

There is Hope

A Special, Timely Edition of
Quirky Questions and Daily Devotions
to Feed Your Family and Your Faith

Based on the book



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INTRO

There is hope.

Take that in for a moment, even in an unpredictable time like now.

There is hope.

That's absolutely true, no matter how young or old you are.

That's absolutely true, no matter what you're experiencing today.

Hi! Our names are Tony and Daniel. We're a father and son who love God, each other, our family, and the people around us. We're Christians, which means Jesus is our Savior and Lord, and we want to grow into whatever that means for our lives. We often talk about that and other fun things around our dinner table, lying on our trampoline, or simply hanging out over a smoothie. For real... we both really, really like smoothies. They're simply amazing.

We also wrote a book together called "If... What If?" It grew out of us writing down what inspired some of the great conversations we've had at home, in the car, on walks, and just about everywhere else. Every question led to another question, which not only kept things fun but made us rethink why our original answers were what they were. The next thing we knew, we were opening up the Bible and growing together spiritually, too.

In seeing how weird things have gotten in the world these days, we wanted to likewise put something special together for you and your family that borrows from our book. It's why we started with telling you (yet again) that "There is hope." That Truth is embedded in the Bible, as how God's story, took place through several different moments based on how people responded to Him. We see this cover to cover, from the Old Testament to the New Testament:

Trinity: Before there was anything, there was a Community of Someone.

Heritage: God made us on purpose, with purpose, as a part of His family, and passed down good blessings to us.

Enemy: We listened to an enemy and became an enemy - to God, ourselves, each other and all of creation.

Revolution: When things are backward, God finds people whose hearts are upward to move things forward.

Ego: Even when we know who God is, we're all tempted create kings or turn ourselves into one.

Identity: When God's people try to find their uniqueness by looking like everyone else, He'll send truth-tellers into our lives to show us who we've ended up becoming compared to who we really were created to be.

Shhh: Sometimes God seems silent, but even then we can let His previous words be more than enough while we await the next thing He might say.

Hero: Jesus Christ came to earth to live among us, inspire us with truth, reveal his Kingdom, save us from sin and unleash us into a fully-alive life.

Opportunity: Jesus didn't just tell us what to do but made it possible for us to seize the true life through Him and the Holy Spirit.

Purpose: We get to be the Church and join Jesus in transforming the entire world.

Eternity: One day heaven and earth will come together forever, and God's people will live with Him forever.

If you take the first letter of each of these words and put them together you spell “THERE IS HOPE” - which is the big story of the Bible.

It’s also the big story we get to live in, even in these awkward times.

So count this as an invitation for you and everyone around you to go on a real-life adventure with a real-life God. Our world leaders have warned that what a household does wrong can negatively affect the rest of the world. What we forget is the opposite can be true,, too... what you do in your household can significantly impact the world and lives around you in amazing ways!

The key is not just what happens when you open these devotions up but in how you help each other live it out when you close its cover. One hundred years from now, the only thing that will matter is our relationship with God. If that isn’t motivation, what is?

So as you get serious, have some fun! And as you have some fun, get serious! We love how this plays out in our home and are praying for what’s about to happen in yours. We’re grateful to go on this journey with you.

Maybe it’s time to pause and pray. And then, let’s get after it together!

There is hope!

Together

Tony and Daniel Myles, father and son

QUICK TIPS:

Every person and family is different, and you may wonder how what’s in these pages will play out in your home. Perhaps everyone in your household is up for diving into something meaningful like this together. Maybe one person in your home isn’t as excited about this as the others are.

Then again, maybe this is all completely new to everyone. A lot of people in the world say they “believe” in God, but not everyone in the world knows how to relate to Him. We feel that difference especially when we go through something tough and unexpected.

Want some good news? Wherever you or your family is at today is simply where you or your family is at today. Growth takes time, so keep stepping in the right direction by giving your best and inspiring others in your home to do the same. Parents have something to say to kids, kids have something to say to parents and siblings have something to say to each other. Even better, God has something to say to all of you through each other!

To help, you might want to have different people in your family take turns reading different parts. We’ve found that our youngest family member likes to read the questions, while an older family member reads the devotional thought or Bible verses. We also know individuals who have read our book on their own but then shared what they’ve gotten out of it each day online or with friends.

However it works out for you, we’re thankful to help get you there. And if you get lost, we even give you a nugget after each devotional in the “There is hope” section that sums up a takeaway for you to own and share with others.

Because... there is hope.

DAY 1: TRINITY

Getting Rooted

IF you were suddenly a complete expert on three things, what would you choose?

WHAT IF you would forget all what you knew on this in a week?

READ IT: Romans 11:33-36

Imagine you were given a huge amount of money to build a tree house. You'd have so much fun shopping for it, right? You'd want to be smart about the whole process, though. It'd be silly to focus on just buying a bunch of wood to create the "house" part without ever considering the strength of the tree you'd attach it to. Otherwise every time you tried to step into the tree house you'd wonder if it had the strength to hold you or if you'd ultimately fall down.

What you build your faith on matters, too. Throughout the next few days, we're going to talk about some big topics regarding God. You might wonder if it's really necessary to stretch your brain like this because God will always be bigger than what you can understand. Some people actually think, "I don't have time to think about who God is. I just want to start building out my faith."

Again, remember the importance of studying the tree part of a tree house. Even though you wouldn't need to understand everything about every leaf on a tree to build something on it, you would want to know enough about its core and roots to have the confidence to step out in faith. Just imagine what it can be like in shaky times to know that God is solid, no matter what!

THERE IS HOPE: Before there was anything, there was a Community of Someone.

Share some of your "favorite" restaurants, stores or vacation spots and think about what their back stories might be. Then ask:

- **IF** you go back in time to watch an inventor or creator behind one of your favorite things come up with idea, who would you visit?
- **WHAT IF** you could be friends with that person - do you think it would affect how you view your favorite thing?

DAY 2: TRINITY

First Things First

IF you could create and know every detail of what was going to happen tomorrow, would you want to?

WHAT IF you were to plan my day and I was to plan your day?

READ IT: Genesis 1:1

Remember that one time you invented a game? Come on, everyone has invented a game, whether it was something you played with friends or by yourself. Maybe it's time to play it again.

Before you invented that game, it didn't exist, but you did. That means the game needed you to exist and keep existing, but you didn't need the game to keep existing. Makes sense, right?

Keep this in mind while trying to understand God and His role in creation. Sometimes people wonder, "If God created everything, who created God?" We ask this because everything natural we see with our eyes comes from another thing that also had a beginning... a tree comes from the seed of another tree, which came from the seed of another tree, and so on. But for everything natural to exist, something or someone had to SUPER-naturally exist outside of creation to create the very first things. Even the smallest atoms and molecules needed something to start them.

Sure, we don't currently see the version of things God created. We're more used to seeing how things have become, like when someone takes a good game you came up with and messes with it. We'll talk more about that later, but for now just remember that God is behind all the good original stuff, for He existed before "the beginning."

And also remember we only ask, "Who created God?" when we think He is like us. But the rules don't apply to Him because He's the one who created it all, including the rules. Wow! Let that blow your mind and deepen your faith! God makes Himself known in creation, and He will make Himself known to you.

THERE IS HOPE: We may not understand every detail about how God works, but we can connect with Him through every detail of our lives.

Think back to the starting point of anything significant in your life, like when you bought something meaningful to you, first got into your favorite hobby, moved into a neighborhood, or formed an important relationship. Then ask:

- **IF** that didn't happen, what would be different about your life?
- **WHAT IF** you looked for a way to thank God for these starting points?

DAY 3: TRINITY

Three-In-One

IF you could create and know every detail of what was going to happen tomorrow, would you want to?

WHAT IF you were to plan my day and I was to plan your day?

