

The **Sermon**
on the **Mount**

**A Journey Through
The Book of Matthew**



SEPTEMBER 2019

Crossroads Christian Church

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Start here.

Hello friend! Thank you so much for picking up this resource! Our hope is that over the coming weeks, this will be a tool to help you move closer to God and people. We will begin each week with the passage from The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5 through 7) that goes along with our weekend message at Crossroads. But each weekday, we will read a short passage from the rest of the book of Matthew. And then on the weekend, we'll jump back into The Sermon on the Mount. We know opening a Bible can feel overwhelming, so we'd like to give you a few tips to get the most out of your study time. Inside this resource, you will find several components to each day:

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>> **READ** - Each day you will be reading from the Gospel of Matthew. Find a quiet place where there aren't many distractions. Focus on listening to God through what you read.

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>> **REFLECT** - After you read through the passage, take a few minutes and think about what you just read. Ask God to help you hear his voice clearly. Write down your reflections.

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>> **RESPOND** - This is the time to obey God and follow Jesus' example. Ask God to give you the courage to immediately put into practice that which you have learned.

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>> **RELATIONSHIP** - God is our Heavenly Father who wants to hear from you. We can do this through prayer, as we talk and listen to God. But he also wants us to share what we have learned with others. This part of your experience is about talking with God and with others.

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>> **REAL LIFE** - Several times a week, you'll hear from a real-life friend from the Crossroads family. They are people just like you, learning to listen to and obey Jesus. We are on this journey together!

Weekend

September 7/8

>> **READ** Matthew 5:1-16

>> **REAL LIFE**

By Jacob Stewart

Have you ever said, "I'm too blessed to be stressed"? This cultural phrase honestly helps us feel just a little bit better about whatever life circumstances we have going on that are putting some pressure on us.

Maybe your toddler has just spilled milk all over you right before you're about to head into Target. Maybe it's that sales pitch you have coming up. Maybe it's that big performance review. Maybe someone you love has been diagnosed with cancer. Even though we have numerous things going on in our lives that are daunting, stressful, and painful to walk through, we simply say, "I'm too blessed to be stressed!"

That word blessed is confusing when we read something like Matthew 5:1-16. We often think blessing in Scripture is when God says or does something that results in things in our lives that make us feel happy or show us that we are doing great. When we are not seeing things in our lives or having that feeling of happiness, we think that God is not blessing us, that we must be doing something wrong, that He must have left us.

In Matthew 5:1-16, you see Jesus doing something pretty radical. In verses 3-11, you see Jesus telling us what blessing truly looks like. That word "blessed" has too many negative connotations with it. Maybe it is more accurate for us to use the word, "flourishing". I think we would often say we are not flourishing, not happy, not blessed, when terrible things come, but Jesus invites us to see His Kingdom in a new way.

Jesus shows us that we can flourish through mourning, being meek, and even being persecuted. In the beginning of this Sermon, Jesus is taking a bold stance and showing the people then, and us today, that when you experience these things and

when you go after some of the virtues listed in these verses, you shouldn't think that God is not with you or for you. That is simply not the truth.

In Matthew 5:1-16, Jesus is inviting us into a new way of thinking and being with Him regardless of our circumstances. Whether life is good or it's absolutely terrible, Jesus is saying that the flourishing life in his Kingdom is available for you right here, right now.

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ABOUT JACOB STEWART

Jacob Stewart is husband to Christian, father to Mia, and pastor to kids and families at Crossroads! Jacob loves being with his incredible family and he also loves all things Kentucky (Go Cats!), craft coffee and showing students who Jesus is and what He has done for them!



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>> REFLECT – Ask yourself: “Am I living with this type of mindset towards the Father? Am I ‘flourishing’ even if I’m suffering?”

Which of the virtues listed in verses 3 through 11 do you find the most challenging?

>> RESPOND – List one or two spiritual goals for the coming few months.



>> **READ** Matthew 1:1-17

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>> **REFLECT** – As we read through Matthew, one of the themes is: Jesus is King. To show that he is the authentic King of the Jews, Matthew traces Jesus’ heritage all the way back to Abraham. Do you recognize some names? God’s plan to restore a broken world through Jesus unfolded over generations! Think about your life. How have you seen God work out some of his plans for you, perhaps over a long period of time?

