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Welcome to the 21 Day Challenge!

It has been quite a journey to arrive at this school year, where we get to be back in person! The next 3 weeks will likely feel especially full with so many new people, new experiences, and new challenges as you step out in faith to meet and love people on campus. We are all learning what life and ministry will be like on our campuses this year, be we feel certain that God is calling us to be bearers of light, and communities seeking to join God in reviving the hearts of students and faculty on campus.

God has great things in store!

This discipleship guide is not meant to be another task on your already full to-do list, but rather a centering place to start your day focusing on Creator God who is inviting you to partner in the work God is already doing in the lives of students and faculty on your campus. The daily readings, reflections, prayers, and actions will help you stay connected with Jesus and the Holy Spirit throughout these 3 weeks.

Over the past year we have seen how deeply God loves students and the campus. Our faithful God will continue to show up this year during New Student Outreach, throughout the 3 Week Challenge, and over the course of this semester and year! We hope you keep choosing to be a part of the ways that God is on the move, and may these few minutes each day, keep you grounded and focused on seeking God’s Kingdom come on your campus.

“And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you...”

Ezekiel 36:26-27 a

**Day 1**

**Read:** Psalm 126

Amid the frenzy of moving in, starting on a new campus, navigating covid rules, and figuring out class schedules, students all around us may have no idea that there is a God who is lovingly pursuing them. But we know that God longs to meet each student of our campus and will stop at nothing to make that love known. On this first day of the NSO Challenge, we pray that God’s movement of drawing people into himself would roll through our campuses: across the quad, through dorm halls, in quiet conversations and bold invitations. We have the privilege of participating in God's work already underway.

**Reflect:**

* How have you experienced God's faithfulness over this last year? Take a moment to rejoice in what God has already done in your life.
* What about the places in your life that feel drought-stricken heading into this NSO?
* How do you need Jesus to meet you as you begin this NSO challenge?

**Request:**

*Lord we need you, whether we are feeling excited heading into this year or coming to you still very much feeling the weariness of the past year. Help us to move into these 21 days, trusting that you will provide what we need and that you have a plan for our campus. We praise you for your faithfulness in the past and we look ahead with anticipation to what you will do. We pray that this year, we would see that harvest we have been praying for. Amen.*

**Respond:**

Today as you walk around campus, pray for opportunities to meet new people. Pray for courage to engage, and that students arriving today would Jesus. As you pray, take some time to walk in silence asking God "is there anything you want me to pay special attention to in this moment? This week? This semester?

**Day 2**

**Read:** Luke 10:1-7

Look around you… the harvest on our campus is plentiful. The campus is full of students, faculty, and staff, all of whom are deeply loved by God. God is already at work on campus, but just as He sent out the 72, He is sending you to the places where He is about to show up. God is calling us to consider every corner of our cam pus where He wants to reveal Himself. Jesus tells the disciples to take nothing for their journey so they can rely on God for everything they need. And while we pray and work and plan, we also know that rules, needs, and expectations are constantly in flux. On day 2 of NSO we need the same reliance on God, that the disciples had -- trusting that God will show up and provide!

**Reflect:**

* How did God show up yesterday during Day 1 of the challenge?
* How can you prepare yourself to respond well and with grace to those who might not welcome you during this NSO challenge? How are you being invited to stay nimble in your plans?
* How is God calling you to rely on Him more fully today / this week / this fall?

**Request:**

*Lord, would you lead us today to where you want us to be. Give us divine appointments with students that you want us to meet. Would you lead us during NSO to new students who already know you & are ready to be co-laborers, reaching the campus. Amen.*

**Respond:**

Pray & then show up where you feel God leading you. See what God will do when you don't have a plan or perfect supplies, but when we listen with a willing heart.

**Day 3**

**Read:** Luke 10:1-7

Yup, today we’re reading the same passage as yesterday. As you read it over today with fresh eyes and experiences, what do you notice this time around? Jesus sent out the disciples into situations where they felt unprepared and maybe a little nervous. We can feel the same way – especially this year. Jesus isn’t looking for a bunch of self-sufficient and competent leaders. He is looking for faithful people willing to take a risk to see others invited to mee the God who loves them.

**Reflect:**

* Who are the people of peace you have met or already know on campus?
* How have you experienced feeling unprepared or nervous about this semester? What do you want to say to God about that?
* Partnership was crucial for encouragement and friendship on mission. Who is God inviting you to partner in mission with this week?

