

As some  
of your own

Polts

have said

**AS SOME OF YOUR OWN  
POETS HAVE SAID**  
A FINALS WEEK DEVOTIONAL

Jamie Donne

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By Jamie Donne

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# Introduction

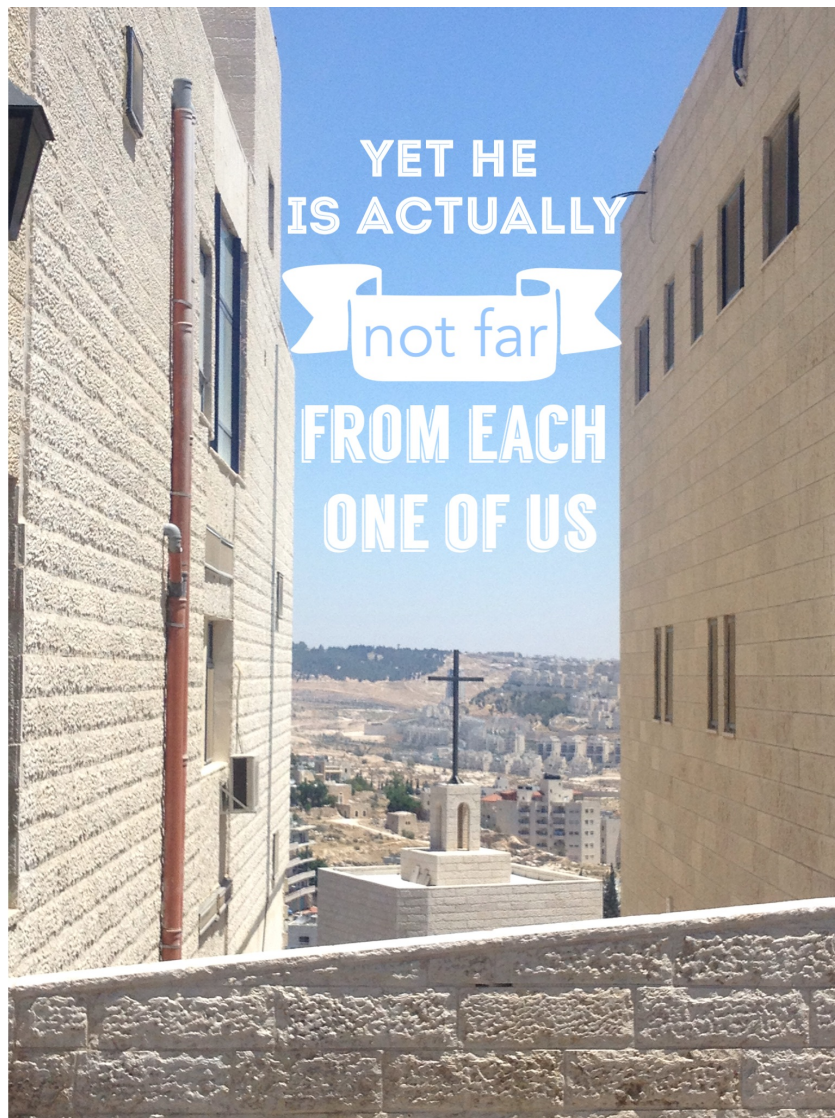
Sometimes finals week can be the last time you want to dive deeper into Scripture. It's stressful and schedules already feel tight. Our prayer time becomes a panicked cry of desperation in the library as 3am nears rather than a time of intimacy and dialogue with the Lord.

Is it possible this could be one of the richest weeks of studying *with* the Lord? We need to be reminded this week, perhaps more than ever, of the significance of our work. Do you know, dear ones, how much God celebrates your passions? He loves seeing you delight in His creation. When we take time to read the Scriptures and spend time with God, we are with the One who created all things and in whom all things are held together! He is the embodiment of Wisdom and Truth. Walking in step with the Spirit creates the opportunity to tap into the wisdom of Heaven. I believe that Holy Spirit can empower us to write, study, and become the best students possible.

In a time that may be full of heaviness, anxiety, and stress, we align ourselves with the yoke of Jesus that is easy and light. I invite you to take a minute to read Words of Life. Set aside some time to sit with the One who brings refreshment to your soul and eases the anxious mind.

Some of these Scriptures relate more to the academic and vocational realm of finals week and others will remind you to cast our cares upon Jesus. My prayer is that you will encounter Jesus and see with fresh eyes the beauty in the calling of being a student.

Soli deo gloria.



## Read Acts 17:16-34

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."