READ IT: John 1:1-4, Genesis 1:2

Do you have a favorite kind of pie? One popular choice is cherry, especially when it's hot and gooey. Something interesting happens when you cut into a hot cherry pie in the pan, though—every time you pull the knife out between two pieces, the insides of the pie ooze out and cover the gap between those sections. So even if you cut a hot cherry pie into three equal pieces, while it was sitting in the pan it would ooze together and still be like one complete pie. Three-in-one, yet one-in three. Wild, huh?

Our Scripture shows how this is true with God. Jesus (“the Word” of God) had a specific role in creation, but He also “was God.” Nothing happened “apart” from Him— He has always existed and always been connected to everything the Bible speaks of when it refers to “God.” You see, God didn’t create the world because He was alone or bored; He created it of the joy of the Father, Son, and Spirit being filled, complete, and connected as “one.”

So is a hot cherry pie the best way to understand the Trinity? Actually, no. Like any illustration, it falls short. God isn’t made up of “parts” but is three “Persons”: the Father makes the plans for the world, the Son carries out the plans, and the Spirit testifies to the plans. If you still have pie on the brain, consider how a pie has taste, temperature, and color. Each of those things tells us something different about the pie, but they are each true of the whole pie—and they are never separate from each other.

Personalize all of this. If there’s more to God than the piece of Him you’re reaching for, what would happen if you invited every aspect of who He is into every area of your life? What if you’ve just been cherry-picking your more familiar or favorite parts of who He is and ignoring the rest? Let that ooze around... and fill in some gaps.

THERE IS HOPE: God invites you into a complete relationship with Him as your complete God.

When have you thought you knew someone well, only to be surprised by new knowledge of who that person was? Maybe it was a hidden talent they had, or how they saw life

- **IF** you never got to know the thing you learned that surprised you, what would be different in how you see that person today?
- **WHAT IF** we did one more thing to know God better as a family today? What are a few ideas? And how could that change how we view Him even in a crisis?

DAY 4: HERITAGE

Preparing the Nursery

IF you could create a planet that only you could visit, what would it be like?

WHAT IF you were creating a planet for other people?

READ IT: Genesis 1:6-25

You're pretty special, and someone in your life went to great lengths so you'd know it. Perhaps your parents sang to you when you were a baby inside your mom, or maybe you're adopted and everyone got excited when they learned you'd join the family. Long before you showed your face, someone dreamed up ways to invest into you!

Granted, not everyone grows up this way. Some people are born into hard homes where they feel overlooked. Even then God can send people to love them on His behalf.

Still, consider a family who's excited to greet their new little one. Picture a giddy mom and dad shopping for a crib (that they'll incorrectly try to assemble multiple times). Imagine them staring at paint colors so they can find the right shade to go up on the walls. They'll spend days upon days tearing down old wallpaper and putting in new carpet. All of this effort is joy filled because of the love they already have for their child.

You are that important to God, and so much more! Creation is our "nursery" that God joyfully prepared for us long before we showed our faces. Picture Him smiling, thinking about you, while making the world. Imagine Him purposefully placing every star in the sky so you'd know that as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is His love toward you! That's part of your heritage.

Not familiar with that word? "Heritage" is a family-sounding term that describes what someone older passes down to someone younger. You've felt this when someone gave you a gift, like a pocket knife they owned their whole life. Or perhaps a grandparent explained the sacrifices that were made years before you were born so the life you're now living could even be a possibility.

Remember this, even when it's hard to. Before things became backward, they were actually forward. God made us on purpose, with purpose, as a part of His family, and passed down good blessings to us.

THERE IS HOPE: Take a look around and notice what God has painted, moved, changed, assembled, and hung up just for you to see today!

What are the earliest memories you have of any rooms or toys you grew up with?

- **IF** someone prepared a room for you today, what would it look like?
- **WHAT IF** someone asked you to change your room to make space for a new baby?

DAY 5: HERITAGE

A Complete Me

IF you could bring a stuffed animal to life, which one would it be?

WHAT IF that stuffed animal had your exact same personality?

READ IT: Genesis 1:26-31, Genesis 2:5-7

This is kind of strange to think about, but you don't have to look exactly like your family in order to look like you're a part of your family. Sometimes kids do get a particular physical trait from their parents, like a father's chin or a mother's ears. Family members can also reflect each other's image in personality, too. Maybe someone has told you that your sense of humor, love of animals, or hunger for pickles reminds them of someone else you're related to. It's wild how you can represent multiple people even though you are still absolutely unique.

During the incredible moment that God created humanity, we again see that He did this as the Trinity, saying, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). The Father, Son, and Spirit as one complete identity gave us a complete identity! He made it possible for us to reflect Him and His personality into the world, even though we'd each be doing this through our own unique personalities. We may not automatically feel this now because of how sin has messed with the way we understand ourselves, but thankfully God had a plan for that so we could through Jesus reclaim our original identity (Ephesians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Being completely human means we come from a complete God who completely carried through on His complete idea to make us complete in Him. You don't have to try to "be real" (think about how silly that sounds). Instead, you can really embrace God really embracing you. He's given you a heritage of so many important things like reflecting His heart, creativity, intelligence, values, and more. When you don't feel like you look like Him at all, He's ready to show you how you're a part of His family.

THERE IS HOPE: God created almost everything simply by speaking it into existence. With people, though, He bent down to personally touch us. He still does

Discuss what you each think it means to be originally made in the image of God.

- **IF** there was at least one thing all of our family members have in common, be it a physical trait or a similarity in personality, what would it be?
- **WHAT IF** we were to sum up in a statement what it means to be a part of our family? For example, "Being a part of the _____ family means..."

DAY 6: HERITAGE

The Rest of the Week

IF everyone only needed to work just two days a week to have all they needed, what would you do on your five days off?

WHAT IF everyone just needed to work for one hour every day?

READ IT: Genesis 1:26-31, Genesis 2:5-7

It's not hard to imagine the first humans enjoying exploring the beautiful world God created. What can be surprising is it apparently was a treat for the Lord,, too! Although He'd already declared everything to be "very good," He set aside a day to delight in and interact with all that had been created. And there's something really special about this that we don't want to miss - God doesn't do things and then leave; He sticks around to enjoy building a relationship with us through what's happened.

The Lord even later blessed the day itself as a holy, sacred "Sabbath" of restoration between God and people. This is why regularly taking part in a weekly church service and daily devotions like this are so valuable. We need a life-giving rhythm that puts us around thoughts and community beyond ourselves or else our opinions and schedules will lead us. Maybe we'd never intentionally deny God, but letting ourselves get so busy that we never make time for Him is kind of the same thing.

The opposite can happen,, too, when you feel stuck or separated from what you're used to in life. Any kind of "quarantine" like that, be it from a physical injury or a situation you can't control, will keep you from sports, hobbies, work, or activities that you enjoy. Then again, maybe this is God's way of saying a reset is needed. Remember, He didn't need to rest and slow down with us but chose to. Sometimes we do the opposite and run away from Him into things that we think will tell us who we are.

So whether life feels way, too busy or you feel way, too stuck, decide if you're willing to reset your soul with God on a regular basis. Because that's the key - you have to decide how important it is or it'll never happen. There will always be one more game to be at or watch, countless tests to study for, unexpected job changes, or new projects at home. And there will also be bad things to get into when you feel nothing good is happening. By continuing to prioritize time with God and His people now, you'll be stronger to not compromise then.

THERE IS HOPE: When you slow down your pace, you make personal space to notice God's face and be transformed through His grace.

Talk about any hobby or interest that tends to take over the family's schedule.

- **IF** this activity never existed, who would we each be as a person?
- **WHAT IF** as a family we all, took a break from this for an intentional length of time and used the

DAY 7: WEEKLY RECAP

IF you could rename an animal species, what would you rename it?

