

RECEIVING
& RESPONDING

30-day devotional

VOLUME I



Our Outcomes

If our Mission is what we do (*We're sent to love people and invite them to follow Jesus with us.*), then our Outcomes are who we hope you become at Wawasee!

Our Outcomes represent our target—both collectively as a church and personally in each of our lives. These are the things we're aiming at in our spiritual lives and ministries.

Every follower of Jesus at every maturity level should be growing in these five ways.

*If I'm truly growing as a follower of Jesus,
I should be growing in the ways that I am...*



RECEIVING FROM GOD



RESPONDING TO GOD



RECEIVING FROM OTHER CHRISTIANS



MOVING TOWARD OTHER CHRISTIANS



GOING TO THOSE WHO ARE FAR FROM GOD

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Preface

If you haven't yet, before diving into this book take some time to read about our Outcomes on the previous page. These discipleship outcomes represent five areas we believe every follower of Jesus at every maturity level should be growing in. They are the things we're aiming at in our ministries at Wawasee Community Bible Church and in each of our individual spiritual lives.

This devotional is all about helping you grow in the first two of those Outcomes: **Receiving from God** and **Responding to God** (hence the title: *Receiving & Responding*).

On the pages ahead are 30 days of devotions written by a handful of different people of Wawasee Bible. Each is designed to work in the following way:

1. Read that day's devotion. Each is centered around something specific we **receive** from God, encouraging you to open your heart to receiving it from God yourself.
2. At the end of each devotion is a related passage of Scripture for you to read and reflect on.
3. Following each devotion is a blank page for you to pause and **respond** to God. You might use this space to write a prayer in response to what you've read, write down Scripture, or reflect on some of the ways God is at work in your life.

Our hope and prayer is that God will use this simple book to help nourish your heart in the ways you are receiving from God and then in turn responding to him.

RECEIVING & RESPONDING

30-day devotional | **VOLUME I**



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1 | Change

Anyone who believes in Christ is a new creation.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Sam was troubled. Several months before he trusted Jesus as his Savior from sin. He knew there were some things in his life that were not honoring to God. Sam sincerely wanted to change. One of his struggles was profanity. Foul talk and taking God's name in vain were an integral part of his life for many years. A few months into his new life in Christ Sam was still failing in his quest to honor God with his mouth. Unless he specifically thought about it, the vocabulary of "former" Sam slipped out. He began to wonder, would he ever be able to change this habit that was so dishonoring to his Savior?

I want you to understand that nothing is too difficult for God. Change—life altering, God-honoring, permanent change—IS possible. Addictions? Lying? Pornography? Gossip? Anger? Sexual sin? God's grace in Jesus Christ is infinitely more powerful than any sin that enslaves us.

Mark 1:14-15 records the beginning of Jesus' public ministry: *Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel."* The Gospel is the good news that "... *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Our ability to change begins with the knowledge that the penalty of our sins has been paid for by Jesus. We can also be confident that since Jesus loved us enough to give his life to free us from the penalty of our sins, that he also loves us enough to free us from the power sin has over us. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached about the new life that comes through Jesus:

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus...

ACTS 3:19-20

Real, permanent change is possible as we rely on the power of God to change us—but in our own power we will likely fail. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 the Apostle Paul reminds us of the Old Testament account of Moses seeing the glory of God: ***“And we all, with an unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”*** As we look to our God for the strength to truly change we will become more and more like our Savior throughout our lives.

Prayer: *God, I surrender my will to you, and I trust you to grant me the power to change more and more into your image.*

| **TOM SPEICHER**

For further reading & encouragement, see 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



2



Forgiveness

*There is therefore now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

ROMANS 8:1

True, honest, and complete forgiveness is something I think most of us struggle with. It seems there is always a catch. For instance, while I am told I am forgiven, the past is brought up and used to make me feel guilty or ashamed. But not so when God forgives us. God forgives like he does everything else—perfectly. He doesn't bring up the past, he doesn't look at us as the pitiful and wretched sinners we are, but as his perfect children whom he loves.

God is the giver of forgiveness—*real* forgiveness. **Ephesians 1:7-10** states, *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”*

In Jesus we have redemption. Redemption is a financial term. It means God paid the full price of our sins with the blood of Jesus. Your forgiveness was bought by Christ. Jesus laid his life down for us as the *perfect* sacrifice. This is possible because he became one of us, every bit as human as you and I, yet he never sinned. He lived a sinless life and offered it to God as our substitute—gifting us forgiveness.

Why would God do this and allow his Son to die for sinners? Look at three words in **Ephesians 1:8**... "*lavished on us*". According to the Oxford Language Dictionary, "lavish" as an adjective means, "sumptuously rich, elaborate, or luxurious" and as a verb to "bestow something in generous or extravagant quantities."

