FIRST *things* FIRST

SIX DAILY DEVOTIONALS

for this week

WEEK ONE

MISSION / EXPERIMENT / INVITE

FIRST NAZ

The Banquet Is Ready

READ Luke 14:15-17

Jesus begins this story with a host who has already prepared the feast. The table is set before the servant ever leaves with an invitation. His job is not to cook the meal, prove that it is worth attending, or pressure anyone into coming. He simply carries good news: "Come, the banquet is ready."

That order matters for us. Christian mission does not begin with our effort; it begins with what God has already done. Through Jesus - His life, death, and resurrection - grace has been offered and a way home has been opened. We do not create salvation. We bear witness to it.

That keeps mission from becoming a sales pitch or a church-growth project. People are not attendance numbers. They are people God loves. To be mission-driven is to live as though the life Jesus offers really is good news - good enough to shape our priorities and good enough to share.

Sometimes the most powerful invitation grows out of gratitude. When we remember how Jesus has met us, forgiven us, carried us, or given us hope, mission becomes less about obligation and more about generosity. We have received something worth sharing. The banquet is ready. The question is whether our lives make that invitation visible.

REFLECT

1. What part of the life and grace you have received in Jesus feels most like good news to you right now?

2. Where does your ordinary life already show - or fail to show - that this invitation is worth sharing?

TAKE ONE STEP

Write down one specific reason you are grateful for what Jesus has done in your life. Ask God to turn that gratitude outward toward someone else today.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for meeting me with grace before I could earn anything. Let gratitude for what You have done make me available for Your mission. Help me live like the banquet really is ready. Amen.

What Have I Called Important?

READ Luke 14:18-21

The excuses in Jesus' story are striking because they sound reasonable. One person has property to inspect. Another has business to attend to. Another has a new marriage. Jesus is not teaching that work, relationships, responsibilities, or ordinary life are bad. The discomfort is that good things can still become controlling things.

We know how easily this happens. Calendars fill. Work expands. Sports, travel, hobbies, family schedules, entertainment, and personal plans all compete for our attention. Much of it may be genuinely good. But a full life can quietly become a closed life - no margin to listen, notice, invite, or respond when Jesus puts someone in front of us.

This is not a call to neglect responsibilities or feel guilty for enjoying life. It is an invitation to honesty. What have I justified that Jesus might call an excuse? Where has comfort become more important than obedience? What do I protect so tightly that there is little room left for the mission of Jesus or the people around me?

Mission-driven people do not abandon everything important. They learn to hold even good things with open hands. Jesus is allowed to interrupt the schedule, rearrange a priority, or ask for a little more room. Sometimes the first missionary step is simply making space.

REFLECT

1. What good responsibility, preference, or activity most easily becomes an excuse for you to avoid what Jesus may be asking?

2. Where might your schedule or comfort be leaving too little room to notice and love people?

WHAT HAS BECOME AN EXCUSE?

Something good in my life that may be receiving too much priority:	**One way I could hold it more loosely this week:**
_____	_____

TAKE ONE STEP

Make one realistic adjustment to your schedule, attention, or priorities that creates room for another person this week.

PRAYER

Jesus, help me be honest without becoming defensive. Show me where good things have become too important, and teach me to hold my plans with open hands so I can follow You faithfully. Amen.

Go Out Farther

READ Luke 14:21-23

When the first invitations are refused, the master does not shrink the table. He widens the invitation. The servant is sent into streets, alleys, country lanes, and places beyond the expected guest list. People who would often have been pushed toward the edges of social life are deliberately welcomed toward the feast.

That movement tells us something about the heart of God. His grace keeps moving outward. He notices people others pass by. He makes room for those we might not naturally expect to be at the table. And He calls His servants to move outward too.

This is where mission becomes personal. It is easy to care about people in general while rarely allowing our actual circles to change. Who lives just beyond the edges of your normal attention? Who have you assumed would not be interested in Jesus, friendship, or an invitation?

Mission does not begin by turning someone into a project. It begins by seeing a person. Learn a name. Ask a question. Listen. Genuine love moves toward people before it asks anything from them. Sometimes following God simply means going a little farther than we normally would.

REFLECT

1. Who is easy for you to overlook because they are outside your normal relational circle?

2. What assumption about another person might be keeping you from moving toward them with genuine care?

WHO AM I NOTICING?

A person I may normally overlook:	**One way I could move toward them with genuine care:**
_____	_____

TAKE ONE STEP

Have one unhurried conversation with someone you normally pass by. Ask a sincere question and listen more than you talk.

