



# Open Doors

## A 42 DAY DEVOTIONAL

*Journey*  
CHURCH

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# Time to Dream

## 42 DAY CHALLENGE

- 1. Read your devotion every day.**
- 2. Before you leave the house, apply the 15 second rule every day for the next 30 days.**
  - a. God, is there anyone you want me to encourage, pray for, or witness to today?
- 3. Remember, every day God has a message and a mission for you.**
  - a. Message: Don't be afraid.
  - b. Mission: Seek, save, and serve.
- 4. Joshua:**
  - a. God told Joshua, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid..." Joshua 1:9, NKJV - That was the Message.
  - b. The Mission: Go in and possess the promise land.
- 5. Jesus' mother, Mary: (Luke 1:30-32, NKJV)**
  - a. The Message: The angel told her not to be afraid.
  - b. The Mission: To bring Jesus the Savior into the world.
- 6. John: (Revelation 1:17-19, NKJV)**
  - a. The Message: Do not be afraid.
  - b. The Mission: To write the book of Revelation (which reveals Jesus)
- 7. Every day Jesus has a message and a mission for you.**
  - a. Your Message: Don't be afraid. (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV)
  - b. Your Mission: Seek, serve, and save. (Mark 10:45, NKJV; Luke 19:10, NKJV; Luke 23:34, NIV)
- 8. You can only come into the greatness you were created for when you understand your purpose clearly and begin to live it out fully.**
  - a. You have to learn to find your purpose in Christ. (Matthew 6:10, NKJV)
  - b. Bring some heaven down here on earth. (Matthew 6:33, NKJV)

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## Day 1

# God Will Help You Succeed

*"We plan the way we want to live, but only God makes us able to live it."*  
*Proverbs 16:9, MSG*

God gives you the freedom to make plans, but it is only through God's power and grace that you succeed. God equips you to succeed in everything He calls you to do.

God's Spirit empowers you to make changes you cannot make on your own. Lasting change is not based on willpower; it's based on God's power. It's not based on trying harder; it's based on trusting Him.

God's Word guides you because the Bible is the owner's manual for life. The more you read it, study it, memorize it, and meditate on it, the more successful and fulfilled you will be.

*When Joshua was given the great dream of taking over the Promised Land, God had these words for him: "Meditate on [this book of the law] day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it...and then you have success" Joshua 1:8, NASB.*



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## Day 2

# Failure Can Be Good for You

*"A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful."  
Proverbs 28:13, TLB*

In America, failure is almost the unpardonable sin and we idolize success. That kind of pressure creates major stress on people. It can cause you to be indecisive, a workaholic, and a perfectionist who clings to safety. When we are afraid to fail, we shun all kinds of risks. For many of us, the fear of failure has an iron grip on our hearts. Even some of the best and brightest people in the world are impacted by the fear of failure.

Failure can be good for you.

Failure doesn't have to be fatal. Wise people know how to take advantage of failure. They accept it as one of God's primary tools in making them who He wants them to be.

God uses failure to educate you, so take the opportunity to learn as much as you can. Mistakes are simply learning experiences, and some lessons can only be learned through failure. If you're not making any mistakes, you're not learning. If you're not taking any risks, you're not growing. When you're free from the fear of failure, you're free to grow.

God uses failure to motivate you to change. People don't change when they see the light; they change when they feel the heat. When you fail, maybe God's trying to get your attention to move you into a new direction.

God uses failure to build your character. Failure has a way of softening your heart. It helps you grow up and become mature and makes you sensitive to others. It makes you less judgmental and more sympathetic to people around you who are hurting.



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## Day 3

# New Life in Christ

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here."  
2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV*

Can a butterfly go back into a cocoon after it's come out? Of course not! Once the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, it is what it is - a butterfly.

When you become a believer, you're like that butterfly - you've come out of your cocoon. The moment you believe in Christ, there's a spiritual metamorphosis - everything changes! There is a matter of faith and not sight. It may take you some time to fly spiritually, but once you become a new creation in Christ, you are a new creation.

The greatest step of faith we can take in our lives is to believe in Jesus. He is the Son of God who lived a perfect life, died for our sins, and was resurrected from death. He paid the price we could never pay. Salvation is a free gift of grace, available to all, that can be accepted by faith.

*The next step is to believe what God says about who you are. In Christ, you are free from the power of sin. The Bible says in Romans 6:14, "Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace" NLT*

Your best life is only found in Jesus.

Do you believe what God says about Jesus? Do you believe what God says about you? Trust in him for salvation and watch everything become new.





James Greer  
PHOTOGRAPHY



## **Day 4**

# **God's Answer for Your Fear**

*"We know the love that God has for us, and we trust that love...because God's perfect love drives out fear." 1 John 4:16, 18 NCV*

People who are afraid to give their lives fully to God generally give one of three reasons: They are afraid they will lose their freedom, lose their fun, or become some sort of religious fanatic.

If any of that were true, their fear would be justified. But none of those reasons are true.

What is God's answer for our fear of trusting Him? It's simple: God loves you. Over and over in the Bible, God make it clear that He created you to love you and to let you love Him.

The greatest expression of God's love is Jesus. God came to earth in the form of a human being to show us how much he loves us, to the point of dying on the cross. God's only Son dying on the cross shows us once and for all that we can fully trust the love of God.



God’s love will drive out the fear out of your life. It will help you see that God isn’t a cosmic killjoy. He won’t take away your freedom, or your fun; He won’t turn you into a fanatic. Jesus didn’t die to take away from your life; His sacrifice means we can have eternal life.

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## Day 5

# No, Slow, Grow, and Go

*"You fathers - if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So, if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him."*

*Luke 11:11-13, NLT*

God answers every one of your prayers. But there are times he doesn't always answer in the way you want.

When the request is not right, God says, "No." Just like parents say "no" to their kids for a hundred good reasons, God doesn't owe you an explanation every time He says "no" to your request.

When the timing is not right, God says, "Slow." There's a big difference between a delay and a denial. "No" and "not yet" are not the same thing, and learning and accepting the difference shows spiritual maturity.

When you're not right, God says, "Grow." He wants to do something in your life before he answers your prayer. It may be you're not yet ready to handle the answer.

When the request is right, the timing is right, and you're right, then God says, "Go." God often gives us the green light to our prayers - and it's a reason to celebrate!

God is never going to give you anything that is hurtful or bad for you. After all, if imperfect parents know how to give good gifts to their kids, won't God, who is good and perfect, do even more for you? He is ready to answer your prayer - in His perfect time and way.

## Day 6

# The Power of Persistent Prayer

*"Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers."  
Ephesians 6:18, NLT*

Why should you be persistent in your prayers, even when you don't get an answer?

Persistent prayers focus your attention. When you pray over and over, it's not to remind God. It's to remind you that God is the source of your answer. If every time you prayed you instantly got results, you'd only think about the blessing. God wants you to focus on the Blessor.

Persistent prayers clarify your request. A delayed answer gives you time to clarify what you want and to refine your prayers. When you pray persistently to your heavenly Father, it separates deep longings out from mere whims. God wants to answer your prayers, but he wants you to be certain it's what you really want. This process helps you develop more wisdom.

Persistent prayers test your faith. When God delays your answer, you are at a crossroad. Will you wait for God to act, or will you take it upon yourself to come up with a solution? God is always working in our hearts to be more dependent on Him.

Persistent prayer prepares your heart for the answer. Sometimes God denies your prayer requests because you're thinking too small and asking too little. He wants to give you something better. But first, He has to prepare you for it.

If you've given up on praying persistently, today is the day to renew your commitment to pray specifically.

Have you been praying for something persistently? What is God doing in your heart through that process?