WHAT IF you could rename an ocean?

READ IT: When I observe your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you set in place, what is a human being that you remember him, the son of man that you look after him? (Psalm 8:3-4)

Pick some questions you'd like to talk through together today.

Recap

- What do you notice or wonder about from today's Bible verse?
 - What is something that stood out to you from what we've read together, talked about or attempted to do together over the past week?
-

Catch up

- Who or what made you laugh recently?
 - How did life feel easy or hard this past week?
-

Grow together

- What might be something God is trying to tell our family today?
 - What if we were to take a good action step based on what we're learning together? What might that be?
-

Take a risk

- What is something you'd like to share with the rest of us, and how would you like us to respond?
 - What is something you are hopeful for, even if it feels like a long shot?
-

Pray

- Who is Jesus to you today?
 - Who would be willing to close out our time with a simple prayer?
-

DAY 8: ENEMY

Your Own Worst Enemy

IF you could yell at someone and they would immediately fall down, who are some people you would use that power on and why?

WHAT IF you could yell at anything in the world and make it fall down?

READ IT: Isaiah 14:12-15

Not everyone celebrates Halloween, but those who do land somewhere between “simply dressing up” to “making a home look like a crime scene.” Then there are the candy-seekers who put on a mask and ring doorbells to get something sugary, all while everyone else squints through the dark and wonders who is really under the mask.

What if this isn't just a Halloween thing, though? Consider today's Bible passage, which pushes us centuries after Creation in order to understand something that happened before Creation. It's spoken through a man named Isaiah who knew things about the supernatural realm because of his unique relationship with God. When confronting a corrupt human king (who was trying to be a bigger deal than God) he said the Devil had similarly tried to push God aside despite being a “morning star,” or a special angel. It's why Jesus said, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning” (Luke 10:18).

The most important truth you will ever realize in your life is that you have a personal Savior in Jesus Christ. He is real and is really fighting for you. He invites you right now to trust in Him to transform your life into what God originally meant it to be.

Yet another important truth you must realize is that you also have a personal enemy in the Devil. He is real and is really fighting against you. He invites you right now to trust in yourself instead of God to transform your life into what you think it should be.

It's an unexpected strategy, isn't it? You might expect Satan to invite you to trust in him instead of God. Sometimes he is that bold, and other times he hides out by “simply dressing up” or “making a home look like a crime scene.” Most of the time he tries to get us to be candy-seekers who put on our own “masks” and ring any “doorbell” that offers us “sugar.” Soon we're all squinting in the dark, wondering who is under every mask.

So Satan isn't the little red guy with horns and a pitchfork you've seen in cartoons. He actually doesn't try to present himself as someone who is evil but as someone who is for your pleasure (even though he's just for his own pleasure). “Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

THERE IS HOPE: You can't stop Satan from ringing the doorbell of your life, but you can send Jesus to answer the door.

Share about a time you thought you knew better than someone else, but it ended up that you didn't.

- **IF** you knew then what you know now, what would you have done differently?
- **WHAT IF** you needed to resist someone who was trying to do this to you?

DAY 9: ENEMY

Without Question?

IF someone interrupted you every time you spoke, how would that affect your willingness to talk?

WHAT IF sometimes when you tried to say something, you uncontrollably said something else?

READ IT: Genesis 3:1-13

You know how questions can be used to figure out truth? Did you know they can also be used to distract us from it by criticizing someone or something? Have you ever been asked a question that caused you to second-guess a person or value you trusted, like, “Do your family members really have your best interests in mind?” As you think about that bad question now, how might you have responded differently in the moment, if you knew listening to it would put you into a funk?

What if the woman had this perspective when the Serpent asked her the question that caused her to doubt God’s goodness? Or what if she and Adam simply remembered how amazing God had already been to them in the past? Can you just imagine them saying to the Serpent, “Why would you even try to get us to second-guess someone who loves us so much that He made this glorious, beautiful world for us to live in? “Hey, God, can You please put this liar in his place?”

Could this be the way we’re to handle things when Satan tries to get us to think that God is somehow holding back on us? How crazy would we have to be to believe lies like that? How easy is it for us to remember all the times God has already blessed us and is trustworthy? What if questions aren’t a bad thing in themselves, but our tone and the reason behind our asking them are what should be examined?

By the way, did you notice today’s devotion is full of questions? Do you think they were used to pursue truth or criticize God? And how might understanding the difference help you spot either one on your own or with others?

THERE IS HOPE: What if the reason Satan is so desperate to get us to second-guess God is because God is that clear to us on how much He loves us?

Can you think of a time you caught someone trying to mislead you or asking you questions just to rattle you?

- **IF** you could redo that conversation, what would you do or say differently?
- **WHAT IF** that person tried to mislead or hassle you again?

DAY 10: ENEMY

A Deflated Life

IF it were possible to enter into a gigantic balloon and bounce around inside of it, would you want to?

WHAT IF you could shrink down into a regular balloon? Would you want to?

READ IT: Genesis 3:14-21

Admit it—you crack up a little bit at the noise a balloon makes when you blow it up and let it go. You probably also feel a little nervous as the balloon randomly moves around in pure chaos, leaving you wondering if it'll smack you in the face or knock something over. This isn't what balloons were made for, but it's what they can end up becoming.

In many ways we're living in a deflated world, too. So much of the random chaos around us isn't what life was made for but what it's become. Sure, some things may crack us up, yet we can't deny how tense and confused our relationships, work, bodies, families, and more can feel. Everything God originally created for us to joyfully know Him was knocked over, all because we listened to an enemy and became an enemy—to God, ourselves, each other, and all of creation.

There is hope, though. Just like a deflated balloon may fly off and end up in an unintended place, it can be reclaimed and reinflated toward its original purpose. God does this in Genesis 3:20 when (in some Bible translations) it's the first time Adam's actual name used. God seems to be reminding him of who he originally was made to be.

And then Adam kept this going when he named his wife Eve, which literally means "life." Appreciate how special this was, for he also gave her this name after they sinned. In the middle of shame and death, Adam reclaimed what God had said—that Eve was originally created to be more than who she was in that moment. She was made in the image of God to be a life-giver. In doing so he breathed life into her deflated moment.

Whenever you feel life is frustrating or tense, remember that we're all in the "making things right again" business, too. We win against the Enemy every time we help each other reclaim our lost "heritage." Let it begin today, starting in your own family.

**THERE IS HOPE: In a deflated world where good things exhaust us,
"the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4).**

Try to think of a time when something that was broken was fixed or restored.

- **IF** it were impossible to fix anything, how different would the world be?
- **WHAT IF** you could fix a relationship between two people? What relationship would you fix?

DAY 11: ENEMY

The Agony of Defeat

IF you could create your own sport, what would it be, and how would you get people interested in it?

WHAT IF you knew your team would win every game you played?

READ IT: Genesis 3:14-15, Romans 16:19-20

It's common for families to cheer for a favorite sports team. You've probably realized this means you inherit a rival team too. There's a certain intensity when these two teams play against each other, whether it's because of previous battles that got ugly or because both teams are in the same territory of the country. Knowing the history behind it all helps you understand the tension today.

This is true of the intensity between God and Satan that has played out over the centuries. The Enemy can't overcome the Lord, so he began attacking God's team through the Serpent that tempted the man and woman. God sent a message back to the Enemy by humbling the Serpent into a creature that would "eat dust" — a symbol of losing a war (Micah 7:17). The Lord also tossed in a powerful statement about how someone from the man and woman's future family would crush the Enemy even further.