Stop and think about that. When was the last time you were *lavished* upon? Maybe a birthday party or Christmas celebration? Undeserving as we are the Lord lavishes us with grace! God has not just given us redemption through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, his grace has been *lavished* on us. God loves us so much he couldn't help but "*bestow us with generous or extravagant quantities*" of grace and forgiveness. In Jesus you are honestly, totally, and completely forgiven. He will not throw your past, present, or future failures at you. Jesus forgives you. *Know* that God has provided forgiveness and grace lavishly through his Son. Now we can spend eternity with our true Father, who loves us more than we can possibly imagine.

Prayer: *Father, help us to fathom the depths and breadth of your love for us and begin to understand that nothing can keep us from you when we are covered in your forgiveness through Jesus's sacrifice.*

| **TIM STIFFLER**

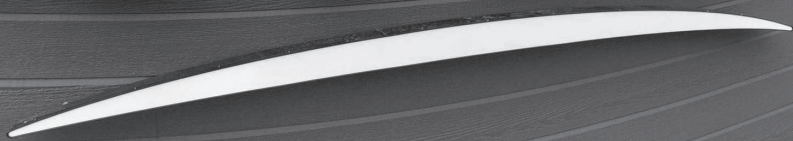
*For further reading & encouragement, see **PSALM 103***



Respond

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you
are
loved.



3 | Loved

When people fall in love they often do silly, corny things which they only do at the start of their relationship, never to be repeated. When Chris and I were falling in love I'd come back to my dorm room and often find a card taped to my door. A card letting me know she was falling for me. It made me feel awesome, made me feel alive, and made me want to write her a letter and stick it on *her* door—which I often did. We phased out of that after a few months.

When another person is pouring out love on you it energizes you, lifts you up, and you don't care as much about your problems. **God loves you!** The love you receive from God is more powerful, true, constant, and life-giving than the love you could receive from any man or woman. My hope for you is to receive a greater measure of God's love to lift you up, energize you, heal you, and strengthen you.

1 John 4:8 declares "**God is love.**" God—if you had just one word to describe him—is *love*. When we use the word "love" we have to clearly define what God means by love. For instance, many people think of love as a feeling, but obviously God is not a feeling. **John 3:16**—"For God so loved the world that he **GAVE...**" In **Jeremiah 31:3** God says, "**I have loved you with an everlasting love.**" **1 Corinthians 13** says, "**Love is patient, love is kind...It always protects...Love never fails.**" Re-read those verses and insert "God" in place of "love". God is patient... God is kind... God always protects... God never fails. To sum up, God's love is loyal, steadfast, unchanging, and unconditional. God's love is accepting, forgiving,

and sacrificial. God loves you because he is love, not because you deserve it. God loves you not because you are lovable but because he can't help himself!

Does your heart ache to be loved by another person? Do you believe if someone—your spouse, your family, a parent, a child, or a friend—*really* truly loved you then you would be fulfilled, healed, and born anew? We all long for and need human love but it's a false hope to believe the love of another human being can make us complete, heal our soul, or give us lasting joy. Only God's love can do that. People change, people don't live forever, but God *never* changes and God's love is forever.

God is love. God will never say, "*I just don't feel love for you anymore.*" God will not decide he deserves someone more useful, more capable, more attractive. God won't say, "*I really need someone who understands or shows more appreciation.*" You can build a new life based on God's love for you knowing his love never changes or grows stale.

Chris and I don't write each other little cards anymore. But we love each other as much as ever. Human love goes through seasons, but God's love doesn't. Ask God to help you know and receive his love in this season of your life in a new way.

Prayer: *Father, help me know and receive the love you have for me.*

| **DAVE WINTERS**

For further reading & encouragement, see **EPHESIANS 3:14-21**



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.
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4 | Mercy

***Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!***

These words from the famous hymn “*Great is Thy Faithfulness*” may be so familiar that now you’re humming them in your head or singing out loud. This hymn was written by a minister named Thomas Chisholm in 1923. Through declining health and financial struggles, he chose to see God’s faithfulness. And Chisholm chose to see God’s faithfulness through the mercies God gives to us every single day, even mercies without end.

Thomas Chisholm knew God’s Word well; he believed and relied on it. He based this hymn on **Lamentations 3:22-24** which says, “*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’*”

Mercy means “not getting what we deserve.” In these verses we see God’s mercies are never-ending! But how can that be? How can the Lord continually give us what we don’t deserve? There is one simple answer: Jesus is all you will ever need. He is your portion.

Interestingly enough the verse goes on to state that God’s mercies “*are new every morning*”. Every morning is a fresh nod of mercy from **19**

his creation. Think about it for a minute. Each morning the sun rises, the birds sing, a new time is given to us to make the most of—and with all of it God gives new mercies for a new day. Yet even with the newness of the morning, the verses recognize that not all parts of the new day will be great.

