

# Reflect and Reset

21-day spiritual reflection  
for leaders

evangelical alliance  
together making Jesus known



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# Evangelical Alliance

The Evangelical Alliance joins together hundreds of organisations, thousands of churches and tens of thousands of individuals to make Jesus known.

Representing our members since 1846, the Evangelical Alliance is the oldest and largest evangelical unity movement in the UK. United in mission and voice, we exist to serve and strengthen the work of the church in our communities and throughout society.

Highlighting the significant opportunities and challenges facing the church today, we are committed to sharing fresh ideas, celebrating best practice and catalysing innovation throughout the evangelical community and beyond.

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# Why are encounters with Jesus at the heart of all we do as leaders?

As Christian leaders, our whole life flows out of our encounters with Jesus. He is the one who calls us, guides us and equips us to lead.

We know there should be a seamless walk with Jesus into our workplaces, our family lives and our communities, but sometimes we're tempted to put boundaries around different parts of our lives as if some parts are spiritual and some strategic. Following Jesus means that all of life is both spiritual and missional, even when we fall into prioritising strategies over encounters. We are filled, guided and challenged by the Spirit in every area, and it's out of this place that we are called to lead others into God's mission for the world.

This truth has never been more resonant than in our current times. The boundaries of our lives have been blurred and skewed by a season of tremendous change, and many of us in church leadership have realised that we are in uncharted territory.

At the Evangelical Alliance, it has been our privilege to walk alongside so many of you as you work out Spirit-guided leadership in a challenging season.

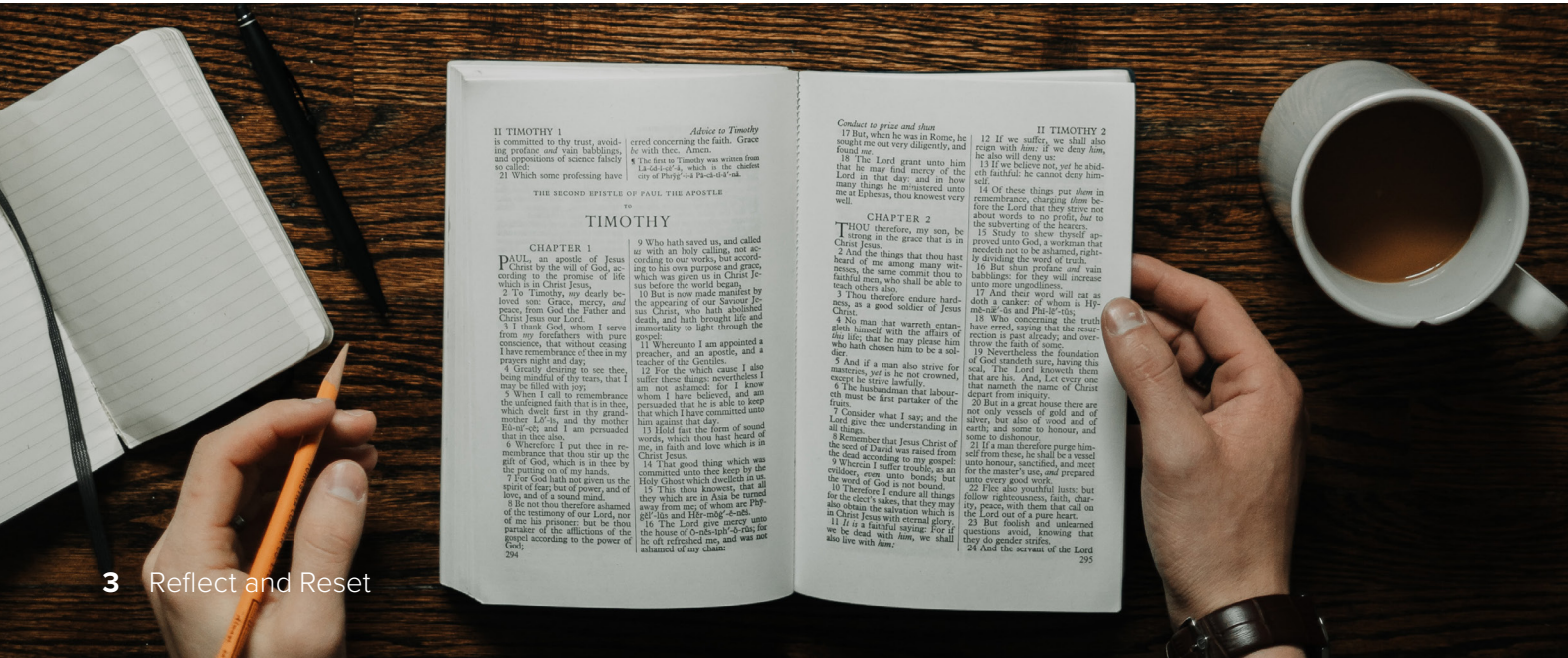
We have witnessed the heavy lifting you have done in the life of your churches, carrying the burden for whole communities. As this season provides an opportunity for you to reflect and reset both strategically and theologically, we realise the need for this process to be framed by spiritual reflection as well.