Jesus Christ lived this out on earth by dying for our sins and rising again in resurrection. He'll crush the Enemy again in a final battle, and that will be a team we can enjoy being on (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). And we get to be a part of crushing the Enemy every time we are faithful in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

Make no mistake, though—if you choose to be on that winning team, you'll have a rival enemy to deal with in the meantime. He'll attack from the ground up like a snake might nip at someone's heel. The agony of the feet from our perspective is temporary, but the agony of defeat from his perspective is permanent.

THERE IS HOPE: When Christ is your Savior, Satan has sore behavior. He'll attack you with zest, because he's a pest. Don't think he's won when (really) he's done.

What does it specifically mean to be on God's winning team as a family?

- **IF** we know God's team ultimately wins, how can we have the confidence that we're on it vs. just watching it from the stands? (Check out 1 John 2.)
- **WHAT IF** as a family we actively help other people get on the winning team with Jesus? What would that practically look like this week?

DAY 12: REVOLUTION

You Say You Want A Revolution?

IF you could change the end of any movie or book, what would you do?

WHAT IF when you didn't like the end of a movie you could change it on the spot?

READ IT: Genesis 6:1-22

The phrase *disaster zone* may have been used to describe a room in your house (like a certain someone's laundry pile), but it actually refers to anywhere in the world where an overwhelming hazard has put people in danger. Someone in real authority has to officially declare that it actually is a "disaster zone," in order to release the best resources toward rescue, clean up, and restoration. Situations that will take weeks, months, or years to fix all have to have this starting point.

Whatever happened in Noah's era was its own unique disaster zone. It's hard to understand all the details, but what's clear is that the Enemy was involved. Humanity itself was in danger because of it, for people thought "nothing but evil all the time." Things were so, so, so, so, so bad that the Lord even regretted making people because of all the trouble they created and would have to endure.

God's grief doesn't mean that He's lacking in power or a plan, though. As our Father who personally cares for us, He'll use His real authority to officially declare when things are wrong in order to begin rescue, cleanup, and restoration. In this case God even gave humanity 120 years before the flood came, likely as a chance to turn things around.

Even today, there's a difference between the way things are and the way things are meant to be. It's why God is in the habit of starting revolutions. Instead of just sitting above the earth and pointing His finger at all the wrong things we're doing, He comes alongside us to show anyone willing to notice how things really can be with His power, wisdom, and presence. When things are backward, God finds people whose hearts are upward to move things forward. What if you could become one of them?

**THERE IS HOPE: Even when we do the worst of our worst,
God gives us the best of His best.**

Share something you each did recently that set you apart from others.

- **IF** your actions were inspiring to others, would you want to know about it so you could keep doing it, or not know about it so it wouldn't go to your head?
- **WHAT IF** you could pick a nickname to be known for?

DAY 13: REVOLUTION

All In

IF every day you were told on a scale of 1 to 10 how hard that day was going to be, how would you prepare for the harder days?

WHAT IF every easy day you had meant a difficult day for the rest of your family?

READ IT: Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-6

Sometime in the near future, your family will all need to be somewhere at a certain time. It'll require a huge push as you all get ready to leave, because while everyone seems to be moving in that direction, at least one person will probably get distracted. This will prompt someone else to step up and rally everyone to get going. When something matters, we want to feel like everyone is "all in" on it.

God invited Abram into His revolution with a command to move his family to a new land. In response to God, Abram went "all in" without any hesitation, choosing rapid obedience instead of arguing back. Although Abram later had moments where his trust in the Lord dipped, this was a great moment we can celebrate and learn from.

God also later made a covenant with Abram, which was the special promise to bless all nations through Abram and his descendants. In this case, it was that all nations would be blessed through him. God made the first move on this by bringing it up to begin with. Keep in mind that in Abram's era, people worshiped idols they'd made. So having the one true God speaking to him was a new thing. This was something special that God also extended to Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob.

You and your family have that same opportunity to respond with rapid obedience to whatever God asks you to do, including being a blessing to the world. Don't "get around to it later" or think that someone else will do it for you. Growth is all about you purposefully moving beyond what's familiar and into the unknown.

Choose to be courageous by stepping into these life-changing moments without knowing how everything will turn out. God's revolution is more about putting our faith in Him than in circumstances anyway. Just as He goes "all in" with you, go "all in" with Him.

THERE IS HOPE: By moving, we becoming a movement ... so move it.

Imagine being able to use the stars to spell out words in the night sky. What would you spell?

- **IF** you could have God remind you of one thing each day, what would it be and how would you want Him to remind you?
- **WHAT IF** your life is one of the ways God reminds others about Him? What does that mean for us this week?

DAY 14: WEEKLY RECAP

IF there were no houses and only tents, how would that change how people lived?

WHAT IF you owned the only house and everyone else lived in tents?

READ IT: By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and set out for a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents as did Isaac and Jacob, coheirs of the same promise. (Hebrews 11:8–9)

Pick some questions you'd like to talk through together today.

Recap

- What do you notice or wonder about from today's Bible verse?
 - What is something that stood out to you from what we've read together, talked about, or attempted to do together over the past week?
-

Catch up

- Who or what made you laugh recently?
 - How did life feel easy or hard this past week?
-

Grow together

- What might be something God is trying to tell our family today?
 - What if we were to take a good action step based on what we're learning together? What might that be?
-

Take a risk

- What is something you'd like to share with the rest of us, and how would you like us to respond?
 - What is something you are hopeful for, even if it feels like a long shot?
-

Pray

- Who is Jesus to you today?
 - Who would be willing to close out our time with a simple prayer?
-

DAY 15: REVOLUTION

Rescue?

IF everywhere you walked you were surrounded by a floating cage that felt like your own personal jail, how would that affect your social relationships?

WHAT IF you were trapped with a wanted criminal in your cage?

READ IT: Genesis 37:1-4, 37:28, 40:1-23

Rescue. Do you long for it in any way? Rescue from a big test at school or a work project at your job that you're behind on? Rescue from upcoming bills or an event on your calendar? Rescue from relationships in your life that have gone bad? Rescue from the piles of laundry in your home or the feelings piling up inside you?

Say this out loud: "Rescue is coming." (For real; say it right now.) This doesn't deny your suffering but claims that there's more to your life than just your suffering.

Joseph longed for rescue over the years while pressing through all his problems. He was hated by his brothers, became a slave to foreigners, was falsely accused of a crime, and was thrown into prison without hope of release. He kept doing what was right despite how life felt wrong, including helping out his fellow prisoners. One of them promised to put in a good word for Joseph if he got out, only he forgot. Do you think Joseph could've genuinely said, "Rescue is coming"? Is it hard for you to say?

By the way, it took years and years for Joseph to finally see the big picture of all his pain. Part of this involved him becoming a powerful man in Egypt who was in charge of everything, and using that power to serve others and save them from dying. It was then that he even said to his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20).

In a world where others let us down (and we may feel that God has let us down), rescue still is possible and happening. It doesn't always look like we think, for rescue requires a willingness to be rescued however and whenever the "rescuer" does it. Be honest with God about how you feel stuck, so a rescue can happen in you before it happens to you. Perhaps like Joseph you'll also see ways to help others. Often when we're waiting for the Lord to do incredible things in us, He's asking us to use our experience with pain to tell another person about the incredible things He's going to also do for them.

THERE IS HOPE: Rescue happened in the past at the cross, will happen in the future in heaven, and is available now as you follow Jesus.

Talk about a time when you wanted to be rescued.

- **IF** you could be rescued from something this week, whether it was a chore around the house or a deeper thing happening in your life, what would that be?
- **WHAT IF** when we're feeling overwhelmed God wants to rescue each of us in a way that doesn't sound like rescue?

DAY 16: EGO

Pharaoh, Pharaoh

IF the government charged you 10 cents for every square of toilet paper you used, how would that change your life?

