

Waybook: Italy - Roots and Revival

The Great Commission & Courageous Witness

Day 1: Grounded in Place

Daily Reading: Genesis 12; Romans 1:1-17

Key Scripture:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" — Romans 1:16-17 (ESV)

Historical/Cultural Context:

Genesis 12 records the calling of Abram to leave everything familiar for a promise he couldn't yet see. This act of obedient trust becomes the seedbed for God's global redemptive plan. In Romans 1, Paul writes from Corinth but longs to be in Rome—the very city we're beginning in. His gospel confidence isn't bluster; it's a declaration of allegiance in the heart of the empire. Rome symbolized power, wealth, pagan religion—and it's precisely there that Paul yearned to proclaim Jesus as Lord.

Devotional:

You've landed in Rome—not just a city of ruins, but a city of roots. This is where the story of the early church collides with the power structures of the world. On this first day, as your body adjusts and your senses awaken to new surroundings, let your spirit do the same. Consider Abram stepping away from his home into a calling he didn't fully understand. Consider Paul, longing to visit this city—not for pleasure or prestige, but to share a gospel that could get him killed.

What does it mean to be "unashamed of the gospel" in the place where it was once most resisted? As you walk the cobbled roads of the Aventine, pause not just to take in beauty but to reflect: Where is God calling you to be bold? Where is your obedience being tested? Where might your presence—even your small, tired, jetlagged self—be used for something bigger than you?



You are not just arriving in Italy. You are being invited into God's unfolding story. You are joining a lineage of faithful witnesses who said yes before they had all the answers. Today, begin with openness. Begin with willingness. Begin with a prayer:

“Lord, I don't yet know what this week holds. But I trust You with it. Make me ready to listen, ready to see, ready to be changed.”

Morning Reflection Questions:

- What distractions or worries do I need to lay down before this journey begins?
- Am I willing to be interrupted by God this week?
- What does it mean for me, personally, to live unashamed of the gospel?

Location Context:

- **Aventine Hill:** One of ancient Rome's quietest heights, historically a place of gardens and monastic retreats.
- **Orange Garden:** Offers panoramic views of the city—a symbolic place to gain perspective.
- **Knights of Malta Keyhole:** A literal “small opening” that frames something immense (St. Peter's dome)—a metaphor for faith.
- **Santa Sabina:** One of Rome's oldest basilicas, built in the 5th century, rich in early Christian mosaics and simplicity.

Evening Journaling Prompts:

- What emotions surfaced as I arrived and walked the city?
- Where did I feel a sense of awe, discomfort, or expectation?
- How does the image of Abraham stepping into the unknown mirror something in my life right now?
- What might it look like for me to live more courageously, more commissioned, more aware of my role in God's story?

Day 2: Hidden Roots

Daily Reading: Acts 4; Hebrews 10:19-25

Key Scripture:

"And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness." — Acts 4:31 (ESV)

Historical/Cultural Context:

Acts 4 presents a critical moment for the early church—when faith was no longer safe. Peter and John had just healed a man and boldly proclaimed Jesus in the temple courts. Their arrest by the religious authorities introduced fear and risk, but also opportunity. These believers were not immune to fear—they were human, like us. What set them apart was not fearlessness, but their hope in the risen Christ. The same holds true for the underground Christians who worshiped in catacombs, carving spaces of faith into the earth beneath a threatening empire.

Devotional:

The catacombs were not merely burial sites; they were sanctuaries of fragile courage. The people who gathered there weren't superheroes of the faith—they were men and women, young and old, who felt fear. They whispered prayers in the dark, unsure of what would come next. And yet they returned, again and again, compelled by a hope more powerful than fear.

Their hope wasn't rooted in political victory or personal safety, but in a God who had conquered death itself. That same hope lives in you. And just like them, you're invited to choose faith not because it's easy, but because it's true.

Let this be a day where you remember that courage and fear can coexist. The question isn't whether you feel afraid—it's what you'll do with that fear. Will you let it silence you, or will you let hope speak louder?

Morning Reflection Questions:

- Where do I feel afraid or hesitant to follow Jesus?



- What gives me hope even when circumstances are uncertain?
- How can I support others who are choosing faith in hard places?