**Request:**

*God, as we step into new spaces and new friendships with new students would you guide us through our fears and insecurities. After a year of not meeting many new people (at least not in person) we feel rusty at it and need you to give us the energy for initiating with so many people. Thank you that we are invited to respond to your calls to us in community. Help us to balance building our community with reaching out to others to invite them in. Amen.*

**Respond:**

Reach out to the person God brought to mind as a partner in ministry towards your campus. Send them a text to let you know that you are praying for them. Plan to meet up and welcome some new students together. Consider inviting them to do this discipleship guide with.

**Day 4**

**Read:** [Nehemiah 1:1-4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+1%3A1-4&version=NLT)

Nehemiah has great care for his people. He is preoccupied by worrying for them, eager to ask about them, and moved when he hears of their suffering. Do we have this same passion for our campus? It should move us that so many of the students we see, and pass don't know the God who wants to meet and restore them. We can follow in Nehemiah's example and start with prayer. From what we experience there we join with the building work God is doing. Just as Nehemiah was attuned to the needs of his people far away, you have been invited to care for campus in this way. As we prepare for the start of the semester, lets listen for God as we pour out our longings for campus to be a place of flourishing.

**Reflect:**

* How did God show up yesterday?
* Is your heart moved by the needs you recognize / know about on campus?
* Is there a way that the pain around you, or even within you, is feeling hard today? What do you need to name before our loving God?

**Request:**

*Lord Jesus, give me eyes to see the campus with the love and compassion that you have. Give me your heart for the people on our campus. Show me, Lord, where you are calling us to invest our energy and time for your kingdom. Amen.*

**Respond:**

Use the empathy map on the next page to put yourself in the place of new students on campus. Spend some time getting into what their experience is like right now. Use this to help you pray, plan, and make new friends.

Diagram

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**Day 5**

**Read:** Nehemiah 2:1-18

Nehemiah's sadness of heart is so great that he can't hide his emotion in front of the King. He is unafraid to name his care for his people. Do we have this same passion for students on our campus? Are we unafraid to have a counter-cultural experience of our first few days on campus to welcome new students well? Just as Nehemiah was sent to the wall of Jerusalem, you have been sent to campus. Who do we need to ask for resources, prayers, and help?

Reflect:

* How did God show up yesterday?
* Is God calling you to a new boldness? In what area of your life?
* Think about Nehemiah in this passage and think back to the empathy map from yesterday. How is God inviting you to speak up for the needs of others?

Request:

*God give me the courage to give myself to the work you are doing during these 21 days and the ways that you have called me to care for and welcome new students. Help me to not get bogged down by strategy, but to continuously hold the plans up to you so that they might serve the people you are putting in my path and care.*

Respond:

Take time today to Prayer Walk around a building, through your campus dining hall, or wherever your students will be living and leading this year. Walk and pray and then share what God has shown you with a student or another staff from your Area.

**Day 6**

**Read:** John 1:35-57

Jesus invites the disciples to Come & See. Andrew runs to invite his brother. The vision catches on, and Phillip invites Nathaniel to "come and see!" Once we have accepted the call to "come" to Jesus and have "seen" who He is, we have the privilege to invite others to know Him. We can often feel overwhelmed at the task of "convincing" others about Jesus but really our task is to invite people to come and see. God is responsible for moving the hearts of people.

Reflect:

* Where did you see God at work yesterday?
* The disciples want to *be with* Jesus (they literally follow him home!) Take a few minutes to sit and just be with Jesus. Listen, without an agenda, for what he has for you today. Feel free to set a 5 minute timer if that helps!
* Who invited you to come and see who Jesus is? (Praise God that someone else extended that invitation to you)
* Is there anyone you particularly feel Jesus calling you to follow up with and invite today?

Request:

Jesus, you have *invited* us *to* Come *and* See. *Lord, make* us *bold in inviting others* so *that they might know what it is to be in relationship with* you. May they *see who* you are *and have their lives and hearts changed for eternity. Amen.*

Respond:

Today, make an invitation to someone you meet (or have met so far in NSO) to Come and See Jesus at Large Group or in your Small Group.

**Day 7**

**Read:** Joshua 3:5

You’ve made it 1/3 of the way through the NSO challenge! Today we read about the Israelites - they are finally in the promised land – finally arriving. Before the Israelites crossed the Jordan, Joshua gave them this word: "The LORD is going to do amazing things today". As we have finally arrived at the start of the year, are you ready for the amazing things God will do? Are you preparing and engaging with others expecting God to show up?

Reflect:

**con·se·crate :** to make or declare sacred; set apart or dedicate to the service of a deity.To devote or dedicate to some purpose.

* How do you need to consecrate yourself today?
* How can you be more mindful of God's presence and work around you today?

