

Paying Ridiculous Attention to Jesus

A 7 DAY JESUS-CENTERED BIBLE READING PLAN



(let's get focused on Him)

Hello reader. You don't know me, but that's okay because who I am is not important. *What's important is that we follow the same leader = Jesus.*

I don't know about you, but my day is filled with NOISE. To-do lists, demands, schedules, media--they all combine to create one loud racket in my mind.

To find peace, I seek organization tactics, lists, and planning apps, hoping that I can somehow find a calmer melody to replace the racket. But time and time again I've found that only one thing truly works: *I need to tune out of the world by tuning into Jesus.*

One of the best ways for me to do this is to stop paying attention to all the concerns around me, and to start paying attention--RIDICULOUS attention--to Jesus. This shift starts in the most grounding place I can think of: the Bible.

Within the pages of Jesus' story, I'm invited to learn something new about him. And when I learn about Jesus, I learn about God and his melody, which I discover is always playing quietly in the background.

This melody is God's story, unfolding every day, right in front of me. When I hear it, all of the outside noise...

..quiets.

And then I get quiet.

When I let my pursuit of Jesus guide my understanding of God and his story, my life is transformed by what I discover.



To help me, I like to use these two tools.

The Jesus-Centered Bible helps me pay ridiculous attention to Jesus. It includes the same familiar passages I've grown to love, but draws my attention to Jesus with focused intention. It cuts down on the noise--what I THINK a passage means, or what someone has told me about it--and reveals HIM. His heart. His personality. His awesome Spirit that speaks to us now. And his Father--the author and creator of everything.



The Jesus-Centered Journal helps me write down what I'm learning and experiencing. It's my "Jesus journal" where I take notes and make doodles and draw pictures of who he is. Each day I write down what I want to say to him from my heart and then write down what he says back. Sometimes he talks in words, and other times he shows me scenes and pictures, like from a movie scene. I copy it ALL down so I don't miss it. Because the more I know Jesus, the more I know my TRUE self.

I want to invite you to the same.

Join me over the next seven days on a journey of paying **RIDICULOUS** attention to Jesus through Matthew's gospel.

Let's welcome each day with a new verse about Jesus. Let's picture him in the story, talking to his friends, challenging listeners, healing with his touch. And then let's put ourselves at his side and see what he says and does.

Let's follow him, friends. Starting now.



>> Grab some coffee and start Day 1 on the next page.



Day 1: Read Matthew 26:36-46

In this scene from Matthew, Jesus is praying not once but in three sessions throughout the night, and petitioning his disciples to pray with him. From this story, and others throughout Matthew, we can observe that Jesus spent more time praying than speaking. His dependent relationship with his Father fueled everything he said and did. He honored the intimacy of his one-on-one relationship with his Father above his teaching, his ministry of healing, and his miracle-working.

Within our busy schedules and pressing demands, it's easy to focus on what we can do (or NOT do) for Jesus during our day. *But if we're paying attention to Jesus' priorities here, we learn that talking and listening to him is at the heart of what he wants from us.*

Before you transition onto the next thing in your day, pause and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can add more moments of prayer into your daily routine, and for his help to call you away--if only for a few minutes--from your tasks and to-dos to connect with him.

(for your notes)



Day 2: Read Matthew 11:16-19

It's easy to picture Jesus with a somber face, marked by a serious intensity during his ministry. But there are many accounts of him attending parties. In fact, his first miracle was performed at a party, and he often participated in the traditional Jewish festivals and celebratory gatherings. Jesus loved celebrations and enjoyed himself so much that at one point the religious rule-keepers accused him of gluttony and drunkenness.

Take a minute to picture Jesus at one of these parties. Imagine him smiling and laughing and telling jokes. How does this change or expand your view of Jesus?

During one of your prayer times this week, **try telling Jesus a funny story or anecdote from your day.** See what it feels like to share a joyful moment with him, and pay attention to his reaction.



Day 3: Read Matthew 5:10-12

Jesus said we'd know we were starting to make an impact when people started insulting, persecuting, and defaming us because of him. He even says that we should be happy about it. (Ever think that sometimes Jesus has WAY different ideas about what leads to happiness?)

Jesus is simply not intimidated by confrontation and conflict. He is not moved or motivated by unfair critique or misplaced abuse. *It's impossible to force Jesus to capitulate on the truth—he cannot be pressured into compromising his integrity.*

Consider what this says about Jesus' character. He cannot be swayed. Unlike other leaders or celebrities or "saviors," he doesn't flip-flop or back down. He's someone we can trust; someone we can follow into a storm.

Spend a minute or two acknowledging these unique and rare qualities about Jesus, and thank him for his uncompromising nature. Ask the Holy Spirit to increase these qualities in you today.