>> **RESPOND** – Before the day is over, thank someone who is part of your spiritual heritage, someone who has helped you move closer to Jesus. You can do that through a text or email. Bonus points if you make a phone call or put a hand-written card in the mail.

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>> **RELATIONSHIP** – Write a prayer of thanks to God for working through history to bring Jesus into the world, and for working through your own life’s story to bring about his amazing plans.



Tuesday

September 10

>> **READ** Matthew 1:18-25

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>> **REFLECT** – When have you been surprised by God?

What do the words “God with us” mean to you?

>> **RESPOND** – The miraculous pregnancy of Mary must have been a huge surprise to this young engaged couple. But they each did what God asked of them. Write down one thing you believe that God is asking of you.

>> **RELATIONSHIP** – Take a few minutes and pray about what you just wrote. Are you afraid or hesitant? Admit it and ask for help. Is this beyond your own ability to make it happen? Pray for God to do what you cannot.

Wednesday

September 11

>> **READ** Matthew 2:1-12

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>> **REFLECT** – The wise men came to worship Jesus, even at great cost. How does the busyness of life sometimes turn your attention away from worshiping Jesus?

>> **RESPOND** – Worship isn't just about music. It's our all-of-life response to who Jesus is and what he has done. What is one way you will worship Jesus as you go about your day?

>> **RELATIONSHIP** – Complete this sentence several times: Jesus, I worship you today because...

Who is one person you can tell what you have learned today?



>> RELATIONSHIP - "Father, help me to develop the discipline and habits of listening to your voice every day. I want to know you. I want my life to be pleasing to you as I seek to obey you. Help me to overcome any worry or to-do list that is fighting for my attention right now. Help me to hear from you very clearly as I read your word today."

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>> READ Matthew 2:13-23

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>> REAL LIFE

By Dwight Silvera

Have you ever experienced a traffic detour? Often times, the reasons for such a detour include restoring roads or bridges. The signs for the detour are meant for your safety and protection as you move toward your destination.

In Matthew 2:13, we read about a detour that Joseph was prompted to take by the angel of the Lord. In the midst of a targeted evil scheme by Herod the Great, to end the prophecy of a coming Messiah by killing all young males in Bethlehem under the age of 2 years, God was revealing a number of important truths about Himself and His people.

Consider how the Sovereignty of God is displayed in this passage. By definition, God's Sovereignty is His ability to accomplish His purposes, promises, and prophecies in and through people and circumstances, even detours, ultimately for their good and His glory. This is evidenced in passages like Romans 8:28 which says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Matthew quotes the prophet Hosea saying, "Out of Egypt I called my son." Here, Matthew uses the reference of "God's son" to relate the saving of Israel out of Egypt to the ultimate Savior, Jesus Christ, who would be temporarily sheltered in Egypt and then later fully revealed as God's true Son.

Matthew further quotes the prophet Jeremiah in verse 18, drawing a parallel between the nation of Israel mourning as they were carried off into exile in the Old Testament with the mourning that occurred as a result of Herod killing the young children in Bethlehem. Both were attempts to snuff out God's Chosen, but God was and is Sovereign and His plans prevailed.

Secondly, consider the protection and blessing of immediate obedience to the Lord's prompting. Joseph provides a great example of one who trusts God and obeys Him. He also displays submission and patience as he waits on the Lord for further instructions to know when to leave Egypt.

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ABOUT DWIGHT SILVERA

Dwight Silvera and his family relocated to Evansville six years ago from Canada for work. God has continued to grow them as they learn to say "Yes" to Him. Dwight is passionate about pursuing Christ in his life and about seeing Him take root and grow in others.



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>> REFLECT – What is an interruption or “detour” you are experiencing? Consider how you can trust God through this circumstance. Can you see how God might work this out for your good and his glory?

>> RESPOND – Write down your “detour” on a note card and then add two column headings: “My Good” and “God’s Glory”. Keep the card handy and over the next week, record any ways you see God at work.



>> **READ** Matthew 3:1-17

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>> **REFLECT** – Write down several things that stand out to you from this chapter.