## Acts 17:22-28 (ESV)

Paul is in a setting very similar to our modern colleges. The Athenians spent their days discussing ideas, philosophers bringing forth new thoughts and debating amongst themselves, each one trying to top the other. It sounds like a modern day round table humanities course. When Paul entered Athens, he took a look around and discovered the culture. "His spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols" (17:16). Paul was so convinced of the Truth that it troubled him to see a city full of idols. But he didn't stop there--his conviction spurred him to speak and declare the Truth. *Holy Spirit, provoke us! Trouble us by the idols of our day!*

Paul took their ideas, drew out the truth in them, and pointed them to the One that is Truth. In verse 28 he took language of the poets of the day and reoriented it. He spoke their language and gave it the proper context. In the previous verses he referenced an altar to an unknown god and declared that there is a God that can be known. Not only is it possible to know Him, but He actually orchestrates our lives so that we would indeed find him. He determines our dwelling places *so that* we might seek God. He is never far off from us! There are altars to an unknown god and yet the One True Living God is waiting for us to feel our way toward Him. He doesn't need us (v. 25), He actually delights in us.

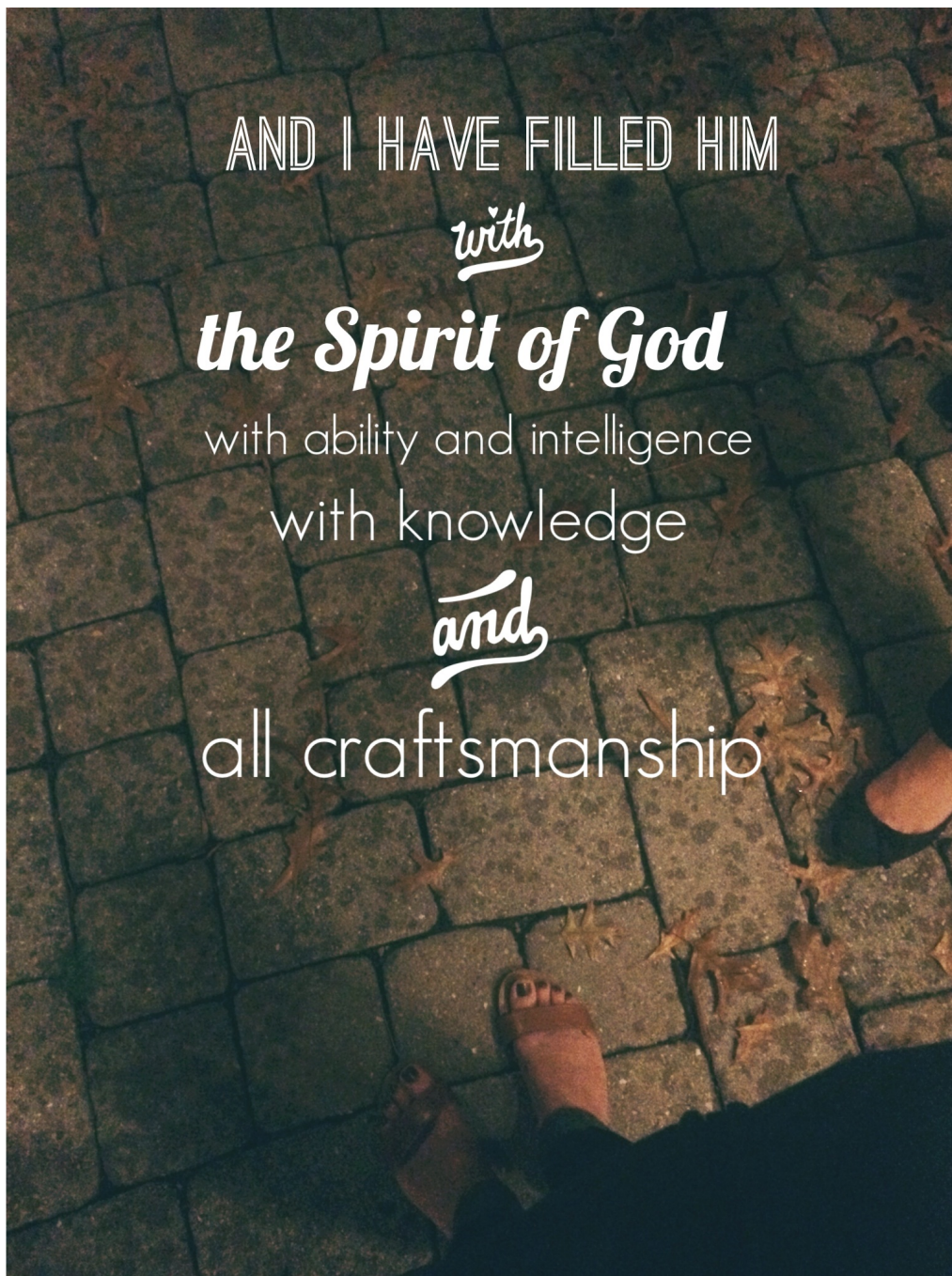
We learn that Paul was specifically speaking with Epicurean philosophers, among others. Epicureans held the belief that God was a far off, distant God. How particular Paul was to point out that the One True Living God is not a God of far off! Paul declared the sweetest and most profound truths of Scripture by participating in the liberal arts of the Areopagus.