This 21-day spiritual devotion is formed of a series of lectio divina reflections followed by different voices from across the Evangelical Alliance team, with the hope that you may encounter Jesus afresh and receive a new vision for your church and its mission. It's also a reminder that while each journey of leadership is unique, you are not alone. Others are on their own journey alongside you, and so we have included prompts for you to reach out to other church leaders for unity, prayer and support.

As we look back, look around and look ahead, I invite you then to reflect, dream, reimagine and listen for the Spirit in every area of life, both personally and for the life of your church. I have no doubt that God will have things to say, both to you and those who you lead.

**Fred Drummond**

Director of Scotland and prayer, Evangelical Alliance



A person is sitting and reading a book. The background is slightly blurred, showing a plant with green leaves. The overall tone is calm and reflective.

# Week 1

## Looking back



# Day 1

## Treasure in jars of clay

### 2 Corinthians 4:7–12

LECTIO DIVINA



#### 2 Corinthians 4:7–12

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may also be revealed in our mortal body.

So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

that stand out to you. Allow the Spirit to speak to you through this passage, reflecting on what God might be saying to you through it. Again, feel free to make notes.



P A U S E

### Lectio (read)

To begin, slowly read through the passage aloud, placing yourself within the story and imagining how you might feel. What can you see and experience within the text? Take time to engage with what's being said, reflect on it and write your thoughts down if you'd like to.



P A U S E

### Meditatio (meditate)

Now read the passage aloud for a second time, paying particular attention to any words or phrases

### Oratio (pray)

Read the passage slowly for a third time, using the words as your prayer to God. As He speaks to you, respond to Him through this passage and what it means for your life today. Perhaps add some of your own words, expanding on the text to say what's on your heart.



P A U S E

### Contemplatio (contemplation)

For one final time, read aloud both the passage and your own prayer, listening to the words and what they mean to you. Allow them to lead you into a quiet space to hear what God is saying. Thank Him for what He has said, and invite Him to say anything else you need to hear today. Ask for His Spirit to continue guiding you through the rest of your day.

# Day 2

## Beginning to look back

### 2 Corinthians 4:7–12

REFLECTION BY  
FRED DRUMMOND

As we begin our spiritual reflection, this first week is focused on looking back. I wanted to remind us of the value in reflecting on how God has brought us to where we are now, taking time to remember, celebrate, repent, grieve and marvel where necessary. In the busyness of life, we can forget to pause and reflect, and, as leaders, it's hard not to constantly press on to the next thing. This week is a chance to regain that space to reflect.

When we look back, however, we see how God, sometimes in spite of us, has used us to advance His kingdom. At times this is with a still small voice, at others it's a prompt of the Spirit or even a miraculous sign of His power.

The heart of 2 Corinthians 4 is that, in all seasons, it is God's Spirit in us that ensures we survive the storms of life. As we reflect, we see this care and love of God at work. We have not been excluded from difficulty and there may have been times when

we have made mistakes, but in our weakness God has been faithful.

### When have you known the faithful presence of God most in the past year?



Faithful God, thank you for your continued presence. On the mountaintop of exaltation and in the valley of sorrow, you have always been there. You have held me when I have been weak and your Spirit has gently encouraged me to press on.

Thank you, Lord.

Amen

# Day 3

## Struck down but not destroyed

### 2 Corinthians 4:7–12

REFLECTION BY  
DAYALAN MAHESAN

One of the questionable highlights of studying civil engineering at university was reading a very thick book about concrete. For most people, learning about reinforcing concrete with steel to prevent it from breaking under stress is not riveting reading and, honestly, I'd have to agree.

