

**THE FIRST**

**100 DAYS**

**OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE**

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Mark J Musser Books  
2019

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First printing 2019

Printed in the United States of America

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Trade paperback: ISBN 13: 978-1549649615

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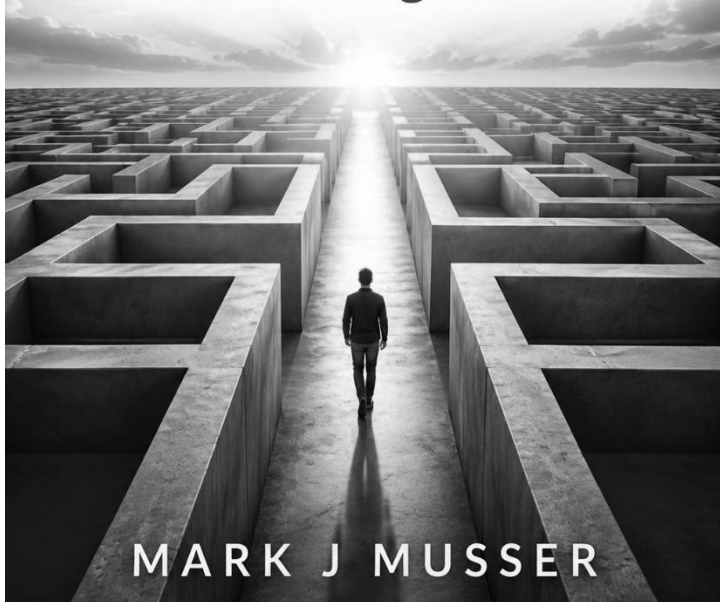
God for guiding my steps and for my wife  
and son who put up with my missteps

**YOU WERE MADE FOR MORE!**

# **SEARCHING FOR MORE**

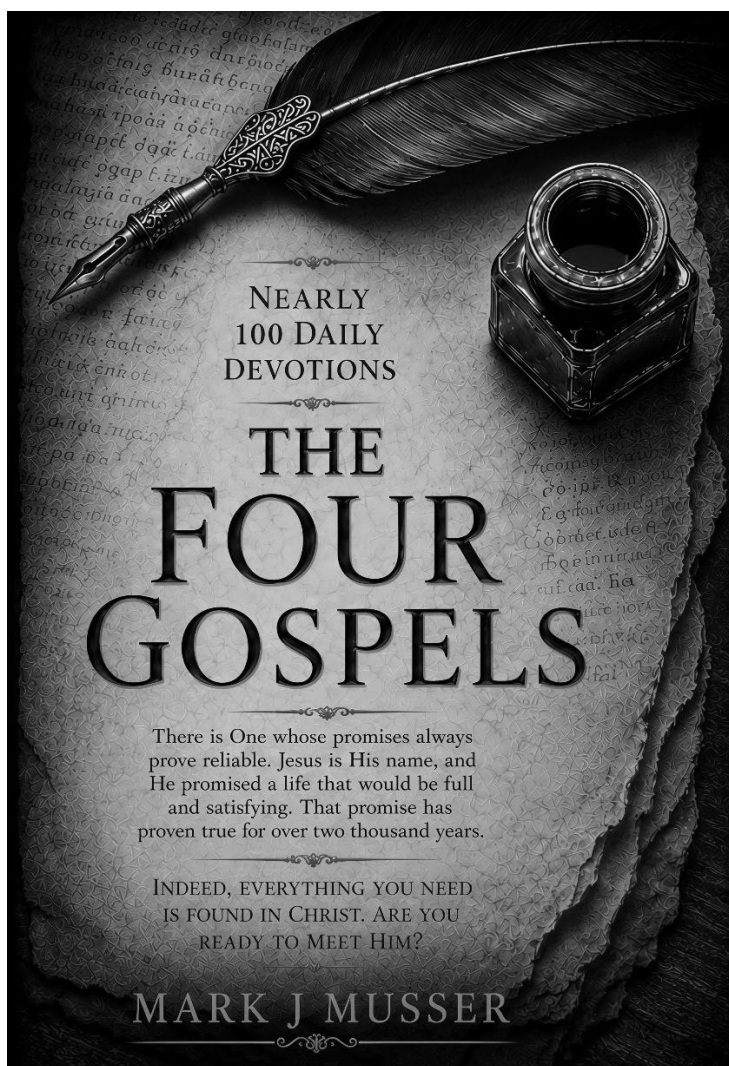
*Finding the Fulfillment*

—— *You Long For* ——



**MARK J MUSSER**

**MEET JESUS IN THE GOSPELS!**





Are you ready to start the  
first 100 days of the rest of your life?

On your mark...

Get set...

GO!



# DAY 1

## **READ: Genesis 6**

The first American Missionary couple, Adoniram and Ann Judson, set sail for present-day Burma in 1812. When they arrived, they were unwelcome and unwanted. For six long years, the couple labored among the people without a single soul giving their life to Christ. Finally, in 1819, a lone person surrendered to the Lord. The Judson's hoped this would lead to a rapid succession of many more converts. However, after thirteen years, there were only eighteen converts. Then jail.

For twenty-one months, Adoniram was held in a Burmese prison. Daily he was hung upside down and beaten. Many days were spent stuck in a squalid hut infested with bugs and rats. During this time, Ann was forced to beg for food so she could gain enough nourishment to nurse their infant son. In spite of these severe hardships, the couple persevered.

When Adoniram passed away in 1850, after spending thirty-eight years in missionary service, it is estimated that there were as many as 210,000 Christians in Burma!

Many tend to believe that serving the Lord will be easy and fun. True followers of Christ, though, know that living out their faith is going to be costly. The Judson's knew this yet travelled to Burma anyway.

Noah was another who knew this full well. Consider what his obedience to the Lord meant. With just three helpers, he had to hand saw and shape thousands of beams of wood to make a boat 450-feet long, 75-feet wide, and three stories tall! This was no easy task.

Not to mention, he was nowhere near a body of water—not even a pond. Can you imagine how his neighbors must have mocked him? Yet, over the course of a century, Noah never gave up.

Let that be a lesson for all of us.

## **THINK**

What does verse 9 say about Noah?

Despite how crazy it all must have sounded, and how hard it must have seemed, what does verse 22 say?

Noah certainly displayed faith—that is, he lived out his convictions. If God had presented all of this to you, how do you think you would have reacted?

All of us need a “working faith.” Would you say you have a “working faith”? Why or why not?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for being with you every step of the way as you follow His will
- Confess to God, if necessary, talking a great faith game, but not living it out in your day to day life
- Ask God for the strength and endurance to do great things for Him
- Ask God to use you to make a mighty difference in this world

### **APPLY**

- Reread the short intro about the Judson’s, then ask yourself if you have that kind of faith
- If the answer is “no,” talk to the Lord about why that is

# DAY 2

## **READ: Genesis 7**

Known as the *Father of Modern Missions*, William Carey (along with his wife and three children) left England for India in 1792. This was no easy journey--five months long across treacherous season. In fact, the undertaking was so disheartening to Carey's wife, Dorothy, she cried almost the entire way.

William, in contrast, left England with incredibly high hopes. However, by 1800, his wife was a shell of her former self, their son, Peter, had died, and not a single person had been converted. Regardless, Carey refused to give up or give in. Instead, he continually repeated his favorite mantra: "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God."

With no converts to disciple, Carey set about translating the Scriptures into over thirty different Indian dialects. He continued on tirelessly for a total of forty-one years, burying two wives in the process. By his death, thousands were converted, and millions could read the Scriptures in their own language.

Truly, having a working faith is very important. The ability to step out in obedience to God's commands—no matter how hard or strange they may seem—is vital for showing the world what the Christian life looks like. However, a working faith is not the only kind of faith we need. Just as vital is a *waiting* faith.

Both the Judson's and the Carey's had to wait six-plus years to see any fruit from their labors. That, however, is nothing compared to Noah who waited one hundred years for the flood to come—all that time he had a giant boat in his front yard and laughing neighbors! Still, he waited and trusted...and trusted and waited. When the time was right, God gave step two—get in the boat.

## **THINK**

What is the hardest thing about waiting for you?

There are people who keep themselves busy supposedly working for the Lord, yet they have never really asked God if they were doing the right things. Others seem to always be waiting and never get working for God. Which of these two are most like you?

Why is it important to have both a working *and* a waiting faith?

How well are you integrating both of these? How can you do better?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God that His timing is perfect
- Confess to God, if necessary, not having a great balance between a working and a waiting faith
- Ask God to show you how to strike the perfect balance between the two
- Ask God to guide you straight into the center of His will

### **APPLY**

- Have you been waiting on God for what seems like eternity to answer a certain prayer? If so, don't give up. Keep trusting and keep praying
- Seek out people who will pray for you and for the endurance you may need to stay the course

# DAY 3

## **READ: 1 Timothy 4**

In 1703, John Wesley was born in England to godly, Christian parents. In spite of growing up with regular instruction in the Lord, John was not a believer—though he pretended to be. In fact, so deep was John’s pretense that he and his brother Charles travelled to the American colony of Georgia in 1735 to be missionaries.

After two years of fruitless ministry, John returned back to England dejected. Then, in 1738, while reading Romans 1, Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed,” and he gave his life over to the Lord. For the next fifty-three years, it is estimated that he travelled over 250,000 miles on horseback, sharing the gospel from place to place. He preached at least 40,000 sermons and led literally hundreds of thousands to the Lord.

In his last sermon, an eighty-nine year old Wesley preached with tears streaming down his face, imploring people to come to Christ. Even though he had seen so many souls come to the Lord, his simple words were, “And still there is room! And still there is room!”

John Wesley’s life teaches us that no one is born great or an instant hero. Growth happens incrementally over a long period of time. For physical growth, it happens naturally and fully when you have the proper diet and environment. Spiritual growth is not so natural. You have to work at it and strive for it. Yet, a proper spiritual diet and environment are still essential!

Because John kept putting himself in places for the Lord to speak to Him, God was finally able to break into that stubborn heart. How about you? Are you doing the same?

## **THINK**

In verse 7, Paul tells Timothy to “train yourself to be godly.” What work do you think must go into spiritual training?

Are you actively training in the ways you just listed?

Paul uses words with Timothy like—*labor, strive, work, devote, be diligent, set an example, watch your life, give yourself wholly, and persevere*. What do you think he is trying to emphasize by using these words?

Where do you need to improve in your spiritual training?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for the spiritual mentors and teachers He has put in your life
- Confess to God, if necessary, being negligent in your spiritual training
- Ask God to show you where you need to improve in your spiritual training regimen
- Ask God to strengthen you to be disciplined in spiritual matters

### **APPLY**

- There are many ways to grow spiritually. Are you part of a Sunday School class? Are you a member of a small group? Is church a priority in your life? Do you study your Bible every day? How is your prayer life? Where do you need improvement?
- Make sure to keep putting yourself in places where God can speak to you

# DAY 4

## **READ: Romans 10:1-15**

Consider the progression—A Sunday School teacher named Mr. Kimball, in 1858, led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. That clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist. In 1879, he awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Frederick B. Meyer, the pastor of a small church. F. B. Meyer, preaching at an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work. Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, N.C. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai Hamm to town. During Hamm's revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the Gospel and yielded his life to Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Who knows how deep into the future your acts for Christ this very day will go? The only thing you can know for sure is this—if you do nothing, the result will be the same.

## **THINK**

What does it take to experience salvation according to verses 8 & 9?

Who can be saved according to verse 13?

For this to happen, though, what must occur according to verses 14 & 15?

Are you fulfilling verses 14 & 15? If so, how? If not, what is holding you back?

## **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for those who shared Christ with you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not passing on faith in Christ to others
- Ask God to use you to train and equip others in the faith
- Pray specifically for those around you who need to know Jesus as

## Lord and Savior

### **APPLY**

- Every little action, word, or gesture can have long-ranging impact. Be careful how you speak to others. Watch your actions and gestures
- Pray and ask the Lord to make you more like Himself in all you say, think, and do

# DAY 5

**READ: Romans 9:1-3; Acts 28:16-31**

When a young Scottish woman, named Mary Slessor, discovered the need for missionaries in Africa, she excitedly signed up. Mary had often heard stories of abandoned children, cannibalism, slave markets, and more; so she deeply desired to see the light of Christ penetrate that dark place.

In 1876, at the age of twenty-eight, she set sail for West Africa. On arrival, coming off the docks, she caught sight of the cages where slaves were kept before being loaded onto ships. Inland, she watched as people were beheaded and eaten, babies thrown on ant hills left to die, and women treated like property to be tossed around and used. Seeing such things might have scared off lesser people, but it just increased Mary's motivation to see Christ at work.

She pressed further inland, even after being warned that doing so would mean certain death. Instead of *getting* death, however, Mary *gave* life--life through Jesus Christ. She rescued scores of babies thrown out into the forest, prevented many wars, and tirelessly told Africans about the great God of love. In the process, hundreds of villages were transformed by the gospel.

Mary's life proves that anyone can be a hero when properly motivated. How motivated are you to see people give their lives to Christ and experience eternal life?

## THINK

According to Romans 9, how motivated was Paul to share the Good News? How can you tell his level of motivation?

Does the thought of people heading into a Christ-less eternity motivate you to share the Good News?

How are you doing at taking every opportunity to present the Gospel?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the one(s) who led you to Jesus Christ
- Confess to God, if necessary, not being motivated enough to share the Good News and save people from eternal separation from God
- Ask God to deepen you, grow you, and mature you
- Ask God to use you to help others do the same

## **APPLY**

- This online gift-survey may help you better understand how the Lord has gifted you. Check out [www.spiritualgiftstest.com](http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com)
- Make a list of three to five people who do not know Jesus as their Savior. Begin praying for them every day

# DAY 6

**READ: Genesis 22:1-3; Mark 1:16-20**

In 1878, C.T. Studd accepted the Lord at the age of eighteen. However, as the son of wealthy parents and the captain of a well-known cricket squad, his new-found faith in Christ soon took a backseat to earthly pursuits. In his own words, C.T. writes, “Instead of going and telling others of the love of Christ, I was selfish and kept the knowledge to myself. The result was that gradually my love began to grow cold, and the love of the world began to come in. I spent six years in that unhappy backslidden state.”

Christ, though, would keep after C.T. By his mid-twenties, a fire for the Lord began to burn in him. At the age of twenty-five, he was set to inherit a large sum of money from his father. He chose to give most of that money away. Shortly thereafter, he left friends and family behind to serve the Lord, first in China, then in India, and finally in Africa.

When asked how he could give up so much, C.T. often replied, “If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.” At his death, the last word he spoke this side of Heaven was “Hallelujah!”

Having lived in both obedience and disobedience to the Lord, I am sure that C.T. would agree with the words of Thomas a Kempis who penned, “Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience. Whoever withdraws from obedience, withdraws from grace.”

## THINK

If your boss asked you to prepare a report that was due on his desk at the end of the day, would you just decide to wait a week? Why or why not?

Why is delayed obedience really disobedience?

When God told Abram to go, the Bible says he got up *early* and went. When Jesus called the disciples, it says they came to Him *immediately* and *without delay*. Why are those good examples of obedience?

Are you someone who obeys the Lord immediately or do you tend to “wait and debate” with God?

What can help improve the speed of your obedience?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for examples of obedience in your life
- Confess to God, if necessary, waiting or debating His will instead of obeying immediately
- Ask God to help you obey Him quickly and decisively
- Ask God to mold you into a person who is full of faith and trust

### **APPLY**

- Think about the speed of your obedience. Have you been quick to obey?
- If not, what usually causes “the delays”? Isolate these things and give them to God

# DAY 7

**READ: Genesis 12:10-20; Genesis 20:1-18**

As you have read through the short missionary biographies the last few days, perhaps you have begun to despair a bit. I know, for myself, comparing my life to those who sacrificed so much can be depressing! I look at my own life, how little I have done in comparison, how often I have failed the tests the Lord has given, and I think, “Will I ever be who I am supposed to be? Can I ever be used to do something great for God?”

Maybe that is where you are as well. If so, take heart in this: God is *not* done with us! We may blow it a thousand times. We may fail over and over and over again, but God still desires to work in and through us.

If you fail one test, God prepares another. If that one comes back with a big, red F on it, guess what? God will prepare another. He will keep testing until we get it right. True, we may not like these tests, but they are actually signs of God’s tremendous love for us.

Abraham, who would eventually be known as a “friend of God,” was certainly no stranger to retaking tests. So take heart from Abraham’s story. God’s not through with you yet!

## THINK

Has there ever been a time when you failed an academic test and had to take it all over again? (If it was in Chemistry, I know how you feel!)

When it comes to our relationship with God, He will often give us tests again after we have failed. What are some tests God has had to give you again and again?

How was Abraham doing with the tests God was giving Him?

How can consistent Bible study, prayer, and friendship with mature Christians help you better pass God’s tests?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the tests He gives you in order to show you weaknesses and help you grow
- Confess to God, if necessary, repeatedly failing the same tests over and over again
- Ask God to help you not falter like Abraham but to stay strong and to pass His tests
- Ask God to guide you into relationships that will help facilitate growth in your life

## **APPLY**

- Have you failed a bunch of tests? You are not alone. (In fact, you're in line with me and millions of others!) Don't let Satan whisper his lies in your ear. Know that you are loved by God and He has a great plan for your life!

# DAY 8

**READ: 1 Samuel 15:10-23; James 2:14-26**

Jacob DeShazer was a member of “Doolittle’s Raiders”—the famous and elite flying unit chosen to engage in a daring air-raid of Japan shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor during World War II.

Low on fuel after the bombing run, DeShazer and his fellow crewman were forced to parachute into China. There they were captured by the Japanese and held in torturous captivity. Jacob spent forty months in a prison camp. (Thirty-four of those months were in solitary confinement.) During that time, he saw fellow prisoners starved, beaten, and shot to death. It didn’t take long for a deep hatred of all Japanese people to consume the airman.

Sometime during his captivity, however, he received a Bible. Within its pages, he encountered the love of Christ, and that love began to change the Raider from the inside out. After the war ended, DeShazer went back to America but soon felt God calling him to Japan!

It was not the easiest thing to follow God’s leading to the country whose men had treated him and his fellow crewmen so brutally, yet DeShazer obeyed. He would spend the next thirty years sharing Christ’s love and hope with the people of Japan.

Obedience is not always easy. Roger Staubach, who led the Dallas Cowboys to Super Bowl Championships in 1971 and 1978, admitted that his position as a quarterback who didn’t call his own plays was a source of trial for him. Coach Landry sent in every play. Even though Roger considered coach Landry to have a “genius mind,” pride said that he should be able to run the offense.

Roger would later comment, “I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey, there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory.”<sup>2</sup> Guess what? The same is true in our relationship with the Lord.

## THINK

How can pride be a *big* barrier to obedience?

Has pride been a factor in your obedience to God? Why or why not?

It is easy to *say* you have faith in God but to *show* it through obedience is the real key. What does James say about this?

God told King Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22 that obedience was better than sacrifice. Why is that true?

How well does your walk match your talk?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for the opportunities He gives you to obey Him
- Confess to God, if necessary, allowing pride to be a barrier to fulfilling His will for your life
- Ask God to refine you into a person after His own heart
- Ask God to whittle down your pride

### **APPLY**

- Review your past few weeks. Has your walk been matching your talk?
- Most of us have an area or two where we struggle. What are your weak areas? And what will you do with them?