>> **RESPOND** – The Pharisees and Sadducees were religious leaders. Many of them loved the admiration that came with their position, but their hearts were far from God. John the Baptist urged them to repent and change their lives. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action. What is an area of your life where you are struggling with sin? Repent and invite God into this part of your story.

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>> **RELATIONSHIP** – In this chapter, the people came confessing their sins (verse 6). There’s something powerful about bringing a trusted friend into your sin struggle. Who can you confess to so that they can come alongside you with prayer and encouragement?



>> **READ** Matthew 5:17-20

>> **REAL LIFE**

By Kelli Ward

Raising four lively and opinionated children has been the most daunting task I have ever faced. During my children's young years, my husband and I have done our best protect them from things that can hurt or harm them. To accomplish this task, we have established rules. Lots and lots of rules. We have rules regarding what our children can watch on Netflix, what games they can play, how they spend their free time, and how they treat others.

But as our children grow older and change, we have realized that our function as parents is changing. We have begun to recognize the importance of doing more than giving our kids a list of rules. It is also important to develop the character of my children so they can make the right decisions for the right reasons. This new season of parenting is a strange and exciting place to be. On one hand, it would be nice to give my kids a list of rules and that be the end of this parenting gig but that is not how it works. We also have to equip them and entrust them to make right decisions on their own.

In Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus addresses a group of men and women who have lived under the rules and regulations of the Law and prophets for many, many generations. He makes the statement in verse 17 that he has "not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Jesus continues by expressing how the Laws that have governed their lives have not been without a purpose and they are not to be dismissed. Rather, they are the foundation on which a rich and meaningful relationships with God and others can be built.

As I read this Scripture, I cannot help but hear a correlation between what Jesus is saying and what I have been hoping to instill in my children. I don't want my kids to mindlessly follow the rules I have set for them. I want them to understand why those rules are important and use them as a foundation to grow and develop into mature, discerning adults.

Likewise, Jesus does not want us to aimlessly follow the Law. He wants us honor the Law and, on that foundation, know HIM. For it is through Jesus and our relationship with him that we can become exactly who we are created to be!

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ABOUT KELLI WARD

Kelli Ward has been ministering in churches on the west side of Evansville for seventeen years. She and her husband, Wayne, have four amazing children. Kelli says, "Living in the intersection of ministry and motherhood is a thrilling place to be!"

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>> REFLECT – The ability of the Pharisees to keep the law was impressive. Nobody could match them! What is your reaction to Jesus’ words “when it comes to right living, we have to do far better?”

It seems that there are two ways of being righteous. One is through our own effort. The other is by letting Jesus change us from the inside out. What is an area of your life where you have tried to do it on your own?

Monday

September 16

>> **READ** Matthew 4:1-17

>> **REFLECT** – Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus is able to empathize with our weaknesses, because he was tempted in every way that we are, except he never sinned. What are your thoughts on the fact that Jesus experienced temptation?

How did Jesus resist each temptation? Think about a recent time you faced temptation – how did you resist? What was the outcome?

>> **RESPOND** – With each temptation, there was a false promise. With the temptation to turn rocks into bread, the promise was, “Jesus, you will be much happier if you use your power for your own comfort and benefit.” Regarding the temptation you just wrote about above, what are some of the false promises that make it appealing?

>> **RELATIONSHIP** – Ask God to show you the truth about the temptation you face. Write out a prayer asking him to help you resist by saying “No” to the sin, and “Yes” to God.



Tuesday

September 17

>> **READ** Matthew 4:18-25

>> **REAL LIFE**

By Emily Holweger

In the spirit of transparency, this passage has the potential to make me feel wholly inadequate. Jesus asked Peter and Andrew to follow Him and they did. No arguments, no questions. They simply followed him. We read a little further and encounter James and John, another set of fishermen Jesus calls to follow Him. Seemingly without hesitation, they comply. They leave their boat and simply follow Jesus.

I think back on all the promptings God has laid on my heart. My response has seldom been as swift and agreeable as these four men. I wonder just how many times I've hesitated or simply refused to follow His calling. My reality lies in stark contrast to these fishermen who listened well THE FIRST TIME Jesus instructed them.