Location Context:

- **Catacombs of San Sebastiano:** Burial place and worship space for early Christians; symbols of resurrection and hidden fellowship.
- **Appian Way:** One of the oldest roads in Rome; the path of martyrs and missionaries.
- **Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls:** Memorial site of the apostle Paul, one who ran his race with endurance.

Evening Journaling Prompts:

- When did I feel fear today? What helped me move forward anyway?
- How does remembering the early Christians shape my view of modern faith?
- What might God be doing underground—in the hidden places of my life?



Day 3: Faith and Empire

Daily Reading: Daniel 3; Revelation 2:8-11

Key Scripture:

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." — Revelation 2:10b (ESV)

Historical/Cultural Context:

Daniel's friends stood before the furnace of empire—not with defiance born of pride, but of allegiance to a greater King. Likewise, the early church in Rome found itself under the shadow of Emperor Tiberius, whose rule projected absolute control, divinity claims, and ruthless power. The empire demanded loyalty. But Jesus, crucified and risen, offered a different kind of kingdom—one of humility, grace, and eternal promise. These were not abstract tensions. They shaped daily choices, daily costs.

Devotional:

Imagine two rulers: Tiberius in the imperial palace, demanding worship, commanding armies, securing his power through violence and fear. And Jesus—born in a stable, crucified on a Roman cross, yet raised and declared Lord of all.

These two visions could not be more different.

Today, as you stand in the Colosseum or walk through the Roman Forum, remember: the grandeur of Rome lies in ruins, but the gospel endures. The choice between these kingdoms isn't just historical. It's personal. It's now.

We all build empires. Some are made of ambition, influence, image, and comfort. We may not wear a crown, but we often enthrone ourselves.

The invitation is this: Whose apprentice will you be? Will you follow the way of Tiberius—the way of self-preservation and control—or the way of Jesus, the crucified King?

The early Christians chose Jesus, even unto death. Not because it was easy, but because it was true. Because it was freedom.

And today, that choice still stands.

Morning Reflection Questions:



- What values shape the “kingdom” I’m building in my life?
- Where do I feel torn between the ways of Jesus and the pressures of culture?
- What does apprenticeship to Christ look like for me right now?

Location Context:

- **Colosseum:** Symbol of Roman power; a silent witness to Christian martyrdom.
- **Roman Forum:** Political and religious center of the ancient world.
- **Basilica of San Clemente:** Layers of Christian worship built on Roman foundations—a visual theology of redemption.

Evening Journaling Prompts:

- Where did I notice empire values around me today—prestige, control, fear?
- What small decision might re-center my life around God’s kingdom?
- What empires do I need to stop serving in order to serve Christ fully?



Day 4: Saints and Storytelling

Daily Reading: Hebrews 11; Psalm 78:1-7

Key Scripture:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." — Hebrews 12:1 (ESV)

Historical/Cultural Context:

The writer of Hebrews catalogs generations of faith, linking past saints to present perseverance. Psalm 78 calls Israel to remember and retell the works of God—not just for nostalgia, but formation. In Rome, stories of martyrs, monks, and faithful women echo through basilicas and backstreets alike. Their testimonies were their greatest tools.

Devotional:

Today is about memory—faith remembered, stories retold. From the grandeur of the Pantheon to the quiet beauty of Santa Maria in Trastevere, we walk alongside storytellers of the gospel.

Martyrs were not icons of suffering but narrators of resurrection. Monks preserved Scripture not for preservation's sake, but for proclamation. Women like Agnes and Prassede led in quiet faith that outlasted emperors.

Every faithful life is a testimony. What will yours say?

God invites us not only to hear stories but to live into them. The Great Commission begins with presence—being with Jesus—and continues with courage. Your life, like theirs, is part of God's narrative.

Morning Reflection Questions:

- What story is my life currently telling?
- Whose faith stories have shaped me?
- How can I cultivate a posture of remembrance and storytelling?



Location Context:

- **Pantheon:** A Roman temple turned church; a place of theological transformation.
- **Santa Maria in Trastevere:** Possibly the oldest public church in Rome, honoring Mary and early Christian worship.
- **Sant'Agnese and surrounding sites:** Commemorate young martyrs and resilient female leaders of the faith.