As you study this week, where do you see Truth revealed? Where are the lines from your studies that you might say "as even some of your own poets/scientists/historians, etc. have said"?

Ask the Holy Spirit to breathe upon what you're studying!

Pray

*God thank You that You are the God that can be known and that You know us. We are indeed your offspring and you knit me in my mother's womb and intimately know me. You're not a god who dwells in temples but You dwell in us. Thank you, Holy Spirit. Lead me into all truth! Anoint my imagination that I might see your truth within my text book. You are the One True Living God! I love you. Amen.*



### **Read Exodus 31:1-6**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, <sup>3</sup> and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, <sup>4</sup> to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, <sup>5</sup> in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. <sup>6</sup> And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you...

In the Old Testament it was rare for the Holy Spirit to come upon a person. We often think this only happened to Moses or Elijah or others who were "important" enough in God's story. However, the Lord pours out His Spirit on artisans. The Holy Spirit fills in order to create excellent crafts, meeting them in their work. In Exodus 28 the Lord says He's given a "spirit of skill" to those who will make garments for the priests. A spirit of skill empowered and equipped people in order that they might fulfill their vocations as artists. The Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever and I believe that His spirit still imparts a spirit of skill to us.

Bezalel and his team were empowered by Holy Spirit to create for the Tabernacle. And now we are part of the House of God in the world. Read 1 Peter 2 as a reminder that you are a living stone.

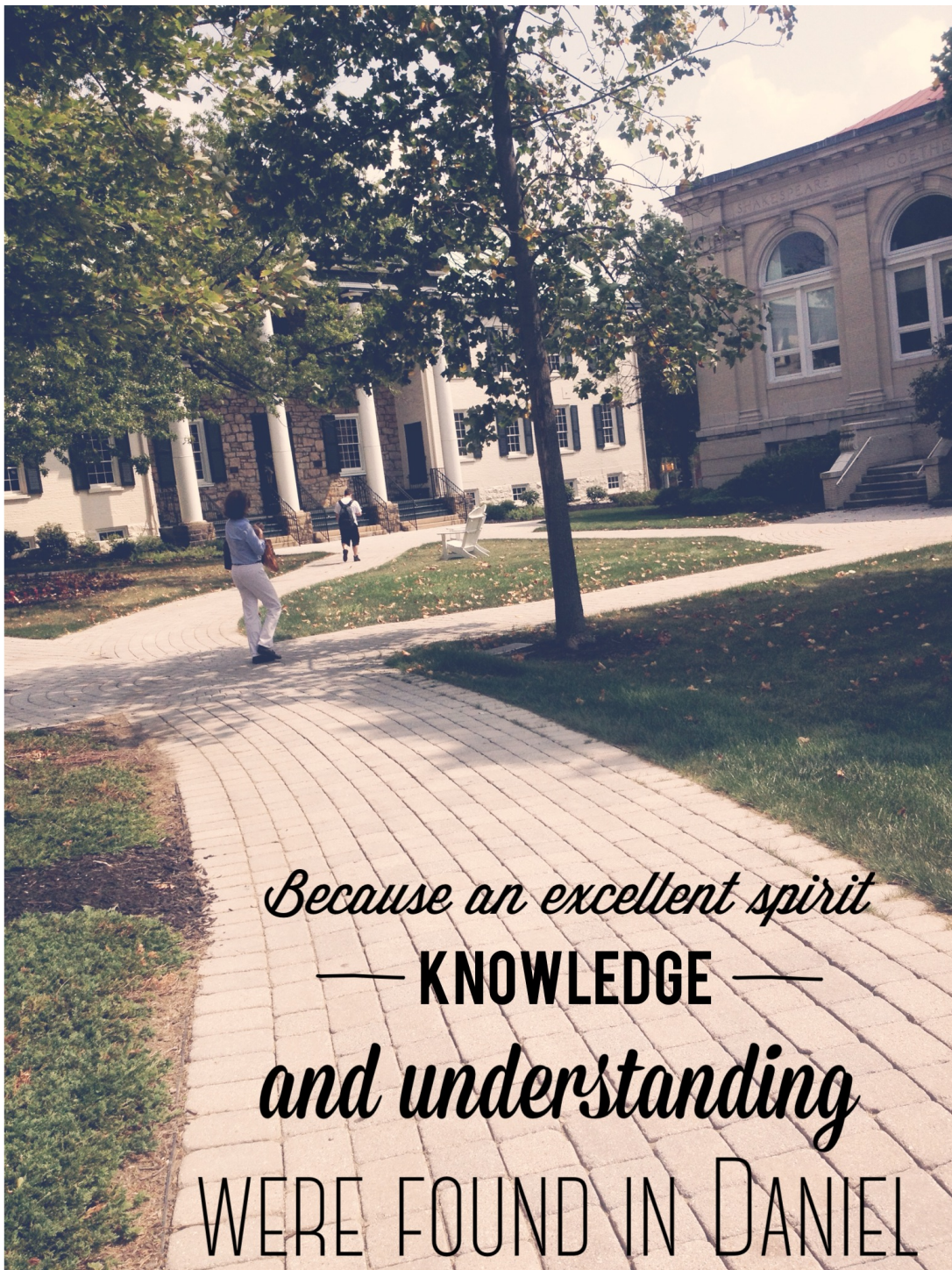
"You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:5 God's temple is the world and you are a living stone, a carrier of Holy Spirit, equipped and empowered to bring the Kingdom of Heaven into your vocation, classroom, and your sphere of influence. The Message puts it, "Present yourselves as building stones *for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life*, in which you'll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God" (The Message). You are a part of building a vibrant dwelling place for The Lord!