Reflecting on the last couple of years, however, I've found it useful to think of ourselves as that

reinforced concrete beam under the stress of a global pandemic. The solid rod of steel hidden inside a concrete beam is a picture of God's Spirit working inside me, holding me together beyond my usual breaking point.

Having God's Spirit in us is what gives us strength when we are prone to fracture. He gives us our 'bouncebackability', to coin a phrase commonly



used in football management. Others may comment on how resilient we are, seemingly always able to weather the storm, and many of us may have felt the pressure to maintain this image to reassure our church communities.

But let's remember it is God who provides the resilience within us, the steel that refuses to yield to stress. Our leadership is not dependent on our own resilience, it is God in us which means we have been struck down and not destroyed.

**Where have you discovered a new resilience that you didn't realise God had given you?**



God of strength, I pray you give us a greater awareness of the moments when you are providing the strength within us to keep going. Amid the pressure to lead our communities, remind us that the burden is not on us but on your Spirit to sustain us.

We gratefully reflect on the grace you give us to bounce back and keep going in seasons of hardship for the good of your church and the glory of your kingdom.

Amen.

## Day 4

### Confronting lost hopes

**Luke 24:13–35**

LECTIO DIVINA



**Luke 24:13–35**

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising Him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked Him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" He asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him; but we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find His body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said He was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets

have spoken! Did not the messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning Himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if He were going farther. But they urged Him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So He went in to stay with them.

When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised Him, and He disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?”

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when He broke the bread.

## Lectio (read)

To begin, slowly read through the passage aloud, placing yourself within the story and imagining how you might feel. What can you see and experience within the text? Take time to engage with what’s being said, reflect on it and write your thoughts down if you’d like to.



P A U S E

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## Meditatio (meditate)

Now read the passage aloud for a second time, paying particular attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you. Allow the Spirit to speak to you through this passage, reflecting on what God might be saying to you through it. Again, feel free to make notes.



P A U S E

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## Oratio (pray)

Read the passage slowly for a third time, using the words as your prayer to God. As He speaks to you, respond to Him through this passage and what it means for your life today. Perhaps add some of your own words, expanding on the text to say what’s on your heart.



P A U S E

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## Contemplatio (contemplation)

For one final time, read the passage and your own prayer to God, listening to the words and what they mean to you. Allow them to lead you into a quiet space to hear what God is saying. Thank Him for what He has said, and invite Him to say anything else you need to hear today. Ask for His Spirit to continue guiding you through the rest of your day.



# Day 5

## The roles of lament and revelation

**Luke 24:13–35**

REFLECTION BY  
ISRAEL OLOFINJANA

This story of Jesus' disciples travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus has so much to teach us about the roles of lament and revelation in our faith.

Cleopas and his friend had just lost Jesus, the one they had been following for some years. Because of their grief and the expectation that Jesus was supposed to be the messiah to redeem Israel, they couldn't even discern when Jesus was in their midst.

But their lament at the loss of their messiah soon turned into a profound revelation of the messiah's ministry. This was only possible because Jesus took them on a journey from their broken expectations to a fuller revelation of His ministry.

As we too experience grief for hopes we've laid aside, perhaps Jesus is preparing to reveal something new to us about His ministry.

**What expectations did you have before the pandemic that may not have been**

**met? What do you feel have you lost during the pandemic and how has this affected you and your leadership?**



God of revelation, what is it that you are trying to teach me or show me through this season? Open my eyes to be able to discern where you are working even when it doesn't look as I expected it to. Perhaps you are calling me into something deeper at this time, which I could not have never experienced before.

I ask that you open my eyes to your eternal truths.

Amen



# Day 6

## Shifting our perspective with a new lens

**Luke 24:13–35**

REFLECTION BY  
ISRAEL OLOFINJANA

Yesterday we reflected on how the lament of the two disciples hindered them from seeing Jesus clearly, and so today, I want us to consider what it was that Jesus actually wanted them to understand better. In essence, what was the content of His revelation to them in their time of crisis?

While the two disciples were aware of the concept that the nation of Israel was expecting a messiah, Jesus gave familiar scriptures new meaning by His own life and ministry fulfilling the prophecies. Perhaps the pandemic context is giving us a new lens on familiar issues as well.