Evening Journaling Prompts:

- Which person or place today stirred my heart?
- What kind of legacy am I building?
- What spiritual habits might help me become a faithful storyteller?



Day 5: From Power to Peace

Daily Reading: Philippians 2:1–11; Matthew 5:1–12

Key Scripture:

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus... he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant.” — Philippians 2:5,7 (ESV)

Historical/Cultural Context:

Paul's letter to the Philippians, written from a Roman prison cell, glows with paradoxical joy and humility. Jesus, though fully God, did not cling to His divine rights. He descended—into human form, into servanthood, into death. The Beatitudes from Matthew 5 similarly turn the values of the empire on their head: blessed are the meek, the merciful, the poor in spirit. In Assisi, Francis and Clare embodied these truths. They didn't start holy. They chose a different apprenticeship. They traded power for peace. Privilege for simplicity. Image for incarnation.

Devotional:

Assisi is a turning point. Physically, emotionally, spiritually. The roads grow quieter. The pace slows. The stories here are gentler but no less radical.

Francis was not born a saint. He was born a son of wealth, ambition, and reputation. His early years echoed the culture of Rome more than the teachings of Jesus. But grace interrupted him. And when it did, it didn't offer mere forgiveness—it offered a new way of being human.

Jesus said the meek will inherit the earth. Francis took Him at His word.

We often admire saints like Francis and Clare as distant examples, but that misses the point. Their holiness wasn't about escape—it was about participation. They became who they were by apprenticing themselves to Christ. Day after day. Choice after choice. They let Jesus' story rewrite their own.

And that's the invitation today.

John Mark Comer writes:

“Because what you give your attention to is the person you become. Put another way: the mind is the portal to the soul, and what you fill your mind with will shape the trajectory of your character... we become what we give our attention to, for better or worse.”



Francis gave his attention to Christ. To the leper. To the Eucharist. To creation. To the poor. To the Gospels. And it formed him into someone utterly free.

What holds your attention? What shapes your inner world? If we're not careful, the algorithms of anxiety and achievement will disciple us far more deeply than we realize.

Here's the beautiful, grounded truth: Jesus was not only fully God. He was fully man. He didn't model something unattainable—He modeled what it means to be truly human in the Kingdom of God. Apprenticeship to Him isn't mystical or elite. It's choosing—again and again—to let His way be your way.

Like Francis, like Clare, you can walk that road.

Let today be a descent—away from proving, toward peace. A release of what you thought you needed. A rediscovery of joy in surrender.

Morning Reflection Questions:

- What do I admire in Jesus that I've believed is "unreachable" in me?
- Where is God asking me to release control or ambition?
- What does it look like to take a step toward simplicity today?

Location Context:

- **San Damiano:** The quiet chapel where Clare heard God's voice and Francis received his call to "rebuild the Church."
- **Assisi countryside:** Olive groves and hill paths where prayer and simplicity shaped a gospel movement.

Evening Journaling Prompts:

- What aspects of today felt lighter, freer, or more joyful?
- Where do I see signs that apprenticeship to Jesus is already reshaping me?
- What's one way I can give my attention more fully to Christ this week?

Day 6: Walking with Francis

Daily Reading: Luke 10:1–24; Isaiah 52:7–10

Key Scripture:

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news... who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” — Isaiah 52:7 (ESV)

Historical/Cultural Context:

Luke 10 records Jesus sending out seventy-two followers in pairs. They were ordinary people asked to carry an extraordinary message: the kingdom of God has come near. They went without baggage or status, relying on hospitality and the Spirit. Isaiah 52 describes the joy of those who bring this kind of news—news that changes lives. Francis of Assisi, centuries later, lived this call in a deeply personal way. He spoke with few words and simple means, yet his life became a message that resonated across cultures and generations.

Devotional:

Today's walk is quiet. The crowds have faded, the noise has lessened, and the rhythms of the past few days might be catching up with you. That's fitting. Because Luke 10 isn't a passage about busyness. It's about readiness.

When Jesus sends the 72, He doesn't give them a script. He gives them a mission and a promise. They're not told to argue or persuade. Just to show up, speak peace, eat with people, and point to what God is doing. That's the shape of witness.

