

21 day
CHALLENGE

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21^{day} CHALLENGE

There are 6 things you need to know to get started on the 21 Day Challenge.

1 NO SCRIPT

The 21 Day Challenge puts a great deal of trust in you. It does this by intentionally *not* giving you an abundance of words. Think of this like a hike through the mountains. There is a trail that you follow, but the trail is intentionally not paved. You will be given guidance as you go, but this guidance will not script your every move. There is a reason for this.

This 21 Day Challenge is intended to facilitate and foster a real and living connection between you and God. Real relationships are dynamic and living. In order to truly experience them, you can't read from a script. If you read from a script, then you're acting, and if you're acting, this 21 Day Challenge will be for nothing.

2 THE SEVEN "I AM" STATEMENTS & THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The backbone of this experience are seven statements made by Jesus in the Gospel of John. Scripture has two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Gospel of John is found in the New Testament. It is one of four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) that chronicle the life of Jesus.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes seven "I am" statements. These statements reveal the character of God. When thoughtfully considered, they hold tremendous potential to profoundly impact our lives. The seven statements will rotate through this 21 Day Challenge three times. Conveniently, there are twenty-one chapters in the Gospel of John. You will be asked to read one of these chapters each day of the challenge.

To make the most of the 21 Day Challenge you will want your own copy of the Bible. If you do not yet own a copy, and you would like to start immediately, consider downloading the YouVersion Bible app on your phone (it's free).

3 AM & PM SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The 21 Day Challenge has an AM spiritual exercise and a PM spiritual exercise. You are encouraged to schedule about 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the evening for these exercises. These spiritual exercises are designed to facilitate and foster a conversation between you and God. They are not something you just read, check the box, and move on. The AM exercise will include reading one of Jesus' "I am" statements aloud multiple times. Initially this might feel odd, maybe even a little foolish. That's ok. Do it anyway. During the PM spiritual exercise you will read a chapter from the Gospel of John. In both the AM and the PM spiritual exercises, you will be encouraged to write and then read aloud a brief prayer of your own to God. Writing a prayer might be new to you, and may feel a little uncomfortable. Again, that's ok. Do it anyway.

21day CHALLENGE

4 FAITH, HOPE & LOVE

The essence of living—according to Scripture—is boiled down to three things:

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

/ 1 Corinthians 13:13

We put our *faith* in something, we *hope* in something, and we *love* something. The 21 Day Challenge is broken into three sections. Week One is about faith, Week Two is about hope, and Week Three is about love. This means that as you reflect on each of the seven “I am” statements, you will do so through the lenses of faith, hope, and love. The repetition is intentional.

5 TODAY'S CHALLENGE

Each AM Spiritual Exercise will include a section called “Today’s Challenge.” These challenges will always include a prayer and some sort of perspective to carry throughout your day. In the third week, the challenges intensify in the best of ways. Nothing strange or weird, just don’t miss Week Three.

6 THE PROMISE

The 21 Day Challenge is inspired by a promise.

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. / Jeremiah 29:13

This promise is from God to you, and this 21 Day Challenge is intended to take God up on this promise. If you authentically and wholeheartedly seek God, according to this promise you should expect to encounter God through this experience. This is the essence of the 21 Day Challenge. For 21 Days, you’re going to go for it. To be clear, this promise is not for those who sort of seek him. God’s promise is for those who seek him with all their hearts. Toward that end, you’re encouraged to use this challenge as a guide, but certainly don’t limit yourself to the guidance offered here. God desires to build a living, breathing relationship with you. This 21 Day Challenge can facilitate that, but it could never contain it.

Week 1
FAITH

21day
CHALLENGE

So what does it mean to put our faith in something?

We put our faith in an airplane to carry us safely from one city to another. We put our faith in our jobs to provide for ourselves. We put our faith in friends to help us in a time of need.

The word *faith* is often confused with the word *belief*.

Just because a person has a *belief* that an airplane will fly doesn't mean they have put their *faith* in it. They put their *faith* in that airplane when they step aboard and entrust their lives to it. They might even do this despite doubts they have about the plane. They might have legitimate questions about the safety of the plane or the qualifications of the pilot. But when they step aboard that plane, they've put their faith in it nonetheless.

The same is true for faith in God.

Just because a person has a *belief* in the existence of God doesn't mean they have put their *faith* in him. Putting one's faith in God is to entrust oneself to him. This might even be done by a person who has questions about God, just like a person has questions about an airplane. At some point they resolve, though, "I'm going to trust him. I'm going to put my faith in him. No longer will I yield to my reservations. I will do the courageous thing, and entrust my life to God."