I mulled over what these four possessed to allow them to so willingly follow Christ. And follow him immediately! Were they more obedient? Perhaps. Were they more Godly in character? Maybe. Did having Jesus make his request as flesh and blood stir their heart in a different way? Likely.

But something else caught my attention. They were brothers.

Two sets of brothers setting up nets to fish. Pairs of men doing work in unity and alignment. Perhaps their ability to follow Christ immediately was not only because their hearts were tender but also because they had a brother in Christ (and in this case a literal brother) to accompany them. I don't know about you but I'm always more confident to take up a new adventure when someone I trust is alongside me.

This passage reminds me just how important it is to have close friends who love Jesus. Whether blood relatives or brothers and sisters in Christ, we provide ourselves a strong support when we link arms and live daily with others who follow Jesus. When frustrated

and apt to make an unwise decision, it is much easier to cast off a worldly gut reaction when a 'sister' reminds me Who I follow. In turn, when I am faced with a new opportunity that seems scary at first glance, I am always less hesitant when another Christian is walking with me.

Do you have a close friend guiding you in Godly wisdom? Someone you trust to help you navigate daily life and point you towards Jesus? If not, I challenge you to seek out a small group, Bible study or simply one Christian friend who can be your fellow fisherman.

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ABOUT EMILY HOLWEGER

Emily Holweger is wife to Matt and mom to Reid, Elyse, Louise and Thaddeus. She is a former sales rep listening closely as God guides her towards what He wants her to be when she grows up! In the meantime, she enjoys writing and wearing down the tread on her minivan tires as she shuttles kids around the county.



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>> REFLECT - When you sense God asking you to do something that is difficult, what might stand in the way of you responding in immediate obedience?

Wednesday

September 18

>> **READ** Matthew 8:1-17

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>> **REFLECT** – How does this portion of scripture foreshadow our eternity with God, and life in his kingdom? In this passage, Jesus mentions Moses, as well as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Why do you think he reminds the Israelites of their ancestry?

>> **RESPOND** – Jesus was amazed by the faith of the centurion. Does your confidence in God's ability match that of the centurion?

Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes through hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ." Reading the Bible (God's Word) and listening to it increases our faith. In other words, as we learn more about God and his love, our confidence in his ability grows.

Commit to continuing in this devotional study, and beyond. There are many free devotionals available through the YouVersion Bible App. As soon as we finish this devotional, download the app and find a "reading plan" that interests you!

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>> **RELATIONSHIP** – The disciples asked Jesus for more faith (Luke 17:5). They recognized that it is the key to pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6). As our closest friend, God wants to know that we truly believe he is looking out for us. Let God know that you recognize the blessings he has already placed in your life, and that you are confident in his ability to care for you.

Thursday

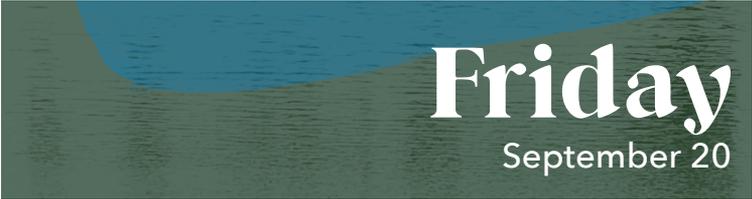
September 19

>> **READ** Matthew 8:18-34

>> **REFLECT** – It’s ironic that the demons possessing the two men in Gadarenes exhibited more knowledge of Jesus’ true identity than his own closest followers. Who do you believe Jesus is?

>> **RESPOND** – Let your knowledge of Jesus’ identity increase your faith. When confronted by storms, rest in the knowledge that you are in the company of Jesus, the Son of God.

>> **RELATIONSHIP** – Ask God to help you continue to grow in your knowledge of him. Pray that as you gain knowledge of him and his will, and put it into action, your faith will both show AND grow.



Friday

September 20

>> **READ** Matthew 9:1-13

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>> **REFLECT** – Jesus’ authority was questioned, as was his choice of company. What does his response to each question reveal about his character?

How do you think his responses made the people around him feel?

How do you think his responses made the Pharisees (teachers of the law) feel?