Take a minute to ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with the spirit of skill...ask that the Spirit of God would impart ability, intelligence, knowledge and all craftsmanship to you! The Gospel of John tells us that the Holy Spirit sees what is happening in Heaven and reveals it to His friends. Ask for the wisdom of Heaven as you read, write, study, and take your exams. He is the Good Father Who pours out the good gift of Holy Spirit generously upon those who ask!!

Pray

*Thank You, Lord, that you are filling me with a spirit of skill and imparting ability, intelligence, knowledge and excellence to me. Thank You that You created my field of study. Breathe life into me, Holy Spirit, so that I can construct a sanctuary vibrant with life on my campus. Thank You that you pour out generously. Will You reveal the wisdom of heaven to me today?*





### **Read Daniel 5**

11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods.[d] In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, 12 because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

The book of Daniel is an incredible account of the way God can use his people to influence kings when they set their lives apart for Him. More than that, Daniel is a book about a faithful God who is the revealer of mysteries (2:47), He uses every way possible to speak to His children. I encourage every college student to read Daniel and immerse themselves in the book.

Reread Chapter 5 and imagine this happening at a fraternity house on your campus or the next big celebration of our governing officials. As the king is partying, a human hand appears out of no where and writes on the wall!

Daniel was known as someone who had an excellent spirit, knowledge and the ability to solve problems because of the spirit of God--even among people who worshipped false gods. He was the top scholar of the astrologers and became the chief of the psychics. He was an influencer in the midst of pagan worship, and he was distinctive because he knew the One who *is Truth*.

People sought him out because of his unique giftings. The same God who moved in Daniel's life is actively moving in yours. I believe that even as you read this, God is revealing the mysteries of heaven for some of the greatest issues of our day. He shares his secrets with His friends (John 15:16, 16;13). He holds the answers to disease, strife between political parties, new and creative businesses, glorious art, and the transformation of our cities! The King's advisors spoke of Daniel that "the wisdom of gods was found in him." The wisdom of God is found in YOU! As you write papers and take exams, know that the wisdom of heaven that's spilling out onto the page! May you be one who stewards and grows in wisdom and favor in the eyes of God and people.

Daniel was the equivalent of the head psychic in the King's court and called by the name of a Babylonian god. He was completely immersed in the Babylonian culture, yet remained set apart, illustrated particularly in his diet. He asked not to eat the King's food and yet was found stronger than all other advisors of the King. We cannot expect to truly transform culture and influence "kings" if we are not willing to consecrate our lives. Our whole lives must be devoted to the King. We need to study, write, perform, sculpt, paint, and communicate to the glory of God--and it must be in partnership with fasting, prayer, meditating on the Word, and growing with a body of believers.