The coronavirus context gives the opportunity to deepen our personal relationship with God and how that impacts our leadership, but God is also giving us new insight and fresh revelation about our world. The pandemic is shining God's light on justice issues such as racial justice, climate justice and poverty concerns, as well as other issues in each of our contexts that perhaps we didn't notice before.

**Where do you think God might be trying to shine new light or put a new emphasis on your life and ministry? What might God be saying to your church about key issues such as racial justice or other injustices that affect your community?**



Heavenly Father, give me fresh revelations of yourself as I study scripture, pray and reflect. Help me to better understand the things of your heart and your mission for this season. Help us as a church to engage with what you prioritise and not our own agendas.

Amen

# Day 7

## A final look back

**Luke 24:13–35**

REFLECTION BY  
FRED DRUMMOND

Joshua 4 tells the story of the 12 memorial stones, placed so that the people of Israel and the generations to come would be reminded of God's mercy and promise. He was the faithful and powerful God, and His people were to look back and remember this.

There is power in what we remember, and just as with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, it's often not until we look back that we see what Jesus was really doing. These memories of what God has done in the past can strengthen our faith and lift the weary hearted.





It may be that you feel weary today. Perhaps you feel that you have given all you can and you're struggling to find the energy to even think of the new season ahead. Then don't rush this opportunity to pause and remember. Think back to times when the Lord has sustained you and remember His times of powerful action. The one who has called you is faithful, and He is with you.

**When have you seen the power of  
God at work in the past year and how  
can that boost your faith that He will  
do it again?**

As we close this week of looking back, take time to think of your own memorial stones, those memories

of God at work in your life. Perhaps write a few down, slowly remembering each one and giving thanks. Allow the Spirit to heal and renew you.



Lord of all grace and glory, for the memorable moments in my life, I praise You.

Come remind and renew me.

In the silence, help me to meet with you.

In Jesus' name,

amen.

## Time to connect

As part of this spiritual reflection, we want to make sure you are checking in with others who can help you carry the burden of leadership. It's important that you have supportive people around you who can relate to your journey from their own experiences, and offer comfort and wisdom where needed.

At the end of this first week of looking back, we encourage you to reach out to a mentor or trusted friend and unpack some of what God

**Speak to  
a mentor**

has been saying to you this week. Throughout your reflection time you may have realised things that you need to process with others, so make it a priority to connect with them. Take time to work through pain and grief from the past, and don't feel pressured to rush this stage.

When you are ready, please join us for the second week of Reflect and Reset, looking around.



A close-up photograph of two hands, one from a person with a blue sleeve and the other from a person with a plaid sleeve, cupped together in a gesture of care or support. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with the palms facing each other. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

# Week 2

Looking around



# Day 8

## The art of remaining in love

John 15:1–17

LECTIO DIVINA



John 15:1–17

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant

does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

This is my command: love each other.”

### Lectio (read)

To begin, slowly read through the passage aloud, placing yourself within the story and imagining how you might feel. What can you see and experience within the text? Take time to engage with what’s being said, reflect on it and write your thoughts down if you’d like to.



PAUSE

### Meditatio (meditate)

Now read the passage aloud for a second time, paying particular attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you. Allow the Spirit to speak to you through this passage, reflecting on what God might be saying to you through it. Again, feel free to make notes.



PAUSE



PAUSE

## Oratio (pray)

Read the passage slowly for a third time, using the words as your prayer to God. As He speaks to you, respond to Him through this passage and what it means for your life today. Perhaps add some of your own words, expanding on the text to say what's on your heart.

## Contemplatio (contemplation)

For one final time, read aloud both the passage and your own prayer, listening to the words and what they mean to you. Allow them to lead you into a quiet space to hear what God is saying. Thank Him for what He has said, and invite Him to say anything else you need to hear today. Ask for His Spirit to continue guiding you through the rest of your day.

# Day 9

## How to bear good fruit

**John 15:1–17**

REFLECTION BY  
FRED DRUMMOND

Emerging from a season of turmoil, it's important to take stock and acknowledge where we are, so this week we are shifting our gaze from looking back to looking around. It's an opportunity to take a good look at ourselves and our own spiritual wellbeing, as well as the wellbeing of those who we serve.

I have a greenhouse and nothing beats the amazing celebration each year when we have the first strawberry of the season. It takes careful work and watering, but I know that without those things, the plant won't grow.