You learn very little about the true essence of flying by studying it from a distance. It's when you board the plane and let it carry you up and over the clouds that you get it. As you enter Week One of the 21 Day Challenge, entrust yourself to God. Don't just think about God, pray to God, or talk about God. Use the AM and PM Spiritual Exercises to set your perspective, and then enter into your days and nights by entrusting your life into the hands of your Creator.

21^{day} CHALLENGE

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to quiet yourself. Ask God to guide this time.

"I AM" STATEMENT

Jesus made the following statement. Read it quietly, but aloud, five to ten times.

I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will never go hungry. / John 6:35

Reflect on Jesus' statement. What thoughts come to mind as you do?

In many cultures—especially the culture into which Jesus was speaking—bread is the main staple for sustaining life. We “put our faith” in bread so that we can live. Jesus’ claim to be the bread of life is no small claim. He’s inviting us to trust him for our very livelihood.

What in your life currently concerns you? What worries you? What stresses you? List them here.

21day CHALLENGE

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

In the space below, write a prayer entrusting your worries to God.

When done, read your prayer back to God, preferably aloud.

As you move through your day, when worry or stress surfaces, reject it by entrusting your concerns to God.

21day CHALLENGE

READING

Read John 1.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take a moment to talk with God. What are you grateful for from your day? What concerns you from your day? Write a brief prayer to God in the space provided here. To close out your day, read the prayer aloud to God.

21^{day} CHALLENGE

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to quiet yourself. Ask God to guide this time.

"I AM" STATEMENT

Jesus made the following statement. Read it quietly, but aloud, five to ten times.

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. / John 8:12

Reflect on Jesus' statement. What thoughts come to mind as you do?

When a room is dark, we stumble our way through it. We may see the outline of a table or a chair, but we're not entirely sure what's there. When the light comes on, we see clearly. Fear and confusion evaporate as we discover what truly surrounds us.

Where do you need light in your life? Where do you need wisdom, guidance, or direction?

21^{day} CHALLENGE

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

In the space below, write a prayer bringing your questions to God and asking him to guide you into wisdom and insight.

After you write this prayer, read your prayer back to God, preferably aloud.

Today, live expectantly that your prayer has been spoken to a living God who has great interest in you and your life. Be observant. Watch for answers to your prayer.

21^{day} CHALLENGE

READING

Read John 2.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take a moment to talk with God. What are you grateful for from your day? What concerns you from your day? Write a brief prayer to God in the space provided here. To close out your day, read the prayer aloud to God.

21^{day} CHALLENGE

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to quiet yourself. Ask God to guide this time.

"I AM" STATEMENT

Jesus made the following statement. Read it quietly, but aloud, five to ten times.

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. / John 10:9

Reflect on Jesus' statement. What thoughts come to mind as you do?

In Jesus' day, shepherds would build a fence around a pasture to provide a safe place for their sheep to eat and sleep. The sheep entered the pasture through a gate. Psalm 23—one of Scripture's most well-known poems—is written on the following page. With Jesus' statement about being the gate running through your mind, read and reflect on this Psalm.

Underline or circle words or thoughts that get your attention.

21^{day} CHALLENGE

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

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

I will fear no evil;

For You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

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

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 23 (NKJV)

21day CHALLENGE

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

In the space below, ask God to shepherd you today. Write to him about areas of your life where you especially need his shepherding.

After you write this prayer, read your prayer back to God, preferably aloud.

Today, live expectantly for God's shepherding. Be observant. If at any point you feel like the sheep that has strayed from the shepherd, take a moment to re-establish God as your shepherd.

21day CHALLENGE

READING

Read John 3.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take a moment to talk with God. What are you grateful for from your day? What concerns you from your day? Write a brief prayer to God in the space provided here. To close out your day, read the prayer aloud to God.

21day CHALLENGE

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to quiet yourself. Ask God to guide this time.

"I AM" STATEMENT

Jesus made the following statement. Read it quietly, but aloud, five to ten times.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

/ John 10:11

Reflect on Jesus' statement. What thoughts come to mind as you do?

The shepherd watches over the sheep. When danger comes, the shepherd steps between the sheep and that danger. This passage, in its full context, talks about the wolf that comes to destroy the sheep. The good shepherd steps between the sheep and the wolf to protect the sheep from death.

With this in mind, reflect on the following statement from Scripture:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. / Romans 5:8

What strikes you about this statement?