## Day 7

# Setbacks Can't Derail God's Purpose

*"Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in His goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you."*  
Acts 27:24, NLT

Sometimes a setback is rooted in your own actions. You made a mistake or hurt another person. Maybe you disobeyed God, and even though nothing you do can remove you from His love, you're now facing a storm because of your choices.

However, sometimes the storms you face in life are caused by other people's poor decisions - or even their sins.

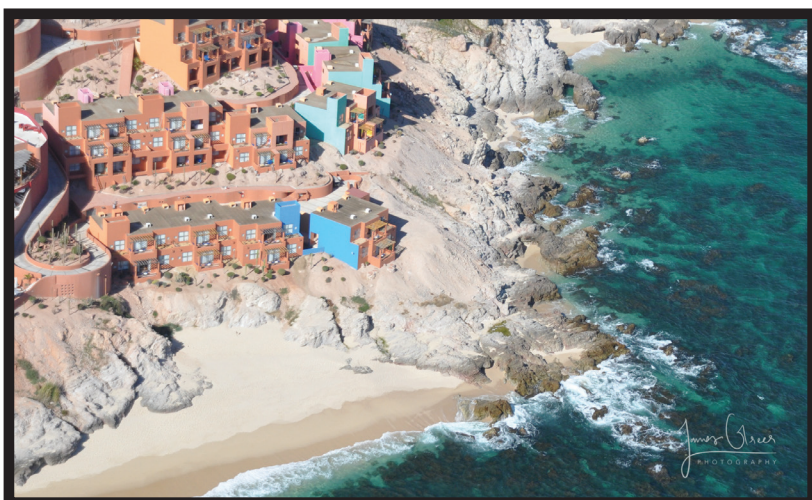
Acts 27 gives us a dramatic example of suffering a setback caused by the foolish choices of others. Paul had been put on trial unfairly for crimes he didn't commit. He was a Roman citizen, and he had the opportunity to appeal Ceasar, which meant going to Rome.

On the way to Rome, the prison ship carrying Paul hit a storm. That storm didn't sidetrack God's purpose for Paul. The angel told Paul he'd one day stand before Ceasar and share his testimony. God's purpose wouldn't be prevented by the poor choices of others. The storm in your life doesn't have to side-track God's purpose for you. God's purpose is greater than any setback you'll ever go through. God is always in control; he doesn't answer to anyone.

God doesn't need a "Plan B" for your life. Hitting a setback - whether it's your fault or someone else's - doesn't mean God's purpose for you is ruined. God saw the disaster coming, and He is more than able to fit it into His plans.

When another person's decision turns your life upside down,



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## Day 8

# Love Is a Choice

*"Now choose life...that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him."  
Deuteronomy 30:19-20, NIV*

God's love for you is great, but he doesn't force you to love him back.

It's a choice: You either love God or thumb your nose at him and go a completely different way. When you love God, you find real life. When you don't, it will inevitably lead to destruction. God wants everyone to love him back, and he's constantly working to draw us closer to him, but he gives us the choice.

Many people buy into the myth that love is controllable. They'll say, "I fell in love," as if it were some kind of unavoidable ditch. This kind of thinking makes for popular movies, but it's terrible for life.

Love isn't something that happens to you. Love is an active commitment that is repeated over and over. When you decide to love God, it's a commitment to love him for the rest of your life.

Loving other people is also an active commitment and this has significant implications for your relationships. You choose who you love. It's not automatic as if you were a robot. Healthy relationships are built on a lasting commitment of love, even when times are tough.

Love doesn't make everything perfect, far from it! Often, the more you love someone, the more your love is tested, because you know everything that person, the good and the bad.

You also can't force someone to love you, which is a painful

truth. No matter how much you love someone, day in and day out you can't make them love you back. Love is a choice for you, and it's choice for them too.

The choice is yours. Will you choose to love God? How will you love others?

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## Day 9

# Keep Joy in Your Life

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm...You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?" Galatians 5:1,7 NIV*

Do you remember how you felt when you first became a Christian? You felt a deep sense of joy and freedom that comes from being totally forgiven. You had a new purpose and no longer felt guilty.

Gradually, you lose your joy because of one of these three common traps.

The trap of perfectionism is when you try maintaining a perfect performance in order to stay saved. The perfectionist says, "God accepts me because of my near-perfect living." This trap steals your joy and freedom. Your relationship with God becomes a duty instead of a delight, and you end up frustrated rather than fulfilled.



The trap of legalism is when you measure your maturity by how many rules you keep. The legalist says, “If I go to church on Sunday mornings, do weekly Bible studies, and witness to others, I’m a good Christian.” So, do you stop doing these things? No. Just change your motive from “I have to” to “I want to.”

The trap of conformity is being controlled by the expectations of other Christians. It takes your eyes off the Lord and puts them on everyone else. New believers don’t care what others think; they just love the Lord and talk to him without using fancy words. But conformity says, “Oh, that’s how I’m supposed to be a Christian. I guess I’ll do it their way.”

How do you keep joy in your life? Accept God’s grace. It’s how you began your life in Christ; it’s how you continue.

*“So then, as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him.” Colossians 2:6, NIV*

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## Day 10

# How Do You Know You're Saved?

*"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV*

Your deepest need is salvation from sin because sin is what separates you from God and eternal life.

*When Jesus hung from the cross, two criminals were also being crucified. One turned to Jesus and said, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Luke 23:42, NIV*

Jesus was famous for doing miracles, but the criminal didn't ask Jesus to stop his pain or save him from death. Instead, he asked Jesus to help him with his biggest problem - separation from God. Jesus comforted the new believer, and told him that he will be with him in paradise.

How can you be sure that you're saved? How do you know you're going to heaven when you die?

Your salvation is secure because it's not based on what you've done. Jesus did all the work. Salvation is a gift; it's not something you can earn because you aren't perfect.

Your salvation is secure because it's not based on how you feel. Feelings come and go; they do not determine your citizenship in God's Kingdom.

Your salvation is secure because it's based on Jesus. We receive this gift through faith. If you believe, you belong! You don't have to wonder if you are saved, you can know with absolute certainty.

## Day 11

# A Prideful Heart Opposes God

*"God opposes everyone who is proud, but he is kind to everyone who is humble. Surrender to God!"*

*James 4:6-7, CEV*

Does this sound familiar? You make plans without consulting God. You think you can do a better job without involving the Creator of the universe. You forget his promise to show you the right path. Then, when your plans don't come together, you get angry.

The Bible calls this pride, and God opposes pride.

You really don't want to be opposed by God; there's no way you'll win that battle. In fact, when you're filled with pride, you're operating as an enemy of God. That's how serious it is.

The best thing you can do is surrender. Tell God you give up control. Stop trying to get God to submit to your plan, and tell Him you are surrendering to His plan.

*Romans 6:13 says, "Give yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes" GNT*

A person surrendered to God prays, "God, I'm going with your plans for my life, not my own. I've been making my own plans, chasing dreams that have nothing to do with you. I'm making decisions based on ambition, pleasure, or convenience. That's all going to stop. From now on, I will intentionally choose your plan for my life. I will seek and pursue the purpose for which you created me. I will rely upon your Word to guide me, and I will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's direction. Amen."



## Day 12

# Let God Take the Driver's Seat

*"Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am." Matthew 16:24 The Message*

You need to put Jesus in the "driver's seat" of your life and let Him lead your every decision.

Here's what many of us do: we let him into the driver's seat, only to become backseat driver's! We're constantly giving Jesus advice - "No, turn this way, stop, wait, faster! I want to go that way." We treat Jesus as if he is our own private chauffeur who follows our instructions.

We get stuck on calling all the shots.