Request:

*Lord God,* we *consecrate ourselves* to *you. Help us to enter this day with anticipation, trusting that You will do amazing things on our campus. Prepare our hearts Lord to be used by you,* for *your purposes on our campus. Help us* to continue *faithfully showing up each day during this challenge* to *be a part of building your kingdom on campus. Amen.*

Respond:

Strike up a conversation with someone new to campus today. Ask them questions to get to know them. Questions like: What's your spiritual background? What is your life motto? What guides you when you make difficult decisions? These questions may open people up to spiritual conversations and connect their longings with the good news of hope and renewal you have to share.

**Day 8**

**Read:** Isaiah 56:1-8

God's dream for his temple is that it would be a house of prayer for all nations. Everyone -- including the eunuchs and the foreigners. God's dream for his temple is the same for InterVarsity on our campus; He desires it to be a place for those who don't think they belong with God. God delights in gathering His people together and invites us to gather with and for Him.

Reflect:

* How have you experienced God meeting you during the last 5 days of this challenge?
* How can you engage people today who might not think they have a place in God's house? How can you invite them in?
* Are there corners outside of your comfort zone on campus, God might be inviting you to go to in order to invite people to know God's love for them?

Request:

*God thank you that you make space* for *us. You want* to *gather your people* to *worship you* -- *including those who have counted themselves out. Would you help* me *today* to *have your* eyes, *your compassion, your heart? Help me to* go *to the people who think there is no place* for *them in your house and offer them the good news* of *your love. Amen.*

Respond:

Engage with people today who are different from you. Go to another part of campus, visit a table advertising a club you don't know much about, strike up a conversation with someone you usually wouldn't initiate with. Invite them to join you at an InterVarsity event or for lunch!

Day 9

**Read:** [John 15:1-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+15%3A1-8&version=NIV)

Jesus' words in this passage are intense, but He reminds us that we are not alone. As we answer Jesus' invitation to follow him and invite others to do the same, Jesus calls us to sacrifice and to be willing to let the master gardener shape who we are becoming.

**Reflect:**

* Take a moment to check-in with yourself before God. What feelings word best describes how you are checking in today (you can find a list of words that might help you at the bottom of the page)?
* Is there something in your life you need to let God prune you can more faithfully and joyfully follow Jesus during the next two weeks of NSO?
* Pruning always feels hard… but what are some of the fruits you are already experiencing in your life? In the lives of others on your campus?

**Request:**

*God, thank you for helping me recognize how I am feeling at the start of this day. Please help me to remain connected to you today. There is much vying for my attention, but steady my focus on you, the true vine. Amen.*

**Respond:**

When we are aware of our feelings – the tensions and the joys we hold – we are better able to remain in Jesus. When we remain in him we are poised to bear fruit. Spend some time meeting new people today- make cookies and hand them out in the dorm, sit with a stranger at lunch, talk to someone in class, host a proxe. Make space to meet people and be bearers of fruit on campus.

**Feelings Words:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fear/Anger | Sadness | Surprise | Joy | Love |
| * Annoyed * Inadequate * Resentful * Jealous * Anxious * Mortified | * Depressed * Shameful * Disappointed * Lonely * Powerless * Grief | * Confused * Amazed * Overcome * Stimulated * Awestruck * Moved | * Happy * Content * Satisfied * Proud * Enthusiastic * Excitement | * Tenderness * Compassionate * Caring * Sentimental * Peaceful * Relieved |

**Day 10**

Read: Philippians 2:1-18

We are called to have the same mindset as Jesus: acting in humility and love for others without grumbling or arguing. Je sus set the perfect example for us as to how we should "not look to our own interests, but the interests of others." How can you look to the interests of others today? What do you need from Jesus so that you can be *for* others?

Reflect:

* How did you experience God yesterday?
* Take a moment and re-visit the Check-in exercise you learned yesterday. How are you checking in today?
* What are you learning about the people you have met?

Request:

*God, thank you for the people I had the privilege of interacting with yesterday. Help* me to *remember names and details today and* to *put my agenda aside in order* to *care for others well. Amen.*

Respond:

Challenge: Close Tik Tok, walk away from Instagram, lift up your eyes from games + distractions on your phone. Today make a conscious decision to walk away from technology and engage boldly with someone new to campus. Ask them questions about how they're adjusting and what they are hoping for in the year ahead. Share your hopes for the year too. Don't be afraid to name your spiritual hopes as well!

**Day 11**

Read: Luke 10:38-42

As we look at Jesus' response in his interactions we see the importance of being WITH him over being busy serving him. We often get too caught up in doing things for the Kingdom that we don't have time to enjoy the presence of God. Spend your quiet time this morning enjoying your time with Jesus. Sit at his feet and listen to what he has to say to you today before you go and serve.