21day CHALLENGE

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

If Christ died for us “while we were still sinners” the implication is that we have sin to confess. In the space below, you’re encouraged to do the courageous. Write a prayer of confession to God. Bring any guilt or shame, and entrust it to him, the good shepherd who chose to die rather than leave you to deal with the wolf alone.

After you write this prayer, read your prayer back to God, preferably aloud. Let this be an act of faith. Entrust God with your sin.

Today, when you are tempted do something harmful, hurtful, or offensive—to God or to others—find a way to talk openly with God about this. Ask him for assistance and strength to walk a better direction.

21day CHALLENGE

READING

Read John 4.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take a moment to talk with God. What are you grateful for from your day? What concerns you from your day? Write a brief prayer to God in the space provided here. To close out your day, read the prayer aloud to God.

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to quiet yourself. Ask God to guide this time.

"I AM" STATEMENT

Jesus made the following statement. Read it quietly, but aloud, five to ten times.

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.
/ John 11:25

Reflect on Jesus' statement. What thoughts come to mind as you do?

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, when we entrust ourselves to him, we no longer have to limit our view of life to the time we have between birth and death. We call this living with an *eternal perspective*. Living with an eternal perspective is both powerful and liberating. When held appropriately, rather than making us detached from this world, an eternal perspective empowers us to engage life's greatest challenges. We aim to live boldly and purposefully, because life matters, not just for the here and now, but forever.

How sincere is your trust in Christ for an eternal perspective? Is it wishful thinking, or is it a reality you stand upon that affects your life and perspective today? What would it take for you to more fully trust Christ and more fully live with an eternal perspective?

21^{day} CHALLENGE

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

In the space below, write a prayer addressing your trust in Christ for a full and eternal life.

After you write this prayer, read your prayer back to God, preferably aloud. Let this be an act of faith.

Today, pause at least one time in the midst of whatever it is that you're doing, and ask this question: *How does an eternal perspective impact this moment?*

21^{day} CHALLENGE

READING

Read John 5.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take a moment to talk with God. What are you grateful for from your day? What concerns you from your day? Write a brief prayer to God in the space provided here. To close out your day, read the prayer aloud to God.

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to quiet yourself. Ask God to guide this time.

"I AM" STATEMENT

Jesus made the following statement. Read it quietly, but aloud, five to ten times.

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
/ John 14:6

Reflect on Jesus' statement. What thoughts come to mind as you do?

We often value people who introduce us to others. The salesperson values the person who introduces them to a new and prospective client. The single person values the friend who introduces them to a prospective date. Jesus tells us he is the way to the Father. He opens the door and makes the introductions. On the following page is an especially important passage of Scripture. It gives a powerful description of how Christ introduces us to the Father.

As you read it, underline any thoughts or words that especially get your attention. If helpful, go over it two or three times.

21day CHALLENGE

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:1-10

21day CHALLENGE

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

In the space below, write a prayer addressing your trust in Christ to bring you to the Father.

After you write this prayer, read your prayer back to God, preferably aloud. Let this be an act of faith.

Today, pause at least one time to privately acknowledge God's presence in your life.

21day CHALLENGE

READING

Read John 6.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take a moment to talk with God. What are you grateful for from your day? What concerns you from your day? Write a brief prayer to God in the space provided here. To close out your day, read the prayer aloud to God.

21^{day} CHALLENGE

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to quiet yourself. Ask God to guide this time.

"I AM" STATEMENT

Jesus made the following statement. Read it quietly, but aloud, five to ten times.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.
/ John 15:5

Reflect on Jesus' statement. What thoughts come to mind as you do?

The fruit is dependent upon the vine for its source of strength and vitality to make it through the day, especially a sun-scorched day. Jesus invites us to let him be our vine, the source of our power and strength.

How are you currently looking to Christ to be the source of your strength toward a fruitful life? How could you do so increasingly?

21day CHALLENGE

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

In the space below, write a prayer asking Christ to be your source of strength for your current day and for your life in general.

After you write this prayer, read your prayer back to God, preferably aloud. Let this be an act of faith.

Today, when you experience a moment of weakness or insecurity, find a way to talk openly with God about this. Ask him to strengthen and embolden you.

21day CHALLENGE

READING

Read John 7.

CLOSING PRAYER

Take a moment to talk with God. What are you grateful for from your day? What concerns you from your day? Write a brief prayer to God in the space provided here. To close out your day, read the prayer aloud to God.