# DAY 9

**READ: Hebrews 11:29-31; Joshua 2**

If you were to look up the word “ordinary” in the dictionary, you would find it to mean: *of no special quality or interest; commonplace; unexceptional: plain or undistinguished; somewhat inferior or below average; mediocre.*

Truth be told, most people consider themselves to be quite ordinary—no special qualities, no great skills, no advanced talents, no great intellect, etc. They consider themselves to be just plain Jane’s or Common Carl’s—certainly not hero material. Perhaps you feel likewise.

If so, learn a lesson from Rahab. She was certainly nothing special to the people of her city. In fact, she was probably viewed as *much less* than special, and likely the last person anyone in Jericho thought would be known for doing anything great or noteworthy. Yet, she will go down in history as someone who protected the Israelite spies at the cost of her own life, saved her family (who she probably had been an embarrassment to), and, oh by the way, ended up becoming the great, great, great, etc. grandmother of Jesus!

## THINK

Do you consider yourself just an “ordinary person”?

Does God need you to be “extra special” to use you to do great things?

How should the story of Rahab encourage all “ordinary people” to make themselves available to be used by God?

Look at Matthew 1 and find Rahab in the genealogy of Jesus. How does finding her there (along with a host of other ordinary people) encourage you?

## PRAY

- Thank God that He can do anything through anyone
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking you need to be special to be

used by Him

- Give God your life and ask Him to use it how He sees fit
- Ask God to help you leave a great legacy for those who follow

### **APPLY**

- *Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:26-27).* Your answer to God’s question at the end of that Scripture will determine much of what you do in life. So, how do you answer it?

# DAY 10

## **READ: Judges 6:1-16**

Today, I am reminded about a little four year-old, named Johnny, who managed to get his Styrofoam glider caught in some tree branches about eight feet off the ground. No matter how hard our young friend tried to climb that tree, his muscles were not strong enough to pull him up. And no matter how high Johnny tried to jump, his little legs could not propel him upwards high enough. By himself, Johnny could do nothing about the glider, but then dad came home from work. He lifted Johnny onto his shoulders, allowing the young boy to easily reach up and grab his prized toy.

Similarly, it is easy for most of us to recognize that we are too little and too weak to deal with much of what life throws at us. However, we are not alone. God is with us, and He is ready to lift us up and strengthen us to reach for the highest goal and handle the biggest jobs.

## **THINK**

What does Gideon tell God in verse 15?

What is God's reply in verse 16?

Do you tend to feel too little, too weak, and too unprepared for the big things that life throws at you?

Why is it good to know that you are not alone—God is with you?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for being with you through life
- Confess to God, if necessary, forgetting that it doesn't matter how weak, little, etc. you seem if He is with you
- Ask God to open your eyes, so you can see that He is with you on the journey of life
- Ask God to show you His majesty, splendor, and glory

**APPLY**

- Feeling weak today? Get on your knees and seek God's strength
- Overwhelmed today? Put on the Armor of God and fight the battle in the Lord's strength

# DAY 11

## **READ: 2 Timothy 1**

George Mueller is one of my great heroes of the faith, though his life certainly did not have the beginnings of a great hero. He was born in 1805 and grew up in Prussia, which is located in present day Germany. By age sixteen, Mueller was a thief, a liar, an alcoholic, and in prison. Yet, at age twenty, he met the Lord and dedicated himself to God's service.

Seven years later, he moved to England. While there, he began to feel a burden for all the street children he saw wandering the cold and mean streets of Ashley Downs, England. Mueller believed that God was calling on him to start an orphanage to house and bless those little ones.

Much to the surprise of everyone but Mueller, money for an orphanage started pouring in. Soon the orphanage was built, and within two years it grew to one hundred boys. Mueller built another orphanage and then another and another. At one point, Mueller had five orphanages that were housing over two thousand children.

George Mueller kept a diary for all of his adult life. It is one of the most fascinating and amazing pieces of literature in the world. In it, Mueller records over 50,000 answers to prayer. More than five thousand of those answers came on the same day that he prayed for them.

In the last of his ninety-three years of life, the Lord provided the following "gifts" for the support of the thousands of children in his orphanages. 7203 loaves of bread donated, 5222 buns donated, 44,669 pounds of apples; forty sacks of potatoes; twenty boxes of soap, nine tons of coal, twenty-six haunches of venison, 4013 lbs. of meat, 112 rabbits and 312 pheasants, twenty-six cases of oranges, five boxes of dates, and hundreds of other items. This does not even include the cash donations which enabled him to purchase much more!

On Mueller's tombstone are these words, "He trusted in God with whom 'nothing shall be impossible,' and in His beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord who said, 'I go unto My Father, and whatsoever ye shall ask in My name that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son.'"

Who would have thought that a tombstone could be such a great testimony? It should make you wonder. If your tombstone was going to be a testimony to your life, what sentence would be etched upon it?

### **THINK**

In verse 13, Paul tells Timothy to pattern his words and life after his own. Could you confidently tell others to pattern their lives after you so they could move closer to faith and love in Christ?

Paul lists some people in verses 15-18. For what will those different people be forever known?

Who has God put into your life that you can pattern your life after in order to move closer to Christ?

What would you need to change about yourself before you could confidently tell people, “Follow me as I follow Christ”?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for the godly men and women He has brought into your life
- Confess to God, if necessary, not living a life that would help others move closer to Christ
- Ask God to help you deal with the things that are keeping you from fully following Christ
- Ask God to use you to help others know Him better

### **APPLY**

- Spend some time thinking about what you want to be remembered for. Pray about the sentence you want written on your tombstone

# DAY 12

## READ: 2 Timothy 2

On June 30, 1967, seventeen year-old Joni Eareckson dove into the Chesapeake Bay. Not realizing how shallow it was, she jammed her neck into the floor of the bay, causing instant paralysis from the neck down.

In spite of being a quadriplegic, Joni has written more than fifty Christian books, hosted a radio show that aired on over 1000 outlets, and was elected into the Christian Broadcasters Hall of Fame. If all of that wasn't enough, she also learned to paint by holding a paintbrush between her teeth. Her highly detailed artwork is sought after by collectors around the world.

If you are like me, you probably spend more time thinking about what you *can't do* than thinking about what you *can do*. I often feel like I am the fork when God needs a spoon, or I am the screwdriver when God needs a pair of pliers. Maybe you have felt the same way.

If so, you should be just as convicted as I am when I read Joni's story. If anyone has a right to complain about not having the ability to be used, it is Joni. Yet, she has been used mightily by the Lord to touch millions of people through her speaking, writing, and painting.

Remember, it's not about you. Followers of Christ understand that it is about what He can do through them when they place themselves in His hands.

## THINK

In verse 15, Paul talks about being a "workman approved by God." What Paul is literally saying here is that we need to be a "good fit" in God's hands. What can help you better understand your "fit"?

In verses 20-21, Paul talks about being a clean utensil that God can use. No one wants to use a dirty fork. What can you do to keep yourself a pure and clean utensil that the Lord can use?

According to verses 25-26, what is possible when we strive to be workers

and utensils in God's service?

Make a list of some of the people around you that you know are still held captive by Satan. Be sure to pray for them regularly.

### **PRAY**

- Thank God that He desires to use you to do great things for His glory and the benefit of all those around you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not striving to be a workman and utensil that He can use
- Ask God to cleanse you from all sin and make you a clean utensil fit for His use
- Spend some time in prayer for those you listed under the last question

### **APPLY**

- Be sure to pray regularly for those you listed under the last question
- If you did not make that prayer list of three to five lost people on DAY 5, do so now

# DAY 13

## READ: 2 Timothy 3

Amy Carmichael was born in Northern Ireland in 1867. While still a teenager, she heard 1 Corinthians 3:11-13, *for no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person’s work has any value.*

Amy was so moved by the power of those words, she spent the rest of the day in her room talking to the Lord. When she came out, she was *not* the same. She began travelling through her neighborhood, telling children about the Lord. Amy even started a children’s worship and prayer group called “The Morning Watch.”

At the age of twenty-eight, she moved to India where she would spend the next fifty-three years of her life. There, she worked unending hours to rescue young girls who were sold to Hindu temples for prostitution. Amy established the Dohnavur Fellowship to care for these young girls, and later young boys as well. This Fellowship still exists today and has grown to include schools and a free medical clinic. And it all started with the hearing of God’s Word.

In this trip called life, the Bible is our GPS and guide. Turn by turn, point by point, step by step, it can guide us right into God’s perfect will for our lives. Amy found that to be more than true. How about you?

## THINK

According to verse 16, what do the Scriptures do for us?

According to verse 17, what do the Scriptures do for us?

Can you think of a time when God used His Word to guide, correct, rebuke, or encourage you? If so, when was it?

In this trip called life, do you regularly consult “God’s GPS”?

If you do not consistently read and study God’s Word, when will you start?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for His Word which guides, directs, corrects, and encourages you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not seeking His plan for your life through His Word
- Ask God to help you seek His will for your life every day
- Ask God to give you a desire and a hunger to read and study His Word on a daily basis

### **APPLY**

- A healthy spiritual diet requires daily doses of God’s Word. If you are not daily getting into the Scriptures, start today

## DAY 14

### READ: 2 Timothy 4

The late President of Moody Bible Institute, William Culbertson, once said, “It is important to start right, but it is imperative to end well.” With that in mind, consider this man:

At age 91, he sits with diabetes and heart disease in a nursing home. Thirteen of the man’s thirteen children are strong Christians with nine in full-time Christian service. You would think that’s enough to content any man, but not this one. Instead of being content, he spends his time in the nursing home writing a book about Christian living to give to his grandchildren that he might strengthen their faith in Christ.

This is a man who is going to fight the good fight until the end. This is a man who is going to serve the Lord until his dying breath. This is a man who will end well. And speaking of ending well, William Culbertson’s last words were, “God... God... Yes!”<sup>3</sup> Amen to that!

Indeed, followers of Christ are prepared to serve the Lord every single day, up until they take their last breath.

### THINK

In verse 5, Paul literally tells Timothy to “fully accomplish” the work the Lord has given him. Are you working to fully accomplish the work the Lord has given you?

If you do not know what the Lord has for you to do, what will you do to find out?

According to verses 6-8, what will be Paul’s reward for fighting the good fight?

As you think about the crumbling morals and increasing problems in our nation, why is it vital for you to fight the good fight?

What will it take for you to end well?

**PRAY**

- Thank God for the work He has given you to accomplish.
- Confess to God, if necessary, not working to fully accomplish the work He has given you
- Ask God to help you build His kingdom until the end

**APPLY**

- Don't breeze by the last question. Spend time thinking and praying over it. The legacy you leave hangs in the balance!

# DAY 15

## **READ: John 4:1-42**

Eric Liddell is probably most remembered for being the central character in the biographical movie, *Chariots of Fire*. The movie focuses on Eric's quest to win track and field gold at the 1924 Paris Olympics. His race of choice was the 100m sprint. However, when he discovered that this race was to be held on a Sunday, he switched to the 400m because he did not wish to run on the Lord's Day. In the end, he would win gold in the 400m and set an Olympic record in the process!

Yet, it is not for his Olympic conquests that I bring him up in this devotional. It is for what occurred well after the spotlight left him. In 1925, he moved with his wife to China to enter missionary work. His desire to see the Chinese people come to Christ was so great that even after the Japanese invaded in the late 1930s, Eric refused to leave.

For the next few years, Liddell ministered diligently to the streams of refugees who came to his rural mission station. In 1943, however, the Japanese made it to that station as well. He was quickly interred as a prisoner of war. While in the prison camp, he continued to minister to his fellow internees as well as to the Japanese guards.

Liddell was not going to let anything keep him from working to bring in a harvest of lost souls. Today, in our culture, there seems to be a plentiful harvest but few reapers. Yet, Christians have been commissioned to the high task of being co-laborers with God.

In so many areas, the harvest is ripe for picking. Are you ready to go into those fields?

## **THINK**

When the woman at the well understood who Jesus truly was, how did she respond?

How have you responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Who have you told the gospel story to in the last three weeks?

Who can you pray for that needs to know about the love and sacrifice of Jesus?

### **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus because He came for you, died for you, and rose again to defeat your sin
- Confess to God, if necessary, not sharing the gospel story that saved you from your sins
- Ask God to use you as a harvester in His fields
- Pray for those you listed under the last question. Ask God to give you opportunities to share Him with them

### **APPLY**

- Take the last question seriously. Covenant to pray for these people regularly. Eternity hangs in the balance
- Remember your prayer list of three to five people? Keep it close and pray without ceasing

# DAY 16

**READ: 1 Samuel 16:1-7; Exodus 4:1-12**

Gladys Aylward had a secret grudge against God. She had always desired to be tall, light skinned, and have long blond hair. Instead, she was short (only 4' 10"), swarthy skinned (in spite of being English), and had dark black hair.

Despite her anger toward God for these things, she felt a call on her life in 1930. At age twenty-six, she believed that the Lord wanted her to serve in China. Yet, when she sought a mission agency to send her, she was rejected again and again.

She did not let that stop her, however. Instead, Gladys saved up her own money and travelled via the Trans-Siberian Railroad across Russia and into China—even though the two countries were at war. When she arrived in Tientsin, China, she immediately realized three things. First, everyone was short. Second, everyone had a dark complexion. And third, everyone had black hair.

Most Chinese were skeptical of foreigners and refused to interact with them. However, Gladys was so near in appearance, the Chinese were strangely welcoming. When other “outsiders” were rejected, she was accepted!

Eight years later, when the Japanese began bombing runs in China, she struggled to lead one hundred children to a safe haven. For twelve days, she guided those young ones on a perilous journey between mountain passes, across swollen rivers, and through frigid nights. Finally arriving safely, she collapsed in exhaustion and was bedridden for several days.

In spite of health issues that plagued her for the rest of her life, she continued to serve the Lord faithfully, opening orphanages, preaching His Word, and changing lives through the power of Christ. Nothing was going to stop her from helping the Chinese people find life in Jesus' name.

## THINK

We humans tend to judge by outward appearance, but what does the Lord tell Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7?

God doesn't care what you look like, how smart you are, the quality of your resume, etc. What God cares about is the condition of your heart. With that in mind, do you have a heart anxious to serve the Lord? Why or why not?

In Exodus 4, how does God encourage Moses?

Many feel unqualified to serve the Lord. But why do your qualifications not matter to God?

### **PRAY**

- Thank Christ again for giving His all for you, so that you could have new and eternal life
- Confess to God, if necessary, using outward appearance as a marker for whether or not someone can be used by the Lord
- Ask God to help remind you that He is with you and that is the only qualification you need
- Ask God to strengthen your resolve to follow Christ and center on Him

### **APPLY**

- It is impossible to live the Christian life alone. You need strong Christians around you holding you accountable, encouraging you, and rebuking you when necessary. Seek those people out if you do not have them
- Often God will use our most glaring weaknesses to make the biggest impact on others. What Gladys thought would inhibit her (her looks) was actually used by the Lord to change the lives of countless people. What weaknesses do you have that God just might use to touch others? (Looks, depression, abuse history, financial issues, addiction struggles, etc.)

# DAY 17

## **READ: Daniel 1**

Milt Rood worked for years in Spokane as a car salesman. He was also very active with the Union Gospel Mission, laboring many long hours with rebellious and troubled youth. Week after week he'd patiently teach the Word, pray, and talk with these youth despite their attitudes and actions.

One week Milt went into the hospital for exploratory surgery. The doctors found he was full of cancer. Unable to do anything to help him, they simply sewed him up again and sent him home. He died within a week. After the funeral, someone remarked that *no one* ever asked how many cars Milt sold. The only thing people talked about was his work for Christ and His kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

Truly, followers of Christ are known for the things that matter for eternity. For what are you known?

## **THINK**

Daniel was essentially offered all that the Babylonian culture had to give. But according to verse 8, what did He want most of all?

The Babylonians took hundreds of teens from their parents and tried to focus them on the delights of their culture so they would forget about the “Jewish God.” Today, we see this as a tool of Satan as he seeks to focus us on the delights of our own culture, so we forget about God’s kingdom. What can help you stand as Daniel did?

Do you have Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego type friends who will help you stand for Christ and lead others to Him?

In the end, Daniel and Milt are known for the amazing things they did for the Lord. For what do you want to be remembered?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for those who stand up for His Kingdom
- Confess to God, if necessary, not being someone who stands for His kingdom but rather focuses on the world
- Ask God to help you stand for Him
- Ask God to help you focus on His kingdom purposes

## **APPLY**

- In a previous devotion, you were to think about what you wanted etched on your tombstone. Have you figured it out yet?
- Think about how Satan specifically distracts you from “Kingdom Work.” What do you need to do about these distractions?

# DAY 18

## **READ: Isaiah 40:1-16**

In 1743, twenty-four year-old David Brainerd entered full time ministry. Though sick with tuberculosis and urged by his friends and family to take a simple and safe pastorate, David chose instead to minister to the Native Americans living in the forests of present-day Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Because of this choice, David was frequently exposed to hunger and cold, lost in forests, caught in storms with no shelter, and forced to spend night upon night in the woods. One journal entry records, “About six at night I lost my way in the wilderness, and wandered over rocks and mountains, through swamps and most dreadful places. I was pinched with cold and distressed with an extreme pain in my head and stomach, so much blood came from me. But God preserved me, and, blessed be His name, such fatigues and hardships as these seem to wean me more from the earth and I trust will make Heaven the sweeter.”<sup>5</sup>

By his twenty-eighth birthday, Brainerd's health was failing fast and he thought about following the advice of friends and family and settling down in a more traditional pastorate. Realizing though that he did not have much longer to live, he resolutely determined to “burn out to the last.”

His journal records, “Farewell friends and earthly comforts; farewell to the dearest, the very dearest of them all. I will spend my life to my latest moments in caves and dens of the earth, if the kingdom of Christ may thereby be advanced.” Brainerd would die at the age of just twenty-nine.

Contrast David Brainerd's life with a story from the excavation of the Roman city of Pompeii. Archeologists uncovered the body of a woman found mummified by the volcanic ashes of Mount Vesuvius. Her position told a tragic story. Her feet pointed toward the city gate, but her outstretched arms and fingers were straining for something that lay behind her. The treasure for which she grasped was a bag of pearls. The focus of her life at that point would be her undoing.

This truth is no less applicable to each of us today. The focus of our lives will determine the direction of our lives. As for followers of Christ, we should be focused on the eternal regardless of the cost or consequence.

What is your focus?

### **THINK**

What does “the voice” say in verses 6-8?

What are you focused on—the temporary or the eternal?

According to Isaiah 40, what are all the things of the world worth compared to God?

What kind of accountability is in your life to help you focus on the things of God and not the things of this world?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for the people in your life that help turn your head to the eternal and away from the temporary
- Confess to God, if necessary, a focus on this world over a focus on Christ
- Ask God to place people in your life who will help you focus on the eternal things and to live your life like Christ
- Ask God to help you be a person like that for others

### **APPLY**

- Check out the e-book *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*. It is inspiring, encouraging, and convicting! It will be the best 99 cents you ever spent!

# DAY 19

## READ: Philippians 1

In her book, *A Practical Guide to Prayer*, Dorothy Haskin tells about a noted concert violinist who was asked the secret of her mastery of the instrument. The woman answered the question with two words: “Planned neglect.” Then she explained. “There were many things that used to demand my time. When I went to my room after breakfast, I made my bed, straightened the room, dusted, and did whatever seemed necessary. When I finished my work, I turned to my violin practice. That system prevented me from accomplishing what I should on the violin. So I reversed things. I deliberately planned to neglect everything else until my practice period was complete. And that program of planned neglect is the secret of my success.”

The theological word for “planned neglect” is *consecrate*. It means to devote or dedicate to a purpose. Obviously, when you devote and dedicate yourself to a purpose that means you, by extension, are choosing to set things aside to make that happen.