WHAT IF everyone else had to pay you 10 cents for every square of toilet paper they used?

READ IT: Exodus 1:6-22

What did the janitor say while cleaning the pyramids? “Something sphinx.”

Why do psychiatrists make a lot of money in Egypt? “Because everyone lives in “da Nile”.

Ancient Egypt was about more than just sand and pyramids. It was also known for its creative arts, government, religion, and record-keeping. The Egyptians also valued personal grooming and appearance. The primary individual who tied all of this together was the pharaoh; a king who inherited his role from the pharaoh before him. Each ruled all of Egypt as a supreme leader and were thought of like gods.

Of course, a pharaoh wasn't a god. The one during Joseph's era seemed more in touch with this than the pharaoh at the beginning of the book of Exodus. All of the great honor Joseph earned for himself and fellow Israelites in saving Egypt was forgotten or overlooked by this newer, ego-driven leader. He saw the Jews as a threat who could take over the land, so he felt turning them into slaves and killing their sons would demonstrate he was in charge. Even later when God used a man named Moses to deliver them out of slavery, the Israelites (God's chosen people) had ego issues of their own.

Even when we know who God is, we're all tempted to create kings or turn ourselves into one. That's the deal with ego—we all struggle with wanting to think of ourselves first. As we do this over and over, we begin to think that life must always make sense to us. And if it ever doesn't, we'll grab for whatever power of position we can to make others know how we feel. This can cause well-meaning people to hoard food and toilet paper for themselves in a crisis instead of only taking what they need in consideration of their neighbors. We're just as tempted to become the next pharaoh when we do.

THERE IS HOPE: The Lord sometimes works in not-so-mysterious ways. Whatever right, needed, and obvious thing He's asked you to do can be done NOW.

Share some of your thoughts on a leader who has inspired you in some way.

- **IF** you were to copy one way this person treated others, what would it be?
- **WHAT IF** you were under the leadership of someone who was intentionally mean and hurtful? What would you do?

DAY 17: EGO

Royally Important

IF your family had to get rid of its last name, how would you introduce yourself to people so they would remember you?

WHAT IF you created a symbol to represent your family and could use it to talk about your family?

READ IT: Deuteronomy 6:1-5, Joshua 24:14-15

During the Middle Ages, knights, royalty, and nobles creatively claimed and shared their “royally important” family history through a picture called a coat of arms. They’d display it on shields, banners, and homes so others knew who they were and what they stood for. A typical coat of arms included a motto (a phrase about what the family was known for), a crest (a symbol representing a family achievement), a field (meaningful colors and symbols), and supporters (two drawn animals or people that held the crest up).

God’s people have historically had a similar relationship with Deuteronomy 6. Moses shared these royally important words with the Israelites so they wouldn’t just hear God’s commands but also act on them. That’s the motto in verse 4, known in Jewish circles as the “Shema.” To this day, Jewish people encase a scroll with lines from this passage into a small box that’s hung on the entrance to their homes (like a coat of arms). They kiss it or touch it with respect as they pass by.

What in your family is “royally important”? Consider what your daily routines, weekend habits, and spending reveal about what you prioritize. Imagine what neighbors who don’t know you well might say if they had to sum you up from perception alone. Maybe none of what you get caught up in feels like it’s outright evil, but that doesn’t mean it’s not distracting you from something more meaningful and lasting.

Joshua, whom God had lead the people after Moses died, asked the Israelites a similar question. He wanted them to really think through who they were going to live for. Jesus also asks us to consider that same question today.

God thinks you are royally important. Make Him royally important. Otherwise life will keep us busy and sidetrack us from the reality of His deep, deep love.

THERE IS HOPE: Recognizing and claiming the total uniqueness of God helps us recognize and claim our total uniqueness as His people.

Brainstorm some of the things that make God unlike anyone or anything else.

- **IF** we were radically honest, what would we say we spend most of our time or attention on?
- **WHAT IF** we were to make a coat of arms about our journey with God, what would be on it?

DAY 18: EGO

Meanwhile

IF little kids took care of their older siblings, what would happen in most homes?

WHAT IF little kids were in charge of their parents?

READ IT: Judges 2:10-11, Ruth 1:1-18, 2:1-16

Other people can be a real encouragement, like when your family pitches in on a big chore. The opposite is also true, however, if someone gets upset and you're affected by it despite not doing anything wrong. The choices others make can be a blessing or a burden to us.

Ruth lived during the era of Judges, when God's people were fickle in how they treated Him. That meant she was affected by their ego-driven issues, including the conditions that made it hard to find food. As a foreign widow who decided to stay with her Jewish mother-in-law (Naomi), Ruth had just one option: to make the most of the law that said poor people could pick from the edges of the fields. In one field she met a landowner named Boaz who was inspired by her character and blessed her for the good she'd done. Over time, Boaz courted Ruth and they were married (and became a part of Jesus' family line).

We get to read this story with the happy ending, but Ruth had to live in the middle of it without knowing what God was ultimately up to. That's the essential idea of the word *meanwhile*—none of us knows in detail what the future holds, but “meanwhile”, we must live the life before us. Ruth's story shows that the Lord isn't just mindful of the bigger things happening; He also cares about the everyday lives of His people.

What's your “meanwhile”? Are you dealing with the blessing or sting of someone else's choices? Is what's happening in the world warping your world? You may think God has bigger things to work on, but don't give up. Even when we don't understand the situation, the Lord completely understands us and what we need.

THERE IS HOPE: While life can work out as mean, God works in the “meanwhile.”

Discuss who or what in today's verses particularly inspired you.

- **IF** you could have given Ruth any advice or encouragement, what would it have been?
- **WHAT IF** Ruth could give you some advice or encouragement? What do you think she would tell you?

DAY 19: IDENTITY

King Me

IF people could show up to school or work at whatever time they liked (and still receive the same credit or pay), how would that affect things?

WHAT IF you were the teacher or boss and had to manage all of that?

READ IT: Judges 2:10-11, Ruth 1:1-18, 2:1-16

It's been said that Elvis Presley was the "king" of rock and roll. Others claim James Brown was the "king" of soul, Michael Jackson was the "king" of pop, and Michael Jordan is the "king" of basketball. Perhaps you'd disagree, or maybe you simply consider a "king" to be someone who wears a golden crown and sits on a big throne. Still, following human kings is a flawed idea—they'll let you down either in their character or in their eventual death, and you'll crave a new leader.

Wouldn't it make sense, then, for us to look to God to be our king? It's always been His plan for His people to find their identity in Him versus someone who's here today but then gone tomorrow. The Israelites instead insisted on having a human leader who would be their champion and decision maker, just like all the other kingdoms had. Despite God using the prophet Samuel to caution them against this, the Lord ultimately decided to let the people have what they demanded as a way to reveal over time how their priorities were misguided.

When God's people try to find their uniqueness by looking like everyone else, He'll send truth-tellers into our lives to show us who we've ended up becoming compared to who we really were created to be.

God loves and leads His people to be different from the world instead of blending into it. He knows it's in our sinful nature to want to follow a flawed leader we can see and touch rather than become a community that's uniquely led by Him. Yet again, though, God can use what He doesn't choose to seed our greatest need. He established a human line of kings in Israel—like King Saul, King David, and King Solomon (despite knowing they were imperfect)—to prepare the way for the greatest King in all history—Jesus Christ.

**THERE IS HOPE: The true purpose of "power" is to "empower."
Your personality may get someone's attention, but true impact happens
through presence. This is what Jesus does... follow His lead.**

Think about some recent challenges you've faced and hoped someone in power would fix it for you, like a teacher, boss, or government official.

- **IF** you were to describe yourself more as a listener or a talker when you're about to make a decision, which would you say you are more like?
- **WHAT IF** a bad decision you made in the past is still influencing you today? What would it look like to invite God to do something better with it?