Sometimes remaining in the vine takes work; it's not easy. But just as we know that the strawberry was never going to survive without being connected to the plant, that same is true for us. No connection, no fruit.

For some of us, this has been a tough season and there have been times when remaining in Jesus has been a challenge. That's okay; we all have times when holding on is hard. The wonderful news is,

however, that by grafting back into Jesus, fruits can begin to grow.

Take a moment for God to reveal to you the beautiful fruits of the kingdom of God that He is growing in you and your community right now.

**How could connection with Jesus  
beautify barren places both in your  
own life and the life of your church?**



Lord, keep me close to you.

Make me a fruit bearer.

Bring hope, beauty and grace to the communities in which I live and work.

Use me, Lord, wherever you send me.

Amen

# Day 10

## Tempted to strive?

**John 15:1–17**

REFLECTION BY  
SIÂN REES

Growing up as a musical child in Wales meant competing regularly in eisteddfodau, a competitive festival of music and poetry. Children spend months rehearsing solo or with choirs and bands, devoting hours to meticulously perfecting the dynamics, phrasing and expression of a specific piece to perform in this important part of Welsh culture.

Becoming effective leaders in the church could not be further removed from this pattern of betterment. Neither striving nor perfectionism could ever advance God's kingdom in any permanent way. Fruitful leadership is the overflow of our intimacy with Jesus and comes from a posture and position of peace.

Jesus is permanently present with us by His Spirit and invites us to a mutual indwelling; we remain in Him and His Spirit remains in us. He encourages us to remain in fellowship with Him and in koinonia with His people, for "no branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine". By remaining, Jesus will

do great things through us, but only from a place of peace not of perfectionism.

**In which areas of your life and ministry might you need to exchange striving for remaining?**



Heavenly Father, thank you for appointing me to go and bear fruit in your kingdom – fruit that will last. I acknowledge that apart from you, I can do nothing.

I resolve to remain in you and invite you to teach me how to lead others out of the overflow of our intimacy.

In Jesus' name,  
amen.





# Day 11

## If you really love me...

John 21:15–25

LECTIO DIVINA



John 21:15–25

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time He said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then He said to him, “Follow me!”

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” Because of this, the rumour spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; He only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

### Lectio (read)

To begin, slowly read through the passage aloud, placing yourself within the story and imagining how you might feel. What can you see and experience within the text? Take time to engage with what’s being said, reflect on it and write your thoughts down if you’d like to.



PAUSE

### Meditatio (meditate)

Now read the passage aloud for a second time, paying particular attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you. Allow the Spirit to speak to

you through this passage, reflecting on what God might be saying to you through it. Again, feel free to make notes.



PAUSE



PAUSE

## Oratio (pray)

Read the passage slowly for a third time, using the words as your prayer to God. As He speaks to you, respond to Him through this passage and what it means for your life today. Perhaps add some of your own words, expanding on the text to say what's on your heart.

## Contemplatio (contemplation)

For one final time, read aloud both the passage and your own prayer, listening to the words and what they mean to you. Allow them to lead you into a quiet space to hear what God is saying. Thank Him for what He has said, and invite Him to say anything else you need to hear today. Ask for His Spirit to continue guiding you through the rest of your day.





# Day 12

## Tuning in to the shepherd's voice

**John 21:15–25**

REFLECTION BY  
RICH POWNEY

In John 21, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Him. After Peter declares his love for Jesus each time, Jesus gives Peter three commands: feed my lambs, take care of my sheep and feed my sheep.

Jesus is clear in these three statements that people in the flock belong to Him. They are His lambs and His sheep. Jesus is the 'good, great and chief shepherd', and as leaders within His flock, we participate with Jesus in leading His sheep.

Bedouin shepherds often have a few sheep in their flock with a bell attached to their neck. These sheep are attuned to the voice of the shepherd. When they hear his call, they follow the shepherd and their bell rings, encouraging the other sheep to follow.

**What practices can you put in place to help you stay attuned to the voice of the chief shepherd? How can you**

**empower others to hear and respond to the Spirit's promptings?**



Heavenly Father, thank you that in Jesus we have seen you are a good shepherd of your people, always protecting us and leading us into green pastures.

Help me to stay attuned to your voice, Lord. Forgive me for times when I don't give you space to speak.