When you are in charge, you miss out on God's best for your life. When you refuse to let Jesus lead your life, the result is more confusion, conflict, and stress.



Putting Jesus in the driver's seat isn't a matter of understanding; the issue is surrender. The problem with most of your decisions is not confusion, you know the right thing to do. The problem is that you want to have it your way, so you argue and disagree with God. In your mind, you fight with the Creator: "I know you are telling me to do this, but I want to do something else."

Surrender is easy to understand but difficult to do.

When you put your faith in Jesus, He expects you to let Him lead. Make this your prayer several times throughout the day, "Not my will, Jesus, but your will." Every night, ask God to show you where you followed your own way rather than His.

Life on this side of eternity will never be perfect, but your best life is when you hand over the keys and let Jesus lead. Today, who is going to be in charge of your life?

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## Day 13

# Encourage Others

*"Encourage one another and build each other up."  
1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV*

Encouragers are a rare commodity because we live in a negative culture. It's easy to be critical or spread gossip in order to tear someone down.

Yet God calls us to do the exact opposite. He wants you to build others up - even the people you don't like! He didn't just create the people you struggle with, he also died for them.

When you encourage others, you are sending a message that says, "You matter to God, and you matter to me."

Here are three practical ways to be an encourager:

Listen to others. The Bible says, "Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2, NLT. When you listen attentively to someone, you are helping them carry their burden. Everyone needs a safe place to share their struggles. Be an encourager by listening without judgment or adding to the negativity.

Use positive words. When your goal is to build others up, it's easy to pick the right words. Before you open your mouth, ask yourself, "Will this help or hurt them? Encourage or discourage? Build up or tear down?" Choose good words!

Pray for them. Make a list of the people you see very week. Put it in your Bible and pray regularly for them. Ask God for wisdom on how to best encourage and build them up according to their needs. When the timing is right, tell them you're praying for them and ask how you can be praying for them in the future. Even unbelievers appreciate that!

Who will you encourage today?

## Day 14

# Discovering Contentment

*"It is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else."*

*Ecclesiastes 6:9, GNT*

The first step in becoming a content person is to stop comparing your life to everyone else's.

You also must learn to admire without needing to acquire. You need to learn to rejoice in other people's prosperity without getting jealous and envious, feeling like you must have what they have.

This is one of the great biblical principles that many people don't understand. The truth is, you don't have to own it to enjoy it! Maybe you like to vacation in the mountains. Why buy a mountain cabin when you can just rent one every year?

The word "covet" in Greek means "to grab or to grasp so tightly that your hands are tight; you can't even let it go." If God ever gives you something and tells you to give it away, but you can't, you don't own it - it owns you.

God is not saying you should never desire things. After all, nothing can be accomplished unless you desire to do it. You can't become more like Christ without desiring to become more like Christ. But when you desire to be like someone else, to have what they have, you will always want more. Why? Because God didn't make you to be like someone else, he wants you to be you.

To have a content life, stop comparing your looks, your house, your job, your kids, and your education to that of others. Find ways to be thankful for what God has already given you.



## Day 15

# God Gives You Wisdom

*"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. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil."*

*Proverbs 3:5-7, NLT*

Have you ever had a feeling that something was so very, very right, but when you did it, it ended up being so very, very wrong?

That's because feelings lie. They lie to you all the time! In fact, most of the wrong things you do actually feel right when you're doing them. Just a few months into a job you ask yourself, "How did I end up here?" after six months into a relationship that once felt so right, you wonder, "What was I thinking?" A quick decision that seemed harmless at the time can leave you broken and scarred years later.



If you want fewer dead ends and difficulties in your life, depend on God's wisdom, not what your feelings say or what your gut tells you. How can you get God's wisdom? It's simple: Pray. Talk to God, and let him talk to you through his Word. The Bible says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." James 1:5 NIV

God doesn't want you to make poor choices. He doesn't want you to hit dead ends or go through failure after failure. God wants you succeed. You must not depend on your own understanding. Seek Gods will because he wants to help you make wise decisions with your time , your money, and your relationships.

## Day 16

# Everything You Need Comes from God

*"My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19 ESV*

Where do you put your security?

Putting your trust in your bank account, your job, or your investments is a recipe for heartache, because you can lose all of those things.

You have to put your trust and security in something that cannot be taken from you: God! If you want God's blessing on your life, depend on his resources and not your own.

Your security shouldn't be in your job. Your job is a channel, but God is your source. If you understand this, you'll have less stress in your life.

If you turned on the faucet in your kitchen and no water came out, what would you do? Would you say, "Oh my, the world has run out of water there's no water coming out of the faucet, so there must not be any left in the whole world"?

Of course not. You'd know the problem is not with the source. There's plenty of water in the world. The problem is the channel. It's gotten blocked one way or another.

If one channel gets blocked in your life and the "faucet" stops working, God can turn on another faucet just as easily. If God closes a door in your life, he can open another door. And if another door closes he can open a window, and you crawl through it.

Jobs may come and go. Bank accounts rise and fall. Economies go up and down. Home prices can peak or hit bottom.

You can trust in God's unlimited resources for your security.

## Day 17

# Your Mind Matters

*"Fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, honorable."  
Philippians 4:8*

What do you fill your mind with? The more you think about something, the more it takes a hold of you. And when you think about things that aren't good for you, it's easy for you to fall into temptation.

Temptation begins by capturing your attention. What gets your attention arouses your emotions, causing you to act on what you feel.

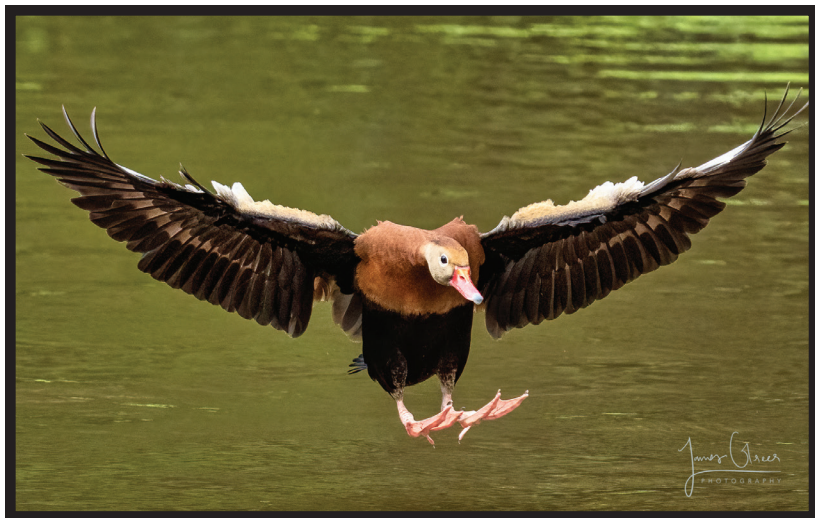
Ignoring a temptation is far more effective than fighting it. The more you focus on things you know you shouldn't do, telling yourself, "I don't want to do this," the stronger it pulls you in. When your mind is focused on something else, the temptation loses its power. When temptation calls, don't argue with it—Just hang up!

Sometimes this means physically leaving a tempting situation.

The Bible says, "Run from anything that gives you evil thoughts" (2 Timothy 2:22 TLB) This is one of the few times its ok to run away. Turn off the television or screen. Walk away from a group of people who are gossiping. Leave the theater in the middle of the movie. To avoid being stung, stay away from bees.

To reduce temptation, keep your mind occupied with Gods word, and you will be filled with good thoughts. You defeat bad thoughts by thinking of something better. This is the principle of replacement. You overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

Next time you are in the midst of temptation, what "true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable" things can you think about instead?