DAY 20: IDENTITY

Graded

IF your grades were printed on candy wrappers for people to read, what would you do?

WHAT IF only your best grades were printed on the wrappers?

READ IT: Isaiah 6:1-8

Report card time! Whether you've ever feared one or looked forward to one, you know the letters alone don't tell the whole story. You may have gotten an A in a class that you never had to study for, or received a C in a course where you studied all the time. The letters are symbols of something more known between the teacher and the student.

Consider the people in the Bible whom we've called "major" or "minor" prophets. Those words make it seem like we've graded them because one type is more important than the other, but those distinctions only indicate a difference in the amount of information we have on them. Whether we have a lot or a little on each one, their impact was off the charts.

Isaiah offers a great example of how this played out. First, he took a look "up" to notice God; then, he took a look "in" to consider himself before God; and finally, he took a look "around" to see how others needed hope. Through this, God prepared him to be a truth-teller because he first was a truth-receiver.

We tend to get this backward, though. We first look around and get nervous by what we see, which causes us to look in and feel insecure and maybe only cry out to God as a last resort. Remember this when you question your own identity or impact. It might just be that you're grading yourself in the wrong context.

God can do incredible things through anyone open to Him, including you. Through prayer, study, and church, you can better grade your soul before God. Even better, though? Do life with God. He's yet again reached out to you. Let Him work through you. Don't worry about being spectacular. Be fully faithful, and spectacular will happen along the way.

THERE IS HOPE: There is nobody who can't help everybody personally know the one Somebody who can transform anybody.

Think of someone you know who seems to honor God in unique ways.

- **IF** you could sum up how this person inspires others, what would you say?
- **WHAT IF** something you gave up would inspire another person to grab hold of a relationship with God?

DAY 21: WEEKLY RECAP

IF every broken thing became truly beautiful with your care, how would that change the way you treated things?

WHAT IF the worse something was treated, the worse it would become, eventually eliminating the beautiful thing?

READ IT: I cried out to him with my mouth, and praise was on my tongue. If I had been aware of malice in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. However, God has listened; he has paid attention to the sound of my prayer. Blessed be God! He has not turned away my prayer or turned his faithful love from me. (Psalm 66:17-20)

Pick some questions you'd like to talk through together today.

Recap

- What do you notice or wonder about from today's Bible verse?
 - What is something that stood out to you from what we've read together, talked about, or attempted to do together over the past week?
-

Catch up

- Who or what made you laugh recently?
 - How did life feel easy or hard this past week?
-

Grow together

- What might be something God is trying to tell our family today?
 - What if we were to take a good action step based on what we're learning together? What might that be?
-

Take a risk

- What is something you'd like to share with the rest of us, and how would you like us to respond?
 - What is something you are hopeful for, even if it feels like a long shot?
-

Pray

- Who is Jesus to you today?
 - Who would be willing to close out our time with a simple prayer?
-

DAY 22: SHHH

To Be Continued

IF you could watch a sneak peek of an upcoming TV episode or movie, which would you pick?

WHAT IF everyone except you could see the next episode long before you did?

READ IT: Daniel 11:1-4

To be continued. These three words at the end of a TV show or movie can drive you crazy. You may have to wait hours, days, weeks, months, or years, confused over the cliffhanger you just witnessed. The only upside may be that you're more able to consider the story as you review the parts you have access to, study information devoted to the plot, develop personal theories, or sit down with strangers to speculate about it.

There's a blank page between the Old Testament and New Testament that represents this in the Bible. God's people experienced a big cliffhanger that lasted 400 years without God saying anything new. During this "SHHH" time a warrior named Alexander the Great conquered the known world for Greece. He was a leader Daniel prophesied about (200 years earlier) who for 13 years imposed Greek values upon every culture. Alexander literally shaped how everyone spoke, giving them one common language. Eventually the Roman Empire took over and capitalized on it all.

God's people didn't know that this would all end up being useful. At the time it was harsh to have their heritage and culture taken over by someone else. The Lord seemed silent to them, for they didn't know He was using these circumstances to prepare and position things for greater purposes in their lives. This is recognized in Galatians 4:4-5, where we read that "when the time came to completion," Jesus came to earth to save us.

The Lord is using your circumstances to prepare and position things in your life, too. You may look around confused by it all and think your story is over. Meanwhile, the Lord has not stopped working. Sometimes God seems silent, but even then we can let His previous words be more than enough while we await the next thing He might say.

THERE IS HOPE: Patience lets you discover treasure hidden in the ground you're already standing on.

Think of some things that are better when patience is involved.

- **IF** everyone except for your family didn't prepare or cook food but just ate it all raw, how would you deal with that?
- **WHAT IF** nobody ever complimented you for the food you gave them unless it was raw and unprepared?

DAY 23: HERO

Secret Identity

IF we celebrated our birthdays every month, what would be different about birthdays?

WHAT IF we only celebrated our birthdays every five years?

READ IT: John 1:14

Where does a hero's story really begin? It's not always obvious. Batman's origin story wasn't revealed until six issues after his comic started. Other comic books include something up front that tells how it all started—for instance, the hero was bitten by a radioactive spider, or the hero grew up with powers that showed up early in life. It helps you see the hero not only as someone who does something, but as someone, period.

There came a moment for us when finally, after centuries of waiting, the Hero emerged.

Or ... what if He was always with us the whole time?

Remember, Jesus has always existed even though there was a moment in history that He intentionally came to earth by being born and living among people. This is referred to as the "Incarnation"—God personally coming to earth, to personally invest in us. It helps us see Him as more than someone who will do something; we see Him as someone.

Jesus becoming incarnate doesn't mean He's just like us, though. It's popular for people to make Him seem super laid-back and okay with everything, but He's truly holy and can't be redefined. The more we try to make Jesus into something else, the less He gets to show us who He really is.

Wonder where your story really begins?

Jesus coming near answers that question. If a powerful person lives in a tower and never lets anyone up there, it says something about the kind of value that person places on others. But if that powerful person shows up where you live and offers to serve you, then you'll understand how valued you are. This is why our Hero became a human—to heroically love and lead. Jesus Christ came to earth to live among us, inspire us with truth, reveal his Kingdom, save us from sin, and unleash us into a fully-alive life.

THERE IS HOPE: Instead of just solving our problems for us from afar, our Hero solves our problems with us up close.

Chat about how tempting it is to want to be famous or thought of as being good at something.

- **IF** you could break any world record, which one would you pick?
- **WHAT IF** you could have either the ability to break every world record or train others to break those records? Which would you pick if your family were the only people who could ever know about it?

DAY 24: HERO

Secret Identity

IF you could be incredible at one sport but first had to spend a year taking care of the equipment, which sport would you pick?

WHAT IF you were only the best at that sport unofficially, never getting fame for it?

READ IT: Luke 2:1-20

Some of the greatest superheroes didn't pick the best ways to hide their secret identity. Superman wore eyeglasses and slouched as Clark Kent. The Green Arrow took off his green hood and mask to be Oliver Queen (who had the same unique beard as the Green Arrow). Wonder Woman spun around and looked like ... well ... Wonder Woman in a dress. If the idea of a secret identity is to keep it secret, they could've all tried a little harder.

Jesus, on the other hand, spent His supernatural life on Earth naturally overlooked by others. He slowly revealed Himself during His adult years, but two older people who were paying attention recognized how special He was even as a baby. Anna never left the temple, ever in search of the coming Messiah, and Simeon had been told by God that he'd personally see the Hero of the world with his own eyes. One day—after all their faithfulness—they saw Christ and knew it was Him.