>> **RESPOND** – Jesus obviously assigned great value to individuals that the “important people” of his time avoided. How highly do you value the people that live “in the margins” of our society? Does your heart/reaction reflect that of Jesus?

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>> **RELATIONSHIP** – Ask God to give you the ability to see yourself the same way Jesus sees you. Ask him to enable you to see how valuable you are to him.



Weekend

September 21/22

>> **READ** Matthew 5:21-26

>> **REAL LIFE**

By Bill Altman

I love sarcasm. I love dishing it out. And I love taking it. For years I have said that sarcasm is my love language. Some of my favorite historical characters, like Mark Twain and Winston Churchill, were masters of the art. Churchill had a running battle of wits with Lady Astor. She once said, "If I were your wife, sir, I would poison your coffee." His reply: "If I was your husband, I would drink it." One point for Mr. Churchill!

But sarcasm, and our words in general, are not always fun and games. I had to learn very quickly after marrying my wife that sarcastic words can hide real barbs that inflict real pain. In this weekend's passage, Jesus compares hurtful words to the crime of murder. Why is that? Because they both come from an angry heart. The difference is merely one of degree.

Jesus tells us that in our relationships with other people, we should never let our feelings rise to the place where the result is angry, hateful words. "Raca", used in verse 22, was a term of contempt. It comes from a root word that means "to spit". Jesus said that mouth that expresses these words reveals a hateful heart that is in danger of judgment.

A friend of mine came to me a few years ago and shared something I had done that bothered him a little. He said, "It's not a huge deal, but I wanted to clear the air so that it wouldn't lead to resentment on my part." And then he said, "I like to keep short accounts." I was so thankful for that conversation.

And I think that gets exactly to the heart of what Jesus is teaching. In your relationships, deal with things quickly. If you have offended or been offended, don't bury it. Deal with it. Even if you are in a place of worship,

doing spiritual things. Set that aside and go to your friend. Otherwise, resentment might grow and a relationship could be destroyed.

Confession: I still love sarcasm. But only when it's funny and gentle and given in small doses.

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ABOUT BILL ALTMAN

Bill Altman has been on staff at Crossroads for seven years. He loves his wife and three kids, music, reading and being outside, preferably in the mountains. Bill says, "If all those loves come together at the same time, I'm pretty much in heaven."



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>> REFLECT – Can you still hear the echoes of hurtful words that were spoken to you by someone important in your life?

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>> RESPOND – Do an inventory. Have you said something to someone that you wish you could take back? How will you reach out and apologize? Alternatively, has someone hurt you, but you have not taken the step to keep a short account? Either of these conversations should involve prayer on your part. So pray for God's wisdom and words and timing. And then follow through.

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>> RELATIONSHIP – Write out a prayer to God, asking him to search your heart and show you any place where anger and bitterness might be hiding.

Monday

September 23

>> **READ** Matthew 9:14-26

>> **REFLECT** – Jesus’ response to the question in verse 14 reminds me of one of my father’s favorite sayings: “Always grab the right tool for the job.” Fasting was done to bring people into a closer relationship with God; with Jesus in their presence it didn’t make any sense for the disciples to participate. Fasting was the wrong “tool” for the job at hand.

What device did the woman with the issue of blood look to use as a means for her healing? What was the actual tool that successfully brought it about?

What “tool” did Jesus cast aside in verses 23-24? What tool did he use in its place?

>> **RESPOND** – When we face challenges, what tool do we immediately reach for in response? On the left-hand side of a piece of paper, write down challenges you are currently facing. Next to each one, write a short prayer asking for God’s intervention. Keep this list, and when you are reminded of the items in the left column, pray the prayer to its right.



>> READ Matthew 9:27-38

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>> REFLECT - The two blind men pursued Jesus doggedly—they even followed him indoors! What does this passage teach about the power of persistence and faith? What does it tell us about the heart of Jesus?

>> RESPOND – Jesus gives his disciples an assignment: “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field.” We must do the same. Pray for more bold Christians to share the love of God with our hurting world, and to gather in a greater harvest.