## Day 18

# Important Versus Necessary

*"Dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."*

*Luke 10:41-42 NLT*

Just because something is good doesn't always mean it is best.

Do you ever fill your life with so many good things-devotion to your family, church, career, and community-that you neglect your relationship with God? We shouldn't let the gifts become more important than the One who gives them! To fulfill God's destiny for your life, you actually don't have to do more; you probably need to do less.

Take Jesus' friends Mary and Martha, for example. One day they invited Jesus over for dinner. Mary spent her evening listening to Jesus. Martha on the other hand, was busy with hosting and worrying about hors d'oeuvres and countless other details.

Martha got upset because she was doing all the work while her sister sat with Jesus. That’s when Jesus gently corrected Martha: “My dear Martha, I see your hard work and appreciate it. But its distracting you from what I want most: your attention. All of your work is keeping you from what you need most: to sit at my feet and learn from me.”

An honest look at both Mary and Martha reveals two great attributes:

Martha’s organized nature and Mary’s relational nature, Martha’s devoted service and Mary’s devoted heart. It’s not a matter of “wrong vs right” but a matter of “important vs. necessary”

When your life is over, only one thing will really matter: Did you get to know the Son of God?

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## Day 19

# God Is Truth

*"God shows how to distinguish right from wrong, how to find the right decision every time." Proverbs 2:9, TLB*

The way to discover the truth is to start with God, for He embodies truth. What is right and wrong is determined by the character of God Himself. Dishonesty is wrong because God is honest. Unfaithfulness is wrong because God is faithful.

We learn the character of God through His Word. The Bible tells us what is true. Whether or not we like what it says is another matter. You can trust God's Word. In fact, to help you understand more about His character, God's Word - Jesus - became flesh in order to live among us (John 1:14).

Jesus not only tells us the truth; He is the Truth. He says, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6, NIV). He doesn't say, "I teach the truth," or "I point to the truth." He says, "I am the truth."

God's truth is universal and unchanging; it applies to everyone. "Truth" that changes isn't truth, it's opinion. Truth is based on God's character, but opinions are based on an individual's comfort and personal desires. For example, adultery was wrong two-thousand years ago, it's wrong today, and it will be wrong four-thousand years from today. Truth is absolute.

Many people like to pick their "truth." You often hear people say there is a choice between different kinds of truth. They say, "Whose morality? Whose justice? Whose values?" Truth isn't relative; you don't get to choose if you are going to build your life on opinion or on truth.

Every day, you have to choose if you are going to build your life on opinion or on truth.

Your choice will dictate how you live, how you love, and, someday, how you die. But it's your choice.

How will you choose?

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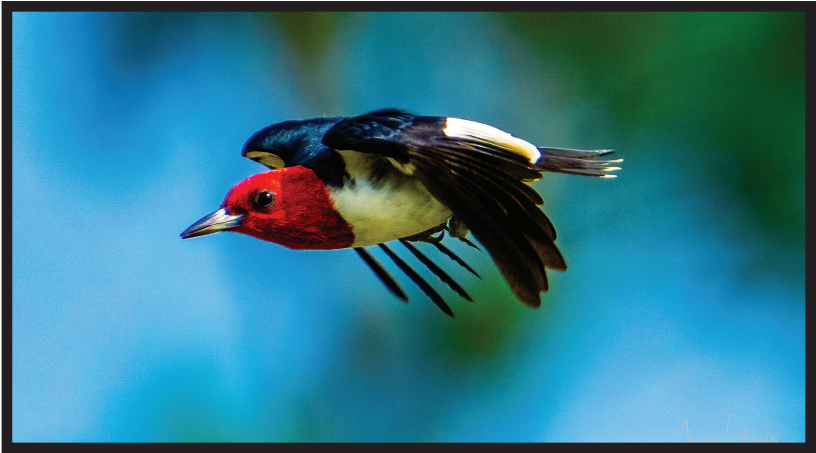
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## Day 20

# A Harvest of Blessing

*"Let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."*

*Galatians 6:9, NLT*

You're going to walk through different seasons in life and some of them will be difficult. The Bible says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, NIV). Some seasons are for reaping, others for sowing.

When you plant a peach tree, you don't get fruit right away. The peaches come in over time. There's a waiting period. And when the peaches do come in, they ripen little by little; you pick only a few a day. If you pick too soon, you miss the flavor.

In the same way, you will also experience seasons of waiting. During these times, you may think nothing is happening. You may get tired of doing good. Be encouraged: God is still working, even if you can't see it. God promises that you will always harvest what you plant. And if what you plant is good, according to today's scripture, you will "reap a harvest of blessing." God uses seasons of waiting to build your faith, to draw closer to Him.

But until then, until you see a little shoot stick up out of the ground, you need to trust that God is working - even when you can't see the fruit of your labor. Keep yourself from discouragement by trusting God. Don't give up. His promises are always true! Keep doing good, and in time, you will be blessed by God.





## Day 21

# Bankrupt Without Love

*"No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love." 1 Corinthians 13:3, The Message*

A life without love is wasted. You need to receive God's love so that it overflows and allows you to love others.

You need God's love because you aren't perfect. His love will never run out, no matter what you've done or will do. Consider King David: He was far from perfect! In fact, he made a series of bad choices. He lied, cheated, and committed adultery. He even had the husband murdered to cover up his sin.

David did many great things for God, and he did many things against God. Yet God called David a man after His own heart. How could God say that about a man like David? Because He knew that David's love for Him was bigger than his mistakes. When David sinned against God, he admitted it and asked for mercy. How can you be after God's heart like David? Let God's love for you be bigger than your mistakes. Accept His perfect love by coming clean with your sins and asking for His



forgiveness. Do this every day!

You need love in your relationships because it's the only way your relationships will last. People will sin against you and you'll sin against them, and the only solution to that pain is love. God's love also gives you the power to let other people off the hook when they sin against you. You've been forgiven by God, and now you are called to forgive others.

Today, how will you receive God's love so that you can love others?

[illegible]

## Day 22

# Live by God's Values

*"[Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." Hebrews 11:26, NIV*

Everyone lives by a set of values. If your values are based on circumstances, events, and other people, and impulses, you will be tossed around. You'll be blown off course from God's purpose.

However, if your values are based on things that last forever - your relationship with God and with others - then, like He did with Moses, God will use you to make a difference for His Kingdom!

Moses chose God's values over short-term, selfish thinking. He would have rather suffered for the sake of Christ than to have the temporary wealth and success of this world. Moses could have been a prince in Egypt, instead He was a shepherd in the desert for 40 years before God called him to lead Israel.

Moses looked to the future - all the way to eternity - to establish his values. He saw God's purpose for him by looking ahead, which empowered him to pass up the temptations and treasures surrounding him in Egypt.

Until you clarify your values, you can't live by them.

Today, you need clarify your values by asking, "What's most important to me? What are the top values in my life? Do they align with who God wants me to be?" For example, if your values are integrity, humility, and generosity, write those down so you can have a reminder of how you want to live every day.

By clarifying your values, you are choosing God's purpose for your life.

What do you need to adjust in your life to bring it in line with God's values? Today is the day for you to choose to be who God wants you to be.

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## Day 23

# Forgiveness is Unconditional

*"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

*Luke 23:34, NIV*

Forgiveness may be the most misused, misapplied, and misunderstood quality in our culture. There are a multitude of myths about forgiveness. Here are just a few: forgiveness must be asked for or earned, forgiveness minimizes personal pain and hurt, and forgiveness restores full trust and reunites a relationship.