PRAYER

Father, give me Your eyes for people. Free me from assumptions and help me move toward others with humble, genuine care. Amen.

Try Something for the Mission

READ 1 Corinthians 9:22-23

Paul describes a remarkable willingness to adapt. He looks for common ground with different kinds of people because he wants them to encounter the Good News. He does not change the gospel to make it more convenient. He is willing to change his approach, his habits, and even his preferences for the sake of people.

That is the heart behind our value: We Keep Experimenting. Experimentation is not about chasing novelty. It is refusing to let a preferred method become more important than the mission. The message of Jesus is fixed. Our methods can be flexible.

This takes humility because experiments do not always work. A conversation may feel awkward. An invitation may be declined. Faithfulness sometimes means learning, adjusting, and trying again instead of protecting what is familiar simply because it is familiar.

This can become very personal. Maybe the person you care about would never respond to the invitation you normally give. Could you meet them on their ground instead? Ask a different question? Share a meal? Listen before speaking? Try a new way of showing up? The goal is not creativity for its own sake. The question is: Does this help me faithfully love people and point them toward Jesus?

REFLECT

1. Where are you relying on familiarity simply because it feels comfortable or predictable?

2. What different approach might help you understand or connect with someone who does not yet know Jesus?

TRY SOMETHING

One person I want to reach or understand better:	**One different approach I could try:**
_____	_____

TAKE ONE STEP

Try one small relational experiment today: a new question, invitation, meal, message, or way of listening.

PRAYER

Jesus, keep me faithful to Your message and flexible in my methods. Give me creativity, courage, and humility to learn. Amen.

There Is Still Room for More

READ Luke 14:22-24

The servant returns with a surprising report: "There is still room for more." The master does not answer, "That is enough." He sends the servant farther. The open seats matter because people matter.

That is why We Invite One More is more than a slogan about attendance. It is a posture of heart. Somewhere in your ordinary life is a person who may be searching, skeptical, lonely, far from God, disconnected from Christian community, or simply waiting for someone they trust to move toward them first.

The invitation does not always sound like "come to church." Sometimes it is, "Would you like to grab coffee?" "Can I pray for you?" "Want to come to my Life Group?" "Would you sit with me Sunday?" or "Can I tell you what Jesus has meant to me?" An invitation is simply a loving way of opening a door.

You are not responsible for another person's response. You cannot manufacture faith, force readiness, or control what happens next. But you can pray. You can pay attention. You can deepen a relationship. You can make room. And when the moment is right, you can invite. There is still room for more - and "more" always has a name.

REFLECT

1. Who is one person in your life who may need an invitation toward Jesus or genuine Christian community?

2. What fear, assumption, or concern most often keeps you from offering an invitation?

ONE MORE

One person I want to begin praying for:	**One next step toward them that feels natural and loving:**	**One invitation I could offer when the moment is right:**
_____	_____	_____

TAKE ONE STEP

If the moment is appropriate, offer the invitation today. If not, begin by praying for the person by name and intentionally deepening the relationship.

PRAYER

Jesus, I place this person before You by name. Help me love them without pressure, listen well, and recognize the right moment to open a door toward You and Your people. Amen.

Look Ahead: Welcome Like Jesus

READ John 8:1-11

Tomorrow we will continue First Things First by exploring two more values: We Welcome Remarkably, and We Lead with Grace, Truth, and Excellence. Before the sermon, spend time with the story in John 8:1-11.

A woman is placed publicly before Jesus while her accusers are ready to condemn her. Read slowly and resist the urge to jump immediately to conclusions you already know. Watch what Jesus does. Listen to what He says. Notice how He treats the woman, how He responds to the crowd, and how the story holds together both compassion and a call toward a different life.

You do not need to solve the passage today. Simply let it prepare you. Where do you see remarkable welcome? Where do you see grace? Where do you see truth? Write down what catches your attention, then bring those observations with you tomorrow.

Come ready to worship with an open Bible and an open heart.

REFLECT

1. Where do you see the remarkable welcome of Jesus in John 8:1-11?

2. Where do you see both grace and truth in the way Jesus responds?

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE?

A word, phrase, or moment in the story that stands out to me:

_____

_____

Something I want to listen for in tomorrow's message:

_____

_____

TAKE ONE STEP

Read John 8:1-11 one more time slowly. Then come ready to worship tomorrow with an open Bible and an open heart.

PRAYER

Jesus, help me see people the way You see them. Teach me what Your welcome, grace, and truth look like in real life. Prepare my heart to worship and listen tomorrow. Amen.