It is said that when the great nineteenth century evangelist D.L. Moody went to Britain for the first time, he heard a preacher say, “The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully consecrated to Him.”

Moody remarked to a friend, “He said 'a man.' He did not say a great man, nor a learned man, nor a smart man, but simply 'a man.' I am a man, and it lies with the man himself whether he will or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man.”<sup>6</sup>

Moody ended up leading thousands of people to the Lord throughout his life. Likewise, all those who wish to be followers of Christ must plan to neglect much of the temporary things of this world in order to focus on God’s eternal purposes.

## THINK

How does Paul show “planned neglect” in verses 20-24?

What should you be living for according to verses 10-11?

What will help you live out verse 27?

If you were to come up with a system of “planned neglect,” what are some things you would need to “neglect” in order to focus more on Christ and lead others to Him?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for His tremendous love and care for you
- Confess to God, if necessary, neglecting the eternal things for the temporary things of this world
- Ask God to help you focus on the eternal over the temporary
- Ask God to help you lead others to Him

### **APPLY**

- Don't skip quickly by the last question. Spend some time on it. Have I mentioned before that eternity may hang in the balance?

# DAY 20

## **READ: Ephesians 5:1-20**

Hazel Allan, Lucie Altenbach, Nathan Amato, Henry Barlieb, Henry Bisco, Bertha Eickhoff, Granville Gould Jr., Leo Guida, Lucille Hattenbach, Geraldine Holden, Russell Hollenbach, Joan Hudacek, Elizabeth Hughes, Kenneth Kalb, Robert Koncir, Judith Kurtz, Stephen Malajczuk, Ralph Newsome Sr., Stephen Sova, Elizabeth Steffy, Larry Toth, Helene Williams, Jeannette Zehner...

Do you know what all those names have in common? They all represent people who were alive a week before the initial writing of this devotional. Today, however, they are no longer with us. I certainly hope that many of them knew the Lord, but what if they did not? What can be done about it now?

Each of us know people in our families, our neighborhoods, our workplaces, etc. who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. What will be their fate if they were to die tomorrow without Christ?

Is that fate acceptable to you? If not, what must you do about it?

## **THINK**

What should we be doing according to verses 1 and 2?

How often do you spend time doing verse 10?

How will fulfilling verses 15 and 16 be a great blessing to your unsaved friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, etc.?

Who are you *daily* praying for that needs Jesus?

What can you do this week to begin sharing Christ with those who need Him?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God that He wants to do great and awesome things in and through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not making a difference in the lives of the unsaved around you
- Ask God to use you in the lives of unsaved friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors
- Pray for people who you know need Jesus

## **APPLY**

- God has placed your friends, relatives, associates, neighbors, and classmates around you for a reason. Be praying about how you can work for God's glory and their eternal benefit
- Talk to your pastor about ministry opportunities available in your church and in your community

# DAY 21

**READ: Psalm 119:9-16; Luke 6:46-49**

Count Nicolaus Ludwig Von Zinzendorf was born in present-day western Germany in 1700. He was the son of a high noble family, and his life was destined for much worldly greatness and wealth. In fact, at the young age of twenty-one, Nicolaus was named to the King's judicial court.

However, less than a year later, Zinzendorf felt called by God to buy an estate and create a safe-haven for Christians persecuted by the Catholic Church. By the age of twenty-seven, Zinzendorf had completely left "public life" and focused all his time ministering to those who sought refuge on his estate.

In 1731, after hearing the account of a converted slave from the West Indies, Nicolaus felt moved by God to send missionaries to the Americas. Zinzendorf's powerful pleas caused men to head out in Christ's name to make a difference not only in the Americas but also in Greenland, Lapland, Surinam, Africa's Guinea Coast, South Africa, Amsterdam's Jewish quarter, Algeria, Ceylon, Romania, and Constantinople.

By the time of Nicolaus' death, he had sent out over 225 missionaries, while he himself had travelled to America, founded the city of Bethlehem, PA, and established present-day Moravian College.

Indeed, Zinzendorf's life is a testimony to how making sacrifices for the Lord can literally change the course of history. Followers of Christ understand that joining in God's work may require major adjustments, but those adjustments are well worth the price.

God has a great and awesome plan for your life. To experience it, however, you must follow through and obey. Only through obedience can you be part of the solution. Only through obedience can the Lord make a mighty difference through you. And only through obedience can you become all that God created you to be!

## **THINK**

According to Psalm 119:9-16, what are the benefits of obedience?

According to Jesus in Luke 6, what are the benefits of obedience?

Why is it wrong for someone to call Jesus their Lord and then not do what He says?

How would you describe your level of obedience?

Is there anything God wants you to do that you are not currently doing? If so, what is it?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God that He wants to do great and awesome things in and through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, the times you have failed to obey Him
- Ask God to strengthen your desire to obey Him
- Ask God to show you clearly what He wants to do through you

### **APPLY**

- The only way to answer the last question is through prayer. Be sure to set aside time to ask the Lord, “What would you have me do that I am not already doing?”

# DAY 22

## **READ: Jonah 1-3**

In the 1800s, the interior of eastern Africa was known as “The White Man’s Graveyard” because of the high mortality rate of Western missionaries. Diseases like malaria, yellow fever, and typhoid claimed so many victims, that most missionaries headed to this part of the world packed all their possessions in a coffin!

Still, they pressed on with a God given sense of urgency.

In 1893, three such missionaries were Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent, and Roland Bingham. Within one year, Gowans and Kent had died of malaria, leaving Bingham the only one still alive. He, too, was sick with malaria and returned home to his native Canada.

Sometime after recovering, he visited with Walter Gowan’s mother to give his condolences. Her words back to him were ones that Roland did not expect to hear. She simply stated, “I would rather have had Walter go out to the Sudan and die there all alone than have him home today disobeying the Lord.”<sup>7</sup>

Today, in our culture, life has become pretty easy. We can get practically everything we want just the way we want it. We can choose the kind of car we want and how “loaded” we want that car to be. We can have computers custom built. We can go to restaurants and pick from large menus, buffets, and salad bars. The list goes on and on.

There is certainly nothing wrong with all of that, *unless* this attitude seeps into our relationship with God. Followers of Christ understand that obeying God is not a “pick and choose” affair. We must do what God says. There are no other options.

## **THINK**

What did God ask Jonah to do? How did Jonah respond?

How did God deal with Jonah's disobedience?

Praise the Lord, God gives second chances! How did Jonah respond when God gave Him a second chance?

How do you think God would rate your level of obedience?

Why do you think He would rate you at that level?

### **PRAY**

- Praise God for giving second chances when you fail
- Praise God that He loves you enough to discipline you
- Confess to God times you have failed to obey
- Ask God to help you live in obedience to Him
- Ask God to mold you into a person who lives in obedience

### **APPLY**

- Review your choices, actions, thoughts, etc. Is there disobedience in any of those areas?
- Seek out an accountability partner who can pray for you and hold you accountable to making choices that honor the Lord

# DAY 23

## **READ: Jonah 3:10-4:11**

While going through college, I worked for three years at an office supply store. During my time there, I literally saw a hundred fellow employees come and go, along with over a dozen assistant managers, and even four general managers.

The last of those four GM's was not good! His "leadership style" rubbed many people the wrong way, creating dissension in the workplace. So much dissention, in fact, that the District Manager stepped down from on high to hold a store meeting. At that meeting, I expected the District Manager to take the GM to task and apologize to us all. That, however, did not happen.

Instead, this regional supervisor informed us that the GM was the head of the store. He was not perfect and had things to work on, but our actions were contributing to the problem. Then he, in no uncertain terms, told us to stop being part of the problem and to start being part of the solution.

This was *not* what we wanted to hear, and many employees resigned shortly after this. For myself, I learned a valuable spiritual lesson: as it is in business, so it is in our relationship with Christ and His church. We may not always agree with God's plans or the decisions of church leaders. At times like that, we need to decide, "Will I be part of the solution or negatively contribute by being part of the problem?"

Followers of Christ, of course, are *always* part of the solution!

## **THINK**

God did a great thing for the Ninevites. What was Jonah's reaction to this according to verses 4:1-3?

What lesson did God try to teach Jonah in chapter 4?

We never hear from Jonah again, perhaps he was no longer used by God. How about you? Will the world hear about God using you?

What will it take to be part of the solution and not part of the problem?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God that He can use anyone to do anything
- Confess to God, if necessary, contributing to the problem instead of working as part of the solution
- Ask God to give you a willing and obedient heart
- Ask God to mold you into a difference maker

### **APPLY**

- Is there dissention in your church? Gossip? If so, send an email to your pastor right now letting him know that you want to be part of the solution
- Even if you perceive everything to be fine at your church, send an email to your pastor. Let him know you are praying for him and that you have his back

# DAY 24

## **READ: Mark 15:16-39**

During his reign, King Frederick William III of Prussia found himself in trouble. Wars had been costly, and in trying to build the nation, he was seriously short of finances. After careful reflection, he decided to ask the women of Prussia to bring their jewelry of gold and silver to be melted down for their country. For each ornament received, he determined to exchange a decoration of iron as a symbol of his gratitude. Each decoration would be inscribed, "I gave gold for iron, 1813."

The response was overwhelming. Even more importantly, these women prized their gifts from the king more highly than their former jewelry. It soon became unfashionable to wear jewelry and thus was established the Order of the Iron Cross. Members wore no ornaments except a cross of iron for all to see. <sup>8</sup>

Similarly, to be a follower of Christ, we must come to our King and exchange the flourishes of our former life for a cross. We must be willing to sacrifice for the betterment of others and the glory of the King!

## **THINK**

What did Jesus go through in the Bible reading for today?

Why did He endure it all?

We know that Jesus gave His all so that the world could come to know Him. What are you giving up so the world can meet Jesus?

How can your sacrifice of time, talents, and treasure be used to make a mighty difference in this world?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God that He sent His Son to die for you, so that you could be

part of His kingdom

- Confess to God, if necessary, not sacrificing for your King
- Ask God to strengthen your resolve to sacrifice
- Ask God to help you use your gifts and abilities for His glory and the benefit of a desperately needy world

### **APPLY**

- God has created you to be a difference maker! Seek to be used by Him. Study His Word, invest in prayer, and ask others, “How do you think the Lord has gifted me?”

# DAY 25

**READ: John 8:28-36; John 15:1-17**

The Bible is clear. We are all born enslaved to sin. Yet through Christ's death and resurrection, the chains have been broken and the prison doors flung open. We need only accept Christ's offer and step out into freedom. The choice is ours.

Consider the following story. In 1829 two men, George Wilson and James Porter, robbed a United States mail carrier. Both men were subsequently captured, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death by hanging.

Porter was executed on schedule. George Wilson was not. Shortly before the set date, a number of Wilson's influential friends pleaded for mercy to the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, on behalf of their friend. President Jackson issued a formal pardon. The charges resulting in the death sentence were completely dropped.

Incredibly George Wilson refused the pardon, and the case went all the way to the Supreme Court! In the ruling, Chief Justice John Marshall wrote, "A pardon is an act of grace...it may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered..."<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, God, through His grace, has made a pardon available to us through His Son, Jesus. However, we can similarly reject that pardon and stay in captivity to sin when we do not seek to know and obey Christ.

## THINK

Many people quote, "The truth will set you free" without remembering that this freedom comes through "remaining faithful to Christ and seeking to know the truth." Why can you truly not have freedom without remaining faithful to Christ and seeking to know His truth?

What are you doing *daily* to remain close to Christ?

What are you doing *daily* to grow in your knowledge of Christ?

What more could you be doing that you are not already?

### **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for being able to set you free from sin
- Confess to God, if necessary, rejecting the freedom you can have because you are not remaining faithful nor seeking to know Christ more and more
- Ask God to strengthen your resolve to follow Christ
- Ask God to help you keep a daily commitment to Him

### **APPLY**

- Being set free from sin is a glorious thing, but it involves more than simply praying a prayer or having been at an altar. It requires a daily commitment, so take some time to review how your daily walk with Christ has been
- Seeking to make a renewed commitment today? Contact your church and seek to talk with your pastor

# DAY 26

## **READ: John 5:1-30**

In John 5, we meet a man who has been sick for thirty-eight years. Lying by the Pool of Bethesda seeking to get well, the only thing he has to show for his decades spent there is despair and hopelessness.

Perhaps you are like this man than you realize. Perhaps you have been struggling with the same issue year after year after year. Maybe it's your marriage. Maybe it's a wayward child. Maybe it's a struggle with a certain sin that keeps beating you, and you are at the point of hopelessness. You're about to throw in the towel and resign yourself to the fact that since it's been this long, it will surely continue day after day after day.

Don't believe it! Jesus has come with pardon papers in hand. He has the power to heal your marriage, to bring back that wayward child, and to overcome that sin. He can set you free. And when the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. Don't give up. Freedom *and* hope are here in the person of Jesus Christ.

## **THINK**

What was the man's response to Jesus' offer in verses 6-7?

When has "I can't" inhibited what God wanted to do in your life?

Why is it important to realize that even if *you* can't, God still can?

Consider what Jesus says to the man in verse 14. How does getting trapped in sin ruin the work of God in a life?

Is there sin in your life that is inhibiting the work God wants to do in and through you? If so, what must you do about this?

## **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus that all things are possible with Him
- Confess to God, if necessary, focusing on what you can't do instead of what Christ can do in and through you
- Ask God to strengthen you so that you can honor the Son with your life (verse 23)
- Ask God to point out any sin in your life

## **APPLY**

- Spend some time focusing on what Christ can do in and through you
- Ask Him to show you what He has planned for you
- Ask Him to use you to do awesome things for His glory

# DAY 27

## **READ: John 8:1-20**

In John 8, a woman is thrust into Jesus' life. She has literally been thrown at His feet after being caught in adultery. The crowd surrounding her has branded this woman a sinner. Publically exposed for her behavior, she hears the shouts of condemnation and judgment.

Can you imagine the shame and embarrassment? Can you imagine the guilt? Maybe you've been there too...or are there? You're the one who did that thing in high school. You're the one with the bad marriage. You're the one with that pornography addiction. You're the one who...fill in the blank. Whatever it is, everyone knows about it.

Now, you are filled with shame and guilt, and every time people steal a glance your way, you think they are looking at you with judgment in their eyes. If that is you, read this next part carefully: *Who cares what those people think!?! Here's what you should care about. JESUS IS HERE.*

He is saying, "I died to set you free. You don't need to feel condemned and judged anymore. If you have guilt and shame, let it lead you to Me. Feel My love and be set free by it. Don't be trapped in a prison of guilt or condemnation. It's time to be free!"

## **THINK**

Jesus does not condemn this woman but does give a command in verse 11. What is it?

As in John 5, why does Jesus tell the woman to sin no more?

Have you made shameful choices in the past? If so, what do you think Christ wants to do for you right now?

Where do you need to experience Christ's freedom? What will it take to fully experience it?

## **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for the power to free you from condemnation
- Confess to God, if necessary, not moving forward in Christ because you are too focused on what others think
- Ask God to fill you with Himself and the freedom He offers
- Ask God to show you where you need His work in your life

## **APPLY**

- Not sure how to answer the last question? Take some time to talk or email with a church leader, a trusted Christian friend, or your church's pastor

# DAY 28

## **READ: John 9:1-38**

In John 9, the disciples see a man born blind and immediately assume, along with the rest of the culture, that this must have occurred because either he or his parents deserved God's curse.

During Bible times, it was falsely assumed that if something negative happened in your life or in your family, it was because God had given a life-long punishment from which you could not escape. You were relegated to that fate. You made your bed, now the Lord was making you lie in it. You wanted to do that thing, now the Judge caused you to suffer the consequences...and to keep suffering them.

Maybe you have been there too. Your parents made some bad choices, and those choices have affected your life in a negative way. Maybe you yourself made those choices. Meanwhile, Satan is whispering in your ear, "This is what you deserve. This is who you are. Get used to it!" But, again, here comes Jesus with the pardon papers. And if the Son has the power to set you free, you don't need to get used to your prison cell. Freedom is here!

## **THINK**

Why does Jesus say the man was born blind according to verse 3?

How does "resigning yourself to a fate" cancel out the power of God working in your life?

Look at verses 11, 17, 33, 35, and 38. Chart the progression of how Jesus is described. What do you see?

How does growing in your understanding of Christ help set you free from the expectations others have thrust upon you?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His glory that can be displayed through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, living by someone else's false expectations of you
- Ask God to help you grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ
- Ask God to deepen your relationship with Himself

## **APPLY**

- If you have been living under someone else's expectations, what must you do to break free of that? How does Christ want to help you down a new path?
- The prison doors have been flung open. It is time to walk out

# DAY 29

## **READ: John 11:1-44**

Death is the ultimate prison because it is eternal. It is for this reason that many people live in fear of death. Yet, because of Christ, we don't have to be trapped or imprisoned by a fear of death. We can have victory over it through Christ!

Realize that death can't hold you in its prison. Death has no grip on you. You are free! Read the great words from 1 Corinthians 15: *"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

That deserves an AMEN!

## **THINK**

What does Jesus say in verses 25-26?

What is your answer to Jesus' question in verse 26?

Do you have any fears about death? If so, what are they?

Why do you need not fear death as a Christian?

Who do you know who needs to understand the powerful truths of John 11 and 1 Corinthians 15?

## **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for overcoming sin and death
- Confess to God, if necessary, living with fears about death when you can have freedom from this fear through Christ

- Ask God to fill you with the knowledge of victory over sin and death through Christ
- Pray for those you listed under the last question

**APPLY**

- Don't just pray for those you listed under the last question today. Commit to praying for them daily

# DAY 30

## **READ: 2 Corinthians 5:1-17**

Liar. Cheater. Adulterer. Impatient. Angry. Immoral. Bigoted. Gossip. Loser. Sinner.

For many people, one or more of the above words has been their identity for too long. Perhaps you know the feeling. You have been labeled and stigmatized. You are living in the present weighted down by a past full of poor choices and regrets.

If that is you, I have great news. Christ came to give you a new identity and to make you into a new creation. Why let your past continue to define you when you can be defined by your future in Christ?

For example, my wife and I have fostered twenty-seven children. It is certainly not easy to be a foster parent, but it can be very rewarding. One of the most rewarding things is seeing a child with a troubled past, and with no one to call Mom and Dad, find a forever family.

These children have the opportunity to leave the past where it belongs and begin fresh. They receive new clothes, make new friends, and most importantly take on a new last name. With this new identity, they can experience family, security, blessing, and more. It doesn't get any better than that!

Likewise, when we are adopted by God, we take on a new identity. We stop being defined by our past and start being defined by the Lord. We no longer follow our old sinful patterns. Instead, we follow after Christ. It is a brand new beginning, and it is awesome!

## **THINK**

What does verse 15 mean?

Verse 17 talks about having a new life in Christ. How has Christ been making you "new" as you walk with Him?

In what areas do you still struggle with the “old you”?

What are you doing to help press toward a new life in Christ?

### **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for coming, dying, and rising again so that you can experience new life
- Confess to God, if necessary, still living like the old you after accepting Christ as Savior and Lord
- Ask God to deal with the issues that keep you tied to the “old you”
- Ask God to make you more and more like Christ and less and less like the world

### **APPLY**

- Spend time isolating where you still struggle with the “old you”
- Examine yourself and give what you find over to God. Let Him begin working on these areas

# DAY 31

**READ: 1 Peter 1:13-25; 2 Peter 1:3-11**

Recently, my wife and I had an old friend and her two young boys visit with us. The youngest boy, nine year-old Josiah, really *loves* to play video games, so during the visit, his *Nintendo DS* seemed grafted to his body!

