

Ice Breaker: What's one trend, phrase, or piece of advice you've heard lately that sounds good but doesn't quite align with what Jesus teaches?

Why do you think we separate our faith from other parts of life (like school, work, relationships, etc.)? What could it look like to invite Jesus into all of it?

**Read Romans 12:1-2:** What stands out in this passage when you consider following Jesus instead of the pressures of our minds and the role culture plays? What does it practically look like to "renew your mind"?

Where are you right now in your journey with Jesus - just getting started, stuck somewhere, or finding some freedom? What's helping you take steps forward?

**Reflect and Respond:** Where have you been fitting in your connection time with Jesus? What might change if you let your relationship with him guide your daily tasks from the start rather than adding him in as an afterthought?

**Prayer:**

*Jesus, I am so thankful that following you isn't about being perfect but about the freedom I find when I trust you. Help me let go of the pressure to figure it all out on my own. Show me where I need to stop striving and start following, and lead me to where you'd like me to begin. I love you, I trust you, and I worship you. Amen.*

**Series Theme Verse:**

**John 8:31-32**

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*This post was written by Lori Tuckerman, Director of Content for the Daily LivingItOut.*

## **A Living Sacrifice - Your Journey**

**April 28, 2025**

### **New Testament Reading Plan: Acts 6**

I can't think of better verses to call us into the life-changing journey of following Jesus:

**Romans 12:1-2**

*And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let*

*God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

The idea of “giving our bodies” to God might seem a bit extreme, but following Jesus is an all-in proposition. Paul the apostle spent the first 11 chapters of Romans describing how dead we are in our sin and how God provided Jesus as the only solution to our *dead-ness*.

The question is, do you believe this?

Do you believe that there is nothing you can do on your own to make yourself right with God? And if you do, do you also believe that the only remedy for your sin is to trust in Jesus' sacrifice for you?

Even after I received the free gift of God's grace, I thought God ought to be pretty happy with what I was bringing to the table. I knew a lot about the Bible, I was prepared to tithe on my gross income, and I wanted to tell everyone about how Jesus had changed my life (a lot!). It wasn't until I sat under good teaching every week at church and got into a discipleship group, which included long periods of prayer, that I began to realize how incapable I was of doing this “following Jesus thing” on my own.

We can easily fall into the habit of adding Jesus on top of our lives instead of submitting to his Lordship. Thankfully, as we grow in our spiritual practices and maturity, we learn the importance of putting God first in all things.

Try starting your day in prayer, acknowledging Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Ask him to open your heart to his Holy Spirit and make you available for his purpose. And then trust that God will lead you as he surrounds you with his love and care.

**Questions:**

Are you honest with yourself about your absolute inability to make yourself right with God? Do you believe Jesus is the only solution for your sin?

**Next Steps:**

Acknowledge your sin and inability to overcome it on your own. Submit your life, all of it, to the Lordship of Christ. Find a group of people who are headed in the same direction, and spend time with them. Learn together what it means to offer yourselves as living sacrifices to God.

**Prayer:**

*My Lord, Jesus, how thankful I am that you called me to follow you. Saying "yes" was not easy, but following you has cost me more. I thought I had counted the cost, but I couldn't begin to know. Now I wouldn't change that decision for anything. Losing my life to you has brought me new life, a life of love I could never have imagined. Help me hear your voice and call upon your strength to accomplish your purpose in my life. In your beautiful name I pray, amen.*

**Series Theme Verse:****John 8:31-32**

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*This post was written by Lauri White, an Oregon attendee, and a regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.*

## **The Good Shepherd - Your Journey**

**April 29, 2025**

**New Testament Reading Plan: Acts 7**

My favorite scripture in the Bible is the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. I'm sure many if not most of you are familiar with it or even know it by heart. It has been my

favorite ever since I accepted Christ into my heart at age 10. Did I completely understand it back then? No, but I always found the verses comforting.

**Psalm 23:1-2 NKJV**

*The Lord is my shepherd;*

*I shall not want.*

*He makes me to lie down in green pastures;*

*He leads me beside the still waters.*

As an older adult, I have a far better understanding of this scripture, because I've experienced the verses throughout my life.

Jesus loves me and you and every member of his flock. He will do everything he can to protect and provide for us. He wants the very best for us - the greenest pastures, the richest life. And he wants us to find peace and calm in his presence.

**Psalm 23:3-4 NKJV**

*He restores my soul;*

*He leads me in the paths of righteousness*

*For His name's sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,*

*I will fear no evil;*

*For You are with me;*

*Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

When we accept Christ into our heart, our life is changed forever. From that point on, we are blessed with the Holy Spirit to guide us in our journey, helping us choose the right way, not for ourselves but for him. As we encounter the many troubles of this world, we have no reason to

fear, for Christ, the Good Shepherd, is right there with us. When we wander - as sheep do - he provides a gentle nudge and welcomes us back into his fold.