Reflect:

* How did you see God at work yesterday?
* What are the ways Jesus is inviting you to be *with* Him today?

Request:

*God thank you for the invitation to be with you. Even as / desire to help others to know you, help me not to become so overwhelmed with busyness that I lose sight of my relationship with you. Amen.*

Respond:

Invite someone you've met to come with you to a place where you can learn Jesus- Large Group, Small Group, Church, etc.

**Day 12**

**Read:** Deuteronomy 30:15-20

As you continue to invite people to events this week, remember that we are not just inviting people to InterVarsity, we are inviting them to choose life with Jesus! Reflect on the truth that the Lord is your life! You are called to love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him - as you do this, others will see that life in you and be intrigued!

Reflect:

* How does it feel to read that God: "has set before you life and death"? Do you feel a sense of joy or conviction? Why?
* What does it look like for you hold fast to Jesus/to choose life today?

Request:

*Lord, Help me to hold fast to you as the busyness of work is underway. Show me the places in my own heart where I am not choosing obedience to you over my own desires or comfort.*

*Continue to draw me closer to you and use me Lord to reach students + faculty on our campus, Give me courage to invite them into life with you. God, help those we are invited to choose to say yes to not only to events, but yes to life in you. Amen.*

Respond:

Walk down a hall (dorm, academic building, student center... ) and see if there are open doors. Introduce yourself! We can't hold out life to those we don't know. So, go get to know the people on the campus you have been invited to love.

**Day 13**

**Read:** Galatians 1:10

During NSO we may find ourselves especially susceptible to people pleasing. The most dangerous part of finding our approval in others is that our scale is always sliding to meet the perceived expectations of others. We are called to please God. When we focus on pleasing others, it can quickly get in the way of our ability to serve people as Christ does.

Reflect:

* What have you done over the past few days that has been pleasing to God? Take a moment to ask God this question and listen for God's response.
* In which NSO situations have you been most tempted to seek the approval of people?

Request:

*God help me to seek your approval above all others. May my actions be pleasing worship to you. I am often tempted to guard or construct my own reputation. May my reputation - what I'm known for- be built around you. Amen.*

Respond

We know that Jesus invites us to be His hands and feet on campus. Today, entrust your reputation to God's hands and go visit someone you've met during NSO.

**Day 14**

**Read:** Matthew 11:28-30

You're 2/3 of the way through the 21 Day Challenge! You are hopefully energized by new relationships, but you may also feel tired, weary, and burdened by all of the relational connections and responsibilities you are carrying. These words from Jesus remind us to take a pause today and come to Him. Find peace in remembering that he wants to give you rest for your soul. Jesus doesn't want you to burn out; he wants you to burn from with­ in.

Reflect:

* Revisit the check-in from day 9. How are you checking in today?
* How have you experienced God refreshing you in the past? Last semester? Over the summer? Last week?
* Where do you need Jesus to refresh your soul today? How can you make some more space to hear from him?

Request:

*God thank you that you meet me and refresh me. Would you show me how to rest my soul in you today and help me be open to the ways you want to revive me? Amen.*

Respond:

Share a story with a non-Christian of a way that God has met you, cared for you, and refreshed you. Ask them if you can pray that God would refresh them in this way throughout this semester.

**Day 15**

**Read:** Psalm 145

Our God is a great God! As you meditate on the truths in this Psalm, think about how you've seen these characteristics of God during NSO.

Reflect:

* How has God been trustworthy in all He promises and faithful in all He does?
* How has God heard your cry and saved you?
* How do you need to be reminded of these truths today?

Request:

*God, thank you for the ways that you have watched over* me *and loved* me. *Help my mouth* to *speak your praises on* cam*pus today. Amen.*

Respond:

In verse 4 one generation commends God's works to another. Make time to connect with an Alumni today. Send an encouraging text, invite them to lunch, ask them to pray for students on campus, and for you!

Day 16

**Read:** Ephesians 4:1-6

In this passage Paul is calling us to remember that we are called by God and that who we are (not just what we do) matters. At this point in the 21 Day Challenge, it can be tempting to slow down and make excuses for not following up with new people. We are working together- in unity with one another on our campuses and in unity with the work of the Spirit. Continue to humbly and patiently trust that God is at work in the lives of the people you've been following up with.

Reflect:

* What will it look like to live worthy of your leadership call today?
* What connections do you need to make? What conversations do you need to follow up on?
* In what areas and relationships are you experiencing God's invitation to live in a way that is more humble, gentle, and patience?