I pray that you would enable me to joyfully chase after you, wherever that takes me, and I ask that you would cause others to follow too.

Amen

# Day 13

## How's your diet?

**John 21:15–25**

REFLECTION BY  
RICH POWNEY

Jesus instructs Peter to do two things for His flock: to feed and tend them. These are matters of care and love. To feed is to ensure people get good, healthy nourishment that helps them to thrive. To tend a flock relates to guarding and guiding a group of people, helping them navigate uncertain terrain, plotting a path over rocky ground to find good pastures.

We've certainly all been travelling through uncertain terrain, often scavenging for sustenance where we can find it. The question to reflect on today is, as you look around, how healthy is your spiritual diet and the diet of those you lead?

When we're tired and weary from a difficult journey, the temptation is to go for quick and easy food, but



as we all know, that will only satisfy for a moment and isn't good for us over a long period of time.

**Do you need to feast afresh on  
sustenance that satisfies your heart  
and mind with the goodness of God?  
How could you help the people you  
lead get more 'spiritual fruit and veg' in  
their life as well?**

## Day 14

### Rallying again

As we remain in Christ, leading His flock through all seasons, His love and compassion soften our hearts to the needs and complexities of the moment we're in. We may find ourselves weeping over brokenness, or we may begin to see things through a different lens in this new season. With that lens, held by the one who is a source of all love, we are sent into the world to bring His hope and love to our communities.

As we think of our communities, let's allow the grace of God to flow through us. What is He revealing to us about our community at this time? What are the big issues that we can pray for God to redeem? Where might He be prompting us to lay down our lives in love for the sake of our communities?

Many of us will have led our churches to respond to local crises during the pandemic, but as we look around with a spirit of compassion flowing through us, we can see that the Lord still longs to do more. May our hearts be softened to rally and go forth again in love.



Heavenly Father, thank you for the nourishment we can find in scripture. Please grow in us a hunger for "pure spiritual milk" (1 Peter 2:2) and forgive us for when we've allowed ourselves to get out of spiritual shape.

May your Spirit guide us all to green pastures and encourage our community to thrive.

Amen

#### John 21:15–25

REFLECTION BY  
FRED DRUMMOND

**Celebrating all that God has already  
done through you and your church to  
bless your community, what can you  
sense He is still longing to redeem and  
restore in your community?**



Lord of love, allow me to open up to your compassion as you hold me.

Change me, Lord, and help me to see things as you do. As your presence sustains me, might you use me to sustain others.

In Jesus' name,  
amen.

# Time to connect

Speak to  
a local  
church  
leader

In light of the time you've taken to look around you this week, assessing your current situation and the present needs of your area, it could be a good opportunity to check in with another local church leader. The power of church unity cannot be underestimated, especially in a time when so many people feel disconnected.

Just as you may have mixed feelings about the last couple of years and how to move on from

here, other local leaders may similarly want to talk and process with someone who knows the context. Why not bless a local leader by reaching out to pray together, and perhaps encourage them to try this spiritual reflection for themselves?

Then please continue to journey with us into the final week of Reflect and Rest, looking ahead.





A person is seen from the side, sitting at a wooden desk. On the desk is a white mug, an open notebook, and a smartphone. The person's hand is resting on the notebook. In the background, a calendar is mounted on a light blue wall. The text "Week 3" is written in a large, dark blue serif font, and "Looking ahead" is written below it in a smaller, teal sans-serif font.

# Week 3

## Looking ahead



# Day 15

## Promises for a new land

Jeremiah 29:4–14

LECTIO DIVINA



Jeremiah 29:4–14

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:

“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the Lord.

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

“Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations

and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

### Lectio (read)

To begin, slowly read through the passage aloud, placing yourself within the story and imagining how you might feel. What can you see and experience within the text? Take time to engage with what’s being said, reflect on it and write your thoughts down if you’d like to.



PAUSE

### Meditatio (meditate)

Now read the passage aloud for a second time, paying particular attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you. Allow the Spirit to speak to you through this passage, reflecting on what God might be saying to you through it. Again, feel free to make notes.



PAUSE

## Oratio (pray)

Read the passage slowly for a third time, using the words as your prayer to God. As He speaks to you, respond to Him through this passage and what it means for your life today. Perhaps add some of your own words, expanding on the text to say what's on your heart.