**Psalm 23:5-6 NKJV**

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;*

*You anoint my head with oil;*

*My cup runs over.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me*

*All the days of my life;*

*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.*

Even as we face the evils of this world, Jesus provides all we need to defeat them. Until the time comes to join him in Heaven, Jesus promises to walk alongside us, pouring out his goodness and mercy in ways far beyond what we deserve.

**Questions:**

Are you allowing Christ to be your Good Shepherd?

Do you sometimes feel lost or confused in your journey?

**Next Steps:**

Intentionally connect with God this week. Read your Bible, journal, pray on your drive to work, join a Group, or step into serving on the Dream Team to watch him fill your life with his goodness and mercy.

**Prayer:**

*Father, you are the Good Shepherd. I know you want to provide for me and protect me. Help me to be a good sheep. Give me the wisdom to follow your lead in all aspects of my life and the courage to face adversity without fear. Help me to trust that you are always beside me, guiding my steps. In Jesus' name, amen.*

## **Series Theme Verse:**

### **John 8:31-32**

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*This post was written by Ned Miller, a Findlay attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.*

# **Broken Glass - Your Journey**

**April 30, 2025**

## **New Testament Reading Plan: Acts 8**

Bend but don't break is how we handle life's hardships without being devastated by their magnitude. I'm an "A" student when it comes to adapting, but I often fail at the not-breaking part. The results are partially due to my ego and partially to thinking, *"at least I'm not as bad as (fill in the blank)."*

Too frequently, I've learned the hard way that comparing burdens is a human flaw. I always come out on the other side, but only after I lean or fall into Jesus and ask him to guide me through my struggles.

I remember the years I had with my mother and recall the many times she took her burdens to Jesus when multiple sclerosis left her exhausted. She never waited until there was broken glass all around her. Though God didn't heal my mother's broken body here on earth, he filled her spirit and brought peacefulness to her tired heart and mind.

Difficult decisions became easier once she gave her problems to God ... and gave God to her problems. As Steven Furtick said, ["God is bigger than your problems."](#)

### **Matthew 11:28** NIV

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*



This scripture offers so much peace within its promise. Jesus isn't demanding we bend a knee or claiming that he will erase all stress and hardship. Instead, he is delivering an invitation to us, because he knows we will eventually break on our own. He acknowledges that life is full of adversity, but he promises to fight alongside us.

Why wait until you're too tired to give your all to Jesus?

Accept the invitation and get the renewal you need to navigate life's other challenges. Jesus promises to give you rest from the weariness and burdens of trying to do life on your own. Allowing Jesus to do the hard work gives you more opportunities to be present in a world waiting for you to share his Good News.

### **Questions:**

Is life too stressful too often? How do you see others respond to life's pressures? How do you feel when you give things to God to handle?

### **Next Steps:**

Name your burdens and write them down. Pray to God about those problems, and cross them off as you see God help you navigate them. Share your burdens with other Christians, and ask them to pray with you.

### **Prayer:**

*God, I know I'm stronger when I live in community with others and give my troubles to you. Remind me when I struggle to see that truth. Replace my foolish pride with humility so that I know accepting or asking for help is a betterment and not a hindrance. Amen.*

### **Series Theme Verse:**

#### **John 8:31-32**

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*This post was written by Jaron Camp, a Findlay attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.*

# Remain in the Master Gardener - Your Journey

May 1, 2025

## New Testament Reading Plan: Acts 9

Many think the life of a Christian is a list of “dos and don’ts.” Even Christians today continue to evaluate their own behaviors when determining whether or not they are good enough. But is this the life of freedom that Christ promised his followers?

Is life with Jesus about what we do or what he does?

In reality, it’s about both. We cannot earn our salvation; it is a gift of grace. However, obedience is the result of our remaining in Christ. We say “no” to sin and “yes” to spiritual practices because we love Jesus. That love makes us want to know him and become like him. We don’t do it under compulsion or guilt, but because we are **in** him.

### John 15:5 NIV

*“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain (abide) **in me**, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing”* (emphasis added).

When you choose to follow Christ, you are grafted into his life source. Though a branch removed from the vine is dead, a branch attached takes part in the life of the vine. It is nourished and grows to produce fruit. A branch cut away may look alive for a short time, but it is dead inside.

This is the reality Jesus invites his followers to live out. We engage in spiritual practices not because we *have* to but because we *want* to, for our own growth. We want to know God and look more like Jesus. Our growth is directly connected to how close we are connected with him.

Abiding in Christ will come with some pain and discomfort. Jesus says the Father prunes the branches (John 15:1-2). Initially, Bible reading will be challenging. Prayer might seem like talking to the wall, and who

thinks fasting sounds fun? Sometimes it feels like turning away from our sin will kill us. But once he strips aside all of the death we took false comfort in, we are free to grow.