Real forgiveness is unconditional. There's no attachment to it. You don't earn it, nor do you deserve it. You don't bargain for it. Forgiveness is not based on a promise to never repeat the offense again. You forgive because it follows Jesus' example. When Jesus stretched out His hands on the cross and said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing," nobody earned it or asked for it. Jesus took the initiative and offered forgiveness.

Forgiveness also doesn't minimize the seriousness of the offense. When somebody asks for your forgiveness, you actually cheapen it if you say, "It's no big deal. It really didn't hurt." If it wasn't a big deal, then they don't need your forgiveness.

Forgiveness isn't the same as trust. When someone hurts you, you need to forgive them, but you don't need to trust them like you did before. You can't guard your heart if you trust people who aren't worthy of your trust.

On our own power, this kind of forgiveness isn't possible. But the power to forgive comes from Jesus. Remember God's unconditional love for you, and express that love to those who hurt you.



James Greer  
PHOTOGRAPHY





## Day 24

# The Importance of Empathy

*"All of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude." 1 Peter 3:8, NIV*

In order to live in harmony with your spouse, your friends, or anybody else, you must have empathy. Not only do you need to be aware of what's happening in their lives, you need to develop a genuine concern for them. Empathy is important because it meets two of our deepest needs: the need to be understood and the need to have our feelings validated.

How do you become an empathetic person?

Start by slowing down so you can notice what's happening around you. Our culture teaches us to move fast, so we end up skimming relationally. You are skimming when you are hitting most of the high points and missing all kinds of details in the lives of people you care about most. When was the last time you allowed someone to share their heart with you? You can't sympathize if you aren't listening.

Once you've slowed down long enough to really listen, start asking thoughtful and specific questions. Most people hold their emotions pretty close, and they don't automatically share how they're doing. Use gentleness to draw them out. "I'm fine" is the standard answer, but that doesn't really tell you how they feel. Asking "How was today?" is better than staying busy. Asking "How was today?" is better than staying busy. Asking "How was your conversation with Sue?" is even better.

The only way you are going to have the energy to be authentically empathetic is by staying close to God. If your emotional tanks get low, you'll be ruled by your own agenda. Selfishness pushes empathy into the background.

Ask God to help you slow down, ask good questions, and give you the strength to better love the people in your life.

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## Day 25

# The Purpose of Frustration

*"When a fool is annoyed, he quickly lets it be known. Smart people will ignore an insult." Proverbs 12:16, GNT*

Some people are so frustrating; they will send you to your knees in prayer.

We all get frustrated by different things: a slow driver, a friend who never apologizes, and people who are rude and obnoxious. When you are frustrated, what's your first response?

Many people have developed unhealthy responses to frustration. They might avoid difficult people, but denial only delays the problem, not solve it. They might try to make frustrating people happy, but some people will never be happy. No matter what they do, it's never good enough.

How can you respond like Jesus?

God has out difficult people in your life to be "heavenly sandpaper." Although you are irritated, God is using them to take off your rough edges. God is more interested in your character than your comfort. Consider your frustration as a learning opportunity.

Learn to look past their behavior to see where they are hurting on the inside. Hurt people will often hurt others. They're full of fear and insecurity. Maybe they're shouldering a pressure you don't know about. You can turn frustration into empathy with a little reflection.

Instead of dismissing these frustrating people from your life, look at them as a gift from God to help you become more like Christ. Frustrations reveals something in you, and it can lead to a change of heart. Spend time in prayer asking God to help you have more patience and less words. Being frustrated doesn't give you permission to take it out on whoever caused your

frustration. Frustration gives you the opportunity to show grace to others.

How will you handle your next frustration?

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## Day 26

# Be Willing to Be Interrupted

*"Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'" Luke 10:37, NIV*

Love is often inconvenient.

If you want to serve like Jesus, be open to interruptions. This means holding on to your schedule with a loose grip. This may be difficult for you! For some people, just the thought of deviating from their plans leads to anxiety.

The reality is that people need you when they need you. Their hour of need won't fall neatly into the part of your schedule set aside for helping others.

Jesus taught that we should be like the traveling Samaritan. He allowed his schedule to be interrupted so he could care for a man left for dead.

Paul had plans to go to Rome and he eventually made it - as a prisoner! He was willing to have his plans interrupted to serve where God wanted him to serve.

Not every interruption is truly an interruption - not from God's point of view. He might be providing you an opportunity that you didn't plan for. Because God's plans are bigger than your plans, this is bound to happen! Next time you think, "I don't have time for this!" follow that with this quick prayer: "God, is this what you have for me to do?"

We can always find excuses not to help someone: "I have my own problems," "I have a previous commitment," "I know someone else will help," and "I have other responsibilities I can't sacrifice."

God intentionally puts hurting people in your path so that you

will learn to love like Jesus. Loving others can be more than inconvenient. God might be calling you to make a great sacrifice of your time, energy, or money. Today, are you ready for an interruption?

If the opportunity comes from God, it's not really an interruption; it's your destiny.

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## **Day 27**

# **Tune into God's Voice**

*"God does speak - sometimes one way and sometimes another - even though people may not understand it."*

*Job 33:14, NCV*

Do you know how to tune into God's voice? God speaks through the Bible; His will is found in His Word. It shows you the right steps to take, which is why you need to read God's Word every day.

God speak through teachers. Have you ever been in a church service and felt like the teacher was delivering a message directly to you? There's no way the teacher could have known what you needed to hear, but the message was tailor-made for you by God. He uses the teaching of others to meet the needs of people who are listening.

God also speaks through impressions. Two extremes play out regarding impressions from God. The first extreme accounts for the people who don't believe God gives impressions at all - everything must be logical. The second extreme is about people

who hold a mystical belief that every impression is from God. Find a healthy place in the middle and recognize that, for an impression to be from God, it has to match His Word.

God often speaks through circumstances. If you're going to live a life of significance, God has to make constant course corrections, and one way he does that is through the circumstances He brings into your life.

God does speak, so it's up to you to develop the ability to tune into His voice. Sometimes He will lead you in a way that you don't understand. Be patient and listen for His voice. God is faithful, and He will show you the way.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Day 28

# Bless Your Opposition

*"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."*

*Acts 2:44-45, NIV*

No one sacrificed like the people in the early church. These early Christians didn't just give their money. They were radically generous with everything they had.

What would happen through our churches if we were just as generous? The Bible says we're stewards - or managers of all that God has given us. We're responsible to use our resources and time in a way that impacts the Kingdom.

God doesn't give you resources just for your own enjoyment, but to make a difference in the world around you.

God's blessings are not meant to be hoarded. He blesses you so you can bless others. When you give to others you make room for God to give you even more.

That's a hopeful, encouraging truth to remember throughout the year. After all, generosity isn't something we only display at Thanksgiving or Christmas. Find ways to be radically generous every day. Make an impact on the people in your church, the people in your community, and the people God has strategically placed in your life.

Whose life can you bless today?

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## Day 29

# God Is Working While You're Waiting

*"In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly."*

*Psalms 5:3, NIV*

When you ask God for help, you can wait with expectation.

You pray to a God who honors His promises. He is a good Father who always gives you what you need. When you wait expectantly, you demonstrate faith by believing God will do what He has promised.

Expectation isn't entitlement. Entitlement says, "I will get what I need from God because I deserve it, I've earned it. I've read my Bible five times this week and have been to church twice, so God has to give me what I need." Expectation says, "God will give me what I need because of who He is."

Waiting expectantly isn't easy, especially when you feel powerless. When you are trusting God to do the impossible - in your marriage, career, or relationships - and His timing feels too slow, it's hard to keep trusting Him.

Don't be discouraged, and don't give up! Even though you don't know why God hasn't answered your prayers, you can trust Him to keep His promise. God is always in control; He is never surprised and no one is more powerful than Him. Your biggest problems are small to Him.