I encourage you to take a moment today to think about the ways that you are living a set apart life for Him.

*Pray*

*Thank you, Lord, that you are faithful and you are the Revealer of mysteries. Give me a spirit of excellence and help me to grow in wisdom. God, I set myself apart for the sake of Your Kingdom. Holy Spirit, give me Heaven's perspective on my coursework today. Help me to solve the riddles and answer the problems of this generation.*





#### **Read Esther 4**

11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days."12 And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by your calling? Are you feeling overwhelmed as finals week drags on? When God calls us to something, He gives us everything we need to fulfill that call. But that doesn't mean we won't feel stretched and challenged. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). We CAN walk in every good work that he has prepared for us.

The story of Esther has often been retold in magical ways that strip the humanity involved. Esther wasn't Super Woman. She was overwhelmed by her situation. She wanted to forfeit her opportunity to rescue the Jews because she wasn't scheduled to meet with the King that month. Her uncle urged her and reminded her of the divine positioning. Remember Acts 17? God has decided the time and place in which we would live (Acts 17:26). He placed you at your college in this season to be used for His Kingdom. And He placed Esther as Queen in a strategic and critical hour. "Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

In response to the task at hand, Esther called a three-day fast. Again we see that fasting and prayer are vital to cultural transformation. At the end of the fast Esther took a great risk and approaches the King. She risked her very life, saying "If I perish, then I perish." When we have died to self we can offer up our lives for the sake of the Kingdom. For some this may very well mean your life. For many of us, this means reorienting our desires to be bent and molded into a better version of ourselves. It means that we'd actually love not our lives even unto death--even if it means that we love not the "perfect" plans we have for our lives.

Esther appealed to the King and he gave her what she asked for. Of course, this is Esther stewarding the influence she has before the King, but it's also the incredible faithfulness of God to use Esther in His plan to rescue His people. He provides for those who are walking in what He calls them to.

It may seem silly to compare your finals week to a potential genocide, as in Esther's case. But Esther didn't know that's what she would be invited to--she was simply walking each day seeking to honor God. Esther moved from feeling overwhelmed to laying down her life. Take heart as you feel overwhelmed this week! You are faithfully stewarding your calling as a student. He has even positioned you for this very moment. Walk knowing that you have been planted in this season, seek to honor God, and write and study for His glory and His fame.

*Pray*

*God, thank You that you have positioned me in this place for this season. Use me, mold me, form me, Lord. Thank You that you have given me all that I need for life and godliness. I cast every burden at your feet now. I know that I can't fulfill my calling without You. Holy Spirit, empower and strengthen me today.*



**Read John 21:1-14**

5 Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." 6 He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.



Some days we experience the toil of the fall in our work. Despite our best efforts, we can't seem to produce fruit. Unfortunately part of the curse of the fall is that the work we are created for now includes toil. We experience the thorns and thistles and the sweat of our brow the Lord spoke of in Genesis 3.

I've heard many sermons shaming the disciples for returning to their former identities as fishermen. There is certainly a bit of truth there. But we see a different response from Jesus. Instead of saying "Hey! Why are you guys fishing again?!" Jesus asked them if they were bearing fruit in their efforts. They were out all night and caught nothing. Toil, thorns and thistles, sweat of the brow. They listened to Jesus as he said to put the net on the opposite side of the boat. Now they had more fish than they can handle--153 of them!

The disciples knew that it was the Lord because of the way He had the answers to their workplace toil. He has the miraculous solution to fruitless efforts! The Resurrected One has broken the curse of toil and has compassion on our efforts. Of course, "the here but not yet" realities of the Kingdom mean that sometimes we still experience toil. We read our textbooks all night and don't absorb the material. We work on a project and it doesn't turn out the way we intended. We create a painting and just can't express ourselves accurately. But there is One who steps in and shouts out to His friends (us!), "you're created to bear fruit. Connect to the vine." When we are faithful to sow, the Lord breathes on our efforts and we're suddenly overwhelmed by how good it is to bear fruit. We remember that we were always made to see the goodness of creation unfold!

Have you experienced the toil of our work this week? Where have you seen the Lord's faithfulness? Ask Him today to continue to breathe on your work. Celebrate the goodness of creation with Him and the fruit of your semester.

Pray

*Jesus thank You that You took the curse of sin upon Yourself on the cross and now it is finished! I am made to bear fruit. I take time today to connect myself to the Vine and know that it's the only way to bear fruit. Thank You for the gift of work and for the incredible fulfillment of knowing that You step into my work and make me fruitful.*