Why would God choose such a humble arrival instead of making Himself known with fireworks? Perhaps it was to address how we're tempted to impress others, and so He chose to be fully present rather than fully impressive. He showed us what our hearts are truly aching for—to look for the Lord and realize He's right in front of us and in plain sight. And He pulls random people into His intentional story to show them they aren't random.

Remember this as you feel the urge to hide behind one more trophy, promotion, compliment, or high five. The humility of Jesus can set us at ease in who God is making us to be vs. who we're trying to prove we are. His becoming less than He's capable of was to inspire us toward more of the good we're capable of.

THERE IS HOPE: Jesus takes people kicked to the side and turns them into sidekicks.

What do you think the place Jesus was born in smelled like? Would you have wanted to stay there long?

- **IF** this is where Christ was born, what does it tell you about Him?
- **WHAT IF** Jesus is working in a person or place in your life you'd rather avoid?

DAY 25: HERO

Great Power = Great Responsibility

IF your face could only smile, how would you express other emotions?

WHAT IF everyone's only facial expression was a smile?

READ IT: John 4:46-54; Mark 2:1-12

You see something surprising on the news and react by praying, "God, please!" Your favorite team is making a big play, and so you wish, "God, please!" You get ready to open mail that'll change your life, and quickly hope, "God, please!" You're in traffic, trying to get someone to the hospital, and cry out, "God, please!"

These moments make you wonder how prayer works. A lot of people ask this and don't know, landing on something untrue, like "God is too busy to bother with me," or "God has to do what I ask because I'm a Christian." Does prayer work this way? Do we ever turn it into a silly thing or insult God based on what we ask?

Pay close attention to the official who asked Jesus to heal his son. Despite being a man of power and wealth, he humbled himself and begged the Lord for a breakthrough. Jesus said it would happen, so the man trusted as he headed home that his son was healed. The same is seen in the group who tore open a roof, believing that Jesus could change everything for their paralyzed friend.

God wants a relationship with us. Just as you wouldn't want a friend only coming around to ask you for money, He doesn't only want us coming to Him to ask for stuff. BUT that doesn't mean He doesn't want to hear what you need or want. You can always turn to Him, even about the smallest or silliest of things, knowing that He cares about you.

Just remember that Jesus said the greater miracle is His saving us from sin. Anything you pray about connects you to this truth because prayer connects you to Jesus. God's answer to your prayer is based on a deeper wisdom He's working off of. With Jesus' great power comes great responsibility. So, put everything before Him and get to know Him as you do.

THERE IS HOPE: When we pray, we, at least momentarily, put our eyes on God instead of our difficulties. That in itself is an answer to the prayer.

What do you think about how God can hear everyone's prayers all the time?

- **IF** you had to guess, how many conversations can you focus on at once?
- **WHAT IF** prayer changes us so God can then bring change through us?

DAY 26: OPPORTUNITY

Reclaiming Normal

IF you had a sombrero that always put you to sleep for a siesta when you wore it, would you do with that sombrero?

WHAT IF the sombrero lit up and played music when you wore it?

READ IT: Matthew 5:1-16

It'll be hard to remember this, but it'll change your life if you let it change how you speak and think: the word *normal* is one of the most misused words in the world.

It ranks right up there with *love*, *hate*, and *always*. We use these words to try to make a point about something that otherwise wouldn't stand on its own. You may say, "I love cheeseburgers" or "I hate cats" when you have no intention of marrying that sandwich or attacking every feline with vengeance. A family member may claim, "You always use up all the toilet paper in the bathroom!" when what he or she means is, "Can you quit leaving everyone else just four squares on the roll?"

So, when it comes to "normal," it helps to remember that the world hasn't been normal for quite some time. You know this when you wake up and feel that you're made for something more significant than your to-do list. It's bouncing around inside of you every time you consider walking away from negative people or are drawn toward positive people. It's why you weep hot tears at funerals, slam the laptop shut when headlines overwhelm you, and sleeplessly stare at the ceiling all night because a relationship has gone sour. This world is not normal, and we all know it.

What if we were given an opportunity to join God in changing this, though? "Normal" can't be determined or eliminated by secret ballot, despite the elections we hold to try to normalize the abnormal. Every time ordinary people embrace this extraordinary truth, we realize the opportunity for things to get better.

There is no such thing as a "new normal" either—unless you mean how the ultimate "normal" person came to show us what "normal" is. He did this not just by critiquing the way things are or telling us to be cocky (remember that), but He showed us how even low moments can raise our awareness of Him. Jesus didn't just tell us what to do but made it possible for us to seize the true life through Him and the Holy Spirit.

THERE IS HOPE: We're not right because we're Christians; we're right because Jesus is right and He makes it possible for us to get right with Him.

Take turns sharing something about God that you are each personally thankful for.

- **IF** there is one thing all our answers have in common, what is it?
- **WHAT IF** we asked each other a question to get to know something we may not have ever known about each other?

DAY 27: OPPORTUNITY

Secret Service

IF you could have an award named after you, what field would it be in?

WHAT IF you could rename an existing award after someone you know?

READ IT: Matthew 6:1-4; 6:16-18

Those people in dark coats and sunglasses who hang out around the president? They're not just sharp dressers who like looking cool. They're Secret Service agents who protect the first family from danger. You won't always notice them, especially since some hide out in plain sight by dressing like regular people. For years the Secret Service headquarters was also hidden as a common-looking building.

It's rare to learn the name of a Secret Service agent, too. Agents do their best to make sure the work of the president gets done without spotlighting themselves. That has to be a challenge in the culture we live in, where people are more inclined to only do something if they feel there's something in it for them.

Jesus said some interesting things about how this value plays out in our giving. He didn't say, "If you tithe ..." (supporting God through His Church via the first part of your finances) or "If you fast ..." (giving up a meal or something else to use that time to instead connect with God) but "when" we do either, we're to do it so the work of God gets done. When we're regularly giving or sacrificing, we do it to grow and not for show.

Ironically, the Lord somehow uses our humble obedience to model to others what this looks like. We don't need to slam-dunk our offering into a collection plate to show others how to do it, but our regular giving keeps a church financially healthy in ways that others notice. The same is true when we are quiet about fasting but later share what we got out of it.

This opportunity keeps our hearts in check, but it also lets our lights shine. Like the Secret Service, our focus ends up being on our Leader instead of ourselves. He'll keep you moving if you keep responding to Him everywhere and anywhere with your best.

THERE IS HOPE: Tithing and fasting help you put God first in manageable ways while prepping your heart to seek Him first in unmanageable moments.

Share about a time you wanted people to notice a good deed you did.

- **IF** no one would have said anything, how would that have affected you doing that same good deed again?
- **WHAT IF** you were never thanked for any of the good things you did?

DAY 28: WEEKLY RECAP

IF there was a real town where cartoon characters lived and did all the things you see them do on TV, would you want to visit it?

WHAT IF when you crossed into that town you became a cartoon character?

READ IT: One of the scribes approached ... he asked him, “Which command is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” (Mark 12:28–30)

Pick some questions you’d like to talk through together today.

Recap

- What do you notice or wonder about from today’s Bible verse?
- What is something that stood out to you from what we’ve read together, talked about, or attempted to do together over the past week?

Catch up

- Who or what made you laugh recently?
- How did life feel easy or hard this past week?

Grow together

- What might be something God is trying to tell our family today?
- What if we were to take a good action step based on what we’re learning together? What might that be?

Take a risk

- What is something you’d like to share with the rest of us, and how would you like us to respond?
- What is something you are hopeful for, even if it feels like a long shot?

Pray

- Who is Jesus to you today?
 - Who would be willing to close out our time with a simple prayer?
-

DAY 29: PURPOSE

YES! YES! YES!

IF you could have an award named after you, what field would it be in?

WHAT IF you could rename an existing award after someone you know?

