

# Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

*A Discipleship Journey*



## **Jesus is Good News in our Lives**

Week 5

God is Close to Me

This weekly material is offered to support our Discipleship Journey as we walk in the foot prints of Jesus.

We encourage you to use this material as a part of your daily prayer practice as follows:

- ❖ Begin with the Opening Prayer.
- ❖ Pray the Reflection on Good News.
- ❖ Listen to God by Praying with the Examen.
- ❖ Close with the Closing Prayer.

Let us pray for each other that we are transformed, as individuals and as community, by this Discipleship Journey.

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### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we praise You, for You are the source of all blessings. You make a way for us to live in relationship with You. You lovingly come to free us, forgive us, and show us the way to a new life in You. Forgive us for the times we've failed to recognize that the stories of our lives are the story of You redeeming us. Thank you, Father, that You so love the world that You gave Your only Son, "so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:16). Thank you for so generously giving Yourself for us. Help us to know, not just with our head but with our whole being, how Jesus' coming is truly good news for our lives. Lord, help us to live in the true joy and gratitude for all that You have done for us. Jesus, we trust in You. We make this prayer in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN

## Reflection

We began our Discipleship Journey by reflecting on God's love for us. God loves us more than we can imagine, so much that He fashioned each of us in our mother's womb as a unique creation for all time (Psalm 139). The Creator of the universe actually knows each of us by name and, believe it or not, has every hair on our heads counted (Matthew 10:30). God created us to live in loving relationship with Him now and for all time (1 John 3:1 - 3).

The problem is that we all have things in our lives that keep us from fully experiencing this loving relationship with God. There have been times when we've turned away from God's plan and chosen to go our own way, which breaks our relationship with God. We tell God that we don't want or need him in our life. This brokenness leaves us with feelings of guilt, emptiness, or loneliness, as if God is far from us or doesn't exist at all.

Can you recall a time in your life when you felt as if God was really far away from you?

The good news is that God loves us too much to leave us in our brokenness - He never gives up on us!!

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (John 3:16 - 17).*

By His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus takes upon Himself the consequences of our sins, and by His resurrection He restores our relationship with God. This is why He says, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6).*

No matter who you are or what your life circumstances have been, Jesus is good news for your life. If you are burdened by the weight of sin, know that Jesus has lovingly died for those sins on the cross so that you can be with Him now and for all eternity.

## Prayer with the Examen

It can sometimes be difficult to see what in our lives gets in the way of our relationship with God. One tool available to us to help is the *Examen*. St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, developed the *Examen* to help his followers see God in all aspects of their lives. For us, this practice brings into our awareness times we felt God's closeness and times He feels further away; it does this by inviting us to reflect on activities in our day that brought us joy and those that left us feeling drained and spent.

The *Examen* is actually an attitude more than a method; it creates a time set aside for thankful reflection of where God is in your everyday life. It has five steps, which most people take more or less in order, and it usually takes 15 – 20 minutes per day. We invite you to use the following as guidance:

**Pray for light.** Begin by asking God for the grace to pray, to see, and to understand.

*I want to look at my day with God's eyes, not merely my own.*

**Give thanks.** Look at your day in a spirit of gratitude. Everything is a gift from God.

*The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.*

**Review the day.** Guided by the Holy Spirit, look back on your day. Pay attention to your experience and look for those times where you felt excited, happy, joyful, energized, at peace, etc. Look for God in those experiences.

*I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.*

**Face your shortcomings.** Face up to failures and shortcomings. Pay attention to the events of your day and look for those times when you felt frustrated, angry, tired, exhausted, etc. Ask God to show you what triggered those feelings and how you could have let God into that experience.

*I face up to what is wrong – in my life and in me.*

**Look forward to the day to come.** Where do you need God tomorrow?

*I ask where I need God in the day to come.*

## Closing Prayer

My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself,  
and the fact that I think that I am following Your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You.  
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road  
though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore, will I trust You always  
for though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death,  
I will not fear.  
For You are ever with me,  
and You will never leave me  
to face my perils alone.

*Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude*