



Welcome to Young Life's Global Day of Prayer! The invitation for this solitude guide is simple: Come as you are; stay as long as you like! We pray this guide will help you linger with the Lord, indulging in leisurely time with Him. This guide has been created by Jeff Chesemore, senior editor/writer, with reflection questions created by Donna Hatasaki, director of Spiritual Formation. Find a favorite spot that feels welcoming to you, one that helps you pull away from the noise and demands of life, get comfortable, and begin to settle into silence. Take time to become aware of God's presence within you and all around you, and enjoy!

HE WELCOMES US

What does it mean to welcome someone? Biblically, it's to show hospitality. The host is already there, making preparations, thinking of the guest and anticipating their needs before their arrival. The guest's well-being — whether that's physical, emotional or social — is of the utmost concern, and the host will do whatever he or she can to provide this comfort.

John 21:1-14 paints a beautiful picture of this kind of hospitality. The host? The resurrected Savior.

Before you open your Bible to this poignant moment in time, take a breath. Try and let all the many needs — your own and the people you're privileged to do life and ministry with — dissolve into the background of your mind. Rest assured, these issues will still be there when you return (but maybe this time away will provide you with a fresh perspective on how to address them).

Remember that Jesus is, even now, welcoming you warmly into His presence.

REFLECTION:

Take an internal inventory. What are you bringing with you into this moment that you would like to lay down as you turn your attention toward Jesus?

Now try this: Hold your hands out in front of you, palms down. Close your hands into tight fists, as if you have a white-knuckle grip on whatever you would like to lay down. Notice what gripping tightly feels like in your body. Now begin to slowly relax and open your hands, loosening your grip, one finger at a time, until your hands are fully open and extended. Release what you are holding into God's care. Now gently turn your palms upward, signaling that you are ready to receive what God wants to give you in these moments of solitude and silence.

You may want to practice this motion a couple of times. Inhale deeply as you close your fists. Exhale deeply as you let go of your grip. Rest in this open-handed posture for a few moments and enjoy the warm welcome of Jesus before moving forward.

READ JOHN 21:1-14. Ask the Father to reveal His heart to you as you read about His Son, then enjoy the time taking in what the Spirit has to say to you. Remember, we are reading for formation, not for information. Read slowly, listening from within, pondering what is stirring.

After the initial reading you may want to experience the story again, this time listening to the account on a Bible app, or reading it aloud yourself so you might hear the story afresh. The hearing of God's Word may draw out other thoughts to enhance the reading of God's Word.

REFLECTION:

Make a few initial notes in your journal. What is capturing your attention from God's Word? What have you noticed? What are you wondering?

TOUCH POINTS

As you spent time in the story, did you notice how it speaks to the senses? For some of us, all we need to read are the words "Sea" and "early in the morning" and we can hear the waves gently lapping against the boat, envision the dawn's new rays hitting the surface of the lake and smell the smoke of the fire. We can imagine the feel of the wet, rugged rope nets and practically taste the freshly cooked bread and fish.

Reflect: Pause and locate yourself on the shore with Jesus. Engage all of your senses. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell, feel or taste? Take a moment to journal about what you are sensing as you immerse yourself in this scene.

We've captured just some of the potential sights, sounds and smells the disciples encountered that morning. These touch points with the senses are not included just to help provide setting or scenery to the story. They are a sweet reminder that our incarnate Savior knows firsthand about our physical bodies and their very tangible demands. During His 30-plus years on earth, He too experienced fatigue, cold and hunger. He is always aware of needs and attentive to our bodies.

This is why the One waiting upon the lakeshore and the One waiting for us today is the consummate host.

Reflect: Take a moment to become more fully aware of your body. Notice any aches, pains or areas where you may be holding stress, grief or tension. Consider that God is more attentive to your body than you are. (For example, He counts the hairs on your head.) Where in your body do you need the compassionate touch of the incarnate Savior today? Offer yourself to Him and experience His warm welcome in your body.

FROM NOTHING TO EVERYTHING

Before we concentrate on the time upon the shore, let's look first at the previous night.

Peter and six other disciples have left Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection and gone to Galilee; this is in obedience to Jesus' command to go ahead into the town, where He would soon meet them. While there, Peter decides he will go fishing in the Sea of Galilee (some versions say Tiberias — it's two names for the same body of water). The other six eagerly join him.

Throughout history, some have criticized Peter's decision. Was he showing a lack of faith by returning to his boat and nets after all they had experienced in the past few weeks? Shouldn't he have patiently waited for Jesus' arrival to know what His "marching orders" might be? Others take a more practical approach: until Peter receives further instruction from Jesus, he still has to eat. He still has a family to feed. His family trade is fishing, so why not do what he's skilled in until he reunites with the Lord?

No matter Peter's reasoning, the fact is that the seven men did in fact cast their nets. The results were disappointing to say the least. John tells us in verse three that throughout the long, cold night they caught "nothing," a word that is telling.

This is the very same word we find earlier in John 15:5, where Jesus tells His followers, "For apart from me you can do nothing." How often have we found this to be true? Our expertise, abilities, skills and determination may fall short in the face of life's challenges. The disciples must feel miserable.

REFLECTION:

Can you relate? Have you worked hard and come up with empty nets recently? What did this experience feel like to you? What did it feel like emotionally? How did you experience it in your body?

And then more salt in the wound ... a stranger back on shore asks the question every unsuccessful fisherman fears: "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

Their response is a terse "no."

The man suggests they move the nets a few feet to the other side of the boat and they will be successful. There must have been something in the man's voice for the men to even consider such a strange plan, but amazingly, the disciples carry it out. This is easier said than done, however. To move heavy, wet fishing nets (with lead weights) across a boat to the other side probably required every last bit of strength the exhausted men had left.

We know what happens next, but imagine that you are one of the seven. The nets begin to drag; the boat begins to tilt; the water is suddenly boiling with flopping, flashing fish. Where did they come from? How could this be?

John knows. There is no doubt in his mind Who is behind this, and he exclaims, "It is the Lord!"

It seems when we obey Jesus, we discover Him anew.

REFLECTION:

Can you recall a time when you experienced this reality? When you took a step of illogical obedience and then suddenly saw Jesus more clearly? Take a moment to journal about your experience.

Are you aware of any invitations from the Lord today that require the risk of obedience? Consider the humility of the disciples that was required to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. Ask the Lord for the humility to simply do what He is asking you to do today.

The sign of the bursting nets ("signs" is what John calls miracles in his Gospel) is the reverse of John 15:5 — with the Lord, we can do anything. Miracles can occur when we listen to Jesus. With God,

all things are possible. Or as the Apostle Paul writes to the Philippians, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

Overcome by John’s exclamation, Peter swims to shore to be with his beloved Savior.

Reflect: Jesus began His first sermon in Matthew 5 with the surprising words, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The fact that we are completely impoverished and unable to do anything without God is good news! Jesus welcomes us with open arms and offers us the Kingdom of heaven! Coming to the end of ourselves puts us in perfect position for God to give us Himself, freely, completely and without reserve.

Where are you today in this dynamic movement between awareness of our spiritual poverty and the experience of God’s generous, self-giving love? Are you standing in the boat, fixated on your empty nets? Are you on the shore, enjoying the generous hospitality of Jesus? Perhaps you’re toeing the edge of the boat, ready to plunge into the water? Where are you? And what is Jesus offering you in this moment?

DÉJÀ VU?

Peter has come full circle. When we first meet him in chapter five of Luke’s Gospel, he has been fishing all night and caught nothing. He is naturally exhausted and dejected. This is his livelihood. Then a man he doesn’t know well, who is not a fisherman, tells him to change his methods and try again. Just move the boat into deeper waters. Although dubious, Peter humors the rabbi and does as he’s told.

The past is definitely prologue in this instance. Peter lands a net-breaking catch! More boats are needed to make the haul!

Newly aware of his spiritual poverty in the presence of Jesus, Peter falls to his knees and begs Jesus to leave him. Instead, Jesus welcomes him and his fishing friends into a brand new adventure. “Don’t be afraid,” Jesus said. “From now on you will fish for people.”

Reflect: In Luke 5, it says that Peter and his friends “were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken.” Can you recall a recent time when you’ve been “astonished” by God’s activity in your life? What happened?

Peter was astonished and fell to his knees and begged Jesus to leave. What did your experience make you want to do in God’s presence? How did you respond?

Jesus encouraged Peter and invited him into an adventure. As you recall your experience of astonishment with Jesus, what would He like to say to you today through that memory?

Three years later, Peter and Jesus are back where it seems they started.

Peter had endured an entire night of fishing with nothing to show for it. Then a stranger on the

shore calls for him to, not move the boat mind you, but just the net ... to the other side of the boat. A seemingly ridiculous suggestion, but he humors the stranger and does as he's told.

The circle is complete! Peter is wrestling with an un-haulable catch! Someone later counts the fish — 153. No wonder they had to be towed in to shore.

Aware now that the stranger is in fact Jesus, Peter throws on his outer garment, plunges into the water and splashes his way to the Savior.

Once again, Jesus welcomes him and his fishing friends. In the blink of an eye the disciple has forgotten all about the previous night's obsession. The One who has captivated his soul is now here — what does he care about fish?!

REFLECTION:

Imagine Peter standing on the shore in front of Jesus, soaking wet. Salty water dripping down his face; his clothes heavy, seeming to hold half the sea; in a hurry to get to Jesus, then not knowing what to say or do. Imagine the two friends standing there, just looking at one another over the crackling fire. What do you notice about the face of Jesus?

What do you imagine it's like to be Peter? What is he feeling? What is he thinking? What words may be caught in his throat?

The gospel tells us the disciples were astonished and overcome with joy! Apparently someone wanted to savor every detail of what just happened, so he started counting fish!

Recall again a moment when God astonished you with His generosity and goodness. Recount in your journal the details you can recall from the experience. Savor this recollection and carry it with you to encourage you in the days ahead.

“FAILURES” NO MORE

Who were these seven men warmly received by Jesus that morning? It's a fascinating list:

- Simon Peter, the leader of the group, who had denied Jesus.
- Thomas, who had doubted His resurrection.
- Nathaniel, who was initially skeptical that someone from Nazareth could be worth following.
- James and John, who sought powerful positions in the coming Kingdom.
- Two others, who assuredly brought their own history of shortcomings with them.

Why are the last two unnamed? Did John forget who rounded out the group when he was writing years later? (After all, he remembered the exact count of fish they caught!) Did he think it was an unimportant detail to name them? Or does he know that the story really isn't about those two. Or John himself. Or ultimately, even about Peter.

The story, of course, is about Jesus.

- Who initiates the conversation from the shore?
- Who performs the miracle?
- Who has already prepared the fire?
- Who invites the disciples to bring the fish?
- Who feeds them breakfast?

This isn't a story about the disciples. This is a story about the radical hospitality buried in the heart of God.

Jesus invites "failures." On their own, they've just failed in fishing, but they're probably also aware of their failings in following Jesus. All seven of these men had scattered when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, and only John was at the cross.

Jesus invites the hurting, those licking their wounds after setbacks. He invites those who are bashful in His presence. These seven seem to fall into these categories. What can He do with followers like these?

Tradition tells us that these men would all go on to become martyrs; the lone exception, again, is John, whom God allowed to live into old age. Each lived faithful lives until the Lord called them home.

REFLECTION:

Perhaps the two un-named disciples in the account creates space for us to step into the story. As you imagine yourself standing on the shore with Jesus, what "failures" is Jesus disregarding as He warmly welcomes you to come enjoy a meal?

Are you willing to follow the lead of Jesus and disregard your failures as well? What conversation would you like to have with the Lord about this?

COME AND ...

Have you ever denied Jesus? Have you ever doubted Him? Ever sought to use Him for your own gain? Ever left Him and run far away?

You're not in the minority. We've all fallen — because we're all fallen. We've all let Him down. Even so, no matter what you've done or left undone, He's inviting you to be with Him in this very moment, just as He did that morning with the seven.

In verse 12, Jesus says, "Come and have breakfast." Come and warm up at this fire I've prepared for the food. Come and rest after an exhausting night. Come and enjoy My presence.

Notice what He's not doing with the disciples. He's not folding His arms and remaining aloof until they get their act together. He's not saying, "Come and listen to me teach on what it means to be faithful," or "Come and think about what you've done."

Here is our Host gently welcoming them ashore, using the miraculous catch that He provided (but graciously credits to them — "the fish that you just caught"). He knows what they're thinking and feeling, but all He does is gently invite them to come and eat with Him. He's inviting them to be human.

REFLECTION:

Jesus does not ask His disciples to be super-human. In fact, He invites His disciples to become simply-human. What would it look like for you to shrink down to size (from super-human to simply-human) today?

What is one specific thing you would do differently?

What keeps you from accepting this invitation from Jesus?

Jesus is the master of invitation. The Gospel of John mentions other invitations from our Lord:

- "Come and see." (John 1:39)
- "Come and drink." (John 7:37)
- "Come and have breakfast." (John 21:12)

It seems our Lord can't get enough of us. Even now the invitation is extended. What invitation is the Lord offering to you?

WELCOME, MY CHILD

Where are you physically right now? Behind a desk, relaxing by a lake, sitting on a park bench?

Where are you spiritually right now? Refreshed and alive? Just going through the motions? Feeling a million miles away from God?

Here's one more question to consider:

Where is the Lord right now?

- He's ahead of you, thinking of you, smiling on you.
- He's beside you, listening to your heart, aware of all you're feeling.
- He's in you, guiding you to the truth, through the presence of His Holy Spirit.

Today, in this our Global Day of Prayer, our Lord has been anticipating this time with you. He is welcoming you — just as you are — into His loving arms. He knows your needs and your wants and understands each of them. He is eager to listen to your heart — and to respond!

Taking a cue from Peter: let's leave everything behind, including our failures, and enjoy the warm welcome of Jesus. Allow Him to welcome you fully and deeply, receiving you as you are and serving you a simple but delicious meal.

This, after all, is what your soul has desired all along.

REFLECTION:

Imagine yourself again, sitting on the shore with Jesus, enjoying the meal He has prepared for you, as the sun dances on the water and the birds call overhead. The other disciples have wandered off to clean the nets and secure the boat. You are alone with Jesus now, and His eyes, filled with compassion, have locked upon you. What would He like to say to you in these moments?

Write yourself a letter from Jesus in your journal. Take dictation from the Spirit. Draw from that well of Living Water for as long as it is flowing.

When you are finished, transition gently back into life around you. Perhaps go for a walk and savor the meal God has fed you in these moments.

Later, we invite you to enjoy a brief video on the Day of Prayer page with a message from Young Life President Newt Crenshaw and prayers of intercession prayed over you and this mission. Then we invite you to gather in teams across the mission and intercede for kids. We've provided a Guide for Teams, if you choose to use it.

May you continue to experience the deep and warm welcome of Jesus throughout this day.