READ IT: John 18:1-3, 19:1-3, 19:16-18, 20:1-18

Without checking any nearby device, what's today's complete date? Go ahead and say it out loud. Then say your complete birth date. Then say as many important dates from history as you can in twenty seconds.

One huge thing all these dates have in common is each reflects the reality of Jesus! Every time we say or reference a year we note that it's been around that long since Christ walked the earth. Unlike other people who claimed to be God, He came back from death to prove He is who He said He is. YES! YES! YES!

This speaks into that part of being human where you wonder about the point of life and your role in it. You tapped into this the first time as a young kid you asked an adult, "Why?" There were also moments in your life when you had to figure out what to do with things that seemed meaningless. As you felt like you wasted your time on a situation or took a certain subject in school that didn't seem practical for your life, you again asked, "Why?" That one-word question helps us figure out what really matters.

God doesn't want to leave you hanging on this, so He hung on the cross for you and rose three days later. That's something you don't want to skip over; anyone who can predict His own death and resurrection and pull it off is worth listening to.

So ask your questions about why things are the way they are or why you're considering doing something. One of God's greatest gifts is allowing us not to live life merely for ourselves but for something greater. Asking big questions can lead us to big answers. Soon you'll do something that is uniquely "you" and know a "YES! YES! YES!" from God.

The Resurrection isn't just something that happened but is something that is still happening in us. If you're sad about something like His follower Mary was, you can take that to Him. If you've run from Jesus and felt like that was the end of the relationship, notice Jesus pursuing you with life. Individuals, marriages, families, churches, and communities can all get a fresh start! What are you waiting for? Transformation awaits! Spread the word! YES! YES! YES!

THERE IS HOPE: Jesus Christ makes hope, second chances, and eternity touchable.

What does the Resurrection mean to you personally?

- **IF** you saw Jesus alive back then, what would be the first thing you'd say?
- **WHAT IF** God's not finished yet with something in your life that you thought He was done with? What might that be?

DAY 30: PURPOSE

Be the Church

IF you could merge two businesses together so their products or what they did were available in the same place, which would you bring together?

WHAT IF each product from each business fused with a product from the other?

READ IT: John 18:1-3, 19:1-3, 19:16-18, 20:1-18

Take this in: We get to be the Church and join Jesus in transforming the entire world.

It's like how a colorful flower can emerge out of a crack in a sidewalk littered with trash. Or how a kitchen full of dirty dishes is overtaken and looks different by a warm sunrise beaming through the window. Both reveal beautiful things in not-so-beautiful places.

The church is the same way. Jesus has power over death and could have stayed around to lead things in person. He instead had the wild idea to trust us knowing that we'd sometimes be ugly to each other. Jesus has faith in His church being inspirationally beautiful despite its not-so-beautiful days.

He doesn't leave us alone in this, though. The disciples may have felt excited to change the world after seeing Christ alive, but He told them to get rooted together through the Holy Spirit. He promised we'd do greater things than Him, in fact (John 14:12, 26). So Jesus did just that, leaving the realm of earth and fully trusting us to step into our purpose together.

Essentially, church is a perfect Jesus-idea created for imperfect Jesus-people. People will at times let you down when you expect them to lift you up, and you'll do the same to them. In these moments, borrow some faith from Christ to keep believing in the church like He does. In fact, He cares about church way more than you do and won't give up on us or His idea. We can learn so much from Him on this.

So embrace your purpose by embracing church. Do it with the Holy Spirit instead of good intentions or excitement. He'll remind you that we aren't here to just "be fed" but to learn how to feed ourselves and others spiritually. And He'll show you how church gives you a chance to see God in things you don't like, in people you don't get along with, and in choices you wouldn't naturally make.

Take this in: We get to be the Church and join Jesus in transforming the entire world.

THERE IS HOPE: Jesus believes in the church, and you believe in Jesus, which means you can believe in what Jesus believes.

What do you expect out of church? How does that match up with what Jesus said about church?

- **IF** you could have changed Jesus' decision about leaving earth, would you? Why?
- **WHAT IF** we focused on what to give to the church rather than what to get out of it?

DAY 31: ETERNITY

Heaven and Earth

IF leaves flew up instead of falling down, what would that be like?

WHAT IF grass was always the perfect height and snow didn't land on the ground?

READ IT: Revelation 21:1-14; 22:1-17

You'll know it when you see it, but you won't fully understand it. A man and woman will face each other, each saying their vows as a groom and bride. Everything inside of them and between them is changing. It's a time for celebration!

In the ancient world there was a bit more to weddings as the man and woman would commonly be apart from each other before the wedding. It may have been that the groom was coming from far away or was using the time to create a place for them to go to together once they were married. He could literally show up at any moment and the wedding party would have to be ready to meet him, but a good groom would give a hint as to when everyone should be ready.

One day Jesus will cross a great distance to become one with His "bride," the church. Heaven is the place He's prepared for us, a realm so awesome that even our deepest imagination cannot even penetrate how cool it is. It'll actually overlap with a new earth, and we'll get to live there with God if we believe and receive Jesus now. When we follow Him and His teachings, we reveal we're ready for Him to come.

As awesome as you think that is now, you will be completely blown away by how much better it will actually be. It'll begin as Jesus returns, Satan has the ultimate defeat, and everything becomes new. And we won't then sit on clouds with harps. We will take part in the world the way it was supposed to be, see each other without problems between us, and have a face-to-face relationship with the Lord that isn't limited by time!

You'll know it when you see it, but you won't fully understand it.

So if God made all of this for you to enjoy, what reason do you have not to say "yes"? What reason do you have not to share it with others? Send the invitations so no one misses out.

**THERE IS HOPE: One day heaven and earth will come together forever,
and God's people will live with Him forever.**

What is something wrong in this world that you're looking forward to God one day transforming?

- **IF** you could hand out three passes to heaven to friends who could go there for a meaningful visit, who would you give them to? Why?
- **WHAT IF** God's waiting to make all this happen because He has something for you to do today "not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9)?

Read This First

You may be wondering why this part is at the end when it clearly says “Read This First.” Good question. We’re glad we asked it on behalf of you (even if you haven’t yet asked it).

Ready to ask it? The most important decision you will ever make in your entire life is to begin a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. This is something you may grow up being aware of, but at some point you have to own it. The sooner the better, in fact. That’s why this part of the book is called “Read This First.” It’s at the end of the book, though, because you may have a better appreciation for what it means after working your way through the Bible. So we’re hoping you read this page in advance but have just now returned to it again after you’ve completed the book.

There is hope for you today and every day. So if we have you here at the beginning of your reading, and you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior and would like to, don’t wait until the end of the book. Pray the following prayer right now with all the sincerity you are capable of:

Dear God, You are incredible, holy, and good. I confess that I am a sinner and need You to save me from my sins and the separation it’s caused between You and me. I’m sorry for my sins and ask for Your forgiveness.

And I believe Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead so that I can be forgiven, transformed, and have eternal life. I receive Jesus Christ today as my Savior and my Lord so that in His power I will turn away from sin.

Today I also invite and receive the Holy Spirit to lead my life. I celebrate the promises You’ve given me for eternal life. I commit to figure out how to put You first in each area of my life, and I will help others know You in all these ways too. Thank You for giving me a new life. I pray this in the name of Jesus, amen.

Too wordy? Want to keep it simple? Say “Yes” to Jesus, being open to whatever that means. That’s where it begins. He can change you, daily helping you turn away from sin and any empty attempt to get through life with your own power and perspective.

And if you are here at the end of your reading and have already prayed a prayer like that to launch you into your faith, pause to thank God again for the assurance of His salvation in your life, and then figure out who in the next twenty-four hours you need to share that invitation with so yet another person can become made new in Christ.