Day 4: Read Matthew 23:25-28

Jesus told us to ignore people who talk big but don't act big and to honor those who talk small but act big. Jesus sees past our rhetoric and our stream of words to see the heart of what we're really about. And the best way to determine what we're really about is to study what we do in life.

In our culture today, it's common to share everything publicly. What we eat, our opinions on current events, what our kids are up to--every detail is welcomed online. Sometimes these status updates, videos, and photos reflect our true hearts and lives; other times they reflect only what we WANT people to think about our hearts and lives.

Jesus cares about who we REALLY are--not the "best version" of ourselves that we choose to share in public.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any areas in your life where you're putting on a show, or trying to follow the rules of what you're "supposed" to do. Then imagine yourself peeling away your layers--your Facebook layer, your professional layer, your parent layer--until all your layers are gone. Then picture yourself walking to Jesus without any layers. Pay attention to what he says or does next.

Day 5: Read Matthew 6:19-24

Jesus said the richest people were those who'd banked a lifetime of actions that honored God. He bluntly told his followers they could not be motivated by love of money and love of God at the same time.

Jesus' message here directly contradicts our culture. Today it seems that money and fame are the prizes most celebrated and coveted. And because being famous and wealthy is only a viral video or a hit song away, it's easy to channel our energy toward the pursuit of popularity, and to admire those who've achieved this kind of success.

Whether it's counting likes on our status updates or dollars in our bank account, Jesus' message is the same: seek a different type of wealth.

The next time you're checking your bank account balance or the number of social media likes you have, ask the Holy Spirit to also help you check your heart, and to turn your attention toward him.

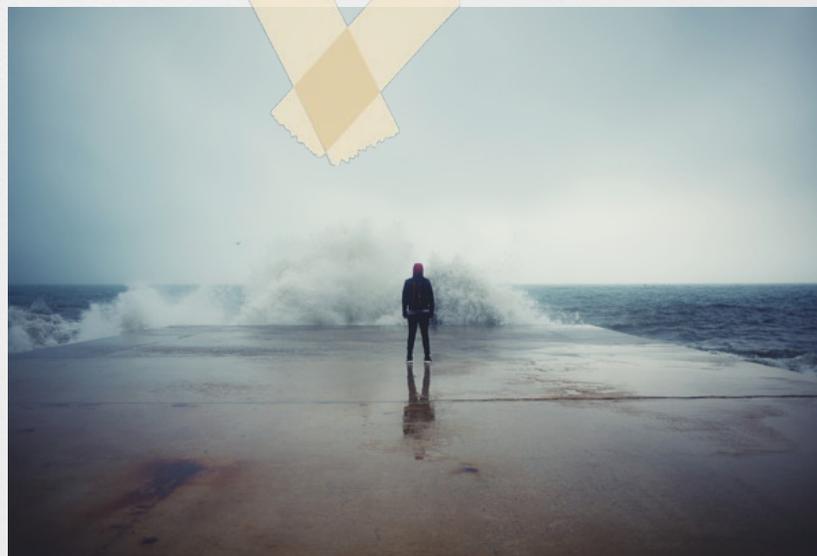


Day 6: Read Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus told his followers to plunge themselves into the mainstream culture like a lamp in a dark room or salt added to a recipe. He is not afraid of a culture dominated by sin—in fact, the darkness of the culture only serves to accentuate the impact of his light.

Take a minute to reflect on where YOUR life intersects with mainstream culture. Is it social media? In your work? Among friends and peers? Make a quick list of these intersections.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one way that you can be a light today in one of those intersections. Don't dismiss any ideas that come to your mind, especially if they seem small and insignificant. Remember that a small match can light up an entire room. Put your faith in Jesus and follow his lead.



Day 7: Read Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus told his disciples that joining him in his redemptive mission would require us to put our "skin in the game"—our personal investment of risk and hard work is conjoined with his own to advance his Kingdom. He will not do FOR us what he can do WITH us.

Before you dash off to your next thing, pause and ask the Holy Spirit to show you one thing that HE wants to do today. Wait until you hear or see a picture of Jesus doing something. Then ask him how you can join him in this work. Picture yourself walking up to Jesus. What does he ask you to do?

>> Congratulations! Your 7-day journey of paying RIDICULOUS attention to Jesus is done. Turn the page for what's next.