Young Josiah, however, was having a bit of a problem getting to the next level in one of his games. Since my son, Kyle, is five years older than him, Josiah thought someone “older and wiser” could get him to the next level, so he gave Kyle his DS and told him to take over. Thankfully for Josiah, Kyle was able to get the job done!

As this was happening, I was reminded that this is what Jesus wants us to do with Him. He wants us to admit that we cannot get to the next level alone and we need help. Then He wants us to willingly hand over the controller for our lives to Him and say, “Here Jesus, you take over and get the job done!”

## **THINK**

Is it possible to live out 1 Peter 1:15-16 without God’s strength? Why or why not?

What can we accomplish through God’s divine power according to 2 Peter 1:3-4?

Have you given control of *all* your life to Jesus? If not, what is holding you back?

What do you think God could do through you if you were fully yielded to His lordship?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His great power that can do infinitely more than you could ask or imagine

- Confess to God, if necessary, refusing to give *all* of yourself over to God's control
- Ask God to make you fully yielded to His lordship
- Ask God to do great and amazing things in and through you

### **APPLY**

- Isolate the areas of your life that are not under the lordship of Jesus Christ
- Surrender them to the Lord today

# DAY 32

## **READ: Matthew 7:12-29**

Looking online, I found the job description of an “Agricultural Inspector.” It reads as follows: *Collect samples from animals, plants, or products and route them to laboratories for microbiological assessment...Write reports of findings and recommendations and advise farmers, growers, or processors of corrective action to be taken. Inspect agricultural commodities...for compliance with laws and regulations governing health, quality, and safety. Interpret and enforce government acts and regulations and explain required standards...*<sup>10</sup>

Why do I bring up this job description? Well, if you call yourself a follower of Christ, then you are identifying yourself with Christ. As a “Christ-one,” certain “fruit” should be evident from your life. With that in mind, consider yourself an “Agricultural Inspector” for the next few moments as you read through the following questions.

## **THINK**

Assess samples of your actions, attitudes, words, and thoughts over the past week or so. How Christ-like have they been?

Has your life been complying with the Word of God to ensure your optimal spiritual health?

When it comes to the standards set forth by Christ and His Word, where are you doing well? Where have you been falling short?

Take the above three questions to someone who knows you well. Ask this person to answer these questions about you—allow him or her to do some inspecting:

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His great love and care for you

- Confess to God, if necessary, any area where you are falling short
- Ask God to help you fully identify with His Son, Jesus Christ, so that the world can see Him in you
- Ask God to go to work in your life, doing what He needs to do to make you more like Jesus

### **APPLY**

- Do not skip by the last question too quickly. Allow someone else, with an objective point of view, to do some inspecting of you. The information you glean could be invaluable!

# DAY 33

**READ: Philippians 3:12-4:1; Galatians 2:19 & 20**

Francis Asbury was the first man sent to America by John Wesley to minister in the name of the Methodists. He was a tireless worker. During his years in the ministry, Asbury rode on horseback from church to church on the American frontier, amassing an estimated 270,000 miles — almost equal to traveling around the globe eleven times!

On October 6, 1771, he wrote in his journal, “As to my own mind, I long and pray that I will be more spiritual. But in this I comfort myself that my intention is upright, and that I have the cause of God at heart. But I want to stand complete in all the will of God, 'holy as he that hath called me is holy, in all manner of conversation.'....my spirit mourns, and hungers, and thirsts, after entire devotion.”

## THINK

Can you say the same as Francis Asbury? If not, why not?

If you told someone to “pattern your life after mine,” would that person be moving closer to the Lord? Explain your answer:

Can you say the same as Paul in Galatians 2:19-20? If not, why not?

If you were rendered mute, would your actions and attitudes be able to still “profess” that you are committed to Christ?

## PRAY

- Thank God for the work He has done in you already
- Confess to God, if necessary, not living like Christ in front of a watching world
- Ask God to fill you with Himself
- Ask God to use you to make a positive influence and difference in people’s lives

**APPLY**

- Write out Galatians 2:20
- Place it where you will see it often—the refrigerator, your desk, the nightstand, etc.
- Every time you see it, repeat the verse to yourself

# DAY 34

## **READ: Matthew 5:1-20**

In July of 2013, I began noticing a number of *Facebook* posts involving Prince William and Princess Kate. “Would their baby be a boy or a girl?” “What would his or her name be?” Etc. It seemed as the due date approached, these posts became more and more persistent.

Many people were simply enraptured by the whole thing. Speaking strictly for myself, I can say that, frankly, it got a little annoying. I did not see what the big deal was. Yes, this couple is royalty, and William is second-in-line to the throne of England. But the fact is that if you are a Christian, you, too, are royalty.

Yes, you are a child of the King of Kings. You are an heir to the Kingdom of Heaven. And what you do as a child of the King is far more important to eternity than what some couple in England names their baby.

## **THINK**

According to verse 3, what enables you to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven?

According to verses 13-16, what responsibilities do you have as royalty in the Kingdom of Heaven?

What will make you great in the Kingdom of Heaven according to verse 19?

How are you doing at fully obeying the King of Kings?

What areas may need some work?

## **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for making a way for you to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven

- Confess to God, if necessary, living like a commoner instead of Heavenly Royalty
- Ask God to help you be salt and light to the world
- Ask God to point out areas where your life does not reflect His majesty

### **APPLY**

- Spend time thinking about what it means to be a child of the King of Kings
- As you do so, ask yourself the following questions: How does that give me value? What responsibilities does this lay upon me? And how should my life reflect the eternal majesty of the King?

# DAY 35

## **READ: Matthew 6:19-34**

The Roman emperor Caligula ruled from 37 to 41 AD. Known for his cruelty, lust, and narcissism, he would eventually be assassinated after just a four year reign.

It is important to note, however, that Caligula was *not* assassinated for being cruel or lustful or narcissistic. After all, just about every Roman emperor had those traits! Rather, Caligula was murdered because of his total lack of care for the Roman Empire or its people.

Instead of investing his time and energies in “kingdom responsibilities,” he chose to spend his days doing all sorts of selfish, and even strange, things. For instance, he was known to spend enormous amounts of time with his horse, Incitatus. The emperor let his equine friend eat from the table during meals. He even made Incitatus an official citizen of Rome and later raised him to the position of senator!

Of course, it is easy to read about Caligula and wonder how someone could do so little for his kingdom. However, as Christians, we need to be thinking about what we are doing for the Kingdom of Heaven. Are we spending our time responsibly serving this Kingdom, or are we engaged in our own selfish pursuits?

## **THINK**

What is Jesus saying in verses 19-21? How are you doing with this?

Verse 24 talks about divided loyalties. Are you totally sold out to the Kingdom of Heaven, or do you tend to focus on worldly pursuits as well?

What is Jesus saying in verses 31-33?

What can help you daily stay focused on your Kingdom responsibilities?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the Kingdom of Heaven
- Confess to God, if necessary, not fulfilling your responsibilities to the Kingdom because of earthly distractions
- Ask God to focus you on His will for you in the Kingdom
- Ask God to use you to make a mighty difference in this world

## **APPLY**

- Think about the things that distract you from the Kingdom of Heaven. What might you need to start eliminating?

# DAY 36

## **READ: Matthew 13:24-52**

The Ming dynasty in China, which lasted for nearly three hundred years, has been described as “one of the greatest eras of orderly government and social stability in human history.”<sup>11</sup>

One of those Ming rulers, however, wasn’t quite up to par. The expansion and power of the Ming ground to a halt from 1505 to 1521 when Zhengde ruled the kingdom. Neglecting his rule, he built lavish palaces to store exotic animals. He created replica city streets in his own palace and forced the servants to dress and act as storekeepers, so he could stroll down “streets” as a commoner. Once he even gave himself the title of general and attacked a rebelling province. When the rebellion was quelled before he got there, he had all the revolutionaries released so he could attack them himself.

Greater than the Ming dynasty is God’s eternal Kingdom. It too is meant to expand in area and in might. However, as Kingdom heirs, we must be up to the task. It is our watch now. How will we respond?

## **THINK**

How does Jesus show that the Kingdom of Heaven is meant to expand in verses 31-33?

How are you doing at working to expand God’s Kingdom?

What did the treasure-finder and pearl merchant give up to get their prizes?

What are you willing to surrender to see God’s Kingdom expand and change lives? What do you have trouble letting go of?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for those who came before you and worked to build the Kingdom of Heaven

- Confess to God, if necessary, falling down on your watch
- Ask God to help you surrender all that needs to be surrendered so that you can fully carry out His will
- Ask God to use you to expand His kingdom and see lives changed for eternity

### **APPLY**

- Don't skip by the last question too quickly. Think through those things that you have difficulty letting go of. Consider what is keeping you from full surrender

# DAY 37

**READ: Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 9:33-37**

You may not know this but, in the 19th century, the United States was unofficially “ruled” by Emperor Norton I. Norton, a San Francisco native, declared himself “Emperor of the United States” and “Protector of Mexico” in 1859. His first edict was to dissolve congress. However, when his edict was unceremoniously discarded by the national government, he turned to local matters.

Known to stroll through the city of San Francisco inspecting roads and buildings, Norton levied fines and even issued his own money. Though our nation’s only “emperor” was a poor man, the good people of the Bay City allowed him to eat at their finest restaurants. In exchange, he would place an imperial seal of approval by the establishment’s front door.

Now, it is easy to laugh at the delusions of grandeur that Norton held. Yet, it is equally laughable when we Christians find ourselves arguing about our greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven. Only God is truly great. The rest of us should be content to simply fulfill the duties with which He has blessed us.

## **THINK**

What were the disciples arguing about in Mark 9:33-34?

What is a prerequisite for entering the Kingdom of Heaven according to Matthew 18:3-4?

How does Jesus show we are all equal in God’s eyes through Matthew 18:12-14?

Have you been guilty of comparing yourself to others within the Kingdom? What can help you to avoid this?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His fair and impartial treatment of you
- Confess to God, if necessary, comparing yourself to others instead of to Christ
- Ask God to help you fully identify with His Son, Jesus Christ, so that the world can see Him in you
- Ask God to help you be humble and childlike in your walk with Him

## **APPLY**

- If you have been guilty of pride and considered yourself better than others, take some time to repent of this
- If you have been guilty of thinking yourself “too unqualified” to be part of the Kingdom of Heaven, take time to repent of this as well
- Ask the Lord to help you see yourself as He sees you

# DAY 38

## **READ: Matthew 24:42-25:13**

Not everyone is prepared to live the life expected of royalty. Two such people were King Charles VI of France and King George III of England.

King Charles VI, for instance, believed he was made of glass! Fearful of shattering, he dressed in padded clothes and forbade anyone from touching him, ever! Meanwhile, King George III of England was known to rant and rave so violently that his servants once needed to put him in a straight-jacket. Moreover, on Christmas Day 1788, he mistook his favorite pillow for his deceased son, Prince Octavius. He insisted to all that his son had been “born anew this day.”

When royalty is not prepared to lead and live as they should, their kingdoms suffer. This is no less true with the Kingdom of Heaven. When we, as heirs with Christ, are not prepared to live and lead as Christ, God’s Kingdom suffers.

## **THINK**

According to Matthew 24:45-47, what kind of servant does God bless?

In the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids, what happened to the ones who were not prepared?

What are ways you can prepare for service to the King?

How are you doing at living and leading in a way that mirrors Christ and reflects God’s majesty?

What areas may need some work?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the work He has done in you already
- Confess to God, if necessary, not living like Christ or reflecting God's majesty as you should
- Ask God to fill you with Himself
- Ask God to prepare you and make you fit and ready for His service

## **APPLY**

- Spend some time praying and thinking through the last question
- Give the Lord time to reveal areas that need work

# DAY 39

## **READ: Matthew 28**

Qin Shi Huang was the first Emperor of China. Ruling from 246 BC to 210 BC, he was a capable administrator--but had some serious issues!

Chief among them was a crippling fear of death that led him to spend his life searching for the key to immortality. Qin Shi was forever wary of the possibility of his enemies making an attempt on his life, to the point that he never slept in the same place twice and regularly carried a massive crossbow at his side. Underground passageways were constructed that allowed him to travel unseen between his different palaces.

Later in life, the emperor began construction on a massive tomb that, in the event of his death, would protect him from his enemies. The monument contained over 8,000 life-sized terra cotta “soldiers,” along with a miniature city for the king to rule over in the afterlife.

Qin Shi spent much time, energy, and resources on a message of death. We, as Christians, need to spend an equal amount of time, energy, and resources. But unlike Qin Shi, the message we should be spreading is one of life, of hope, and of an eternal Kingdom that is open to all who would become sons and daughters of the King of Kings!

## **THINK**

What is the Great Commission that Jesus gives in verses 18-20?

How are you doing at living out the Great Commission?

Who are you presently sharing the gospel with and/or discipling?

If you have not done so already, think of three to five people who are outside of God’s family and need to experience the blessing of being part of the Kingdom of Heaven. List them here:

## **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for coming, dying, and rising again
- Confess to God, if necessary, not fulfilling the Great Commission
- Ask God to use you to make a difference in people's lives
- Pray for the people you listed under the last question

## **APPLY**

- If you did not write out a list of three to five unsaved people already, what are you waiting for???
- Remember to pray for the people on this list *daily*

# DAY 40

## **READ: Philippians 1:20—2:5**

According to *dictionary.com*, the primary definition for *alien* is: *a resident born in or belonging to another country who has not acquired citizenship by naturalization, a foreigner.*

With that definition in mind, I certainly know what is like to live life as an “alien.” After graduating college, I moved to Romania for one year. During that time, it was very easy for the locals to notice that I was “not from around here.” I dressed differently. I talked differently. I went about doing things differently, etc.

I was easily pegged as a foreigner or “alien.” Similarly, as followers of Christ, we should also be easily recognized because of how differently we live. We should speak differently, act differently, go about things differently, and spend our time differently. These things should all be different because everything we do should be reflecting Christ *not* the world around us.

So, how about it, are you living like an alien?

## **THINK**

Who does Paul say is the reason for life in verse 1:21?

Is Christ your reason for living, or it is work, hobbies, TV, music, family, sports, friends, or something else?

Verse 1:27 instructs us to live as citizens of Heaven. What does it mean to do that?

Does your lifestyle reflect citizenship in Heaven? Why or why not?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for good examples of godly living

- Confess to God, if necessary, living for things other than Christ
- Ask God to help you reflect a citizenship of Heaven and not a citizenship of the United States
- Ask God to focus you on thinking, acting, and living like Christ in front of a lost world

### **APPLY**

- Compare your entertainment choices with those you know who are not saved
- How about the websites you visit and the way you spend your free time? If these things are not much different from the unsaved, you may want to check your citizenship

# DAY 41

## **READ: 1 Peter 2:1-17**

On October 30th, 1938, a radio program (sorry, no TV back then) dramatized H.G. Wells book, *The War of the Worlds*. The first two thirds of the sixty minute broadcast were presented as a series of simulated news bulletins, which suggested to the many listeners that an actual alien invasion was in progress!

A real space alien invasion and subsequent “war” should *not* be expected anytime soon. Yet, there is a war—a spiritual war—going on in our world. As Christians, we should be on the offensive, constantly invading our communities, our nation, and the world with Christ’s love, godly choices, strong stands against sin, and holiness of life.

That is the key to victory!

## **THINK**

What is Peter saying in verse 1? How is this going for you?

How are you doing at living out verse 11? Explain:

Is the way you are living showing people Christ or the culture?

Review your thoughts, actions, attitudes, and choices over the past week. Where did they reflect Christ? Where did they reflect the culture?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for sending Christ to die for your sins
- Confess to God, if necessary, living like a citizen of the U.S. instead of a citizen of Heaven
- Ask God to help you live like Christ and not like the culture
- Ask God to use you to make a mighty difference in this world for His glory

**APPLY**

- Don't skip by the last question too quickly. Review your thoughts, actions, attitudes, and choices. Look to see what reflects Christ and what does not

# DAY 42

## **READ: [Philippians 3](#)**

Perhaps you have heard the saying, “Your actions speak so loudly, I can’t hear what you’re saying.” It basically means that your actions say *a lot more* about you than your words. In regard to this, the great 19th century preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, stated, “When men take stock of your life, they reckon your deeds as dollars and your words as pennies.”

In the end, it is indeed easy to say, “I am a Christian, and I love Jesus.” Those words, however, don’t mean too much if our decisions are selfish, our thoughts are sinful, our entertainment choices are worldly, and our free time is spent without considering what the Lord would have us do.

## **THINK**

What does Paul say is the most valuable thing of all in verse 8?

If people had to guess what was most valuable to you by your actions over the past two weeks, what would they say?

In verse 18, Paul says it is our conduct that really shows if we follow Christ or not. What have your actions been saying you follow?

How are you doing at reflecting Christ? Where must change take place?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for all that He has done for you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not living fully for Christ
- Ask God to point out where your actions have fallen short of a Christ-like standard
- Ask God to use you to do great things for His glory and the benefit of a lost world

**APPLY**

- Visual cues are often great reminders. Consider purchasing “an alien” to remind you of where your citizenship lies.

# DAY 43

## **READ: Luke 14:25-35**

Imagine if I agreed to meet you for dinner at *Applebee's*. (You would have to pay.) I show up thirty minutes late, and you are none too pleased with me.

I try, however, to explain my delay by telling you that, while I was driving to the restaurant, a fully loaded lumber truck travelling at sixty miles per hour struck me head on. Of course, as you look at me, you notice that I don't have a scratch on me, so you become even more upset. You question me as to how I could have encountered something so large and not be radically altered!

Obviously, such an encounter would indeed radically alter me. After a head-on meeting with something that big, I would most likely be unrecognizable to say the least!

Well, what is bigger than a fully loaded lumber truck? God is. And having an encounter with something as big and mighty as God should equally cause a radical change in us. Our words, thoughts, actions, free-time choices, should be unrecognizable compared to what they were before our encounter with the Lord.<sup>[12](#)</sup>

I hope that is the case with you.

## **THINK**

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus according to verses 26, 27, and 33?

Why is “praying a prayer” one time or “going to the altar” one time *not* an acceptable alternative for true discipleship?

Would you say that your thoughts, words, actions, and entertainment choices are radically different than the average person in our culture? Explain your answer:

If you say you have had encounter with the Lord but are not radically different, why should anyone believe that you actually had such an encounter?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for all He wants to do in and through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not living out the radical life of a follower of Christ
- Ask God to guide you deeper into a relationship with Him and to make you more and more like Christ
- Ask God to do a tremendous work in and through you

### **APPLY**

- Compare your “pre-Christ” life with your life after you accepted Him as Lord and Savior. Are they radically different from each other?

# DAY 44

## **READ: Ephesians 3**

One day, while my family visited with my parents, a terrible thunderstorm rolled in—ominous clouds, dark skies, booming thunder, the crackle of lightning, and pelting rain. It was a nerve-wracking few minutes.

However, once the storm cleared, there was a gorgeous double rainbow literally feet from my parents' lawn. You could actually stand in them! It was so spectacular that several people stepped out of their homes or stopped their vehicles just to stare at a pair of God's great wonders.

There is something about colorful things that cause us to take notice. Rainbows (especially double ones) surely grab our attention. People dressed in bright colors also turn our heads.

Why all this talk of colors, you ask? Well, Ephesians 3:10 discusses our need to display God's "manifold wisdom," and the word for "manifold" literally means "multi-colored." This word choice implies that we should be living so much like Christ that it turns people's heads. They should want to stop, look, and learn more about Him because of how bright and attractive we make Him with our lives!