Request:

*God, help me* to *live a prisoner* for *you (v.1). That I would not chase after my own desires, but wholly live into the life* you're *calling me* to *on campus. Amen.*

Respond:

Take a moment to encourage someone else in the midst of welcoming new students.

Take a walk around the parts of campus where you've been most connecting with new people. Pray, asking God to show what He is calling you to in that place?

**Day 17**

**Read:** Acts 2:42-47

What an amazing picture of community! As you've been building your ministry community, imagine what it would be like if it reflected the early church. They partied! They ate together. They enjoyed each other. And each day, people were coming to Jesus. God wants this to be your story, too!

Reflect:

* How would you like the community you're building to be reflective of the early church?
* What can you do today to shape that?
* How can you invite others into this vision?

Request:

*God thank you* for *the example of the early church. Would you help* me to *be building a community that is built on your love - a community that is empowered to live radically and counter-culturally on campus? Help* me to see *opportunities to invite* more *people* to *know you today.*

Respond:

Gather some new people that you've met and make a meal together today- or make plans to make a meal together soon. It will be a great opportunity for conversation and time together.

**Day 18**

**Read:** John 13:1-17

Jesus serves his disciples with true humility by washing their feet. It is a low and dirty job that a host would never do. It was a job for servants. NSO is full of lots of thankless moments (some are probably coming to mind right now!). Leadership means being a servant and laying down our pride so that others may know Jesus.

Reflect:

* How is Jesus calling you to continue serving those you've met during NSO?
* What do you need to remember about who Jesus is and who you are so that you can serve like him?

Request:

*God, it's hard to serve others. You see the places where I struggle with it and where I feel tired. You also see the great needs that are on this campus. Would you help me to have your eyes to see and your heart to serve to day? Amen.*

Respond:

Serve a new student today. Offer to help them with a difficult task, walk them to a building they're looking for, take them to get food off campus. Ask God for ways to live out the kind of servant action we saw Jesus taking.

**Day 19**

**Read:** Romans 12:9-13

These verses are jam-packed with Godly wisdom for us during this season of ministry. Take some time to think about what these words: love, devotion, joy, hope, patience, faithfulness, and hospitality mean to you.

Reflect:

* How have you experienced joy in your hope for your area of ministry?
* How have you experienced God's invitation to patience when things haven't gone quite right?
* How have you been faithful in prayer during NSO? Anything new you want to try?
* What has God shown about himself through this?

Request:

*God help me to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer- by your power and grace. Amen.*

Respond:

As you've been reaching out to new people, hopefully they are starting to share what is going on for them. Maybe they've shared anxiety about an upcoming test, frustrations with a new roommate, or loneliness being far from home. Take a new risk today and offer to share these verses with them and offer to pray with them!

**Day 20**

**Read:** Acts 5:27-42

We’re almost to the end of the 21 Day Challenge! In this passage Peter and the apostles stood up for Jesus with the knowledge that it could lead them to prison, and even death. But Gamaliel knew that if their purpose or activity was of God, there would be no stopping them.

Reflect:

* How have you seen and experienced God's power during NSO?
* How does the first-hand experience of that power influence your actions and your plans for the rest of the semester?

Request:

*God, help me not to hesitate in sharing your love with the students I meet. I trust you to provide people of peace on campus, like Gamaliel, who will make space for us to continue caring for and preaching to people on campus about your goodness. Help me to trust in your authority and power over campus systems and administrations. Amen.*

Respond:

Schedule an appointment with administration, faculty, or staff. Get to know them and help them get to know InterVarsity. Ask them how you can be praying for them as they serve the campus.

Day 21

**Read:** Exodus 15:1-21

This passage takes place just after the parting of the Red Sea and Moses and the Israelites are rejoicing! God has brought them out of slavery and their response is to sing praises to their God. God did great things for the Israelites, and He has done great things during NSO and the 21 Day Challenge.

Spend time rejoicing and thanking God for all He has done.

Reflect:

* What new risks did you take during the 21-day challenge?
* What new things did you learn about God during the 21-day challenge?
* What new ways have you experienced God growing your care for campus?
* What are some of the activities and habits that you want to continue or pursue throughout the semester?

Request:

*God thank you for your faithfulness during these 21 days. There were moments I felt truly challenged and many moments where I felt your presence. Thank for you the ways that you met me and met these people I have been reaching out to. Continue to guide me in next steps for inviting people on campus to know you. Amen.*

**Respond:**

Get together with others from your campus to celebrate all that God has done. Share stories of God’s faithfulness, God’s pruning, and God’s love for your campus!