Breakthrough happens when we allow our Master Gardener to prune us. Consistent study in Scripture leads to understanding, and prayer brings comfort in trials. Fasting becomes an opportunity to deny our flesh and freedom from being a slave to our desires. These practices are the cross we gladly bear on our adventure with Jesus.

### **Questions:**

Do you see the Christian life as a list of items to check off or an opportunity to become like Jesus?

What sins are keeping you from bearing the fruit?

What Spiritual practices are you participating in that will help you be fruitful?

### **Next Steps:**

If you have never read the entire Bible, make that a goal. (Research says reading 4+ days a week is the magic number for optimal growth.) The Bible Recap is an excellent resource to help you work through Scripture with brief commentary to help you understand what you are reading.

Join a Group this summer to help you develop relationships with other Christians who will challenge you to grow in your faith.

### **Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, you are our Good Shepherd, our Master Gardener. You prune and lead us into a life that is not always comfortable but always good. Thank you for not leaving me where I am comfortable. Thank you for stretching me to make me grow and become more like you. Grow in me the desire to become more like you, no matter what the cost. Amen.*

**Series Theme Verse:****John 8:31-32**

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*This post was written by Julie Mabus, a Whitehouse attendee, and a regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.*

## **Following - Your Journey**

**May 2, 2025**

**New Testament Reading Plan: Acts 10****John 8:31-32**

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

What does it really mean to follow Jesus?

According to Jesus, it's more than belief - it's a daily decision to remain faithful to his teachings. To follow Jesus is to trust him enough to align our thoughts, choices, and direction with his.

Jesus transforms not just our spiritual life but every area of our life. He wants to shape how we view work and our church and even how we deal with the hard stuff - like the difficult people and circumstances in our lives and the pressures we face at school or home.

But here's where many of us get stuck: we compartmentalize Jesus into a small corner of our lives instead of letting him lead us fully to the life of peace and purpose he has for us.

What if following Jesus wasn't meant to be one part of life but the process that transforms all of it?

In a world where social media is loud, cultural messages keep shifting, and standards are always changing, Jesus offers a steady truth we can actually trust.

The beauty in following him is that we don't have to get everything right. We just have to stop holding back and choose to move in his direction. Staying faithful to his teachings isn't about pressure or keeping rules. It's about staying close in a relationship with him.

Through that closeness, we can truly understand who God is and who we are - or can be - in him.

### **Questions:**

Take a moment to ask yourself: What shift would I have to make from just believing in Jesus to really following him?

### **Next Steps:**

Pick one area of your life - like school, work, family, or friendships - where you've been trying to lead on your own. This week, take one intentional step to invite Jesus into that space. It could be starting your day with a short prayer, pausing to reflect before making a decision, or simply asking, *"Jesus, what would it look like to follow you here?"*

### **Prayer:**

*Jesus, thank you for inviting us into a life of freedom through following you. Help me remain faithful to your teachings, not just in what I believe but in how I live. Transform my mind, guide my steps, and remind me that this journey isn't about perfectly following rules – it's about following you. Amen.*

### **Series Theme Verse:**

#### **John 8:31-32**

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*This post was written by Lori Tuckerman, Director of Content for the LivingItOut Devotional.*

## Reflections – 5.03.2025 - Your Journey

May 3, 2025

Do you memorize scripture?

Memorizing scripture can be a tangible way to cultivate a deeper relationship with God.

If you're feeling stuck on how to get started, here are a few summarized ideas from BibleHub.com in their article "[Top 10 Ways to Memorize Scripture More Easily](#)."

**Say it out loud.** Read it when you wake up, say it in a prayer, recite it while doing housework, or read it aloud before bed. The more you say it, the more it sticks.

**Write it out.** Jot it down a few times. There's something about handwriting that helps words sink in.

**Focus on short passages first.** Make them manageable by memorizing them in chunks. Using John 8:31-32 as an example,

*"You are truly my disciples..."*

*"...if you remain faithful to my teachings."*

*"And you will know the truth,..."*

*"...and the truth will set you free."*

**Use it digitally.** Put the verse on your phone lock screen or background so you see it throughout the day.

**Add a tune or rhythm.** Sing it to a melody you already know or make up a little chant, whatever helps it stick!

**Doodle it.** Draw out the verse or use visuals and symbols to help you remember key parts.

**Share it with someone.** Whether it's a friend, family member, or your kids, teaching it to someone else could help you remember it yourself.

As we reflect on what we've learned about the spiritual domain of our journey, I encourage you to commit to memorizing some scripture.

If you need a place to start, memorize the series verse, John 8:31-32.

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Word. Help me hide your truths in my heart and recall them when I need them most. Give me focus, discipline, and joy as I memorize scripture - not just to remember words but to draw closer to you! In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

**Series Theme Verse:**

**John 8:31-32**

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

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