## **THINK**

How are you doing at displaying God's manifold wisdom--that is living for Christ in a way that is bright and vibrant instead of dull and bland?

The closer you get to Christ, the more vibrant your faith will become. With that in mind, what are you doing to make verse 17 a reality?

Christ's love is the most attractive thing in the universe! What are you doing to grow in His love as verses 18 and 19 discuss?

How can you glorify God through your life this week?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for having all the love and power you need
- Confess to God, if necessary, not brightly and vibrantly displaying Christ to a lost world
- Ask God to make you a “head-turning” Christian
- Ask God to use you to show His “multi-colored” greatness

## **APPLY**

- Don’t skip by the last question too quickly. Make sure you prayerfully consider how you can “be bright” for Christ this week

# DAY 45

## **READ: John 21:1-17**

As a neat freak, I must confess that I have some difficulties with babies. I mean they are just so messy, aren't they? Even now, when I look at pictures of my son as an infant/toddler sitting in his highchair covered in chocolate cake or pudding, I cringe and instinctively reach for a wet-nap!

Yet, what else can we do with our babies whom we love so dearly? They must be fed to grow healthy and strong, so feed them we do. It may take time. It may be messy. Our little ones may not be interested in eating their strained carrots, but we grab the spoon and begin feeding anyway.

It is the same in a spiritual sense. We must feed ourselves, and we must feed those who are babes in the faith. Yes, it may take time, and it even may be messy. Indeed, those we seek to feed may not always be interested, but we grab the gospel and begin feeding anyway.

## **THINK**

How does Jesus feed the disciples in this passage?

In this passage, Jesus is restoring a repentant Peter. And, as a restored disciple, what does Jesus charge Peter to do three times?

What are you doing to keep yourself fed spiritually?

Who are you feeding?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for those who have fed you spiritually
- Confess to God, if necessary, not feeding others the spiritual nutrients that they desperately need
- Ask God to guide you toward the things that will feed your soul
- Ask God to show you who you should feed and shepherd

**APPLY**

- Start with your family and move outwards, asking yourself these two questions: 1. Who needs Christ around me? 2. Who is young in the faith and could use a mentor?

# DAY 46

## **READ: Hebrews 5:11—6:12**

There are certain things that give me nightmares. The thought of having to go camping with a country-western band is one. Having to shop in a mall with rap music blaring through the speakers is another. Oh yes, there is also the one where I am tied down and forced to watch the *Phantom of the Opera* over and over again.

Yet, even though all of the above are terrifying to me, I think my biggest nightmare involves being forever trapped in a room of three year-olds who never age a day. (Is anyone else getting cold shivers?)

Now, there are parts of my wife that wish our now teenaged son had stayed a little one. There are *no* parts of me wishing for that! It is part of God's design that our children grow and mature, so they can begin the process again with their own little ones.

It is the same in a spiritual sense. It is God's design that we grow and mature spiritually, so that we can help others do the same.

## **THINK**

What is the author of Hebrews lamenting in verses 5:11-14?

What are we challenged to do in verses 6:11-12?

What are you doing to press toward spiritual maturity?

What are you doing to help others move toward spiritual maturity?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for those who invested in you and your spiritual maturity
- Confess to God, if necessary, not working to make an eternal difference in the lives of those around you

- Ask God to show you who He has placed around you that needs Christ or deepening in Christ
- Ask God to fill you with wisdom in how to best reach, teach, and bless these individuals

### **APPLY**

- Don't move by the last question too quickly. Spend some time thinking and planning about what you can do to begin the process of spiritual maturity in someone's life

# DAY 47

## **READ: 1 Peter 5**

Can you hear the excuses? “But I’m not a pastor!”

“I’ve never been to Seminary or Bible College.”

“I’m so busy with my job. You have no idea.”

“I wouldn’t even know where to begin. Surely, there are better qualified people than me. I don’t even know that much.”

“I need to get myself totally straightened out before I can help someone else.”

Those excuses, and many more, hang like dark clouds over churches across our country. Perhaps you have used one or more of the above yourself. I know I have, and I *am* a pastor! God, however, is not interested in our excuses. Each of us, despite differing backgrounds, personalities, etc., is called to spiritual maturity and to assist others down the same path as well.

## **THINK**

What does verse 2 call us to do? With what kind of attitude should we be doing this?

What is verse 8 talking about?

How can fulfilling verse 2 lessen the likelihood of verse 8 coming true for those around you?

What excuses have you used to get out of fulfilling verse 2?

What will help you push past those excuses?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the gifts He has given you
- Confess to God, if necessary, using excuses to keep you from shepherding others
- Ask God to strengthen you to fulfill verse 2
- Ask God to use you to keep Satan away from those around you

## **APPLY**

- If you are struggling with whether or not you can actually shepherd others, don't hesitate to call, email, or speak face to face with your pastor

# DAY 48

## **READ: John 15:1-17**

Fourteen year-old Sarah stormed into her room and slammed the door. She had just been told “No” for the sixth time by her parents. Going to that party was out of the question. Sure the party was at a friend of a friends, and Sarah didn’t really know the person. But what could go wrong? Her parents were just being...well...them!

That “no” was the last straw. She was tired of all the rules and restrictions. *I’m not a little kid anymore.* She reasoned to herself. *I am old enough to make my own decisions and live my own life!* With that, she opened up her bedroom window and slipped out into the night, showing her parents the one who was really in charge of her life.

This story is not an unusual one. Many teens long for independence and resent their parents’ authority. They often fail to realize how much their parents love them and want to protect them. Moreover, they don’t want to admit that perhaps, just perhaps, their parents know a little more than they do.

It’s not just teens who do this, however. Many adults seek independence from Father God, failing to recognize His great love and further failing to understand how His wisdom and plans are far better than their own.

One of the true marks of spiritual maturity is coming to understand just how dependent on the Lord we really are.

## **THINK**

Count how many times you read the word *remain* or *abide* in the Scripture passage for today. How many are there?

What do you think Jesus is trying to emphasize through the multiple uses of these words?

Why is there no such thing as “the independent Christian life”?

How are you doing at remaining dependent on God?

**PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for His desire to keep you close
- Confess to God, if necessary, living independently--apart from His desires, plan, and will for your life
- Ask God to help you remain close to Him through love and obedience
- Ask God to deepen your relationship with Christ

**APPLY**

- Review your choices over the past few weeks. How many of them have been made with God's will in mind?
- Are you living dependent on God's wisdom and guidance?

# DAY 49

## **READ: John 14:15-31**

Pastor and author Chip Ingram tells the story of a time when one of his sons was around four years old. Chip and his wife were taking a walk with their young boy on a sidewalk lined with hedges. As an adult, Chip could easily see over the hedges onto the road, but his pre-schooler could not.

Approaching an intersection, Chip could see that a car was turning onto the street his son was just about to cross. He called for his son to stop, but the boy just turned, smiled, and kept walking. Seeing his son getting ever closer to the intersection, Chip called out again for his son to cease and desist. Again, his son simply turned, smiled, and kept walking. In a panic, Chip started running and shouting. He could see the car making its turn just as his son stepped onto the street.

Screech! The car missed the boy by inches.

At that moment, Chip said he came to a realization. For his child's safety and ultimate good, he must begin training his child to obey. God, likewise, fully understands how our safety and ultimate good is tied up in being dependent on, and obedient to, Him.

## **THINK**

What do verses 15, 21, 23-24 all have in common?

Why do you think Jesus was emphasizing obedience?

What does Jesus say will be the result of His obedience to the Father in verse 31?

Is the world seeing how much you love the Father through your obedience to Him? Explain:

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for loving and caring for you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not showing your love for Him through obedience
- Ask God to strengthen you so you can show the world your love of the Father through obedience
- Ask God to focus you on thinking, acting, and living like Christ in front of a lost world

## **APPLY**

- It may be good to ask someone close to you this question, “Can you tell I love God through my words and actions?”

# DAY 50

## **READ: Ephesians 1**

When my son was fourteen, he and I went on a two week mission trip to India. It was an incredible experience. I was able to see my son minister to others, share Christ, show love, and much more. My prayer is that the memories and experiences he had will last a lifetime and hopefully stimulate him to a life of service to Christ, His church, and a desperately hurting world.

It is important to realize, however, that none of above would have happened for Kyle had it not been for me. Now, please don't see me as a braggart. What I mean is that since Kyle was under sixteen years-old, he could only have gone to India if a parent went with him. So, in a very real way, he could only have experienced those things because of his father.

Likewise, there are many blessings that we as Christians can experience *only* because of Christ. As you read through Ephesians 1, you would have found at least ten uses of phrases like *in Christ*, *with Christ*, or *through Christ*. The reason for this is simple. We can only experience these great things because of Jesus!

## **THINK**

As you read through Ephesians 1, list the things you only have in, with, or through Christ:

Verse 3 says we can have *every* spiritual blessing as we stay in Christ. With that in mind, what are you doing to stay dependent on Him?

What can you do to constantly remind yourself that you will only experience all God has for you as you stay connected to Jesus?

Who do you know that needs to hear about all they can experience through Christ Jesus?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for all the blessings you have through Christ
- Confess to God, if necessary, acting like you can experience true goodness and lasting blessings in life apart from Christ
- Ask God to constantly remind you of your desperate need of Christ
- Pray for those you listed under the last question

## **APPLY**

- Spend time thinking about what you are doing to stay intimately connected to Christ
- Review what you have done the last five to seven days to stay so connected. What more could you be doing?

# DAY 51

## **READ: Ephesians 2**

It is not uncommon to see people at Wal-Mart, restaurants, sporting events, church, etc. carrying around portable oxygen tanks. When seeing such a thing, one instantly realizes that, because of said person's condition, he or she is now dependent on this extra supply of oxygen. Without this supply, life would be greatly diminished and even death could result.

Similarly, as Christians, Christ must be our continual supply. We must consider Him as necessary to our life as the air we breathe. We must understand that, without His constant presence and in-filling, our lives are greatly diminished, and spiritual death and decay will be the result.

## **THINK**

As with chapter 1, Ephesians 2 has at least ten uses of *in Him*, *in Christ*, etc. With that in mind, what things does this chapter say we have solely because of Christ?

What is our condition without Christ according to verses 1-3?

Because of Christ, what can our condition be according to verses 4-7?

What is the great news of verse 18?

How can you thank God for all He has done for you through Christ?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for all He wants to do in and through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not living as though Christ is as necessary to you as the air you breathe
- Ask God to guide you deeper into a relationship with Him and to make you more and more like Christ

- Ask God to do a tremendous work in and through you

### **APPLY**

- Go to YouTube and search “Breathe – Michael W. Smith.”
- Listen to the song and let it inspire you.

# DAY 52

## READ: Psalm 63

I didn't think I had any "addiction issues" until I was on the mission trip to India which I spoke about earlier. Now, before I share my "addiction story," please allow a moment for backstory. It is important that you realize that I despise both the taste *and* smell of coffee. This means my usual morning "fix" comes via *Mountain Dew*.

Imagine, now, that I have been in India for four full days with nothing to drink but water or "chai" (a tea-like substance). At that point, my brain kept giving me just one command over and over, "Must...find...Mountain...Dew." Wanting to please my brain, I cajoled one of our guides to take me to a local store during a downtime one day, so I could buy that sweet green liquid my brain and body had been craving. In moments, I had the Dew in hand...only discover that it was past its expiration date by six months!

You'll be glad to know that I have since given up *Mountain Dew*. (It's *Cherry Coke* now.) However, one craving we should never give up is our craving for more of Christ. Like the writer of Psalm 63, we must continually be thirsting and yearning for more of the Lord's presence.

## THINK

How does the psalmist describe his desire for God in verses 1-3?

Is the Lord your deepest craving? If not, what is?

Is the Lord where you turn for satisfaction and fulfillment? If not, what is?

How much do you long and yearn to know the Lord deeper and more intimately?

What do the answers to the above questions tell you about your priorities?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for being the source of all satisfaction
- Confess to God, if necessary, not craving and desiring Him above all else
- Ask God to fill you with a strong desire for Himself
- Ask God to show you where priorities must be rearranged

## **APPLY**

- It is easy *to say* that the Lord is first above all in your life but look over your choices and priorities. Has your life *shown* that He is first?

# DAY 53

## **READ: Genesis 3**

There's a story of a textile mill in the south where thread was woven and then wound onto large spools. The first thing new employees at this mill were shown was a large sign that simply read: "When your thread becomes tangled, call the foreman."

Well, a young woman was new on the job, and it didn't take long for her thread to become tangled. Instead of remembering the sign, her first thought was: "I'll just try to straighten this out myself." And try she did, but the situation only worsened. Finally, in desperation, she called the foreman. "I did the best I could," she said when he arrived.

"No, you didn't," the foreman began. "The best thing you could have done was call me."

In similar fashion, we humans often find ourselves in a bind. What's worse, when we are tempted, or struggling, or hurting, or confused, or fill in the blank, we usually end up trying to deal with it ourselves. Doing so never ends well. Instead, we must remember our dependence on Someone above us.

The best thing you can do is call on the Father.

## **THINK**

When deciding whether or not to eat the fruit, who did Adam and Eve depend on? How did that work out for them?

What were the consequences of their actions?

Do you normally turn to the Lord when faced with difficulty, tough choices, tempting situations, etc.?

What have you learned about dependence on the Lord the last few days?

**PRAY**

- Thank God for His greatness, love, and wisdom
- Confess to God, if necessary, not seeking Him when you should
- Ask God to remind you to always seek Him first
- Ask God to keep you dependent on Him

**APPLY**

- Make a commitment to seek the Lord daily and remaining dependent on Him

# DAY 54

## **READ: 1 Samuel 15:1-31**

John and Eric are brothers. They are both active in the church, and both are also leading small groups. That's the surface. Under the surface, they sit on opposite sides of the sanctuary and haven't spoken to each other in over eight years.

Allan and Jill have been married for twelve years, and they have three beautiful children. They both volunteer in the church nursery and work actively with the children's program. That's the surface. Under the surface, Jill and the kids walk around on eggshells because Allan has a terrible temper and they never know what will set him off.

In these scenarios, things on the surface look great. Underneath, however, things are desperately wrong. Guess what? They are not alone. Many live a "surface-life" existence, while all sorts of things are churning below the surface.

## **THINK**

Saul was living in disobedience while outwardly asserting (in vv. 13, 15, 21) that he was doing all that God commanded. Would you say that you have been guilty of this kind of double life as well?

A careful read of 1 Samuel shows Saul to have a deep inferiority complex. How does 1 Samuel 15:24-30 show some of this?

An unhealthy emotional life led to Saul's undoing. Have you seen flashes (or more than flashes) of this in your own life?

What do you need to start praying about right now?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for loving you beyond all possible measure

- Confess to God, if necessary, living a “false” surface-life while unhealthy things are churning beneath the surface
- Ask God to show you where there is emotional immaturity in your life
- Ask God to work in your life and in your heart

### **APPLY**

- Sit down with someone who knows you well and ask him or her, “Where do you see weaknesses in my emotional life?” Instruct this person to answer as honestly as possible
- Check out the following website that provides emotional intelligence tests—[www.emotionalintelligence.net](http://www.emotionalintelligence.net)

# DAY 55

**READ: 1 Samuel 18:1-9; 20:27-34; 22:11-19**

We've been reading about Saul the past few days. When we first met him, he was described as "tall and handsome," chosen to be king by God Himself. On the surface, things are definitely looking pretty good. However, under the surface, Saul is incredibly unhealthy, and that unhealthiness is taking him down a path of destruction and ruin.

Unfortunately, Saul is like many people in the church today. They put on their Sunday best, show a fake smile, loudly sing songs of praise, say "Amen" at the end of prayers, and use all the right words while in church. But, under the surface, there is unresolved hurt, excused sin, struggles, and unhealthy habits which are *not* being addressed.

## THINK

How do we see Saul's unresolved issues finally taking complete control of his life?

What is the effect to those around Saul because he has not effectively dealt with the things going on below the surface?

Have you seen how unresolved issues have affected the lives of others you know?

How do you think people have been affected by your unresolved issues?

## PRAY

- Thank God for those who are working to help you become more and more like Christ
- Confess to God, if necessary, pretending like issues deep within you don't exist while those very issues are negatively affecting the people around you
- Ask God to point out areas in your life that you have turned a blind

eye to

- Ask God to show you where you need to apologize to others

### **APPLY**

- It may be uncomfortable—and perhaps even painful—but start digging down to the root of issues inside yourself.
- Ask yourself, “Who is being hurt around me because of *my* issues?”

# DAY 56

**READ: 2 Samuel 11:1-12:14; Psalm 51**

Every one of us will have struggles with sin and personal flaws. The difference comes in how we deal with them. Saul, as we have seen, refused to learn from, or be broken by, them. Meanwhile, David was willing to learn and be broken.

Many might find brokenness to be a bad thing, but it actually is quite a good thing! It is in brokenness that we find humility. It is in brokenness that we experience the Lord's faithfulness. And it is in brokenness where we see that we cannot make it through life without God and His strength.

In the very first recorded sermon of Jesus (Matthew 5), what are His very first words? *Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* In other words, the *most* crucial things in your relationship God are poverty of spirit, humility, brokenness, and dependence on Him. If you want to experience the Kingdom of Heaven, those are the keys that open the door!

## THINK

What do you think of this statement, "You cannot have a relationship with God without poverty of spirit"?

How did David show his poverty of spirit after sinning?

Have you been guilty of trying to hide your flaws and issues, or have you willingly allowed the Lord to expose them so that He can work on them?

Each of us needs a "Nathan" in our lives who will point out sins and flaws for our own good. Who is your Nathan?

## PRAY

- Thank God for working in your heart and in your life
- Confess to God, if necessary, lacking humility and refusing to be

poor in spirit

- Ask God to humble you and to teach you
- Ask God to work on your sins, flaws, and issues

### **APPLY**

- If you do not have a Nathan in your life, pray and ask God to provide one

# DAY 57

## **READ: Matthew 6:1-6; Psalm 23**

I don't know about you, but at my house we have an "earbud policy." Since car rides are usually good times to talk, my son is *not* allowed to listen to his "tunes" with his headphones in. And, while in the house, my wife and I want him to always be able to hear us. Despite this, there are still times when I am virtually screaming to get my teen's attention, and he has no clue that I am calling for him. Why? The headphones are in and the volume is pumped!

This, I think, is what God experiences as He works to get our attention sometimes. He is calling out to us, so He can point out sin, help us with struggles, give us guidance, etc. However, we are tuned into a TV, the radio, a book, a hobby, or something else.

The problem is we are never quiet and rarely put ourselves in places of solitude where God can speak to us and begin to go to work in the deep places of our lives.

## **THINK**

Before praying, what does Jesus say we should do in Matthew 6?

As you read Psalm 23, can you picture David in a quiet, peaceful place just communing with the Lord without any distractions?

Do you have a time and place where you can do a similar thing on a regular (read *daily*) basis?

If you do not, when will you start finding that time and getting in that place?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for all that He wants to do in and through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, living a "loud" life and not allowing for times of silent prayer and reflection

- Ask God to open up opportunities and times when you can get away for quiet reflection and prayer
- Ask God to point out any sin or issues in your life

### **APPLY**

- Don't skip quickly by the last question. It is important that you find a time and a place to be quiet with God. Even if you have young children, ask God to provide you with such a time and place

# DAY 58

**READ: 1 Timothy 4:7,8; Hebrews 4:12,13**

The end of 1 Timothy 4:7 states, *discipline (or train) yourself to be godly*. Now, the word for *discipline* is the Greek word *gymnazio*—which literally means *exercise naked*. Yes, you read that right. The word *gym* in the Greek can be translated *exercise* while the word *nazio* actually means *naked*.

Well, that sounds a bit crazy, doesn't it? Is Paul telling Timothy to grow in his relationship with God by jogging in the buff? I think not! In Bible times, the Greeks would exercise in the nude. They prided themselves on their bodies and wanted to make sure every inch was sculpted. So when Paul talks about “exercising naked” for godliness, he is talking about stripping *all* away and going to work on *every part* of your life. For it is only when everything is exposed that we can become spiritually mature and effective.

## THINK

What does the Word of God do according to Hebrews 4:12-13?

Do you regularly read the Scriptures so that God can work on every part of you through His Word?

When people are out of shape, they often wear bulky clothes to hide this fact from others (and themselves). With that in mind, have you been guilty of trying to cover over your spiritual issues?

If you answered “Yes” above, what must you do about this?

## PRAY

- Thank Christ for dying on the cross so that you could be in a relationship with the God of the universe
- Confess to God, if necessary, putting on bulky spiritual clothing to cover up spiritual flabbiness and emotional immaturity
- Ask God to point out any part of your life that is not as it should be

**APPLY**

- Take some time today to stand in front of God's mirror and allow Him to look at every part of you

# DAY 59

## **READ: Genesis 4:1-16**

In 1882, Mark Twain published a farcical tale entitled *The Stolen White Elephant*. In this short story, an Indian elephant, in route from India to Britain as a gift to the queen, disappears in New Jersey. The local police department goes into high gear to solve the mystery. Throughout his engaging narrative, Twain comically tells of inept police detectives who can't seem to find something as big and easy to spot as a white elephant.

Not to be outdone, we can be much like those police detectives in Twain's tale. There are issues, struggles, and sins in our lives, in our families, and in our churches, and we seem to miss or ignore these giant white elephants right in front of us.

## **THINK**

What did God tell Cain in verses 6-7?

Why do you think that Cain ignored the warning of the “elephant” crouching at his door?

What was the result of Cain ignoring the sin and anger festering inside?

Have you been guilty of pretending “elephants” don't exist in your life or family?

If you answered “yes,” what must be your next step?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His willingness to point out sin so that it can be dealt with
- Confess to God, if necessary, not listening to the Lord as He speaks about your sin

- Ask God to point out the elephants in your life and in your family
- Ask God to deal with these issues and bring healing

### **APPLY**

- Don't act like the elephants don't exist. Allow the Lord to start dealing with them today!

# DAY 60

## **READ: Nehemiah 1; Isaiah 59:12-15**

It is easy to blame, excuse, and/or try to hide sin. The first couple, Adam and Eve, did so, and many have followed in their footsteps. However, there is a better way to deal with sin. It is called *confrontation*. Now, when I say *confrontation*, I am not referring to confronting everyone else about their sin. No, I am talking about confronting *our own sin* and allowing God to deal with it.

We need to stand in front of God's mirror and *gymnazio* with Him. Then, after our lives have been closely examined, we need to resist the urge to excuse, blame, and hide. Instead, we need to turn to God and simply say, "God, I see that I \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the sin). This needs to be dealt with. Please begin!"

There can be no emotional or spiritual maturity until this process takes place.

## **THINK**

How does Nehemiah deal with the news he received in Nehemiah 1:6-7?

After God confronts Isaiah with Israel's sin, how does he respond in Isaiah 59:12-15?

How do you usually respond when God confronts you about sin in your life?

Are you willing to start dealing today with any issues that may have been long buried deep down in your soul?

How can your church come alongside you during such a process?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for working in your heart and in your life

- Confess to God, if necessary, refusing to let the Lord deal with the sin in your life
- Ask God to humble you and to teach you
- Ask God to work on your sins, flaws, and issues

### **APPLY**

- If you need help going through this process of confrontation, forgiveness, and new beginnings, set up a time to talk with your pastor or trusted Christian friend

# DAY 61

## **READ: Psalm 32**

Having read through the previous several devotions, perhaps you are thinking, “To live with all that is wrong in my life is no picnic, yet to bring it to the surface and expose it will be even worse!” Don’t believe that lie. Bringing it all to the surface is the only path to peace, forgiveness, and transformation. Consider the following analogy.

Gold was found in Cripple Creek, Colorado during the mid-1800s. The only problem was that the gold was mixed with tellurite ore, and no one knew how to extract the gold from this ore. But one day, a pioneer mistook a lump of tellurite ore for coal and threw it in his stove. Later, when cleaning out the ashes he discovered beads of pure gold on the bottom of his stove.

You see intense heat had burned away all the impurities around the ore, separating it from the precious gold. Likewise, it might be painful to go through the process of examination and confrontation, but without that intense process we can never get to transformation.

## **THINK**

What was life like for the Psalmist while he tried to hide his sin and refused to confess it? (SEE: verses 3 and 4)

After he went through the process of examination and confrontation, what happened? (SEE: verses 1, 2, and 5)

Have you bought into Satan’s lie that the process of examination and confrontation is too painful to deal with?

How can the Lord begin transforming your life today?

What is the first step you need to take to begin this process?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for all that He wants to do in and through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, refusing to go through the processes of examination and confrontation
- Ask God to begin the transformation process today
- Ask God to show you plainly what your first step needs to be

## **APPLY**

- Don't let this day end without praying the above prayers. Begin the healing process today!

# DAY 62

## **READ: Matthew 5:1-12**

In Matthew 5, Jesus gives His first message. Now, we know that firsts are important as they tend to set the stage for all that will follow. So how does Jesus start? What is His first message? It is simply this: “Your life truly begins when you realize you are broken, when you realize something is wrong that you cannot fix yourself. Life truly begins when you realize that you are not all you should be and work needs to be done.”

Each of us needs to look in the mirror and say, “I am not what I should be. I need work. I am not whole. I am not living the life God created me to live.” When we do that, and begin to truly mourn over our condition, then God can come and begin to make a mighty difference in our lives.

## **THINK**

What does Jesus say in verses 3-4?

What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”?

Do you recognize your brokenness and spiritual poverty?

If so, what will you do about it?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for creating you as His masterpiece and for having a tremendous plan for your life
- Confess to God, if necessary, trying to mask, or cover over, the brokenness instead of letting Him deal with it
- Ask God to strengthen you to always be open and honest with Him (because He knows about it all already!)
- Ask God for the strength to confront your own brokenness and then allow Him to go to work in your life

**APPLY**

- Recognizing your need is only the beginning. What practical thing must you start doing to get set on the path of healing?

# DAY 63

## **READ: Matthew 8:1-17**

In 1935, Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith founded Alcoholics Anonymous. They designed this organization to deliver people from the crippling addiction of alcohol by getting them to understand two important principles: 1. Admit that you have a problem. And 2. Realize that God is the only one who can deliver you from this problem.

Today, this second principle has been “dumbed-down” and generalized to mean a “higher power.” Yet, Bob Smith called his AA meetings “Christian Fellowships” and labeled the Bible as his AA manual.

Now, of course, not all of us struggle with alcoholism, but each of us struggles with brokenness and sin. Regardless, the first two steps to healing are the same--recognizing and admitting this truth: *I am broken and I cannot fix myself. Only the Lord can fix what is broken.*

## **THINK**

Every time Jesus healed someone in Scripture, it was because either the one needing healing, or someone on that person’s behalf, came to Jesus. Rarely does Jesus just show up and heal someone who didn’t ask (or have someone ask on his behalf). What do you think we should learn from that?

Do you realize that you are broken and in need of healing?

Where specifically do you recognize your brokenness?

When will you start giving all this brokenness over to Christ in prayer?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for being the Great Healer
- Confess to God, if necessary, a refusal to admit your brokenness and need

- Ask God to go to work on the areas you listed under the third question
- Ask God to deal with these issues and bring healing to your life

### **APPLY**

- Commit to praying over your brokenness on a *daily* basis
- Allow the Lord free access to your heart, mind, and life. Let Him go to work and bring wholeness and healing

# DAY 64

**READ: Psalm 34:15-22; Psalm 147:1-11**

I know a grandfather who keeps children's Band Aids in his wallet. He does this because he spends a good deal of time with his little grandson, Austin. Now, as you know, young children tend to hurt themselves on a regular basis. Many a time, Austin, with tears streaming down his cheeks, has run into his granddad's arms for comfort. While being held, he will ask for a Band Aid to cover his "wound." Once it is attached, miracle of miracles, Austin is cured.

This is really a picture of what God wants us to do with Him. He wants us to run into His arms for comfort and request that He go to work on our lives—not with Band Aids, but with wisdom, grace, guidance, forgiveness, love, and more.

## **THINK**

What does Psalm 34:17-18 say?

What does Psalm 147:3 say?

In Matthew 18:3, Jesus says to be truly saved we must become like little children. Children, as the Lord well knows, are not afraid to run into someone's arms for help. Are you willing to do that with God? Why or why not?

Have you called out to God to heal you of your brokenness?

If not, what is holding you back?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for having all that you need to overcome your

brokenness

- Confess to God, if necessary, continuing to live in brokenness because pride is keeping you from running to Him
- Admit to God that you are broken and in need of His healing
- Ask God to heal you of your brokenness

### **APPLY**

- Isolate where you are emotionally wounded. Call on the Lord to go to work in those areas

# DAY 65

**READ: Isaiah 6; Acts 9:1-9**

C.S. Lewis writes, “I think that many of us, when Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were an obvious nuisance, are inclined to feel...that we are now good enough. He has done all we wanted Him to do, and we should be obliged if He would leave us alone. But the question is not what *we* intended ourselves to be, but what *He* intended us to be when He made us...Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on. You knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised” (emphasis mine).

Lewis continues, “But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of...You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage, but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”<sup>[13](#)</sup>

## THINK

Often we must be undone before we can be made whole. How do you see this happening with Isaiah before he is used by God?

How do we see Paul being undone before he is used by God?

Are you willing to go through pain and hurt to become all that God has for you to be? Why or why not?

What reservations might you have?

## PRAY

- Thank God for wanting to do great and amazing things in your life
- Confess to God, if necessary, refusing to let the Lord do all that He

wishes to do in and through you

- Ask God to work on your sins, flaws, and issues
- Ask God to mold you and make you into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ

### **APPLY**

- You will see this again in the following devotion but start thinking about it now. Are you willing to pray this prayer? *God make me more like Christ no matter what the consequences*<sup>3</sup>

# DAY 66

## **READ: Philippians 3:1-14**

In the book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, Peter Scazzero asks: “Are you willing to pray this prayer? God make me more like You no matter what the consequences.”

I’ll be honest. When I first read that sentence I was a bit afraid. How about you? Are you afraid of what might happen if you pray that prayer? Do you think God will begin to ruin your life once you utter those words?

What’s wrong with us that we view God that way? What’s wrong with us that we are afraid to pray that prayer for fear that God might do something bad to us? God doesn’t want to hurt us. He wants to heal us. He didn’t send Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, so that He could then crush us. God’s ultimate desire is to heal us, to make us whole, to bless us, and to make us like Himself.

So whatever He takes us through—even through brokenness—we should be bolstered by the fact that He loves us beyond all possible measure, and His ultimate desire is to see us be the amazing creations He designed us to be.

## **THINK**

In our Scripture for today, how do we see that Paul’s desire is to be like Christ?

What was he willing to give up so that he could attain Christ-likeness?

How much do you want to be like Christ?

Are you willing to pray the prayer? Why or why not?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for all that He wants to do in and through you

- Confess to God, if necessary, being afraid to pray the prayer
- Pray the prayer—God make me more like You no matter what the consequences
- Ask God to do what He needs to do to make you more and more like His Son, Jesus Christ

### **APPLY**

- Come on! Pray the prayer

# DAY 67

**READ: James 1:1-8; 1 Peter 1:6,7**

I had a nine pound toy poodle named Kobie. A few years before his death, he was diagnosed with diabetes. This meant that I had to give him a shot of insulin twice a day, and little Kobie was *not* a fan! If he saw me going near where the needles were stored, he ran up the stairs and scurried down the hall, trying to hide himself behind the bed in the master bedroom! Of course, I would track him down because if he didn't get those shots, he would die.

You see, he may not have liked the pain (and I may not have liked giving the pain), but in that pain was *life*. Do you see it? God, also, does not like giving us pain, but in that pain is *life*. God's desire is to mold us and shape us and make us into the great and amazing creations He designed us to be.

However, right now, that creation is marred. For God to bring healing and restoration, He may need to bring pain. Fret not though, for infused into that pain is life beyond anything you could ever imagine.

## THINK

Why does James say we should count trials as “a joy”?

What does Peter say the benefits of trials are?

I wish I could've explained to my dog everything I was doing and why it is important, but he couldn't understand it. Similarly, we cannot understand all that God is doing, yet we need to trust Him anyway. How are you doing at trusting God, even when you don't understand what He is doing?

Are you ready to go through the pain so that you can experience life?

## PRAY

- Thank Jesus for going through the pain of the cross so that you could experience new life

- Confess to God, if necessary, an unwillingness to go through the pain
- Ask God to do what He needs to do to make you like Christ

### **APPLY**

- If you have been angry with God because of pain you have gone through, use this time to repent
- Thank Him for infusing any pain He causes with life

# DAY 68

## **READ: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31**

There is a lie that many parents are guilty of telling their children. It goes something like this: A parent looks into the cute little face of a child and says, “You can be and do anything you want to be and do.” Doesn’t that seem like a nice, supportive thing to tell your kids? Sure it does. Unfortunately, it is completely false!

If it were true, I wouldn’t be writing this devotional right now, I would be playing second base for a Major League Baseball team. Sadly, however, I cannot be a Major Leaguer because my athletic skill might be good, but certainly not good enough.

A basic fact of life is that we all have limits. We cannot be and do whatever we want, and parents do a disservice when they tell their children otherwise. (Ever watch *American Idol* tryouts?) To be mentally and spiritually healthy, you must know and embrace your limits, then seek to be used by God with the gifts you have...not with the gifts you don’t.

## **THINK**

Verse 18 says that God has put each part of the body where He wants it. What happens, though, when we don’t like where we are and try to be some other part?

A person with “gift envy” spends all of his time looking at other people, wishing he had their gifts. How useful do you think such a person is in the body of Christ?

Have you been guilty of not fulfilling your role in the body because you want to be something you were not created to be?

If you are unsure of your part in the body, what should you do to begin discovering this?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for making you a part of the Body of Christ
- Confess to God, if necessary, not living out life as the part of the body He intended for you
- Ask God to show you how to live according to His plan
- Ask God to use you to make a difference in people's lives

## **APPLY**

- The Bible is clear that *every* believer has been gifted by God. Ask God to reveal how He has gifted you and what He wants to do in and through you with those gifts
- Want to see what happens when parents tell their kids they can do or be anything? Go to YouTube and search “Top 10 worst auditions on American Idol”

# DAY 69

## **READ: Exodus 18:13-27**

Jack Johnson loved the Lord...and his travel business. While Jack always tried to make time for church on Sunday, his work schedule meant many long nights and weekends at the office. Not surprisingly, Jack's devotional life suffered, and time with his family was almost non-existent. He missed recitals, ballgames, birthdays, anniversaries, and more on a regular basis.

Moreover, his long days and almost non-stop lifestyle caused him to begin short-circuiting. His normally pleasant demeanor disappeared. In its place came orneriness and irritability. After an emotional family meeting filled with tears and ultimatums, Jack knew that something needed to give. He could ignore his limitations no more.

## **THINK**

Some Christians say that they are ready to “burn out for God,” but do you think God really wants anyone to burn out for any reason?

What was happening to Moses and the people before Jethro showed up with some timely advice?

What was Jethro's advice?

Have you been guilty of trying to do too much for God (or just too much in general)?

How are you doing at seeking, and living out, God's perfect plan for your life?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for all that He wants to do in and through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking that “burning out for God” is

a good thing

- Ask God to show you what is in your schedule that should not be there
- Ask God to focus you on His good, pleasing, and perfect will for your life

### **APPLY**

- Are you making *daily* room for time with family?
- Are you making *daily* room for time with the Lord through devotions and prayer?
- Are you making *daily* room for proper sleep and rest?

# DAY 70

## **READ: 1 Samuel 17:12-31**

There are many good things about being part of a family. The bad thing, though, is that families are made up of human beings! Yes, we humans are a sinful, fallen people. We each have our own set of issues and struggles.

Because we grow up surrounded by all of that, we are tempted to think that such things are normal and acceptable. “Dad always yells when he is angry. That must be how one deals with anger.” “Mom always made fun of Dad to us kids. This must be how Moms treat Dads.” “Dad never said ‘I love you.’ That must mean expressing love isn’t something a Dad does.” “Mom played favorites with us kids. That’s just life.”

We grow up this way, and it affects us in deep, deep ways. Our families help shape who we are—for good and for bad. Yet, in the end, we each must make our own choice—continue any dysfunction or break the chain.

## **THINK**

We know from 1 Samuel 16 that David wasn’t thought much of by his family. His father, Jesse, did not even think to call him when Samuel said he was going to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as king. Similarly, how do we see David treated by his brothers in chapter 17?

What do you think it must have been like for David to grow up in such an environment as the neglected and mistreated little brother?

What was it like growing up in your family? What past patterns of dysfunction do you see carried into the present?

We know David overcame much of his past and became a chain breaker. What can you do to start breaking chains?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for having the power to defeat your past
- Confess to God, if necessary, continuing to live in dysfunction as though it is normal and acceptable
- Ask God to point out areas in your life that you have turned a blind eye to
- Ask God to go to work in your life and in your family

## **APPLY**

- Could it be time to have a family meeting to discuss how things are going?

# DAY 71

## **READ: 1 Samuel 17:32-51**

In our Scripture for today, we can plainly see that David knows who he is and to Whom he belongs. In verses 38-40, David basically tells Saul, “This is not who I am. I cannot wear your sword or your armor. I need to go out as I am, and I am shepherd. I will go with a shepherd’s staff, my shepherd’s bag, and my sling.”

It is the same with us. We cannot live our lives trying to put on everyone else’s expectations. You are *not* your mom, or your dad, or your big brother, or your best friend. You are you. You are a unique creation of God. You were created by Him in a special way for your own special purpose. If you try to live like someone else, then you are really living like an imposter. Imposters can never really know God or His good, pleasing, and perfect plan for their lives.

## **THINK**

If David had tried to go out and battle Goliath as King Saul would have, what do you think the result would have been?

What was the result because David went out, in God’s strength, as himself?

Are you living life according to God’s plan or according to someone else’s plan?

Do you live your life as God expects you to be or as someone else expects you to be?

What do you need to start doing in order to step out of other people’s expectations?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for working in your heart and in your life
- Confess to God, if necessary, refusing to let the Lord deal with the sin in your life
- Ask God to humble you and to teach you
- Ask God to work on your sins, flaws, and issues

## **APPLY**

- Look over your life and your choices.
- Have your life and your choices been governed by God's will, your own desires, or by the expectations of others? Spend time pondering that question

# DAY 72

## **READ: Romans 8:31-39**

I hope you are ready to fight the giants in your life. I hope you have the courage to take off the masks and stop being an imposter. I hope you have the courage to look beneath the surface and begin dealing with the things deep down inside. And I hope you have the courage to face the fight ahead of you, knowing that God is with you every step of the way. If so, you are on the path to spiritual maturity

However, perhaps you may be thinking, “You don’t know me. You don’t know who I am and what I have done.” You’re right. I don’t know you, but God does. He knows all the terrible things you have done. He knows all that lies beneath the surface which you have worked so hard to cover. He knows it all, and He loves you anyway.

More than that, He sent His Son to die for all those terrible things so you could experience freedom from them!!!

## **THINK**

What does Romans 8:37 say?

Will you shed off your fake self and stand as you truly are?

Will you stand and fight the giants in God’s strength?

Will you allow God to mold you and make you into the person He desires you to be?

Are you ready to start living out God’s perfect plan for your life?

## **PRAY**

- Thank Christ for dying on the cross, so that you can have victory

over all the sin in your life

- Confess to God, if necessary, not allowing Him to go to work in your life
- Ask God to point out any part of your life this is not as it should be

### **APPLY**

- If you are ready to get some work done in your life but need some help, don't hesitate to talk to your pastor

# DAY 73

## **READ: Isaiah 55**

On DAY??? of this devotional, you read about Gladys Aylward. Remember her? As a teenager, she was angry at God over the looks He had given her. She desired to have long, golden hair like many of her friends, yet hers was jet black. Further, she desired to be tall and slender. Instead, she was only four feet, ten inches tall. Because of these two things, she hid deep frustration in her heart toward God.

One day, however, God put a call on her life. She was to go to China and spend time as a missionary there. When at last she reached the country to which God had called her, she stood on a wharf in Shanghai and noticed two things immediately: Every person she saw had black hair, and most were under five feet tall! Looking up to the heavens, she exclaimed, “Lord God, You know what You’re doing!”

## **THINK**

We tend to have plenty of opinions regarding what God should be doing in our lives and in the world, but what does the Lord say in verses 8-9?

How did Gladys find this to be true?

Often, what we wish God would do, really would *not* be beneficial to our lives. Later, when God does what we did not even imagine, we realize the truth of this. Can you think of a time like that in your life?

What do you believe God is trying to teach you through this passage?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His thoughts and ways which are far above yours
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking you have Him figured out
- Ask God to guide you into a deeper trust of His will and ways
- Ask God to help you accept His plans and purposes for your life

## **APPLY**

- Before you get out of bed each morning, say to the Lord, “Show me what You have for me today. Don’t let me miss Your will.”
- Be looking for what God is doing already, not what you want Him to be doing

# DAY 74

## **READ: Joshua 7**

Joshua 6 is an amazing chapter in the history of the Israelites. The great walled city of Jericho, which had stood undefeated for over 1500 years, was totally destroyed. All the Israelites had to do was march around the city and blow trumpets! One can only imagine that the Israelites were flying high when Joshua 7 rolls around, and their next opponent is just the little backwater town of Ai.

Oh, but things did not go as planned. The Israelites had assumed God would do just as He had done before, so they neglected to ask for His will. With sin in their camp, God would not bless them and they were soundly defeated.

This can often be true in our lives as well. God works a certain way in our lives, and we suddenly assume, “This is what God does!” and so we stop asking for His will or asking if there is anything in our lives, our families, or our church that might need to be worked on before we move forward.

## **THINK**

What was preventing the Israelites from having victory?

How might this story have been different had Joshua and the Israelites consulted God *before* the battle at Ai?

Have you been guilty of assuming you knew God’s will and then just jumping ahead with what you were planning?

What can help you stay focused on God’s will on a continual basis?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God that He has a great plan and purpose for you
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking you have that plan and purpose totally figured out already

- Ask God to focus you on His will on a day by day basis
- Ask God to keep you focused on prayer, Bible study, and mature Christian counsel to help you know His will

### **APPLY**

- Don't focus on God's plan for your whole life. Make sure to focus on His will day by day
- Remind yourself every day: "God, You are too great for me to totally understand. Help me to be open to the new things You want to teach me about Yourself today."

# DAY 75

## **READ: Judges 7**

More than two hundred years ago, John Wesley wrote, “My brother Charles, amid the difficulties of our early ministry, used to say, ‘If the Lord would give me wings, I would fly.’ I used to answer him, ‘If the Lord bid me fly, I should trust Him for the wings.’”

Nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, George Mueller penned, “Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man’s power ends.”

About fifty years ago, Corrie Ten Boom also informed, “Faith is like radar that sees through the fog—the reality of things at a distance that the human eye cannot see.”

From Gideon in 1200 BC to this very day, God is still God. And to truly see Him, you need faith for eyes.

## **THINK**

We are told in Judges 6 that the Midianite army was so vast that they seemed to travel like an innumerable horde of locusts. Knowing this, how was Gideon able to face them with just three hundred men in chapter 7?

Many people like to keep God in a box because you don’t need faith for that kind of god. Yet, what is necessary for our unboxed God?

If your faith in our great God could be measured on a scale of 1 to 10—with 10 being “total faith” and 1 being “no faith,” where would you place yourself?

If you didn’t give yourself a ten, what can you do to deepen your faith?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His awesome power
- Confess to God, if necessary, not trusting Him as you should
- Ask God to deepen your faith
- Ask God to give you a wholehearted devotion to Him

## **APPLY**

- If you encounter something that is too big for you, don't despair. This is right where God wants you. Understand that God wants to show you how He can work where you cannot

# DAY 76

## **READ: Luke 2:1-20**

In the summer of 2003, I went to Wisconsin to interview for a youth pastor position. Somehow, this church had heard that I was an outgoing and dynamic person who won many youth to the Lord by virtue of my contagious life and personality. Wow! How they got that idea, I have no clue! Nothing could be further from the truth. I am much more introverted than extroverted, and the only thing contagious about me are my frequent sinus infections! It is true that God has always blessed my youth programs, but that is all about Him. It certainly isn't about me.

You can imagine that when I showed up in all my “non-dynamicness,” this church was pretty shocked. In spite of the truth of growing youth ministries in my past, I was not what they expected, so I was quickly dismissed as a candidate. (God, in His goodness, led me to another church the very next day!)

## **THINK**

Most New Testament era Jews were expecting the Messiah to come. This Messiah, they believed, would be a mighty and powerful king who would overthrow the Romans. Did they get what they expected?

What did they get instead?

Have you ever expected something specific from God and then missed what God really had for you because you were focused on the wrong thing?

What advice would you give someone who was seeking to know God's ways better?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His tremendous love and care for you
- Confess to God, if necessary, missing what He has for you because

you are focused on something else entirely

- Ask God to fix your eyes and ears squarely on Him

### **APPLY**

- When you are about to dismiss something simply because it was not what you expected, pause and pray. See if God might have something totally *unexpected* in store

# DAY 77

**READ: Ephesians 1:19-23; 3:14-21**

A young boy traveling by airplane to visit his grandparents sat beside a man who happened to be a seminary professor. The boy was reading a Sunday School take-home paper when the professor thought he would have some fun with the lad. “Young man,” said the professor, “If you can tell me something God can do, I’ll give you five dollars.” The boy thought for a moment and then replied, “Mister, if you can tell me something God can’t do, I’ll give you a whole pile of money!”

With that in mind, the French philosopher Blaise Pascal once wrote, “The greatest single distinguishing feature of the omnipotence of God is that our imagination gets lost when thinking about it.”

## THINK

What is possible *for God* according to our Scripture for today?

Because of this, what is possible *for you* according to our Scripture?

What can this “unboxed God” do in your life and in your family this week?

What can this “unboxed God” do in your church and community this week?

## PRAY

- Thank God for all that is possible through Him
- Confess to God, if necessary, a lack of faith in His immeasurable power
- Ask God to go to work in your life and in your family with His great power
- Ask God to go to work in your church and community with His great power

**APPLY**

- Realize that when you make yourself available to God, He can do *anything* through you
- Make sure to pray the above prayers not just today but every day

# DAY 78

## **READ: Exodus 3**

A frightened Moses cowers while shielding his eyes from the blinding flames of a burning bush. “What is your name?” His words come shaking out of his trembling lips. “Who should I say sent me?”

“I Am!” is the booming reply that has echoed through the centuries. And what a reply it was!

Every other god Moses would have learned about during his time in Egypt would have been a “containable god” pigeon-holed into a domain—Ra, the sun god; Horus, the god of power; Amon-Re, the god of fertility; Anubis, the god of death; etc. There would be no such title for the One True God. He cannot be boxed into a category. He cannot be pigeon-holed into a domain. He simply is, was, and will be. He is over all, and all exists because He wishes it to be.

## **THINK**

Have you been guilty of trying to categorize God—thus diminishing who He truly is?

Moses would have grown up slicing his life into different areas—and then assigning an Egyptian god to each “slice of life.” How does the God he encountered defy this mindset?

Since God is YAHWEH (I AM), that means whatever you need—God is. Whatever your struggle —God can. Whatever your concern—God does. How does this truth comfort you today?

What do you need to give over to the Great I Am right now?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for who He is

- Confess to God, if necessary, trying to pigeon-hole Him into a domain or category
- Ask God to open your eyes, so you can see Him for who He is
- Ask God to show you all His majesty, splendor, and glory

### **APPLY**

- Spend time pondering just how great and powerful and amazing our God is (Warning: It could take a while!)
- Surrender your life to this God and watch what He does in and through you

# DAY 79

## **READ: Exodus 5:1—6:13**

In 1997, I was “nervously excited” about being sent to Romania by the Lord to minister in His name. However, my first three weeks in this new and foreign country were a torturous experience. Everything that could go wrong went wrong, and just when I thought it could get no worse...it did! I was supposed to go to the school where I would be working. However, it was pouring down rain, and I was completely lost. Because of the language barrier, I was unable to communicate with people or even ask for directions. After a few hours, I was totally soaked, totally demoralized, and totally ready to pack it in and head home.

My experience is not an isolated one. Many times it seems serving God makes life harder! It is in those times, though, that God tests our commitment and faithfulness to Him.

## **THINK**

How did life seem to get harder for Moses as he worked to serve God and obey His commands? (List things from 5:7-13; 19-23)

How did Moses respond to these difficulties?

How do you respond during times like these?

Most importantly, how did God respond during this time?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God that He is never surprised by difficulty or hard times, and He always has the answer
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking life should be easy now that you are serving the Lord
- Ask God to strengthen your commitment and faithfulness during difficult times

- Ask God to speak His love to you during difficult times

### **APPLY**

- Understand that when it appears that God is sleeping on the job that is because He is dreaming of the great things He has planned for you!

# DAY 80

## **READ: Exodus 7:1 -8:15**

You probably noticed a lot of things in our Scripture for today. What you may not have noticed, however, are the “competing glories.” Several times, you read that Pharaoh hardened his heart. Two of those times, in verses 7:14 and 8:15, the word used there for “hardened” is “Kabod.” This is the same word that is translated “glory” when the Bible talks about the *glory of the Lord*.

There are many who are tempted to feel somewhat sorry for Pharaoh as though he was just the leader who had the misfortune of being in power when God decided to free his people. This is *not* the case, however. Pharaoh saw himself as God, sought his own glory, and refused to exalt even the Lord Almighty above himself.

Unfortunately, there is a bit of Pharaoh in us all. We, too, often keep God in His box and refuse to allow His rule over us. The result is usually just as tragic for us as it would turn out to be for Pharaoh.

## **THINK**

How did God show His great power and glory in our Scripture?

List the times that Pharaoh hardened his heart:

Would you say there is a bit of Pharaoh in you? Why or why not?

Why is God the only one who deserves all glory, honor, and praise?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His awesome power and glory
- Confess to God, if necessary, exalting yourself above God in your heart
- Ask God to humble you and exalt Himself in your heart

- Ask God to give you a wholehearted devotion to Him

### **APPLY**

- Seek to humble yourself and realize that God's plans and purposes are better than yours
- Any plans you have created, hand them over to the Lord. Ask Him if these are what He wants for your life

# DAY 81

**READ: Exodus 10:21—11:10; 12:28-30**

Nicknames for God--Great Vending Machine in the Sky, Doting Grandpa, Genie of the Heavens, The Man Upstairs, The Big G, etc. Unfortunately, none of them convey who the God of the Bible really is. Today, in our Scripture, we find a God who defies these genial nicknames that are meant to lessen the Lord's character in our hearts.

He takes Pharaoh's exalted heart (as we saw yesterday) and punishes pride and arrogance. He takes a slave-driving people and brings them to their knees. He takes an enslaved people and guides them to freedom. And through it all, He shows that He is a God who defies nicknames.

## THINK

Are you guilty of defining God by a nickname?

How does God defy the above nicknames (and others) in our Scripture for today?

How has God defied these nicknames in your own life?

Why is it vital to focus on the God of the Bible and not the god depicted by our culture, our conscience, or our friends?

What (or who) is helping you focus more on the One True God?

## PRAY

- Thank God for who He is
- Confess to God, if necessary, falling for a cultural or comfortable version of God instead of the True God
- Ask God to focus you on who He truly is
- Ask God to fix your eyes and ears squarely on Him

## **APPLY**

- Think about your view of God. Is it Biblical or cultural?
- Make sure you are part of a Bible believing church *and* a small group. Surround yourself with people who view God as He is not as the culture defines Him

# DAY 82

## **READ: Exodus 14**

John Paton was a missionary in the New Hebrides Islands. One night hostile natives surrounded the mission station, intent on burning out the Paton's and killing them. Paton and his wife prayed during that terror-filled night that God would deliver them. When daylight came, they were amazed to see their attackers leave.

A year later, the chief of the tribe was converted to Christ. Remembering what had happened, Paton asked the chief what had kept him from burning down the house and killing them. The chief replied in surprise, "Who were all those men with you there?" Paton knew of no men that were present—but the chief said he was afraid to attack because he had seen hundreds of big men in shining garments with drawn swords circling the mission station.

## **THINK**

Our God is an amazing deliverer. How did He deliver the people of Israel?

God can deliver from bondage--from anger, from loss, from sin, from hurt, and much more. How has God delivered you?

How can you praise God for His deliverance?

With whom are you sharing your "deliverance story"?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for all that He has delivered you from
- Confess to God, if necessary, not praising Him enough for how He has worked in your life
- Ask God for opportunities to share Him with others
- Ask God to go to work in your church with His great power

## **APPLY**

- If you are in need of deliverance today from something, pray now and ask the Lord to set you free. Contact your pastor and/or a trusted Christian friend. Get them praying for you as well
- Make sure you are still praying over your list of 3-5 people who don't know Jesus. Pray for those individuals daily, asking God to give you a chance to share your story with them

# DAY 83

## **READ: Isaiah 1:1-20**

While pastoring in Wisconsin, I, being the neat-freak that I am, contacted a carpet cleaning company to steam clean the church's carpets. After the carpet cleaner had finished his work, he informed me that *every* stain was removed *except* the "red dye stains." I asked what could be done about these stains, and he quickly informed me that his company had no chemicals that were strong enough to remove stains made from red dye. I was a little taken aback, "You mean in the 21st century, we can't remove red stains?!?!" (What a nightmare for a neat-freak!)

Interestingly, about 2800 years ago, God told the Israelites that He was more than capable of removing deep crimson stains from even the whitest garments. And praise Him for that! No matter how far we have fallen, no matter how deep the stain of our sin, God's love and grace can go deeper. That stain can be removed!

## **THINK**

The Israelites did just about everything wrong you could think of, but what does God say in verse 18?

Why is this good news for you as well?

God is a God of second chances (and third, fourth...). Is there anything you need God to "clean up" in your life today? If so, what is it?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His "stain-removing" capabilities
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking God can't deal with any and all sin in your life
- Give any sins over to God right now and start fresh
- Ask God to deepen your trust and faith in Him

**APPLY**

- Check out the words to the great hymn, “Grace Greater than Our Sin.” Read, pray, and meditate over the lyrics.
- Never stop thanking God for these great truths!

# DAY 84

## **READ: Romans 8:18-39**

One day Charles Spurgeon was walking through the English countryside with a friend. As they strolled along, the evangelist noticed a barn with a weathervane on its roof. At the top of the vane were these words: GOD IS LOVE. Spurgeon remarked to his companion that he thought this was a rather inappropriate place for such a message. “Weathervanes are changeable,” he said, “but God’s love is constant.”

“I don’t agree with you about those words, Charles,” replied his friend. “You misunderstood the meaning. That sign is indicating a truth: Regardless of which way the wind blows, God is love.”

Sometimes, when the storms of life hit, when the wind whips in our faces, and the rain drives us for cover, we tend to forget that God is always love and that His love never fails.

## **THINK**

According to verses 26 & 27, how does the Spirit assist us when we are so beaten down that we don’t even know what to pray?

When troubles come, what good news is promised us *if* we stay centered on God and His will? (See verse 28)

List the things that *cannot* separate you from God’s love according to verses 35-39:

How can these truths encourage your heart today?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God that His love never fails
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking that His love comes and goes based on the circumstances of your life

- Ask God to fill you with His great and unending love
- Ask God to speak His love to you during difficult times

**APPLY**

- Write out the list of things that cannot separate you from God's love. Keep that list in a place where you can see it often

# DAY 85

## **READ: Isaiah 49:8-26**

Twenty-five years ago, the nation was captured by the story of “Baby Jessica.” Eighteen month-old Jessica McClure fell twenty-two feet down an exposed pipe in her backyard. Millions around America, and around the world, were glued to the TV for two and a half days while the rescue unfolded.

Now, I do not know exactly what Baby Jessica’s father was doing during those two days, but I doubt he ever said, “What? My baby’s down a well? Oh yeah, I guess I just forgot for a moment.”

We know that *no* loving father would ever say such a thing. And God, as the ultimate loving Father, certainly never forgets about us or our circumstances. He is always aware of what is going on in our lives and our need of rescue from sin and Satan.

## **THINK**

When you are tempted to think verse 14 is true, how does verse 15 give you comfort?

Much of Isaiah 49 deals with Father God rescuing His children and restoring their lives. How have you experienced this rescue and restoration of God?

Is there any area of your life in need of rescue today? If so, what is it?

List some people who you know need a rescue from sin:

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the rescue and restoration He provides
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking God could actually forget about you
- Ask God to work in any area of your life that needs His touch

today

- Pray for the ones you listed under the last question

### **APPLY**

- Make sure to hand over to the Lord any area of your life in need of rescue today
- Seek to be used by God to help rescue others

# DAY 86

## **READ: Jeremiah 31:1-14**

There comes a time in the life of every young man and woman when God causes them to meet that “special someone.” Once that “someone” shows up, it seems there is little else they can think about. For example, twenty-two year-old Gerry had been going through life fairly focused. That focus enabled him to graduate high school and college near the top of his class. Yet, now, as he begins his new job at a pharmaceutical company, he can’t focus at all. He can only think about Jill! He tries to shake her from his mind, but he cannot. Every idle thought is of her.

Why do I mention Gerry and his lovesickness today? I do so because Jeremiah 31:3 can literally be translated that God is “everlastingly lovesick” for his people. He is a God who loves us so much that He cannot help but think of us.

## **THINK**

Do you remember a time when you were “lovesick”? (Come on, you can admit it!) When was it?

Is it difficult to imagine that God is lovesick for you? Why or why not?

What blessings does God bestow on His people in Jeremiah 31 because of His great love?

List some of the blessings that God has bestowed on you because of His great love for you:

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His tremendous love for you
- Confess to God, if necessary, doubting His love for you
- Ask God to deepen your experience with His love
- Ask God to fix your eyes and ears squarely on Him

## **APPLY**

- If you are a guy, you may be “creeped out” at the thought of a God lovesick for you. Instead, choose to think of Him as a brother who has your back like no other
- If you are a gal, imagine that any man’s love for you cannot compare to the love God has for you today...and every other day after that

# DAY 87

## **READ: Romans 5**

When Frederick Lehmen wrote his amazing hymn, “The Love of God,” in 1917, it had only two stanzas and a chorus. The third stanza was added from words that actually first appeared deep inside the bowels of a prison, etched into a stone wall. Read the words carefully (or sing them if you know the hymn).

*Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made;  
were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade;  
to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;  
nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.*

The love of God is so amazing that it can pierce the deepest and darkest places with brilliant rays of light!