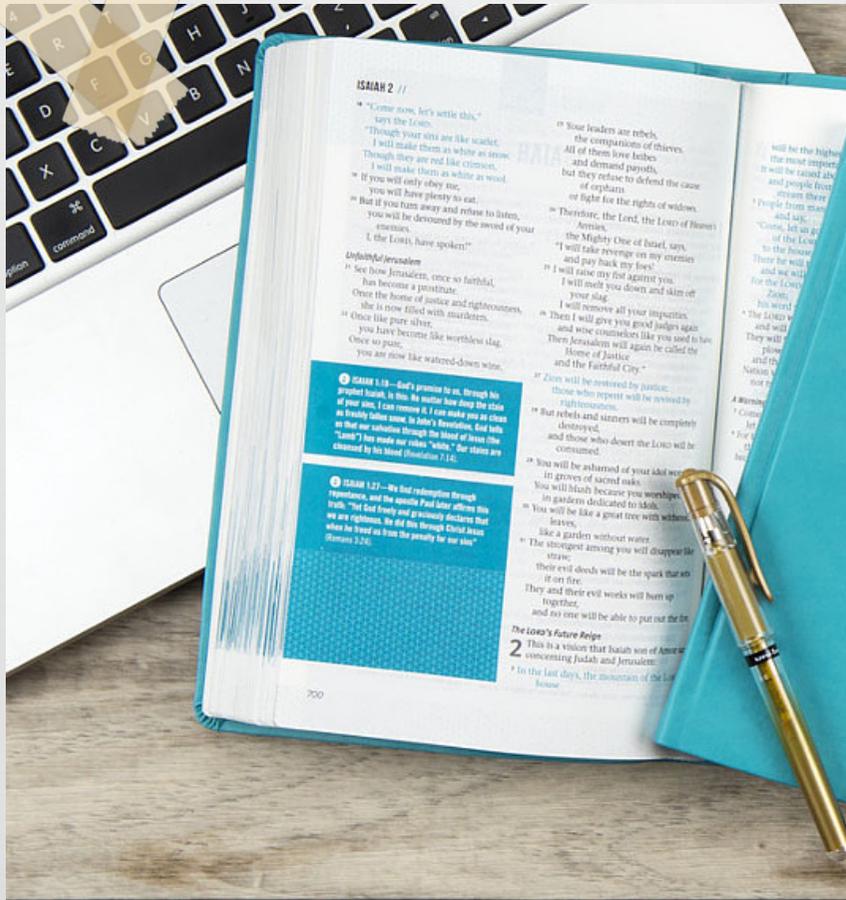


>> What's next?

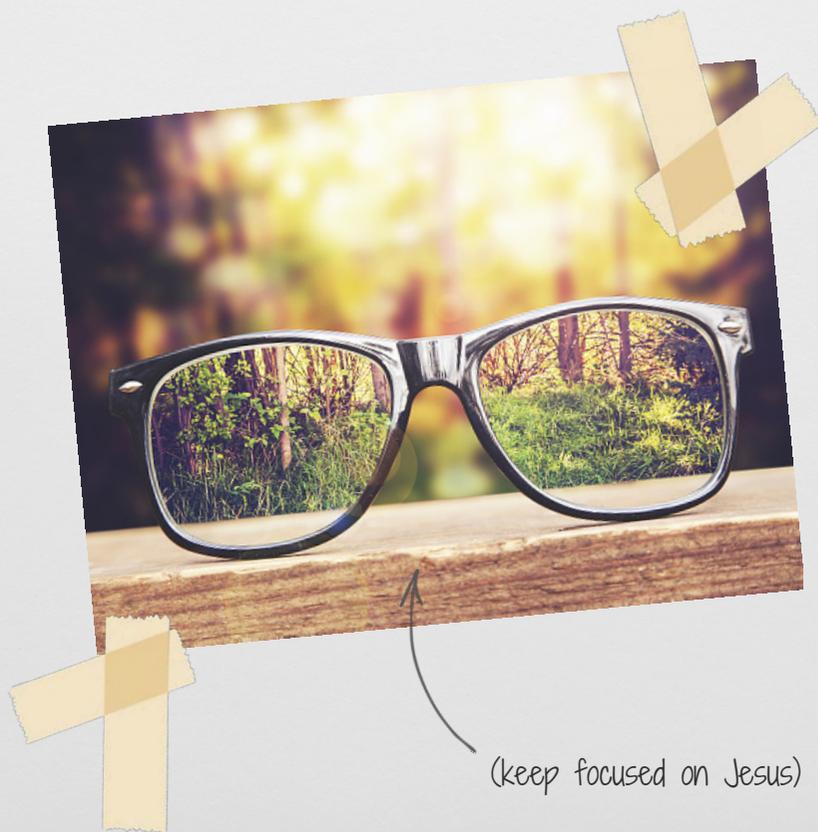
Seven days isn't NEARLY long enough to pay ridiculous attention to Jesus. There's SO MUCH MORE to learn about him.

Take the next step by getting your copy of the Jesus-Centered Bible and a Jesus-Centered Journal. Your journey of paying ridiculous attention to Jesus has only just begun.

>> Shop the Bible + Journal



the end.



(keep focused on Jesus)

