



August 2, 2026

Becoming More Like Jesus

Ordinary Saints: A 5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Day 1: You Are the Branch, Not the Vine - Reading: John 15:1-5

Devotional: There is a quiet relief buried in the image of a branch. A branch does not generate life. It receives it. So much of the exhaustion in the Christian life comes from confusing the role of the vine with the role of the branch. You were never designed to produce fruit through effort alone. You were designed to stay connected. The moment you stop straining to manufacture spiritual results and simply remain close to Jesus, something shifts. The pressure lifts. The fruit is not your project. It is the natural overflow of a life rooted in him.

Reflection: Where in your life are you straining to produce what only connection to Christ can grow?

Day 2: The Pruning Is Not Punishment - Reading: John 15:2-3; Hebrews 12:5-11

Hebrews 12:5-11 describes God's discipline as evidence of his love for his children, comparing it to a father who trains those he cares for deeply, with the promise that such discipline yields the fruit of righteousness.

Devotional: A cluster of peaches that is never thinned will never grow well. What looks like abundance can actually be the very thing preventing health. God's pruning in your life works the same way. The season that felt like loss, the door that closed without explanation, the thing he asked you to lay down that seemed good on the surface -- these are not signs of his absence. They are signs of his attention. He is not removing things to diminish you. He is removing things to develop you. Trust the hand of the gardener. He knows what the branch needs.

Reflection: What has God removed from your life that you are still grieving? Can you begin to trust his purpose in that pruning?

Day 3: Abiding Is Not Striving - Reading: Psalm 46:10; Matthew 11:28-30

Psalm 46:10 calls God's people to stillness and surrender as the path to knowing him. Matthew 11:28-30 describes Jesus as one who offers rest to the weary, whose burden is light and whose yoke is easy.

Devotional: Abiding is not passive, but it is restful. It is not the absence of movement -- it is the presence of trust. A branch connected to the vine is not anxious about whether fruit will come. It simply remains. In the same way, your spiritual life is not a performance to be evaluated. It is a relationship to be sustained. When you open Scripture, come to know him more, not to earn a grade. When you pray, come to stay close, not to complete a task. The invitation of Jesus is not to do more. It is to stay near.

Reflection: What practices help you remain close to Jesus? Are any of those practices beginning to feel more like obligation than connection?

Day 4: Fruit Is Who You Are Becoming - Reading: Galatians 5:22-25; Romans 8:29

Romans 8:29 reveals that God's ultimate purpose for those he calls is that they would be shaped into the likeness of his Son.

Devotional: The fruit of the Spirit is not a checklist. It is a portrait of Jesus. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control -- these are not behaviors to perform. They are the character of Christ being formed in you. God is not primarily interested in what you accomplish for him. He is interested in who you are becoming through him. You do what you become. When character is transformed, conduct follows naturally. Stop asking only what you should do for Jesus today. Start asking who Jesus is making you into, and let the doing flow from there.

Reflection: Which quality from Galatians 5:22-23 feels most absent in your life right now? What might that reveal about where deeper connection with Christ is needed?

Day 5: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Presence - Reading: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 9:22

Acts 2:42-47 describes the early church as a community that devoted itself to teaching, fellowship, prayer, and one another, and as a result found favor with all people around them. 1 Corinthians 9:22 captures Paul's commitment to becoming like those around him so that he might reach them with the gospel.

Devotional: You do not have to be extraordinary to be used by God. You simply have to be present, connected, and available. The early church did not win the world through impressive strategies. They won it through genuine community, shared life, and the kind of love that made outsiders take notice. The goal of ordinary sainthood is not to look different from the world in a way that creates distance. It is to be so genuinely shaped by Jesus that people who are nothing like you still find themselves saying, find that person. I need that person. Abide in him, and you will be that person.

Reflection: Who in your life needs to see Jesus through you this week? What would it look like to simply be present and available to them?

Discussion Questions:

The sermon describes fruit as being about who you become rather than what you do -- in what ways might your current spiritual practices be focused more on outward behavior than on genuine character transformation?

Jesus says in John 15 that apart from him we can do nothing, yet we often live as though God needs our efforts and accomplishments -- where in your life do you most struggle to trust that abiding is enough?

The pastor described a moment where a man in crisis said 'find Austin' despite having little in common with him -- what kind of relationships are you building that would cause someone to seek you out in their most vulnerable moment?

The sermon compares busyness to a cluster of peaches that prevents healthy growth -- what good things in your life might actually be hindering the deeper fruit God wants to produce in you?