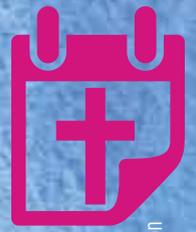


APRIL



By Justin & Courtney Rose

Age 31 & 29 | Mayfair Community Church | Metropolitan Division



DEVOTIONAL CALENDAR

This calendar is meant to help you set time aside with Jesus. Decide on where you'll meet Him, and choose a time when you won't fall asleep or be distracted. You can cut this page out and keep it in your Bible. "Come close to God, and God will come close to you" (James 4:8).

As Christians, we get to partner with God. We live in grace and freedom, but still exist in a world filled with pain and sin. Read Jesus' words in **Luke 10:2**. Consider how you can be a co-worker with Christ and be a part of the Kingdom of God on Earth.

1

Matthew 4:1-11 tells of how Jesus experienced true humanity as He went into the desert to face the temptations of Satan. Jesus was tempted, but strengthened by God, He was able to remain sinless. What does this mean for your life and how you deal with temptation?

2

Learning to read Scripture through the eyes of characters who suffer is an important skill. It also helps us learn empathy. Read the graphic story of Dinah in **Genesis 34**. Consider the story from her perspective and imagine her suffering even though she is given no voice.

3

Many cultures and individuals use humor to help cope with pain and process suffering. How do you cope with pain? Jesus doesn't want us to avoid our suffering; He wants to help us work through it and redeem it. Read **2 Corinthians 12:8-10**. What pain do you need God to help you process today?

4

There are many cultures in our country that have deep histories of pain and suffering. The African American community is one culture that carries a legacy of strength in the midst of overwhelming suffering, and maintains hope for a brighter future. Read **Psalms 33:20** and pray for the hope of God to be your shield in a world of suffering.

5

Sometimes the sweetest relief from this world's pain is the promise that Heaven will be greater than our world and present circumstances. Read **Revelation 21:1-5** and be encouraged by the images of a peaceful place.

6

Going to church isn't always the easiest thing to do, but living the Christian life among other believers is imperative to being a follower of Christ. You may find some people at church to be annoying or frustrating. **Proverbs 27:17** encourages us that others can help us become stronger and sharper.

7

Who in your life has come alongside you when you've had pain and suffering? Who would be willing to cry with you or help you figure out the next steps after going through a crisis? Pray for those people and thank God for their faithfulness. Ask God to bring the right people to you in times of need.

8

Sometimes it is preached that if we love God we won't suffer. Some people believe that if we love God enough, God will bless us financially and take away all our problems. Yet the Scripture teaches something very different. Read **Romans 5:1-11** and consider how suffering is an important part of the Christian life.

9

Luke 9:21-27 gives Christians a bleak view of being a follower of Christ. Jesus says in verse 23, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me" (NIV). Are you prepared to follow Christ and die to your own desires every day?

10

It can be easy to judge people for their decisions and fail to look at how their past sufferings might be influencing their choices of today. Read **Matthew 7:1-6**. Pray for compassion to see the history of suffering in others instead of judging them.

11

So much suffering in the world and throughout history has been inflicted upon women. Often this comes when men make decisions for women and view them as objects rather than as people. Read **Judges 21** and consider the suffering of the kidnapped women. How can you be an advocate for women and the unique sufferings they face?

12

With the world's fast pace, it can be easy to become overwhelmed by grief and sadness. It's important to find ways to express yourself, and avenues through which you can be recharged by the hope of Christ. Examine yourself today. How are you recharged by hope?

13

Many of us live very comfortable lives. We have the privilege of not facing many forms of suffering that so many people in the world are forced to endure. It is easier to stay safe and satiated, rather than engage with the messiness of the suffering around us. Read **Luke 9:57-62** and ask God to move you outside your comfort zone.

14

"Mere waiting and looking on is not Christian behavior. The Christian is called to sympathy and action, not in the first place by his own sufferings, but by the sufferings of his brethren, for whose sake Christ suffered."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

15



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Jesus changed the rules for how death operates when He died and resurrected. Through Jesus, Christians now know how to enter into physical death and worldly suffering without fear. Are you walking with Christ and confronting death, or are you still living in fear without the aid of Christ?

16

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born in a time of great suffering. Her name literally means, "strength" or "bitterness." Yet she was the mother of the Savior and hope of the world. Meditate on what Mary's relationship with pain and suffering must have looked like in the midst of raising her Son.

17

We must suffer alongside those who suffer. Read the story of Cain and Abel in **Genesis 4**. Cain famously asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He misses the point that he in fact is bound to his brother; and the pain and death he inflicted hurts him more than he understands. Who is your brother?

18

A unique responsibility for Christians is to show the world how to suffer and mourn correctly. Many people in our society don't have healthy avenues to mourn or outlets to suffer through. Read the story of Rizpah (**2 Samuel 21**) and contemplate how she prophetically calls the king back to healthy mourning.

19

Who in your community encourages you to follow Christ? Christ entered into suffering empowered by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus needed community, too. To be alone in your faith is not capturing the full picture God desires for your life.

20

While Jesus promises the Christian life will be difficult, the Gospels are also full of accounts of Him alleviating the sufferings of others by having compassion on them and honoring their faith. **Matthew 9:18-26** recounts Jesus raising a girl from the dead and healing a bleeding woman. What other examples of hope and healing can you find in the Gospels?

21

While it's true that there will always be suffering for the Christian, and the world will still have the effects of sin (**Mark 13**), the Christian is called to alleviate suffering and work to eradicate sin in the world. What are you doing to serve suffering humanity today?

22

Taking the time to remember the suffering of our ancestors and of other cultures is important. Read **Deuteronomy 15** and consider how God wrote remembrance into the Law for the Israelites. How do you mourn with other cultures?

23

There are many people suffering in our country in a variety of ways. Pray for our leaders, and consider how you can act politically to help ease the suffering of others in our nation. Being in line with Jesus' teachings often does not fit neatly into any specific political party.

24

Read the story of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:25-37**). Put yourself in the Samaritan's shoes. Would you sacrifice time, energy, and money to help alleviate the sufferings of someone you're at odds with politically, culturally, or religiously?

25

Imagine how lonely it must have been for Jesus on the cross when most of His closest friends and disciples had abandoned Him. Most of those who mourned for Jesus at the foot of the cross were the unnamed women disciples (**Luke 23:26-43**). Would you be like one of these women and stay with those who suffer in the midst of confusion and pain, or would you abandon those in need?

26

We all have a responsibility to speak up and act when we see other's suffering. **Exodus 1** tells the story of Shiphrah and Puah, who formed a plan of resistance in the face of suffering and saved thousands of people's lives. Are you willing to step up?

27

In the Church, we often point to the book of Job for comfort in the midst of suffering. Search for "The Book of Job" by *The Bible Project* on YouTube and consider what suffering meant for him. How can we trust God's wisdom even when we do encounter suffering?

28

So much suffering takes place at the hands of those seeking power. Jesus teaches us that in the Kingdom of God there are new power structures in place (**Matthew 19:30**). Read **Matthew 2:13-18**, the story of so many infant boys who died at the expense of Herod's search for power, and pray for Jesus' structure of power to reign on Earth.

29

Even one of the most faithful Christians of all time suffered. Paul in **2 Corinthians 12:1-10** speaks of a "thorn in [his] flesh." It's unclear what this "thorn" was, but we know that even Paul suffered in his earthly body and awaited full relief when he would eventually go before Christ. What can Paul's suffering teach you?

30