## **THINK**

How do we see the magnitude of God’s love in verses 5-8?

How do we see the magnitude of God’s love in verses 16-19?

How have you experienced God’s great love in your life?

With whom are you sharing this love?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His immeasurably great love
- Confess to God, if necessary, not seeking to grasp the fullness of this love
- Ask God to fill you with His love
- Ask God to use you to share that love with others

**APPLY**

- Sit and ponder the love of God for you
- Work to share that love with others. The world is literally starving for it!

# DAY 88

## **READ: Genesis 1**

One day, a potter went to grab a hunk of clay to begin working with it. As he grabbed it, the clay amazingly began to speak. “Do not touch me!” yelled the grayish lump. “I have seen what you’ve done to my friends, and I want no part of it!”

“What do you mean?” asked the potter.

“First, you grab us and throw us onto that hard wheel. Then you spin us around and around and around. If that is not bad enough, you douse us with water and dig your hands deep into us. It looks like torture! And when you are done with that torture, you throw us into a burning fire for hour upon hour. I say again, I don’t want any of that!”

“Oh, my little friend,” the potter started gently, “You are not the creator, I am. If you knew the purpose of all of that, you would gladly submit to the wheel. For through it all, I am making a masterpiece!”

## **THINK**

We learn, right from the first chapter of Scripture, that God is the sovereign Creator. Why is it important that we start with this foundation?

Have you been guilty of reversing God’s design? That is, instead of thinking you were created in God’s image to do His work, you act as though God is in your image and exists to meet your needs?

God looked at all He made and saw it was very good. This means that the plan God has for the world, and for your life, is also very good. Have you been seeking God’s very good plan for your life?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His creation of the world and of you
- Confess to God, if necessary, acting like He exists for you instead

of you existing for Him

- Ask God to show you His very good plan for your life
- Ask God to strengthen you to fulfill that plan

### **APPLY**

- Step outside your home and look at all the Lord has created. Stand in awe of that and contemplate the greatness of such a God

# DAY 89

## **READ: Genesis 15**

In Christian circles, it is not uncommon to hear someone say to another, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” This is certainly true. There is no doubt that God loves us more than we can ever know, and Romans 12 clearly states that God has a good, perfect, and pleasing plan for each of us.

However, what is sometimes lost in translation is the fact that God’s will is usually not easy, requires great sacrifice, deep faith, and patient endurance. This was certainly true for Abraham who was promised a multitude of descendants and a great nation. Yet, after many years had passed, he had *no* children and *no* land.

## **THINK**

What kind of doubts did Abraham have about God’s sovereign plan?

How did God answer his doubts?

Do you tend to doubt God’s good, perfect, and pleasing plan for you sometimes? Why or why not?

Have you been guilty of believing that because God loves you and has a great plan for you, everything should be nice and easy? If so, what can help you combat this misconception?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His good, pleasing, and perfect plan for you
- Confess to God, if necessary, buying into the lie that your life should be nice and easy...thus making faith and trust unnecessary
- Ask God to deepen your faith and trust in Him
- Ask God to give you the endurance you need to follow His plan

## **APPLY**

- Write out Romans 12:2 and underline the kind of plan God has for your life
- List all the things that are “going wrong” in your life right now.
- Hold this list up to the Lord and ask Him, “What do You want to teach me through these things?”

# DAY 90

**READ: Isaiah 61; Luke 4:14-21**

For my son, Kyle's, 13th birthday, I had a great plan in place. I had a "man-weekend" all set up. We headed to the Great Wolf Lodge in the Pocono Mountains, and it was going to be a huge surprise. *However*, shortly before Kyle and I were to leave for his big surprise, my mother asked him, "So are you excited about going to the Great Wolf Lodge?" Talk about a surprise killer!

Yes, we humans have a way of ruining plans. And when it comes to God's plans, we seem especially adept at ruining those! Through sin, through stubbornness, through short-sightedness, through selfishness and more, we have messed up the great things God has planned for us.

Thankfully, God had a plan in place for just such an occasion. He would send Jesus to provide a way back to Himself and His good, pleasing, and perfect plan for our lives.

## THINK

The Israelites had blown God's plan in literally every way possible, yet what was God about to do according to Isaiah 61?

How is Isaiah 61:10 possible because of Jesus?

Because Jesus came and paid the price for you blowing God's plan, what is possible now?

What steps do you need to take to get into (or stay in) the center of God's will?

## PRAY

- Thank God for sending Christ for you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not staying centered on His plan for

your life

- Ask God to focus you on Christ—the One who can keep you centered on everything God wants to do in and through you

### **APPLY**

- Don't finish this devotion until you have answered that last question. There are few other questions that are as important as that one
- Whatever those steps are, make sure to do them consistently

# DAY 91

## **READ: 2 Chronicles 7:11-22**

The word “if” is just a little word, but it is packed with meaning. Coming from the Old English word “yif,” it means “condition” or “stipulation.” With this understanding, it is easy to see how so much can hang in the balance on such a tiny word.

All throughout Scripture, and certainly in our passage for today, we see that God’s promises and plans hang delicately on that tiny, two-letter word. We know from previous devotions that God’s love is unconditional. Yet, when it comes to experiencing the fullness of His love and the joys of His blessings, there are conditions and stipulations that must be met. So the question for us today is: *If* we know that is true, what are we going to do about it?

## **THINK**

There are three big “ifs” in this passage. What is the first one dealing with?

What is the second one dealing with?

What is the third one dealing with?

How are you doing with the conditions and stipulations connected to these “ifs”?

Where do you need some work?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His desire to bless and strengthen you
- Confess to God, if necessary, thinking God will bless you “just because”
- Ask God to work in any area of your life that needs His touch

today

- Ask God to guide you deeper into His way and His will

### **APPLY**

- To avoid confusion, make sure to realize that God's love is *always* unconditional. However, to truly experience the fullness of His blessing, there are some conditions
- Review your lifestyle. Are you seeking to stay close to Christ, so you can experience all that He has for you?

# DAY 92

## READ: 1 Peter 1:13-25

During the divorce proceedings of a former NFL, Pro-bowl, quarterback, it came out that this player had an extra-marital affair. His wife's lawyer told the court that when she asked her husband why he had an affair, his response was, "God wants me to be happy."

With apologies to this player (who I left unnamed), nowhere in Scripture does God say His plan is to make us *happy*. Rather, as you noted in 1 Peter, His plan is for us to be *holy*. To make this possible, He sent Jesus to ransom us from an empty life. And the ransom that was paid was not mere gold or silver. No, the ransom was paid with the precious blood of Christ—the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

## THINK

Many Christians today live as though God's plan revolves around their happiness. What could you say to such a Christian to help them understand that God's plan actually revolves around holiness?

How is God working out verses 15-16 in your life?

Many people focus on happiness which is fleeting and based on circumstances. Yet, holiness is eternal because it is based on an eternal God and His everlasting Word. How does such a thought encourage you to not live for happiness but for holiness?

What is the next step you must take on the path to holiness?

## PRAY

- Thank God for His power to make you holy
- Confess to God, if necessary, living for happiness over holiness
- Ask God to fill you with a desire for His holiness
- Ask God to guide you step by step down the path to holiness

## **APPLY**

- Remember that living for holiness will eventually bring happiness, but living for happiness seldom brings holiness (and rarely brings long-term happiness either)
- Understand that sometimes God may need to take you through some “unhappy” things in order to perfect holiness in you

# DAY 93

## **READ: Haggai 1**

Roger and Sue retired in their fifties and moved to Florida. They spend their days collecting seashells, going out to eat, and drifting on the ocean in their thirty foot trawler. Many call this the pinnacle of the American Dream.

Ed and Patty are in their early seventies and just retired. Their first act as a retired couple was to buy an RV. Why? Because they wanted to explore the country? No. They did so because they wanted to be able to travel to any place in America that was experiencing disaster or need. It is quite common for them to be away from the comfort of their own home for months at a time as they serve victims of floods, tornados, wildfires, and more.

To this, I am sure God is saying, “Thank you Ed and Patty for following My Dream!”

## **THINK**

Have you been guilty of buying into the American Dream?

How did buying into the “Israeli Dream” affect the Israelites in our Scripture for today?

What did God say was necessary for the Israelites to do if they wanted to experience His presence and blessing among them?

How enthusiastically are you pursuing God’s dream? What could help you along?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God that He has a great plan for you and your family
- Confess to God, if necessary, not living out His dream for you, but rather the American Dream
- Ask God to guide you into His perfect will and plan for you

- Ask God to strengthen you to live out that plan in front of a watching world

### **APPLY**

- Invest in the study of God's Word, prayer, and a Bible-believing church. Nothing will help you move toward God's dream like those three things
- If you have not already, join a small group and gather others around yourself who are also seeking God's dream

# DAY 94

## **READ: Haggai 2**

David was a Christian working hard to achieve the American Dream, then he went on a missions' trip to Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Visiting the city's dump, he was overcome by the smell of burning trash and human excrement. He was even more overcome by the families he saw there who call that city dump their home. Watching a five or six year-old girl standing knee deep in garbage, trying to pick out something to eat, he realized his life must change.

All of his resistance to God's Dream fell away, and he went home dedicating himself to God's plan for his life. Many of his friends and family thought that he had gone overboard as he sacrificed valuable time and hard-earned money, as he moved into a smaller house to free up more resources, and as he began the process of adoption. But to David, God's dream was worth everything.<sup>14</sup>

## **THINK**

Building the Temple in Haggai 2 seemed a daunting task which discouraged many of the people. Likewise, trading in the American Dream and living a life of sacrifice for others is something Satan actively tries to discourage. How has he discouraged this in your life?

How does God encourage Zerubbabel and his fellow Israelites?

How has God encouraged you on this path?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the difference He wishes to make through you
- Confess to God, if necessary, giving into Satan's discouragement, selfishness, etc. and not pursuing God's dream
- Ask God to deepen your faith and trust in Him
- Ask God to give you the endurance you need to follow His plan

## **APPLY**

- If Jesus was outside your door right now and asked you to drop everything and follow Him, what would give you pause? What things might cause you to say, “I can’t right now”?
- Take those things and give them to Christ

# DAY 95

## **READ: 2 Corinthians 3:12—4:18**

In the book *SoulShift*, the authors talk about seven “shifts” in our soul that are necessary if we wish to move from immaturity to maturity. One of those “shifts” is the need to move our focus from “seen to unseen.” That is, to move toward spiritual maturity, we must turn away from a focus on the temporary things of this world toward an increasing focus on the eternal unseen things of God.

This shift, by the way, also leads us away from the American Dream—along with its focus on temporary material things—and toward God’s Dream and its focus on the eternal and everlasting things of His kingdom.

## **THINK**

When we accept Christ, a veil is taken away. This enables us to see what?

It is very easy to focus on the temporary pleasures of this life (or the temporary struggles of this life). Yet what does Paul call us to do in verses 4:17-18?

How are you doing in your shift from seen to unseen?

What is the biggest hindrance for you on this journey?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for taking the veil away so you can see the unseen
- Confess to God, if necessary, too much focus on “the seen”
- Ask God to show you more of His plan for you
- Ask God to focus you on Christ—the One who can keep you centered on everything God wants to do in and through you

**APPLY**

- Take inventory of your thoughts, actions, purchases, etc. What does this inventory show your focus to be?
- If your focus has not been set on the eternal plan of God, seek to make a “shift” today

# DAY 96

**READ: Psalm 93; Revelation 7:9-17**

Read through these names of God.

Lord Most High, Everlasting God, Healer, Lord of Hosts, Consuming Fire, Judge, Savior, Redeemer, Holy One, Strong Tower, Rock, Almighty God, Alpha and Omega, Ancient of Days, Creator, Father, I AM, King of Glory, King of Kings, Shepherd, Giver of Life, Refuge, Our Hope, Majestic One, and the list goes on.

Our God is an unboxed God. He cannot be contained. He cannot be categorized. He simply is, was, and will be.

Amazingly enough, this tremendous God of the Universe wants a relationship with us. He created us with the ability to know, love, and relate because He deeply desires us to know, love, and relate with Him.

So deep is this desire that when sin separated us from Him, God sent His Son to pay the price for our transgression. Christ's blood paved the way back to our Refuge, our Hope, our King, our Father, and our Creator. Christ's sacrifice made it possible for us to crawl into the lap of our Healer, our Redeemer, and our Shepherd.

How can one not help but get lost in the awe of these incredible truths!

## **THINK**

How is God described in Psalm 93?

How does John see God in Revelation 7?

How do you view God?

What can help you more deeply appreciate the greatness of our God?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for His greatness and majesty
- Confess to God, if necessary, not fully appreciating Him for who He truly is
- Ask God to lead you deeper into Himself
- Ask God to mold you into a person after His own heart

## **APPLY**

- Spend time looking again at the names of God
- Write down some of the names that speak to you and keep them in your pocket. Refer to this list throughout the day

# DAY 97

**READ: Psalm 56:8; Psalm 139:1-18**

One of my most embarrassing moments occurred when I was around fifteen years-old. Hanging out at the mall, I noticed that quite a few people were looking my way and smiling. My teenaged brain instantly thought, “Yeah, I got it goin’ on today!”

After about an hour of this, I tragically realized that my zipper was down. All those smiles from my fellow mall walkers were actually attempts not to laugh out loud in front of me!

I am sure you can think of times when you had a zipper down, a crumb caught in your facial hair, toilet paper stuck to your shoe, a blemish on your forehead, or something else. Each time something like this happens, it is a reminder that we can’t see ourselves very well.

There is One, however, who sees us as we truly are—inside and out. He knows our every thought, our every action, and our every motivation. He even knows how many tears we have cried and how many hairs sit atop our heads. This unboxed God is intimately aware of every detail of our lives, and He deeply cares for each and every one!

## THINK

Understanding that God knows everything about you can either be very comforting or very discomfoting, depending on how you are living your life. Which is it for you?

God does indeed care about every little detail of your life. Is there anything going on right now in your life that you have not given over to God because you think, “That’s not big enough to bother Him with”? If so, what is it?

Sometimes we purposely avoid coming to God because of embarrassment over something we have done, but God knows about it already! If this has been you, come to God right now with whatever you have done.

How does knowing that God intimately cares about every area of your life encourage you?

### **PRAY**

- Thank God for being intimately acquainted with every detail of your life
- Confess to God, if necessary, any sins you have been hiding from Him
- Ask God to deepen your experience with His love
- Ask God to guide you deeper into knowing Him and His will

### **APPLY**

- Seek to know God better. Commit to studying His Word, praying regularly, and investing in church and a small group
- Find someone who knows God better than you and seek to learn from that person

# DAY 98

## **READ: Revelation 22**

Have you ever been right in the middle of a really great dream and then woke up? Sometimes that can be a real bummer, but then that is the nature of dreams. We are all meant to wake up from our dreams and face the reality of the day ahead.

Likewise, God has a great dream for His people. But one day, that dream on earth will be over, and the whole world will have to face the reality of what lies ahead. Those who have been living for Christ will experience the glorious realities of Heaven. Meanwhile, those living to please themselves will experience a totally different reality.

## **THINK**

With such a reality facing you, how are you living your life?

With such a reality facing a lost world, what are you doing to impact it?

How can verses 14 and 15 inspire you to pursue God's dream and to help others do the same?

One more time, make a list of people who need to give their lives to Christ:

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the beautiful reality of Heaven
- Confess to God, if necessary, not following His dream and/or not helping others to do so
- Ask God to fill you with a desire for Him and His will
- Ask God to guide you to meet needs in the lives of those you listed under the last question

**APPLY**

- Don't fail to pray for the list you created every day.
- Ask God to use you in people's lives that they might experience the power of God, the love of Christ, and the blessing of Heaven

# DAY 99

## **READ: Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:13-21**

Stuff. We have lots of it. And all this stuff—I-pods, I-pads, laptops, video games, CDs, clothes, books, magazines, TVs, and more--takes up much of the time and money God has given us. We pride ourselves on our “collections.” “Look at all the songs I have loaded on my mp3 player.” “Look at all the clothes I have in my closet!” “Look at this fantastic gun collection.”

In the end, though, is this how we want our lives to be measured? Do you want your life to be measured by how much you have, or by how much good you’ve done with what you have? Do you want your life to be measured by how much time you spent with your stuff, or by how much time you spent fulfilling the stuff God has for you to do?

## **THINK**

In Matthew 25, what does Jesus say to the servants who used well the time and money given to them?

In Matthew 25, what does Jesus say to the servant who did not use well what was given to him?

What does Jesus say in Luke 12:21?

If life is measured by how well you are using the time, energy, and resources God has given you, how are you doing?

## **PRAY**

- Thank God for the time, energy, and resources He has given you
- Confess to God, if necessary, not centering on Him
- Ask God to help you measure life by the right standards

## **APPLY**

- Don’t skip by the last question without giving it much thought.

Process how you are using the time, energy, and resources you have, then decide which servant in the parable you are

- Is there anything you have been collecting that you could give away to others in need?

# DAY 100

## **READ: John 19:1-30**

Deep down each of us wants to know, really know, that we are truly loved. But how can we know? Quick answer: Look to the cross. When you look to the cross, you see the immensity of Christ's love because He sacrificed His life for you while you were still a sinner. You, me, and the person next door had done nothing to deserve or earn this sacrifice, yet Jesus gave it anyway. That is love!

A look to the cross means no more doubt. There you'll see how much Jesus loves you. There you'll see all that He was willing to do so that you could experience new life, a fresh start, forgiveness of sins, peace, joy, love, hope, and much, much more.

Knowing this, the question now becomes, what will you give in return? What will you sacrifice to show Jesus your love for Him?

## **THINK**

What did Jesus go through out of love for you?

Why did He do it?

What does it mean to you that Jesus would sacrifice His life on your behalf?

What will you do in return to show love back?

## **PRAY**

- Thank Jesus for exhibiting such sacrificial love
- Confess to God, if necessary, any sins (be specific) that are separating you from all that He has for you
- Ask God to show you how and where He wants you to serve Him

## **APPLY**

- Consider watching *The Passion of the Christ* or *The Greatest Story Ever Told*
- Consider purchasing a pocket-sized cross that you can carry around with you wherever you go



## **EPILOGUE**

I hope God has truly blessed you during this 100-Day journey. I know He deeply desires to do so many awesome things in and through you. His plan for your life is truly remarkable! I trust you have grabbed hold of that.

If you have been blessed in any way through these 100-Days, please do me the great favor of leaving a positive review on Amazon. Your review just may encourage another to take this same journey.

**GOD BLESS!**



## APPENDIX

1. <https://bible.org/illustration/shoe-clerk-led-moody-lord>
2. <http://www.family-times.net/illustration/Submission/200254/>
3. <https://library.moody.edu/archives/biographies/william-culbertson/>
4. <https://bible.org/illustration/faithful-servant>
5. <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2010/david-brainerd-my-hero/>
6. <http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biomooddy4.html>
7. <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/o/obedience.htm>
8. <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/s/sacrifice.htm>
9. <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/32/150;>  
<http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/32/150/case.html>
10. [https://www.mappingyourfuture.org/planyourcareer/careership/career\\_summary.cfm?careerID=621&headerImage=career\\_summary](https://www.mappingyourfuture.org/planyourcareer/careership/career_summary.cfm?careerID=621&headerImage=career_summary)
11. [http://confuciusinstituut.nl/en/view.php?a\\_id=169](http://confuciusinstituut.nl/en/view.php?a_id=169)
12. Taken from a sermon by Paul David Washer.
13. Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*, Harper, San Francisco, reprint 2009
14. Idleman, Kyle, *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*; Zondervan, 2011