P A U S E

# Day 16

## The space between hope and fear

It can be frightening, not to mention tiring, to be in a period of transition and ambiguity for too long. We hang in that threshold moment where the past is gone, never to be returned to, but the future looks unclear. Emotionally, we may swing from dreaming about what's to come to fearing all that is still unknown.

This may resonate with how you are feeling, knowing that church will never be the same as it was pre-coronavirus and recognising both the challenges and the opportunities that this presents.

At this time, many of us find ourselves without answers, wondering about the same questions that the people we lead and serve are asking us. How do we move forward? What should our priorities be? Will we ever see the fulfilment of the dreams we once had for our church and its surrounding community?

In these moments, there are some things that we need to remind ourselves of: God has His hand on the future, He has good plans for us; it is His church, so He will build it; His love is always for us, and we are secure in Him.

## Contemplatio (contemplation)

For one final time, read aloud both the passage and your own prayer, listening to the words and what they mean to you. Allow them to lead you into a quiet space to hear what God is saying. Thank Him for what He has said, and invite Him to say anything else you need to hear today. Ask for His Spirit to continue guiding you through the rest of your day.

**Jeremiah 29:4–14**

REFLECTION BY  
FRED DRUMMOND

**When you reflect on the goodness of God – releasing for a moment any practical concerns – what do you want to see Him do in this coming season? Have some fun with big dreams and ideas.**



God, your love was with us from the beginning, and is now and always will be.

You have carried me through many situations in the past, so I trust you will carry me again into the future.

I know that you are faithful. In my times of uncertainty, help me to hold on to you.

Lead me in your love.

Amen



# Day 17

## A new normal

**Jeremiah 29:4–14**

REFLECTION BY  
SIÂN REES

One of the most unexpected outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic is the change in societal narrative. Alongside buzz words and phrases such as ‘unprecedented’, ‘flattening the curve’ and the infamous ‘herd immunity’, perhaps the phrase we now hear most of all is ‘the new normal’. But this concept should feel familiar to God’s people because the foundational truth of our salvation is that “the old has gone, the new is here” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In Jeremiah 29, we read a letter detailing what God had revealed to His prophet regarding the ‘new normal’ of those who had survived being carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. In it, the Lord encourages them to trust His goodness in a new season. He truly does have “plans to give us hope and a future”.

As we emerge into a new landscape, looking to both re-establish our gatherings and accelerate our mission, let’s trust in God’s goodness and

faithfulness to lead us, our congregations and our nations into a brighter future.

**Why not make a list today of all the things you are praying for and hopeful for in the coming months of this ‘new normal’?**



Heavenly Father, we thank you for your unfailing love towards us.

In you, our hearts rejoice, and we trust in your holy name. In this season of uncertainty and change, help us to fix our eyes on you. Grant us wisdom and guide us as we lead your people. In Jesus’ name, amen.

# Day 18

## Going beyond the walls

**Acts 16:6–15**

LECTIO DIVINA



**John 15:1–17**

Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter

Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come

over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

## Lectio (read)

To begin, slowly read through the passage aloud, placing yourself within the story and imagining how you might feel. What can you see and experience within the text? Take time to engage with what’s being said, reflect on it and write your thoughts down if you’d like to.



P A U S E

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## Meditatio (meditate)

Now read the passage aloud for a second time, paying particular attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you. Allow the Spirit to speak to you through this passage, reflecting on what God might be saying to you through it. Again, feel free to make notes.



P A U S E

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## Oratio (pray)

Read the passage slowly for a third time, using the words as your prayer to God. As He speaks to you, respond to Him through this passage and what it means for your life today. Perhaps add some of your own words, expanding on the text to say what’s on your heart.



P A U S E

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## Contemplatio (contemplation)

For one final time, read aloud both the passage and your own prayer, listening to the words and what they mean to you. Allow them to lead you into a quiet space to hear what God is saying. Thank Him for what He has said, and invite Him to say anything else you need to hear today. Ask for His Spirit to continue guiding you through the rest of your day.

# Day 19

## Planning and participating with Jesus

**Acts 16:6–15**

REFLECTION BY  
DONNA JENNINGS

In Acts 16, we join Paul on his second mission, accompanied by Silas and Timothy. Paul's original strategy to check up on the faith communities he previously visited (Acts 15:36) has not gone to plan, and we are not given any detail as to what went wrong – a storm, a change of wind, lack of funds, perhaps even a pandemic? Nor are we told how they responded, whether it was with frustration, confusion, fear or doubt. But twice, Luke interprets the change of plans was due to direct intervention by the Spirit (15:6-7).