While you are waiting, God is working. He is building your faith, teaching you His truth, drawing you closer to Himself, and making you more like Christ. God knows what you need better than you do.

Follow David's example: Keep making your requests to God and waiting expectantly for Him to answer.

## Day 30

# God's Truth Will Set You Free

*"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

*John 8:31-32, NKJV*

Nothing changes lives like the Bible. People struggling with addiction find sobriety, the broken find healing, the hopeless find hope in the Word of God. God's Word turns self-centered people into selfless servants, misers into givers, rebels into worshipers, and sinners into saints.

Laws can punish behaviors, but they cannot change human hearts. You can make laws to outlaw racism and bigotry, but no law can turn a bigot into a lover of people of other races. Only the truth of God's Word will set a hater free from his hatred. Only the truth of God's Word will set a doubter free from his doubts. Only the truth of God's Word will set a man or woman free from the prison of their past.

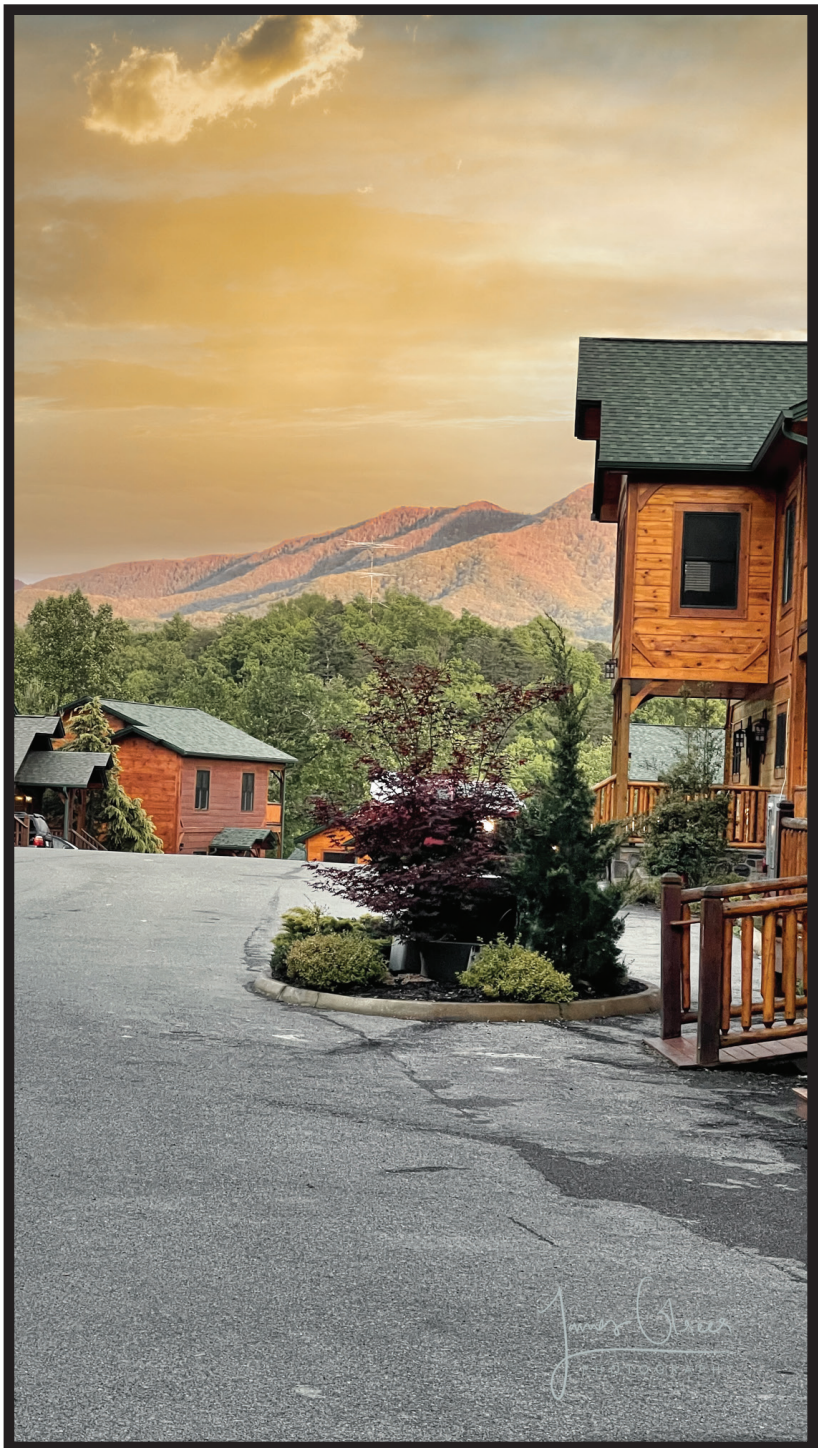
Secular universities all around the world have the second half of today's verse etched in stone on their buildings: "The truth shall make you free." But those same universities ignore the first part of the verse: "If you abide in My word." Your own opinions of others won't set you free. Only the truth of God's Word will.

The fundamental question you must answer is this: What will be your authority in life? Will it be God's eternal Word or the world's ever-changing philosophies? Will it be what God says is true or public opinion? You need to decide, and you need to do it soon. Your life - and your freedom - depend on it.

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## **Day 31**

# **Jesus Meets You in Your Storm**

*"About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water." Mark 6:48, NLT*

Jesus wanted to go off by Himself to pray, so He sent the disciples ahead of Him in the boat to cross the lake. It wasn't long before they were engulfed by a storm and blown off course.

Have you ever been blown off course by a storm? You thought you were following Jesus, but you ended up with unexpected troubles or at an unintended destination. Maybe you had no plans of being where you are today in your job, your marriage, or your finances. You've been blown off course by situations you couldn't control, and you've given up hope of getting back on track.

Maybe you are wondering if you can even survive.

When you're at your moment of desperation, what does Jesus do? For his storm-tossed disciples, Jesus came to them –

“walking on the water”! He didn’t tell the disciples to come to Him. He knew they couldn’t get to Him, so He went to them. When you’re at that point of desperation, Jesus comes to you too.

Jesus did not stand on the shore and shout instructions. When you’re in a storm, you don’t need advice. This is the heart of the Gospel: God doesn’t stand on the shoreline telling you what to do. He comes out and meets you in your pain, your fear, your depression, and your discouragement. What a loving God!

You may feel abandoned right now, but you’re not. You might not be able to fix your problems, but you can fix your eyes on Jesus.

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## Day 32

# Get Refueled God's Way

*"Because of the Lord's faithful love we do not perish, for His mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness! I say: The LORD is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in Him."  
Lamentations 3:22-24, HCSB*

What do you do when you are drained?

Emotional exhaustion isn't foreign to people in the Bible – Job, Elijah, Naomi, David, Jeremiah, and even Jesus experienced it. When Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations, Jerusalem had been captured, and the Israelites were in exile. Everything Jeremiah held sacred had been ruined.

Jeremiah was emotionally exhausted! For an entire book of the Bible, Jeremiah released his frustrations and expressed his emotions to God. In the midst of his complaints, he focused on these aspects of God's character: steadfast love, unfailing mercy, great faithfulness, and kindness.

Jeremiah chose hope over despair, and his hope was not disappointed.

When life overwhelms you, don't pretend it's not happening. Denial won't do you any good. Be honest with yourself and express your feelings to God. You can do this without letting your problems become your main focus. Instead, fix your eyes on God by remembering who He is and what He's done for you.

Emotional exhaustion is similar to being really hungry. You need to eat something healthy, not the empty calories from the junk food. Chocolate may sound good when you are starved, but it won't give you what your body needs. Similarly, God made your emotions, and He's the only one who knows how to bring you restoration when you need it most.

Make it your habit every morning to be renewed by God's mercies. God's faithfulness is the fuel you need.

## Day 33

# How to Fight Spiritual Warfare

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the Heavenly realms."*

*Ephesians 6:12, NIV*

There is more to the world than what you can see with your eyes or touch with your hands.

The spiritual battle is real, and so is our enemy: Satan. As believers, he has lost the war for our eternal salvation. But in the present, he is working to make us ineffective for Kingdom work. To fight the spiritual war, you need to do two things on a continual basis.

Consistently take every thought captive. The battlefield for spiritual warfare is primarily in your thought life. Our enemy is the father of lies. Some things sound true on the surface, but in the light of truth they don't stand up. We need God's truth to transform Satan's lies.

In addition, put on God's armor. In Ephesians 6, Paul says that just as the Roman soldier is dressed for the battle, we also need to be appropriately dressed for our spiritual battle. You can prepare yourself by praying:

*"Lord, help me resist the enemy. I want to put on the belt of truth to fight the devil's lies. I want to put on the breastplate of righteousness to protect my heart. I want to put on the shoes of peace to tell others the Good News. I want to hold up the shield of faith to block the devil's arrows - life's setbacks and temptations. I want to put on the helmet of salvation to protect me from doubts about Jesus and my salvation. And I want to take the sword of the Spirit to help me trust in His Word. Amen."*

## Day 34

# You Can Fight the Feeling

*"It was faith that made Moses leave Egypt without being afraid of the king's anger. As though he saw the invisible God, he refused to turn back." Hebrews 11:27, GNT*

Do you ever feel lazy?

Sometimes we just want to lie on the couch and be entertained. We don't feel like doing anything productive, especially if it involves dealing with another problem.

Here is the truth: You don't want to be controlled by apathy.

Just because you don't feel like doing something, doesn't mean you shouldn't do it. For example, you may not always feel like praying or reading your Bible. Does this mean you don't need time with God? Of course not. You need time with God whether you feel like it or not. Maturity means living by your commitments, not your feelings.

In the same way, you don't become a godly person by doing only what you feel like doing. Godly men and women choose to develop habits that produce godliness. Do you know anyone who eats well and exercises consistently? They don't always feel like eating the right thing or working out, but they live by their commitments - and their persistence pays off.

How do you develop godly persistence? The key is to look to God for direction rather than your feelings. Moses is a great role model for godly persistence. For 40 years, he led a group of crying, squabbling, complaining people around the desert while they questioned his leadership over and over. Yet he never gave up because he kept his eyes on God.

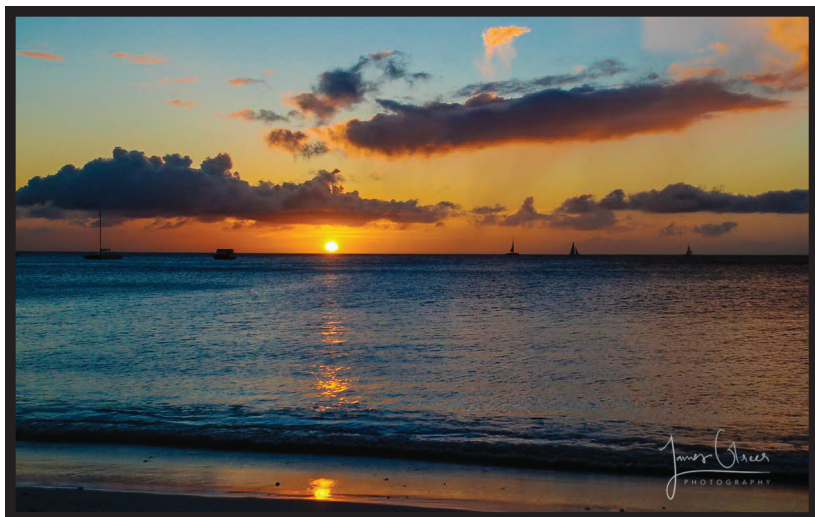
The pursuit of godliness will require a commitment that's stronger than your feelings.





James Glaser  
PHOTOGRAPHY





## Day 35

# Choose Faith Over Fear

*"Be quiet!' Many of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, 'Tell him to come here.'"*

*Mark 10:48-49, NLT*

Fear can paralyze your potential, prevent you from reaching out for help, and prohibit you from growing closer to God. If you want to jump-start your faith, you will have to learn how to face your fears so they don't control you.

When you choose fear over faith, your spiritual life gets trapped in a rut because the fear of emotional pain replaces the hope of God's promises. Fear keeps you from trying to do anything new for God, and therefore limits your commitment to serve Him.

Bartimaeus, the blind man Jesus encountered in Mark 10, had to face his fear of rejection if he wanted to reach Jesus. When he shouted to Jesus, many of the people yelled, "Don't do that. Be quiet. Don't make a scene. Surely Jesus isn't interested in you. He has more important things to do."

Bartimaeus chose to live by faith rather than fear. So he continued to shout out - even louder.

To get closer to Jesus, you will need to turn your back on your fear. Your faith isn't dependent on what others think about you. Your faith isn't even dependent on what you think. All that matters is what God thinks.

If your fears start saying, "God isn't interested in you," reject them as lies. God sent His Son to save the world. Jesus cared about Bartimaeus, and he cares about you.

God's love for you is perfect, complete, and unconditional.

Is there any fear in your life that you need to stand up to?

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## Day 36

# What Do You Want from Jesus?

*"Jesus asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man answered, 'Teacher, I want to see.'" Mark 10:51, NCV*

After Bartimaeus chose faith over fear, Jesus asked him an important question, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Why do you think Jesus asked that question? The answer seems obvious. Jesus had the power to heal, and Bartimaeus needed his blindness cured.

Jesus asked the question for Bartimaeus' benefit - and ours. It allowed Bartimaeus to publicly announce his faith - that he trusted in Jesus' ability and willingness to heal him. Bartimaeus believed Jesus wasn't just a teacher, but that He was also God. Before Jesus, no prophet from Israel had ever cured blindness. The blind man was trusting Jesus to do something that had never been done before. That's faith!

Here's the amazing thing: Jesus asks you the very same question, "What do you want me to do for you?" This isn't a question of entitlement; it's a question that builds faith because it forces you to look inward and examine your expectations of Jesus.

If you don't trust God to work powerfully in and through your life, chances are, He won't.

God wants to work in your life. He has big plans, and He wants to use you to make a difference in the world. Do today what the blind man did long ago: Cry out for help. Take an honest look at what is broken in your life, and ask Jesus for hope and healing.

In faith, what do you want from Jesus?

## Day 37

# Living Guilt Free

*"He does not punish us for all our sins; He does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west." Psalm 103:10, 12 NLT*

God gives you what you need, not what you deserve.

We deserve judgement for our sins because we are guilty for doing bad things, but Jesus took the punishment we deserve. He has removed them "as far as the east is from the west." Earth has a north pole and a south pole, but there is no end from east to west. God has taken your sin and wiped it out!

King David committed adultery, and then, to cover it up, he had the woman's husband murdered. Can you imagine the guilt he carried? The far-reaching effects of adultery and murder are devastating. David didn't deserve forgiveness or mercy from God. David knew he was wrong, and he also knew that God was a merciful God.

David prayed: "Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin" (Psalm 51:1-2, NLT).

If you are struggling with a sin right now, read Psalm 51. Read it slowly, and read it several times. Make it your prayer and meditate on the truth. God is in the business of forgiveness; He can purify, cleanse, and restore you.