>> RELATIONSHIP – Have you ever felt that people today just don’t seem to want or need God? Pray to God that he gives you the ability to see the people around you the same way that Jesus sees them—as a great harvest, ready to be gathered in. Pray he helps you see that the harvest itself is truly greater than the number of available workers.

Wednesday

September 25

>> **READ** Matthew 10:1-15

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>> **REFLECT** - Jesus delegates the job of spreading the news of God's eminent kingdom to his disciples. However, he doesn't just assign them the task, he also grants them the authority to ensure it can be done. He then gives them guidelines within which they are to operate. What can we learn from the example of leadership that Jesus provides?

>> **RESPOND** - Jesus has his disciples begin by speaking directly to the people of Israel first. This would be the people to whom they were most closely related. Who are the people in your closest circle that need to hear the good news of God's kingdom? Record their names.

>> **RELATIONSHIP** - Ask God for opportunities to share his love with the people in your closest circle.



>> READ Matthew 10:16-31

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>> REFLECT - As Jesus sends out his disciples, he warns them that they will face persecution from several directions. Yet, they are told not to be afraid to share the Gospel message. What reasons does Jesus give for our confidence?

What fears have kept you from speaking the Gospel Message? Is there anyone you have felt prompted to share it with, but have shied away from?

>> RESPOND - Circle the name of someone from yesterday's list that you know needs to hear about God's love. Pray for that person. Pray specifically that God gives you the right words to say to that person. Then, commit to sharing God's love with them this week.

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>> RELATIONSHIP - Ask God to give you the courage to follow through, and to guide your conversation as you share the Good News of his love.

A graphic with a dark green background and a blue wave-like shape at the top. The word "Friday" is written in a large, white, serif font, and "September 27" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it.

Friday
September 27

>> **READ** Matthew 10:32-42

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>> **REAL LIFE**

By Courtney Musgrave

It was 2010. I had a new job. I was still a newlywed, and even though I had been a believer for years, God began to reveal that I needed deep spiritual and emotional healing. Intense does not even begin to describe what this time in my life was like. This season felt like one giant groan, in unison with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27), as the Lord himself performed surgery on my broken insides and began to mend me in places I didn't even realize were wounded.

In Matthew 10:38-39, Jesus said, "If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it." In that season of deep healing, Jesus was extending an invitation to lay down my life as I had known it, so I could find true, abundant life in him. He was offering me a life that I didn't even have a "box" for at the time, a life far beyond what I could have ever asked for or even imagined possible.

I love that from the very beginning, God has been a choice giver. In the garden he offered us the choice of following his way or following our own way. I could have said no to his invitation of healing and kept following my own way. My own way was getting exceedingly harder to endure, but I also knew if I laid down my life and followed him down this road of healing, it was going to get messy and painful pretty quickly. I asked: Was it going to be worth it? Would I even survive it? Would I still be "me" afterward? Who was "me" anyway?

I look back on that season and weep with gratitude that I chose to follow Jesus' directives to give up my wounded life, take up my cross, and follow him. Now that I'm much further down that

road of healing, I can tell you it was worth it. I not only survived; I have thrived in the healing. And I found the “me” he had always intended for me to be. If you sense that Jesus is calling you in a similar way, be strong and courageous. Keep saying yes to his invitation to lay down your life, take up your cross, and follow him into abundant life one step at a time. It will be worth it.

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ABOUT COURTNEY MUSGRAVE

Courtney Musgrave is the owner of Transformed, where she gets to help people heal emotionally, spiritually, and physically. She loves to help others grow in their understanding of their identity in Christ, the realities of the spiritual realm, and the importance of being able to confidently hear God’s voice. Courtney has been married to her wonderful husband Aaron for ten years and they have two awesome kids, Maggie (7) and Max (2).



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>> REFLECT – Jesus says that when we acknowledge him before others, the results will sometimes be more like a sword than like peace. In many times and places, identifying with Jesus has caused people to lose their families – and sometimes their very lives. Has there been a “cross” you have had to bear because you follow Jesus?

>> RESPOND – Visit opendoorsusa.org and click on “World Watch List”. Scroll down and choose one of the countries where Christians face persecution. Click on it, read the page and follow the prayer prompts.

>> RELATIONSHIP – Write out a simple prayer in response to what you have read and learned today.