Amidst a change of plans, God's Spirit directed Paul and his team into unplanned, uncharted western territory, through a vision of a man calling for help in Macedonia – and so immediately they obey and go.

The book of Acts is all about this synergy, the partnership between God and humanity as we participate with Him to do His work in His world. Here in this Acts 16 incident, we see this participation, weaving together the wisdom and work of human leadership and the ever-present leading of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit calls, leads, inspires, and the early church leaders followed, listened, adapted, obeyed.

And so it is today.

In every change of plans, we must be attentive to God's Spirit, discerning what He is seeking to do in and through us instead.

**In light of all the things that were paused or stopped due to coronavirus restrictions, what could this change of plans give you space to do instead?**



Spirit, in this strange season, you have prevented us from doing so much of what we know to be church. At this moment of leadership, I yield to you my understanding and my response to your plans for our church.

Spirit, like these early leaders, I am listening, I am ready. I surrender my leadership plans to join with you in what you are doing in your world.

In and through the name of Jesus, amen.





# Day 20

## Unexpected people and places

**Acts 16:6–15**

REFLECTION BY  
DONNA JENNINGS

Philippi is Paul's first port of call in Macedonia. Because of the strong culture of emperor worship in this city, there is no synagogue to witness in and so he ventures out to an informal place of prayer at the riverside where he meets Lydia. Along with her whole household, Lydia believed the gospel message, was baptised into the Christian faith and then hosted the early Christian leaders as they worked through the city of Philippi.

These leaders walked in step with the Spirit not just in following Him to Macedonia but in being able to recognise Him working in the most unexpected people and places. The vision of the man from Macedonia turned out to be a woman, and spiritual awakening didn't happen in a synagogue, but alongside the river. None of this looked as they expected but they remained confident that the Spirit was moving and so they stepped forward with Him.

Similarly, as your church has been scattered throughout local communities in unexpected ways, perhaps you've noticed some of these same moments where the Spirit has worked in surprising ways.

**Considering this tendency for the Spirit to move unexpectedly, how might this be a long-term vision for being agile and in step with the Spirit at work in your community, rather than an interim coronavirus strategy?**



Lord, just as the promised king entered the world in the unexpected person of Jesus, I acknowledge that you still work in ways I don't expect today.

Spirit, I pause with fear-filled trembling, to recognise that you move in ways beyond my understanding and more wonderful than my expectations. I open myself and my leadership to look for you and your work in the most surprising people and places.

In and through the name of Jesus, amen.

# Day 21

## Ready and waiting to move ahead

**Acts 16:6–15**

REFLECTION BY  
FRED DRUMMOND

God is creative and surprising, so sometimes He calls us to do things we think are unusual or

challenging. There are also times when we need to allow some doors to close so that God will open

new ones that we can't yet predict.

God sometimes reveals His plans immediately, but at other times we are called to wait. We all know that this waiting can be difficult, yet we are told that it is in the waiting that strength is given and power is renewed. It is often as we slow down, wait and listen that we are both restored and informed about the next steps forward.

Today, why not spend some time actively waiting on God? Don't come to Him with a list or preconceptions of what He will say or do. Just kneel and worship, or go for a walk and allow peace to fill your mind. Pause the planning and allow space for God to speak.

**How can you ensure you are ready to step into God's next phase for you, operating from a place of rest and union with Him?**



Lord, I bring nothing but my constant activity.  
Please will you take it from me.

Allow me to dwell in your presence and  
receive your peace.

Let me live in the stillness of encounter,  
overwhelmed by your love.

You are enough for me.

Speak Lord.

Amen

## Time to connect



As you've begun to listen to the Spirit's guidance for the future, now could be the moment to share these dreams with fellow leaders in your church. Regardless of what may have gone before, this new season is a chance to carve a new path, following the Spirit's leading into unexpected places.

Encourage your leadership team to spend time listening to God with you, asking Him

to reveal the good plans He has in store for you, your church and the whole community that you serve.

We hope you have been blessed by this opportunity to reflect spiritually on your leadership and we hope you'll enjoy using the rest of the Reflect and Reset resource to build strategy around what God has been saying.

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together making Jesus known



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