Francis lived this shape with clarity and humility. He wasn't trying to impress Rome. He was trying to follow Jesus. He trusted that the Gospel was not only good—it was enough. And while we might admire his legacy, the point is not admiration. The point is invitation.

Jesus was fully God, but also fully human. He didn't just show us who God is—He showed us who we can become. That includes you. This isn't about perfection, but pursuit. About allowing your life to be slowly, faithfully shaped in the direction of Christ.

As you walk through the hermitage and along these mountain paths, consider what it might mean for your life to move outward. To be shaped not just by what you believe, but by how you walk, where you go, and whom you serve.



Morning Reflection Questions:

- Am I open to being sent in small, daily ways?
- What does it look like for me to follow Jesus in my current context?
- Where might I be holding back instead of stepping forward?

Location Context:

- **Basilica of St. Francis:** Burial place of Francis; a place to reflect on how one life can reflect Christ over time.
- **Eremo delle Carceri (Hermitage):** A space of quiet and solitude that helped shape Francis's life of service and peace.

Evening Journaling Prompts:

- What stood out to me today—in silence, in scenery, in thought?
- How do I respond to the idea of being sent?
- What practical steps could I take toward becoming more available to God's direction?



Day 7: The Way Forward

Daily Reading: Matthew 28:16–20; 2 Timothy 4:6–8

Key Scripture:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:19–20 (ESV)

Historical/Cultural Context:

Matthew 28 gives us Jesus' final words to His disciples—a commission that defines Christian mission to this day. He speaks not just to those who are confident, but to those who doubt. The message is clear: Go. Teach. Baptize. And remember—I am with you. Paul's words in 2 Timothy are a kind of echo from a life lived in response to that call. He doesn't say he got it all right—only that he remained faithful.

Devotional:

The end of this journey offers space to look ahead. Not just to what's next on your travel itinerary, but to what's next in life.

Matthew tells us that some of the disciples doubted even as they worshiped. Jesus doesn't correct them. He commissions them. Their belief wasn't complete, their courage wasn't perfect, but their direction was clear. He sent them anyway.

The same is true today. No one is sent because they've figured it all out. We're sent because we belong to Jesus.

The Great Commission is not just about faraway missions. It's about living every day as someone who has been with Jesus and is willing to make Him known. It's about relationships. Conversations. Encouragement. It's about presence and consistency more than performance.

Francis lived this in small ways. Paul lived it in costly ways. Jesus modeled it fully. And now, you are invited to consider your own next steps—not out of pressure, but out of purpose.

What will you carry from this experience into the habits and rhythms of everyday life? What has been stirred in you that needs space to grow?

Discipleship is not an arrival. It's an ongoing walk. And every step matters.



Morning Reflection Questions:

- Where do I sense God is asking me to be more present or available?
- What parts of this trip might influence how I live or serve back home?
- How can I build a habit of walking closely with Jesus, even in ordinary routines?

Location Context:

- **Basilica of St. Clare & San Rufino Church:** Reminders of roots, baptism, and trust—foundations for a life of steady discipleship.

Evening Journaling Prompts:

- What will I take from this journey into the weeks ahead?
- How do I want to grow in apprenticeship to Jesus?
- Who might I walk with, invest in, or encourage in the faith?

Day 8: Returning with Intention

Scripture for the Road:

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” — Hebrews 10:23 (ESV)

Closing Thought:

Today is for movement—not just on planes or trains, but in your heart and mind. You’ve walked through ancient places, heard old stories, and perhaps discovered new parts of your faith. Whether your journey felt quiet or intense, steady or surprising, what you carry now is what matters.

The goal isn’t to stay “on a mountaintop.” The goal is to return differently—to allow something from this experience to root and grow in daily life.

You don’t need to do everything at once. But you can take one step today.

Reflection Prompts (optional journaling):

- What is one small practice I want to continue at home?
- What encouragement or truth do I want to hold on to?
- Who could I share this journey with meaningfully?

Prayer for the Journey:

“Lord, thank You for every step, every word, every quiet moment. As I return, let me not forget what I’ve seen or heard. Help me carry Your peace, walk in Your strength, and stay open to Your leading. Amen.

