



# Growth

31 Devotions by Crossroads Fellowship Staff



*Growth*

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DAY 1

## The Best Love Story Ever Told

*This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.*  
- John 3:16 (MSG)

Stop and read that verse again...

Let it sink in...

Really sink in....

Don't just read it for the one millionth time. Let this verse awaken your spirit.

**God.** The God who created everything; the God who is, was, and will always be. The God who can take in one billion prayers a day. The God who can do whatever He wants whenever He wants; the God who is everywhere all the time, always...

**Loves.** Not just with words, or because He has to, not imperfectly, not half heartedly. But He loves us perfectly and completely! He proved it by giving His one and only son to die; because He wants to be with us, to have communion with us, to live life with us, to help us, to talk to us, to talk to...

**Me.** What have I done to deserve this? I have a chance now to be vitally united with Christ on a daily bases. I am no longer stuck in my sin, my choices or my mistakes. I am now alive in Christ. The old is *gone*, the new has come. I have a hope and a future; I am not stuck; I am free in Christ! I am alive for the first time! I have hope.

**Forever.** Because of HIS LOVE FOR ME, I am His forever. His love will never stop, never give up, never end. He won't take it back. It is perfect and complete and all I have to do is believe.

- Daniel Cwiakala

### Reflect:

When is the last time you truly experienced the Love of God in your life?

When have you let this love change you?

How does this perfect love you have received impact how you love the world around you?

### Respond:

Take time to experience God's love for you today. Remember how this love has changed you. Remember the first time you experienced His great love. Dream of how this love will continue to impact you and the world around you!

How is God calling you to take this love to the people around you today?



## DAY 2

### What's It Worth to Ya'?

*...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*  
- Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

How often does our amount of effort depend on the reward we think we will receive?

When Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame," he did it for the "joy set before Him." Was that joy the promise that he would sit at the right hand of the throne of God? We know that Jesus knew he would be reunited with his Father after his death. But was that the reason why Jesus was so obedient to his Father? I don't think so!

He had already been with God before he came to Earth. The "joy that was set before him," the very reason and purpose for his life and his suffering is YOU. Yes, you...and me, and every person who has been, who is and who will be on this Earth. Jesus paid the penalty of our sins with a horribly excruciating death for all of us. Where is the joy in that? The joy is that Jesus knew by his faithful obedience to his Father, he was providing a way for all of us to have eternal life with them in Heaven.

So, what's it worth to ya'? Do we have a love and an understanding of the "author and perfecter of our faith"? Do we acknowledge that if we put our faith in Jesus, admit we are sinners and ask for His forgiveness that we will see him and be together in Heaven? Are we willing to be inconvenienced or suffer for it?

Do we truly, "lay aside every encumbrance of the sin which so easily entangles us"? What do we choose to allow our time and our minds to be preoccupied with? What do we allow our eyes and ears to consume from the world around us? Are we willing to lay aside our pleasures to make time to know and love the one who offered his life for us? Are we willing to share Him with others?

- Kristin Gruber

### Reflect:

Take time to evaluate your day. Where in your heart are you willingly exchanging time with God for time with this world?

What changes do you need to make in your daily activities?

What steps will you take?

### Respond:

What's is worth to ya'?

This week, set aside 15 extra minutes each day and spend that time getting to know God better by diving into His Word, by heartfelt prayer, by eager listening and willing obedience.



## DAY 3

### *It's a Battle out There*

*Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous.  
Be strong.*

- 1 Corinthians 16:13 (NLT)

Any sports fanatic knows that proper training, strategy and preparation is key to winning a victory. Just as being physically and mentally geared up is critical in sports, being prepared is also essential for a victorious spiritual life. In 1 Corinthians, Paul exhorts us to do four things:

1. **Be on guard.** You are in a spiritual battle. Has there been a time in your life when things were going so well that you let your guard down and something happened (a sin) that could have been avoided? When you let down your guard, the enemy likes to throw things your way to make you stumble or fearful. Always be on guard. Ask yourself, "Am I prepared for the spiritual battle that happens every day or am I an easy target for the enemy?"
2. **Stand firm.** Remember the old saying, "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything?" We are called to stand firm in our faith and in what we believe to avoid being easily swayed by the things of the world.
3. **Be Courageous.** This literally means "show one's self a man." Don't be childlike but be the brave mature man or woman of God He has called you to be. Do not be afraid to "go against the flow" when it comes to the things happening all around us.
4. **Be Strong.** We must continually grow and increase in our spiritual strength by trusting in God and not in our own abilities. Daily read God's Word and spend time with Him in prayer.

- Mark Dalton

### *Reflect:*

When was the last time you realized you were in a spiritual battle?

Think of a time when you've "fallen" for something. What was distracting you from being alert and on guard?

Do you find it hard to "go against the flow"? How can you find the courage to make a stand?

What steps are you taking to grow spiritually? Are you reading His Word and spending time with Him daily in prayer?

### *Respond:*

How has today's devotion encouraged you to always be prepared?



DAY 4

## What Does the Lord Require of You?

*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

- Micah 6:8 (NIV)

Crazy traffic, snippy store clerks, an undermining coworker or an eye-rolling teen. Some days you want people to know exactly how you feel! When the people surrounding you are rude or unkind, it's easy to let anger and frustration take over. But what does God really want from us?

Micah 6:8 tells us that the Lord requires three things of us. First, we are to act justly and with fairness, honesty and integrity. Acting justly goes straight to the heart of how we treat people around us, whether it's our spouse, family, friends, the cashier you see each week at the grocery store or even the person who cut you off in carpool line.

The second thing God requires is that we love mercy. Notice that the requirement here is not that we HAVE mercy, but that we are to LOVE mercy. We don't just do acts of kindness from a sense of obedience, but we do them out of love. It is often challenging to show mercy, but it is the only response that makes sense in light of the mercy that God has shown us in Jesus Christ.

The third requirement is to walk humbly with our God. God expects us to have a right relationship with Him; that relationship always begins with humility, not pride. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. *"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast."* What sounds so simple in Scripture is hard to make a reality. We're often arrogant and proud. We tend to think God's role is to answer our prayers and make us happy, when in actuality our role is to humbly serve and glorify Him.

- Val Edwards

### Reflect:

How do I act in all of my dealings with others, no matter what my relationship (family, friend, colleagues, strangers) is with them?

Does my "fruit of the spirit" (love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) reflect God's love and mercy for others?

### Respond:

Pray every morning that God would provide you with an opportunity that day to act justly and mercifully from a spirit of humility, not from a spirit of condescension. Look for those "divine appointments" that will allow God's love to shine through you to others!



DAY 5

## The Good Life

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

- John 10:10 (NIV)

The prestigious job, a nice house, a sports car in the driveway, great kids and the perfect spouse – living the good life. How often do we think this is all promised to us as Christ followers? After all didn't Christ himself say he wanted us to have life to the full?

Is "having it all" really what He meant by living life to the full? Then why do we feel so empty inside? Why are our stress levels over the top? Why do some of us need a pill at night to lower our anxiety and help us sleep? Very simply, we have allowed the thief into our lives and he is robbing us of our joy in Christ.

There are only two ways to live life – you can pursue things for satisfaction or you can seek God to satisfy. Pursuing things will ultimately rob you of your soul. Pursuing Christ offers life.

Christ didn't live the American dream. Many times he was cold, hungry and hurting. Instead he chose to live a life fully connected to his Heavenly Father. He had direct access to God's love, peace, security and power. He knew the purpose of his existence and lived a life of fulfillment here on earth that has continued in the eternal presence of God.

So the choice is ours. We can live a life of fulfillment and purpose, fully connected to God that begins now and continues through all eternity. Or we can continue to pursue the things that leave us empty on the inside, kills our joy in life and robs us of life to the full.

- Emily VerSteeg

### Reflect:

How would you answer a believer who says that if you have enough faith you will be healthy and wealthy?

If you lost everything you had, could you still say that a life spent in relationship and communion with God is the best life you could have?

### Respond:

How does your perspective on having life to the full change when you look at people around you who seem to be successful and happy through the accumulation of things while you are suffering?



DAY 6

## Take a Walk on Water

*But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"* - Matthew 14:30-31 (NIV)

I've known the story of Jesus inviting Peter to come walk on the water with him for as long as I can remember. Do you know that one?

I used to think that Jesus' comment about Peter's faith pointed toward a quantitative problem: He didn't have enough faith, therefore, he sank. If that were true, then why would Jesus also say things like, "If you have faith even as small as a mustard seed, you can move mountains"? The truth is, the weakness of Peter's faith in that moment wasn't a quantitative issue, it was a qualitative issue. When he saw the wind and the waves, his faith in the reality of the storm suddenly became more real than his faith in the power Jesus. Peter lost sight of the greatness of Jesus, and allowed his attention, trust, and faith to rest on the reality around him. It was a little thing, compared to the wonder of Jesus in that moment.

The truth is, it's hard to keep our eyes on Jesus. It's hard to see hope when others don't. It's disorienting to trust the promises of God even more than what we're seeing or experiencing.

The good news is, Jesus leads us from where we ARE, not from where we think we ought to be. Just as he continued to love and teach Peter, Jesus is still passionately interested in loving and teaching you and me.

- Ryan Siegers

### Reflect:

Do you know what it feels like to be overwhelmed by the reality you can see?

Why do you think God allowed the storm under Peter's feet?

### Respond:

Who do you have in your life that can help you pay attention to what God is doing despite the storms in your life?

Take some time to talk to them this week, be honest about any struggles and ask that they help remind you of the faithfulness of God no matter what storms you face.



## A New strength

*"But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint."*

- Isaiah 40:31 (NLT)

It wasn't fair! I mean, how much could be asked of a teenage boy? Eight hospitalizations in ten months, and things had only gotten worse.

I wasn't sure what was more difficult as a father – to watch my son's body wither under disease or to see his hope diminished with each hospitalization. The helplessness was overwhelming. It was tough not to give into anger and bitterness as I prayed every night for God to allow me to trade places with my son – and to wake up every morning and try to be strong for him.

In times of despair we can lose perspective of how great and powerful our God is and that His promises are eternally true. There comes a time when we have to give up on our own strength and fully surrender to a strength that's beyond all understanding. And in that moment of "weakness" years ago when I called on God's strength – for my son, for me and for my wife – I watched God give us what only He could give: restoration.

My son now has a son of his own and I couldn't be more proud of him as a father. I see greater strength in him than I possessed at his age, and those days of fear and hopelessness over his health issues have passed. Although he still has health challenges, fear has given way to a renewed love for life, strength of character and confidence in tomorrow – for both my son and me.

- Jon Henry

### Reflect:

When have you tried to rely on your own strength instead of trusting in God?

Was there a time when you completely relied on God's strength during a tough situation?

In comparing these times, how would you describe your personal faith and sense of peace during each time?

### Respond:

How does knowing God's character of restoration and renewal help prepare you to let go of your inner "control freak" and trust Him in future situations?

# DAY 8

## Car Talk

*Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT)

The thought occurs to me that a Scripture verse used at the top of a devotional is probably going to be applicable for my own day. Oh no! I'd prefer positive verses that don't imply a looming challenge. The truth is I'd rather think deeply, than live deeply. Yet, wouldn't you know it? My devotional verse states, "Be thankful in all circumstances!"

Before I get deep into writing this devotional, I hear God say, "David, you're just supposed to *live* this verse today. No writing, just living." No! Anything but that, I don't want any "circumstances."

There was no getting around it...fast forward 12 hours. The day started when two of our family cars decided to break down. I tried to be thankful, I honestly did, but it was 98 degrees outside and I hate working on cars. I reluctantly thanked Him for the broken headlight and the dead battery. There's no space here to explain how it played out, but something I'd been trying to make happen for several years resulted from these two "circumstances."

God is orchestrating amazing things. If we're constantly rowing against the tide, trying to change everything, we're going to miss it big time. I'm not advocating rolling over and letting history happen to you. But when I look back, all of the best things in my life happened without my full understanding - my wife, adopting our children, etc. Remove His "circumstances" and enter "my perfect plan" and none of those things happen.

So if you belong to Him, be encouraged, His will is being worked out. We are surfing through life. We'll eventually hit shore but the waves that carry us there are His. It can be a joyous ride if we just stop swimming back out to sea.

- David Howell

### Reflect:

List several occasions when "circumstances" that didn't make sense at the time eventually revealed His plan for your life?

### Respond:

Will you take the challenge?

How can you live out this verse today?

## Do What I Say...Not What I Do

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only,  
deceiving yourselves.*

- James 1:22 (ESV)

"Do what I say, not what I do." HA! What a farce! Whoever came up with that line obviously did not know what trust means. How can you trust someone who doesn't DO what they say they will?

My friend's adult son recently confided that what meant more to him than all the "godly wisdom" she had spoken to him over his lifetime was seeing her read her Bible when nobody was looking. Isn't it true that what we DO, especially when we think no one is watching, is far more important than what we say? This young man knew he could trust what his mom said because of her actions.

Trust is the essential ingredient to all relationships. If you do not have trust, what kind of relationship do you truly have? As believers, we trust that God's Word is truth, that Jesus is His Son and that we receive the Holy Spirit when we ask for the free gift of salvation. There is no way that we can have a healthy relationship with God unless we trust Him and His Word. And we *can* trust that everything God says will happen....will truly happen. The Bible is a living example of His Word! Our God is a "DOer"!

However difficult it may be, we trust that God will work out everything for our good. It is this trust in Him and in His ability to work through us that allows others to see that we are different from the world we live in. We trust in God, not our portfolios, not our education, not our position or anything this world would have us believe in. When people see and know they can trust what we "DO," they then know they can trust what we "say."

- Kristin Gruber

### Reflect:

Would those around you say they can trust what you say because of what you DO?

If others saw your actions when you thought they weren't looking, would they continue to trust you?

Is God bringing anything to your mind right now that you need to not DO so others will believe what you say?

### Respond:

If trust is an issue with your relationship with God, pray that you and He work together to build that trust.



DAY 10

## The Fruit-Full Christian

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

- Galatians 5:22-23 (HCSB)

The fruit of the Spirit is certainly intriguing. As Christians, we are called to exhibit the character of the Holy Spirit. So why did Paul decide to use the word “fruit” to describe the character of the Holy Spirit? It has to do with the fact that a fruit is nourishing; it is pleasant; it provides refreshment and it is sweet.

Notice that Paul begins verse 22 with a preposition, “*But* the fruit...” The Spirit’s fruit is opposite of what the flesh produces such as envy, sexual immorality, outbursts of anger, etc. (Galatians 5:19-21).

Paul makes it clear that those who follow Christ are to display, and cultivate, the fruit of the Spirit within them. The fruit of the Spirit is for all believers and is what distinguishes us from unbelievers. Jesus, when speaking of counterfeit believers and prophets, warned us saying, “You’ll recognize them by their fruit” (Matthew 7:16-20). The bottom line is this: If the root of the tree is rotten, bitter, or bad, the fruit will be as well!

Here is the most important caveat of this passage: none of us can produce the fruit! However, we can cultivate it. In the life of the believer we call this process “sanctification” (Romans 6:22). It is a lifelong process. The law and our flesh cannot produce the fruit, but the Spirit works in concert with our spirit to bring about the character of God in us. We must take care of the soil, water the soil, till the ground, and work to make sure we are “fruit-full” Christ followers.

The result is obvious. The Psalmist describes the one who dedicates his life to God’s word daily and walks in righteousness beautifully; “He is like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season” (Psalm 1:3).

- Daniel Messina

### Reflect:

How are you properly cultivating the fruit of the Spirit in your life?

Are you actively pursuing the fruit of the Spirit? Why or why not?

Are you walking in the Spirit or living in your fleshly desires?

### Respond:

How can you practically display the fruit of the Spirit in your life today?

List the gifts of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and list the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) – if any works of the flesh are being displayed in your life, repent in prayer. If any aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is less evident in your life today, pray and ask the Spirit to help you cultivate it better.



## DAY 11

### Love is Priority #1

*Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not conceited, does not act improperly, is not selfish, is not provoked, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.* - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (HCSB)

Having a baby changes everything. As I was with my wife in the delivery room, nervous, sweating (and honestly, about to faint), it happened...my son was born. This 9lb, 2oz. little human being completely changed my life in an instant and I couldn't help but love him when I saw him. He was my priority, and his existence signaled an expectation of better things to come.

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul argues that *love is an action, not an emotion*. The kind of love Paul describes is seen, experienced and demonstrated. This is contrary to how our current culture honors personal feelings above almost everything. The world teaches that we can do what we want, when we want, because we "feel" like it. And if we don't "feel" like it, we don't do it.

Paul has no room for abstract, made up definitions of love. He wants us to clearly know what love looks like when we see it. So, he paints fifteen separate portraits describing love in action. "Love is patient; love is kind...."

So, if *love is an action, not an emotion*, we need to study what God says about it and then make it a priority to live out this kind of love in our own lives. Just as Paul clarified to the church in Corinth, love ultimately endures.

Certainly every expression in the Bible that refers to God's love shows God in action. In love He sent His Son to be our Savior and our Redeemer. In Jesus (and His great love), we have a reason to hope and can spend this life with an expectation of better things to come.

#### Reflect:

How often do you stop to think about how God chose to share His love with you?

How does it make you feel that sharing His love with us was, and still is, a priority to God?

#### Respond:

Make plans to actively display God's love to others in your life.

Identify those who need to experience this love. How will you share this wonderful truth with them?



DAY 12

## *I Give You the Nations*

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

*- Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)*

The Great Commission is Jesus' last recorded personal directive to his followers. He gave these instructions to his disciples after His resurrection and just before He ascended into heaven.

I don't know about you, but when reading the collective commands and exhortations from Jesus, it is often so easy to assume it is everyone else's job to enact them. It never comes home to me that Jesus put my name on part of this global and history spanning work. Yet, the Great Commission is the longest running movement of God in human history and spans 20 centuries and thousands of languages and cultures.

The Great Commission wasn't intended just for Jesus' followers two thousand years ago. It is just as relevant today as it was then. He has surely equipped each one of us to be able to reach out in some way (Hebrews 13:20-21) and He will provide opportunities to impact others.

When we get to heaven will you be able to join the conversation about the "good news" of Jesus and how it spread to every tribe and nation? Or will your faith have been a cul-de-sac or dead end street that never intentionally engaged an unreached person or population?

- Doug Gamble

### *Reflect:*

Have you heard this invite and command from Jesus in a really personal way yet?

Have you discovered how this incredible movement can use YOUR abilities?

Could your great commission inheritance be transferred to another who is listening?

### *Respond:*

Can you commit to reading one good read [article, book, magazine] related to global missions this year?

Have you seriously investigated the many small and significant ways you can engage the world even if you don't leave town?

Can you commit to meeting with a missions department staff member this year to learn?



DAY 13

## The Power of God's Love

*The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.*

- Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV)

Imagine feeling so thoroughly loved that your defenses are down and critical voices quiet. It is hard to comprehend being loved that much and so unconditionally, even by God. The closest earthly comparison is the bond new parents feel for their newborn child. It's amazing how much you can love this new little person in such a pure way. A baby requires so much from us and gives us nothing in return, yet the love and pure delight that we typically feel is hard to express. There is little we wouldn't do for our precious children.

Why is it so hard to comprehend God as viewing us with this level of delight? In 1 Corinthians 13:12 Paul reminds us that we see through "a glass, darkly." In other words, there is much we just do not understand. Our grasp of reality is limited, at best. And nowhere is our limited perspective more apparent than in our understanding of God and His love for us. In Psalm 136 the psalmist gives thanks for God's enduring mercy, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever." The Psalmist offers comfort and hope for us as he points to a God who is good, merciful and loving toward us.

As you dwell on how thoroughly loved you are by God, consider these truths for all who have been redeemed by Christ:

- God is with you, regardless of what you are going through, or where you have been.
- God is mighty to save. There is none better to be with you than the one and only, mighty God.
- God takes great delight in you! He loves you so much, it will quiet you. He rejoices over you with singing.

- Anthony Thomas

### Reflect:

Take a moment and reflect on this image of God. He is the perfect father, expressing His unconditional love toward you by showing delight and singing over you. How does this image compare to the image that you have of your earthly father and his position toward you?

In what ways does God reflect a perfect father?

List the ways that God has shown you His great and unconditional love?

### Respond:

Since God has shown you such unconditional love, how should you respond to Him?

In what way can we reflect God's attitude in our relationship with others? List the people in your life who need to feel God's unconditional love through you.

Spend time thanking God for His goodness, and for His loving attitude and delight toward you.



## DAY 14

### *In Spirit and Truth*

*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

- John 4:24 (ESV)

I had the privilege of going to school at Liberty University. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning we were expected to attend Convocation. Each session began with about 15 minutes of worship through song while 10,000 residential students lifted their voices to praise God! It is the largest gathering of Christian young people in the world - three times each week. Looking back, I realize how lucky I was to be in that environment, but I must confess, I didn't always feel lucky at the time. It was very easy for the worship times at Convocation to become an empty ritual for me.

So what does true worship really look like? Jesus made it clear what kind of worshippers God is looking for. In John 4:23, when Jesus is speaking to a Samaritan women, He says, "...the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." To worship *in spirit* means to worship from your whole heart, not just ceremoniously. To worship *in truth* means worshipping according to the what the Word of God says. God is seeking those who worship with their whole heart and according to truth of Scripture.

I became so convicted about my approach to worship at Liberty's Convocation. Although, I often would worship God in truth, my heart was not in it. Too many times I was simply going through the motions simply because I was expected to be there. I was not being the worshipper that the Father was seeking even though I had countless reasons to give glory to God. How thankful I am that He is still helping me grow into a true worshipper.

- Tyler Hairston

#### **Reflect:**

When have you found yourself not worshipping in both spirit and truth?

Do you worship the Father every day of the week, or just for an hour on Sunday morning? How can you improve your times of sincere worship?

#### **Respond:**

Spend time each day this week reading God's Word. Let the truth you read about God's character stir you to respond to Him with worship from the depths of your heart. Be sure to examine your heart to see if you are worshipping out of ritual or if it is in loving response to who God is and what He has done.





DAY 15

## Never Alone

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*  
- Romans 8:37-39 (NIV)

Why does the word “separation” tend to bring such negative connotations? Perhaps it is because marital discord comes to mind. Is it the idea of one of the most sacred commitments moving towards collapse? Maybe the fear of being alone is hidden beneath the surface in all of us. Simply hearing “separation” makes us think we are just waiting for the moment when we will find ourselves all alone.

Whatever the word conjures up in your mind, one thing is for sure: being separated from God is definitely not a good thing. When Adam and Eve made that first decision to separate themselves from God, they morphed their reality (and ours), into a warped experience of fear, pain and anger.

Yet, now that we’ve been rescued by Christ out of our own fear-filled nightmare, why do we live as if at any moment we might get “sucked back” into it? After all that Jesus did to pull us back from the brink, would He really just let us slip right back over the edge?

In Romans 8, Paul very clearly declares this as a “No Way!” scenario. No matter what you can think of, either good or bad, it cannot and will not, reinsert a wedge in between us and God.

Let that sink in for you today! It is the love of Christ in which we now live. We are free from fear and full of life. Reaffirm today in your own heart and mind, the firm knowledge of Christ’s love for you. He will never let you go!

- John Frye

### Reflect:

Why do you think we all choose to initially try out our own fantasy-land reality apart from God?

How might a “collision” of millions of people’s own self-defined realities contribute to what you see play out in the world each day?

Do you sense any fear of separation from God beneath the surface in your own life? Why or why not?

How might Paul’s words in Romans remind you of God’s inseparable love for you?

### Respond:

Determine to daily reassert God’s eternal, inseparable love for you by choosing one of Paul’s comparisons in Roman’s 8 and memorizing it. Picture how it might play out in various practical situations. Be prepared to declare this truth anytime you begin to feel fearful or alone during the day.



DAY 16

## Hanging by a Thread

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see.*

- Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

One summer I worked at a Christian sports camp in Branson, Missouri. As part of my experience, I learned the art of rappelling 180 feet down the rock face of a canyon. Rappelling consists of being harnessed to a rope, and leaning backwards off a rock face, ledge or platform, while using the rope to let you down in a controlled way.

I had the proper equipment, the knowledge, and the courage to successfully rappel down the cliff, but initially I lacked faith. I had seen numerous people go before me, but because I hadn't personally experienced it, I had doubt, which resulted in fear. I had to believe, and act in faith, that the rope would hold me. I gripped the rope tightly, leaned backwards, and had one of the best experiences of my life.

Faith was the key that resulted in action and belief. Hebrews 11:6 states, *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*

The reward of rappelling down a cliff is nothing compared to the reward of placing your faith in Christ. When you feel like you are hanging by a thread or you are paralyzed with fear, it is faith that will give you hope and assurance.

- Robbie Thomas

### Reflect:

Where is God calling you to step out in faith?

How is God growing your faith?

### Respond:

Write down actions steps you need to take.

# DAY 17

## *I Can Do All Things...?*

*I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.*  
- Philippians 4:13 (HCSB)

Have you ever seen the old TV show, "Kids Say The Darndest Things"? The show highlighted the unique and often comical way that kids process what they hear and experience. It was unpredictable and hilarious!

As a father of two children, I've had my own experiences with how kids interpret questions and life in general. When we challenged my son with the idea that he could accomplish anything he put his mind to, he responded, "Oh yeah, can I ride unicorn?" I had no response except to laugh and realize that I may have to revisit my approach to life's teachable moments.

It seems we Christians are sometimes a lot like children, interpreting Bible verses to reflect what we want them to say. In Philippians 4, Paul did not write verse 13 to suggest what many of us have come to think it means. I think Paul would want us to ask two important questions. Is doing all things through Christ about Him giving us what we want? Or is it a desire for us to be content with His will?

The apostle Paul, writing as a prisoner to Christians in Philippi, was focusing on how we can be content in all of life's circumstances when we trust in His will. Our focus should be on what *He* can do, rather than what *we* can do.

Verse 13 is not about what we can accomplish when faced with challenges. It's not even about us at all. As much as we would like it to be, we are not the point of this verse. The point is Jesus and what can take place in our humility and total dependence on Him. It's about Christians like Paul doing God's will and working out God's plan of salvation even when it is not comfortable. Can this truth be our teachable moment?

- Mark Stroupe

### **Reflect:**

How often do you find yourself operating in your own strength and lacking dependence on Jesus?

Is Jesus and His will for your life what you depend on for every circumstance you face?

### **Respond:**

Work to rely on what Jesus can do by praying for humility to depend on Him.

Make a list of the areas in your life where you know you need to give control to Jesus. Then pray for His will to be done, not yours.



DAY 18

## Is It in You?

*This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*

- Joshua 1:9 (NLT)

The Israelites had made a miraculous exit from Egypt. They had seen the power of God first hand. However, distrust had set in. Their disobedience had turned a 240 mile victory hike from Egypt to Israel, into 40 years of skirting the promises of God but never obtaining them. This wilderness wandering was something more than a bunch of guys unwilling to ask directions, it was a death sentence. Every adult who started the journey and disobeyed God, was gone, including their leader Moses.

However, God was not done. The children of all the Israelites who had left Egypt were now young adults. As the book of Joshua opens, God sets His plan back into action!

I love the straight forward, no bones about it, language: Moses is dead. Joshua, you're in charge. All the land belongs to you guys and all the previous promises are in effect; no one can stop you ... except there is one thing. There is one really important thing (Joshua 1:8). You must study the word; mediate on it; obey everything written, "THIS is my command." You cannot be strong and courageous for very long without God's word being in you, but with it you can take the land that you have been circling for years.

Just like the Israelites, it's a simple equation if you want to move from the outside to the inside of God's blessings. You do not have to fear or be discouraged, He is with you wherever you go.

- David Howell

### Reflect:

What blessings and promises from God do you believe are unfulfilled in your life?

### Respond:

In what ways can you make a renewed commitment to putting His word in your mind and heart?



DAY 19

## All That I Need

*The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.* - Psalm 23:1-3 (NLT)

Years ago, I was presented with a decision that would change the rest of my life. The weight of needing to make the right choice brought such fear and anxiety, I was terrified that I wouldn't do what I was supposed to do. It was in those moments that I turned to Scripture and was reminded that I did not face this decision alone.

As I began praying, I could envision this picture in my mind. Jesus was walking ahead of me and guiding where I should and shouldn't go. I was the sheep and He was the shepherd. All I had to do was follow His lead and I would be right where I was supposed to be. This is why we can walk through valleys of darkness without being afraid, because the LORD walks beside us. I no longer had to worry about making the right choice, I only had to trust my shepherd and follow his lead. When I truly grasped this truth, a wave of relief washed over me.

We are not made to live life in the chains of anxiety and fear, but too often we allow fear to dictate what we will or will not do. Jesus came so we could be free.

My prayer for you today is that you find comfort knowing that the LORD is your shepherd. He provides your every need. He walks with you through dark valleys. Whatever you are facing in life, I encourage you to turn to the LORD and trust that he will guide you along the right path.

- Tyler Hairston

### Reflect:

When you are facing tough circumstances is your first response to turn to the LORD?

How have you experienced the LORD's presence when you were walking through a dark valley in life?

### Respond:

Over the next six days, read and memorize one verse a day from Psalm 23.



## DAY 20

### *Don't Go It Alone*

*Confess your sins to each and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*

- James 5:16 (NLT)

If you're like most people it is hard to admit to someone when you are wrong, much less when you've sinned. So often we try to sweep such incidents under the rug and try to forget about them. But James tells us that we need to confess our sins not only to God but to one another. Why? So we may be healed.

Is there a problem in your life that you'd like to be rid of?

It is not going to magically disappear, no matter how much you wish it away. You're never going to get rid of it on your own. You are only going to get better when you are honest with God – and with others. So, if you want to be healed, tell other people. This is the hardest step for many of us because it hits our pride. We might not mind telling God about our sin but we're not about to tell anybody else. There is healing when we humble ourselves and share our problems with one another because God gives grace to the humble.

Not only are we to confess our sins to one another but we are to pray for each other; there is great power in prayer. When someone comes to you to confess their sins, don't judge them, pray for them, so that they may be healed.

We were not meant to face our problems (or our sins) by ourselves. God designed us to need each other.

So don't go it alone.

- Mark Dalton

### *Reflect:*

When did you last experience a problem that might have been resolved by confessing it to someone and having them pray for you?

### *Respond:*

Is there an unresolved problem lingering in your life? How are you going to move past it?

Is there someone you need to go to and admit that you have messed up and are wrong? Who is it?

What will you do differently going forward as a result of what you learned from today's devotional?

# DAY 21

## He's Got You!

*God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble.*

- Psalm 46:1 (HCSB)

The Psalms are a beautiful collection of theological truths written to instruct, inspire and remind us of the character of the God whom we serve. Notice how the Psalmist begins the verse with the words, "God is." If we quickly glance at the beginning of this verse, we can miss its implication. It means that God **is**, not that He "will be" when needed, "can be" if necessary, but that He **is**! It is His essence! He **is** OUR refuge and strength. The word translated as "refuge" is also used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe a place of shelter from a storm or from danger.

Note that the verse also says that God "is a helper." This means He is always able to help, is always helping, and will help us, even when we don't think we need His help, or realize He is at work to provide us safety from trouble. That is why the following verse begins with the words, "Therefore we will not be afraid..." Notice that this Psalm is a collective Psalm. It is a psalm for God's people, by God's people. That is why the plural pronouns "we" and "us" are used. God takes care of His people. He is always for us, never against us.

Finally, God's Spirit is described by Christ as a "helper" in the New Testament, *paraklatos* (John 14:16). He is a comforter, an advocate, and a helper to those who believe in Him and seek refuge under His wings. The Psalmist concludes Psalm 46 with the words, "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold." Paul put it this way, "If God is for us, who can be against us!" (Romans 8:31). So, don't fret, He's got you!

- Daniel Messina

### Reflect:

Do you believe God can be your refuge and strength?

Is there an area in your life where fear has taken a strong grip? Remember, He's there to help you! Always!

### Respond:

Write down your fears, hurts, and pain...then pray that the Lord will release you from these things.

Memorize Psalm 46:1 and walk in its truth!



DAY 22

## When All Hell Breaks Loose

*For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,  
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you  
hope and a future.*

-Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

At 3:00am on a Sunday in October 1998, I was jarred awake by a telephone call. My father had passed away in Kenya, Africa. The news about my father was even more devastating considering that I had no money to go home for the funeral. We had three kids and I was a full-time international student at Southeastern Baptist Seminary. As an international student, I was only allowed to work at the college just 20 hours per week (and was paid \$5.50 per hour.)

It was the longest night of my life. I had no clue of where to begin. My wife and I only knew to pray and believe that God would take care of us. After sharing my terrible news with other students, they asked if I wanted to go home. In three days, God miraculously provided enough money for my son and me to fly home.

The day before our flight to Kenya, I was involved in a serious accident that completely totaled my only car. The accident was so bad that the first responders thought I was surely dead, but I came out of the car only with minor facial scratches. We safely made our flight to Kenya for my father's funeral.

On our return trip, we planned to board a connecting flight in Belgium after visiting the US Embassy for a visa to reenter America. Unbelievably, the visa was denied and we spent a soul wrenching week in Belgium while waiting for the college officials to sort out the required documentation needed. It was overwhelmingly difficult. I couldn't imagine why God was allowing me to go through all the pain I was enduring. My son was only eight, so I just kept assuring him that everything works for good to those who love the Lord.

Finally, we got the visa. God had been working and my friends in the US had raised enough money to clear our hotel bills and we still had \$4,000 left to buy another car by the time we landed in US.

- Stephen Barine

### Reflect:

Are you going through moments of confusion, loneliness, depression and frustration because nothing seems to work for your life?

Do you feel like you are moving from one crisis to another and you are at the point of giving up? What truth can you cling to when you feel like your faith is being tested beyond your imagination?

### Respond:

How has today's devotion changed your perspective on how to respond the next time it feels like all hell is breaking loose in your life?





## DAY 23

### No Fear

*Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.*

- Isaiah 41:10 (NLT)

The direction, "Don't be afraid," is not a request. God is telling you that He is with you and that with Him there is no fear. There is no fear of society, no fear of your environment, no fear of your financial situation, no fear of the future. God is with you.

The verse doesn't stop there, He then instructs you to not be discouraged, because He is your God. It's not because things might improve and your "luck" will turn around. The reason to not be discouraged is unshakable, unbreakable, and unchanging. The reason to not be discouraged is because... He. Is. Your. God.

In His love and compassion for us He continues, "I will strengthen you and help you." He doesn't say that He will make all the tough, sad, and terrible things go away. He says that He WILL strengthen you. None of us are left alone in this world to fend for ourselves. God, the creator of all things, will strengthen and help you. There is no greater help.

The close of this verse brings an awesome finality to it with the image of God holding you up in His hand. The significance of His "victorious right hand" is to remind you that God isn't *going* to win, He already has. He has already rescued you, strengthened you, helped you, and encouraged you. You just need to seek Him.

- Aaron Pippin

### Reflect:

What are the things or situations that bring fear into your life?

In what areas of your life have you allowed fear to discourage you?

How can you allow yourself to rest in the victorious hand of God?

When have you looked to the face of God before the opinions of others?

### Respond:

What will you do differently this week with this perspective that God will strengthen and help you?



DAY 24

## Confidence In Crisis

*No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face....God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it.*

- 1 Corinthians 10:13 (MSG)

I barely heard my boss's words over the thoughts crashing through my mind. I knew this day would come, but was unprepared for the choice I was about to make. Sitting in that conference room, all I could think about was preserving and protecting my family – but what did that truly mean?

Under new management, our organization had taken a 90-degree turn from the values that had attracted me to this role. Recent management decisions contradicted my personal values and ethics. After expressing my concerns to my direct supervisor, I now found myself in this room, being asked one "simple" question, "Jon, are you on board with the direction we're going?"

Simple, right? I knew the repercussions of answering, "No." I'd be facing immediate unemployment with financial risk for my family. It meant job-seeking, lifestyle adjustments, and possibly another move. A "Yes" answer meant that I might keep my job until I could find another one. It meant that my family would be protected, right?

In that moment, I prayed for God's strength to overcome the temptation to give in to fear. I looked my leader in the eye and answered, "No. I cannot support this direction."

The next three months were tough financially. But my family witnessed a husband and father who wasn't afraid to stand for what he believed and we experienced God's supernatural provision as He brought us to a greater place than we had started. He truly preserved and protected us.

- Jon Henry

### Reflect:

When was the last time you faced a personal crisis?

Did you rely on God's strength?

Can you look back and see God's provision through the trial?

### Respond:

How does knowing God's character to always protect and provide help you prepare for future trials in your life?



DAY 25

## Paralyzed by Fear

*For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power,  
and love and self control.*

- 2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)

A few years ago we took our family to see the USS North Carolina Battleship in Wilmington. I was ready for an exciting day exploring the ship. My oldest son, Austin, was 5 years old at the time, and I was sure he would love the experience of exploring the ship.

After looking at the massive guns turrets and huge anchor top side, we decided to go below deck to check out the interior and the rest of the ship. We were having a great time until Austin became paralyzed by fear when we had to walk across the metal grates that allowed you to see a floor below you. No amount of coaxing or reassuring could allay his terror.

Fear is a very real, and powerful emotion that causes people to act in a way that does not look like they have self-control. Because of his fear, my son was hysterically crying, unable to move, and did not think this battleship was very cool anymore.

Reflecting on the verse in 2 Timothy, I think about how God wants us to live our lives in response to the gospel. Through Christ, our lives can be full of power, full of love, and display self-control. Fear or timidity creates the exact opposite for us, and we end up not moving. The devil wants to use fear to steal the blessing of what God has given you, which is a new spirit and power to live an amazing life in Him.

- Robbie Thomas

### Reflect:

Are there areas of life where you are living in fear?

Where has fear caused you not to move or do what God is telling you?

### Respond:

Journal, pray over, and watch God move in these areas.

# DAY 26

## The Calm

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

- Romans 8:28 (ESV)

*Yeah right... All things, what about that one time I.."*

*"Sure, but I just went through.... How was that for my good?"*

*"Nope that can't be right. "*

The truth that "all things work together for good" can be very hard to believe, especially when we are going through a hard season, when we don't see the out or when we doubt God cares for us.

When a parent tells a toddler not to touch a hot stove, she only hears, "No" and thinks you are keeping her from fun. She doesn't understand that you are doing it in love and for her protection. In the same way, we often don't see God's bigger plan at work in our lives. We're hurt and don't understand. Yet, God's plan and purpose is so much broader than we can comprehend.

Romans 8:28 gives us something that will help us through the hard times... HOPE. The hope we have in Christ takes deep root in our soul. It gives us strength to trust, to persevere and to continue to fight the good fight of faith. We can know in our heart of hearts God has everything in His control and that He cares for us.

By holding onto this promise, our focus can shift from our tough situation to resting in our all powerful, loving, merciful Father. It takes our view off of the storm swirling around us and gives us a higher perspective of the situation we are in. In the hard moments of doubt and struggle, KNOWING the truth of these words gets us through.

These words bring rest to the weary heart in the midst of the battle; they bring peace to the troubled; they bring hope to the desperate. These words bring calm to the storm.

- Daniel Cwiakala

### Reflect:

When have you faced a situation where you have not been able to see the hope of Christ?

How can prayer change your perspective during hard seasons of life?

What is God's big picture plan for your life?

### Respond:

Begin to change your prayers from a focus on your problems, to a focus on our Great God. Pray this truth, even when you don't see it in your situation, believe in a great God who can do more than we can ever hope or imagine.



DAY 27

## *Come and Rest*

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

- Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

Today, more than ever, people feel weary and burdened. What makes us feel that way? Let's look at some statistics.

In the US about 18% of the population struggles with anxiety disorders, 7% struggles with depression, and nearly 50% of all adults don't get enough sleep. In fact, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has called "insufficient sleep" a public health epidemic that contributes to a number of difficulties, including marital dissatisfaction, depression, weight gain, etc.

Other stressors include financial challenges, work fatigue, relational dysfunction, extreme responsibilities, aging and health issues, and the emotional toll of loss, grief or shattered dreams. Spiritual issues, like guilt, shame, or striving for success add to our worries. It seems there are countless ways to become weary and burdened.

With so many factors contributing toward our burdens, it is interesting that God gives just one solution and one way forward. He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." How often do we run to self-help books or the advice of friends instead? Jesus reminds us to simply come to Him and find rest for our souls.

In the Parable of the seed and the sower, the soil is a metaphor for the Soul. The seed can't thrive in a soul filled with clutter or ceaseless activity. Matthew 16:26 says, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" It isn't the challenges you are facing for that cause your weariness. It is the condition of your soul. Unburden, and find rest in Him.

- Anthony Thomas

### *Reflect:*

Take a moment and reflect on the health of your soul. Are you weary and burdened? Are you hurried, cluttered, or sleep deprived?

How does God want you to deal with your burdens and worries?

List the ways in which your worries and burdens have infiltrated your soul. Also, list some ways in which your hurried life has caused you to miss opportunities for your soul to receive provision and care.

### *Respond:*

Since God has shown you the value of an unhurried and unburdened life, how should you respond to Him?

List some ways to live an unhurried life and practice being fully present in situations with people around you. Spend time thanking God for His provision and rest.



DAY 28

## Be Strong and Courageous

*Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you*

- Deuteronomy 31:6 (NASB)

The last words a leader speaks to his followers typically reflects what weighs heaviest on his heart and what he hopes will impact the next generation. Moses' admonition to, "Be strong and courageous..." were some of the very last words he spoke to Israel before he died. His successor, Joshua, would soon lead Israel across the Jordan River to "claim" the land God had given them.

Although he had delivered and led the Israelites from Egypt, one costly past mistake would not allow Moses to enter the "Promised Land" with them. Moses took this opportunity to speak to a young generation just 40 years removed from Egyptian slavery. They were born and raised in the wilderness and were not seasoned warriors yet. Perhaps that explains why Moses gave them this exhortation. They needed to know there was a powerful factor on their side. He's on our side too.

We all eventually face some "Jordan River" in our own lives that seems to block our way to God's promise. We need to hear the same exhortation these young people needed. God knows we are able to be stronger and more courageous than we realize. Progress on becoming "fully devoted to Jesus" takes courage and strength in Him. He planned and provided for it that way. We cannot become fully devoted followers in our own strength. We must trust and rely on the promise that our God will never fail nor forsake us no matter the situation or circumstances that we face.

- Doug Gamble

### Reflect:

Are you facing a once in a lifetime challenge you need victory over?

Can you hear the Lord speaking this exhortation to you through Moses to YOUR Jordan River?

God doesn't lead us through deserts to leave us at impassable rivers! Can you see beyond the river to the "land" of God's promise for you?

### Respond:

Do you need to take a knee today and hear God say to you, "Be strong and courageous" regarding the Jordan River you are facing?



DAY 29

## Enough for Today

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

- Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV)

When I was in my teens and early twenties, I often dreamed about the future, imagining a great career and a happy family. If someone had come to me when I was 21, and told me, "Someday you will get married to a wonderful man, have two beautiful daughters and a great ministry in the church," I would have been overjoyed and thanked God for His great love and faithfulness.

However, if I had been told all the details, would I have been as thankful and excited? What if I had known that I would have to walk beside my husband as he battled cancer for over three years? What would I say if I had been told that my sister and I would nurse our mother through cancer until the day her fight was completed in the presence of Christ? If I had been forewarned that I would help care for my father as dementia overtook his mind and that I would one day send my baby girl into a hostile, violent world each day as a police officer, I am pretty sure my response would have been totally different. My cry would have been, "God, how can you do this to me? I can't deal with all this? Don't you love me?"

Fortunately, God doesn't reveal our entire future; He gives us just one day at a time. But more than that, He gives us His great love and His new compassions (mercies) each day that are sufficient for that day's burdens.

Our job is to live within the strength and love that He has given us for today and have faith that there will be strength and new mercies for tomorrow and its troubles.

- Emily VerSteeg

### Reflect:

When was the last time you felt like you had reached the end of your rope and were completely depleted?

Were you able to go to bed that night trusting that God would provide enough love, strength and new mercies in the morning to face the troubles of the new day?

### Respond:

Just like the manna God provided the Israelites in the wilderness, God provides just enough for today. You can't store up today's strength for tomorrow. How has this devotion changed your perspective?

How can you have faith today that tomorrow's mercies will be new and enough for tomorrow's problems?



DAY 30

## A Place of Warmth

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

- Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)

I often reflect back on “places of warmth” in my life. One of the most comforting places was on my grandparents’ farm. I remember waking to crowing roosters, the wind rustling through trees, the smell of freshly turned soil, and hearing my grandmother preparing breakfast in the kitchen.

God’s peace is much like this - a place of warmth. When we draw near to Him, His warmth surrounds us and we experience His comforting peace.

How, then, do we draw near to God? Philippians 4:4-7 describes how this happens. Here we see five ways that acknowledging God can lead to intimacy, and ultimately peace, with Him:

- **Rejoicing.** We express our joy filled gratitude towards God.
- **Gentleness.** We demonstrate humility in how we respond to God and to others.
- **Praying.** We invite God into every situation we encounter.
- **Petitioning.** We express our trust in God by going to Him expectantly.
- **Thankfulness.** We affirm our belief in the goodness of God.

God’s desire to draw close to us is even stronger than our desire to be close to Him. He is always turned towards us with open arms. Our only step involves acknowledging Him – even if only in a small way. The next time you find yourself facing a difficult situation, stop and simply acknowledge God. Let Him know that drawing near to Him is even more important to you than simply resolving your present challenge. Then, as you lean in close to Him, anticipate the warm flood of His peace that will soon envelop you.

- John Frye

### Reflect:

What has been a place of warmth for you in your life? Consider what and why this was the case. How might this help you understand what God’s peace is like?

Which acknowledgement of God in the scripture referenced comes to you most easily? Which is most difficult?

### Respond:

Prepare today to stop and acknowledge God the next time you face a difficult situation. How will you do this?

What do you want God to experience? What do you hope to experience? Take time now to simply let God know about your expectations.





DAY 31

## Trust and Seek

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.*

- Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

"Trust in the Lord..." this seems like a simple thing to do, but once we take the time to look at what the word trust calls us to do, it's more difficult than we first thought.

The definition of "trust" is:

- belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, effective, etc.
- assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.

We can "trust" that God will take care of us when things get tough, but sometimes we forget to trust Him *while* things are tough.

The passage also calls us to trust "*with all your heart.*" It doesn't mean to trust with a slight sense of hesitation or trust with the expectation of failure. It is total, complete, absolute trust that God has the situation well in hand and that He cares more about your outcome than you do.

The statement, "...*don't depend on your own understanding*" is not necessarily a continuing statement, but a reinforcement of the trust factor. God knows our tendencies. He knows we may pray a "Jesus, help me" prayer and then go and do whatever we can on our own. This part points us back to "*trust in the Lord*" so that we will "*seek His will in all you do.*"

"*He will show you which path to take.*" God doesn't merely point out a direction and send us on our way. He is showing us through the progression of this passage that He is with us at every point. We are only alone if we choose to go alone. Be encouraged today that God is with you.

- Aaron Pippin

### Reflect:

In what areas of my life am I holding back in trusting God?

When are the times that I stop seeking Him for guidance?

### Respond:

Why has God given you this verse today?

What is He calling you to do that is beyond you, but not beyond Him?