Follow David's example. Admit your guilt to God and ask for His mercy. He will forgive you because He is good, not because you are good enough to earn it. God has forgiven you, so accept His forgiveness and forgive yourself too.



## Day 38

# The Crisis of Control

*"This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. When the man saw that he would not win the match, He touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of socket."*

*Genesis 32:24-25, NLT*

For many people, wanting to be in control is their biggest struggle in life. That was Jacob's problem - he tried controlling his life to such an extent that one night he went one-on-one with God and wrestled an angel all night long.

Think about the biggest problem you've got right now, and it most likely boils down to these two questions: "Will I trust God?" and "Will I obey God?" No matter what your problem is - financial, physical, relational, social, or vocational - your biggest problem is not your problem. The real problem is whether you choose to obey and trust God.

God doesn't want your life to be painful, but He often allows an uncontrollable crisis in your life in order to get your attention.

Jacob walked with a limp his entire life, which was a constant reminder of his struggle. Do you think God had his attention?

How does God use a crisis? You are more likely to change when the pain you feel exceeds your fear of change. You don't change when you see the light; you change when you feel the heat. All of a sudden, you're flat on your back and forced to look up.

Where are you struggling with God? What will it take for you to trust and obey Him in every area of your life?

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## Day 39

# Put Christ at the Center of Your Life

*"[God] will give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern."*

*Matthew 6:33, NLT96*

You create balance in your life by learning and living out the principles in God's Word.

It all starts by building your life around Christ. Therefore, put Him at the center of your life, and He will teach you how to be balanced.

Think of your life like a wheel. At the center of the wheel is the hub. And out of that hub are all the spokes of life which represent your relationships, family, career, finances, dreams, goals and every other area of your life.

What does your life revolve around right now? Whatever you think about the most is what you center your life around.

If you have a solid center, you're going to have a solid life. But if you've got a weak, flimsy center, you're going to crack at the edges. Have you heard the expression, "I feel like I'm coming unglued"? If you've felt that way, it means you have a faulty center. It means something other than God has taken first place in your life. Whatever it is, if it's not God, it's not strong enough to hold you together.

The core of your life will provide the power you need. Power always emanates from the hub outward. If you don't have God at the center of your life, you've got a power to help sustain you through all the unforeseen crises that you're inevitably going to experience.

Put Christ at the center of your life, and He will give you stability, balance, and power.



James Greer  
PHOTOGRAPHY

## Day 40

# God Has a Special Assignment for You

*"Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, 'He told me everything I ever did!'"*

*John 4:39, NLT*

What excuses have you been making to avoid being used by God?

It doesn't take years of following Jesus to do what God put you on earth to do. No matter what you've done, God has a special assignment for you. In fact, it doesn't even take a day of "good" living. God can use you the moment you put your trust in Jesus - like he did with the woman at the well in Samaria.

What started out as a simple request for a drink of water, became the longest recorded conversation Jesus had with an individual, a conversation in which Jesus offered the woman, not well water, but living water - the kind that leads to eternal life.

Not only did Jesus initiate this conversation, He knew going into it she has had five husbands and wasn't even married to the one she woke up to that very morning. Jesus knew beforehand about her rather complicated past, yet He still sought her out!

The woman then left her water jar beside the well, ran back to her village, and told people about Jesus - and "many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus."

Are you ready for your special assignment? God doesn't need you to get it together first. When you look at the Bible, you'll see that God has used all kinds of "misfits": Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Moses stuttered, Samson was codependent, Rahab was immoral, David had an affair, Jonah was reluctant, John the Baptist was eccentric, Peter was

hot-tempered, Martha worried a lot, Zacchaeus was unpopular, and Thomas had doubts.

God had an assignment for all of them. He has one for you, too, if you will stop making excuses.





## Day 41

# Jesus Came for the Brokenhearted

*"He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted."*

*Luke 4:18, NKJV*

Have you ever had a broken heart?

Doctors today say a broken heart is a medical reality with measurable physical effects. After experiencing stress or trauma, some of the hormones released by the brain actually weaken the tissue of the heart. This results in chest pain as the normal rhythm of the heart is interrupted. It's called "broken heart syndrome."

Emotionally, a broken heart can come from disappointment, rejection, or resentment. When things don't turn out as we plan, it hurts. We are wounded in the wake of rejection or careless words. When the attack comes from a close friend, the pain is all the more deeper.

Pain is real, and you don't have to hide or deny it. You can stop pretending it's not there and deal with it. You need to face it head on so you can find healing for your broken heart.

Here's the good news: Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted. Go the Father sent His Son to live a perfect life, die an unjust death, and defeat death so that our broken hearts might be healed. You don't need to hide your brokenness from Jesus; it was His mission to come and heal you!

When your heart is broken, it won't get better on its own.

When you hold onto your personal brokenness, you are missing out on God's best for your life. You become a shadow of who you are supposed to be. The longer you wait, the deeper the shadow becomes.

Jesus came to heal your broken heart. When will you let Him?







## Day 42

# It's a Matter of Trust

*"I want you to trust me in your times of trouble, so I can rescue you and you can give me glory." Psalm 50:15, TLB*

When you are in trouble, where do you put your trust?

Maybe you are continuing on your skills, money, friends, or power to get you through the trouble. Whatever it is, if you aren't trusting your Creator, then you are trusting something He made - and it wasn't designed to hold your trust.

We love to overcome our problems on our own because it feeds our ego.

Sometimes we don't trust God because we can't see Him, and He doesn't always speak to us directly. We hide behind an excuse that say, "If God would show Himself to me, I'd trust Him more." The truth is, you trust in things you can't see - all the time. You can't see a cell phone signal, but you trust it. You can't see the WiFi, but you trust it to get you on the internet.

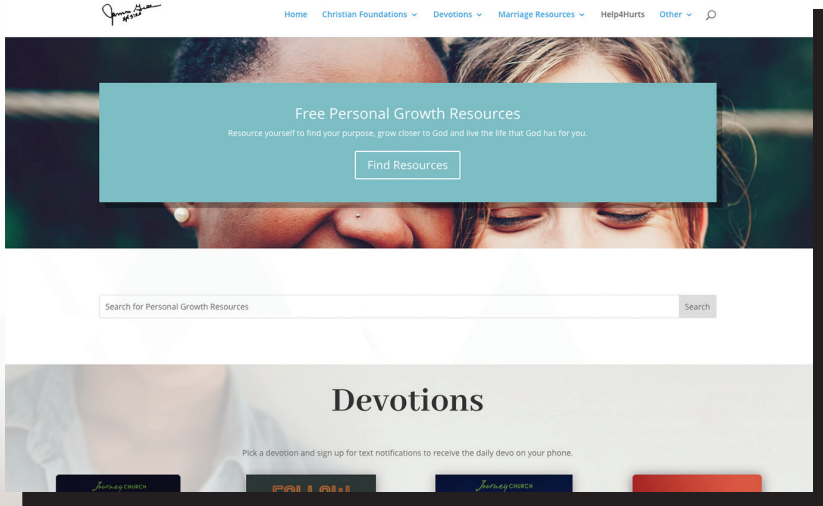
Trusting your phone is easy, but trusting God - especially in times of trouble - is really difficult. That's because trusting God means you need to stop relying on lesser things like money or friends. WiFi won't ask you to change your life, but God loves you enough to help you become more like Jesus. It's a better life, but it's not easy.

Are you willing to trust in the One who is unseen but more reliable than anything in all of creation?

"Dear God, forgive me for trying to handle problems on my own. I am not big or powerful enough, but you are. Show me where I need to trust you and give me the strength to hold on only to you. I give you my life. Amen."

[illegible]

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