Each day can bring its own set of challenges and difficult problems—but *God’s mercies are ever-new, ever-changing, and never-ending!* *“His mercies never come to an end.”* Even with our challenges and difficult problems there is hope in him and we can have confidence because of the new mercies he gives. And the best part? Tomorrow a new day awaits us with *even more* new mercies. Praise God!

Hebrews 4:16 encourages us, *“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* So if today seems a little heavier than you would like, or if it seems challenges are not easily overcome—take heart in the fact that Jesus is faithful to us. Draw near to him and absorb his grace. Allow yourself to receive mercy only Jesus can give. Great is his faithfulness!

Prayer: *Lord, thank-you for being gracious and understanding in all circumstances. Your gentle kindness and loving ways go way beyond what I deserve. Thank-you for being faithful in your promises to us and thank-you for mercies that are ever flowing and never-ending.*

| **ERIC & MANDI JACKSON**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **LAMENTATIONS 3:19-27***



5 | Purpose

Why are we here? Let's personalize it: Why am I here? What should I do with my life? What are my goals? My dreams? What is my actual purpose? Spoiler alert: your life is not about you, but all about Jesus! We were made *by God and for God*, not him by/for us. Life is about letting God use you for his purposes and not us using him for our purposes.

Self-help books are great, right? Aim high, set goals, be disciplined, and believe in yourself. None of these suggestions are bad for us, but we need to be aware of falling into “me or I thinking” and leaving Jesus out of the mix. Left on our own we may keep striving but never feel fulfilled.

God's Word says we are here on earth to love. To grow together. We can't grow in our faith without interacting with others. *Loving God and loving others* sets the groundwork for our eternal significance. Here are several verses that speak to living a life of eternal purpose and meaning:

For we are his workmanship (masterpiece) created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago)

EPHESIANS 2:10

Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. (I will show you how to fish for people who will also want to learn to follow CHRIST)

MATTHEW 4:19

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.

COLOSSIANS 3:23

The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands. (he made us)

PSALM 138:8

See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord. (be sure to carry out the work the Lord gave to you)

COLOSSIANS 4:17

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

JOHN 15:16

Life is all about love, sharing each other's troubles and problems. That doesn't mean we are always going to be thrilled with each person in our path or that life will be easy and perfect. We must forgive each other like families forgive. Christ's love for us is like no other. We are adopted as his own. We belong to our *Father*. What a day it will be at the end of this life when we will live with *Christ* as one big happy family. An eternity filled with purpose! Living forever with the Saints! What a gift!

Prayer: *My precious Father, I need you to instill in my heart a love for you and a soft spot for others. Help me be open and aware of opportunities you bring before me with a servant's heart.*

| **BOBI DOLL**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **JOHN 15:1-16***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



6 | Identity

“Look at me, Mom!” I hollered. I was five years old, dressed proudly in my pale pink ballet leotard and matching pink skirt, leaping and spinning across our small living room without shame. A recording of the Cinderella ballet I had just performed with my local ballet played on the TV screen as I danced. “*Tendu, tendu, tendu,*” I recall my teacher reciting for us. I remember knowing every move, even looking to the girls next to me to make sure they were doing the movements correctly. (I think I even boldly corrected a few of them with my steely stare. Did it help? I’ll never know.)

I twirled around the room in my clumsy little girl way, with the lovely ballet dancer on the screen in front of me, and confidently declared, “*That’s me! I’m Cinderella!*” In my head it was **not** pretend. The girl on the screen was ME! Eventually my pea-sized attention span was on to pretending something else, but for those few minutes I knew who I was. I really believed I was Cinderella.

Isn’t it interesting that at age five we can know exactly who we are? We can be confident and declare our “self”. But what about at 25-years-old? Or 55? Why does our identity and knowing who we are become so jumbled and complex as we grow older? We often just default to identifying who we are by what we do. Either trying to impress people or trying to get God’s attention and approval. The good news is we can and will find who we are when we look to Christ—knowing that because we’re in Christ, God sees us as he sees Jesus.

The Bible tells us in **Romans 8:29**, “*For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*” In this verse we see not only how God sees us but also who we are becoming—more like *Christ*! Being a part of God’s family as his sons and daughters, we are shaped, formed, and changed to be like Jesus. As a Christian this is an inevitable (and often uncomfortable) process. When Jesus was baptized the Father declared, “**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased**” (**Luke 3:22**). In this moment God the Father declared Jesus’s identity as his loved Son, and Jesus knew who he was. Jesus lived a righteous, humble life, seeking to please the Father in all he did. He was an example for us to love and care for others rather than ourselves. We can know who we are as we look to Jesus.

Take a minute to think about this: to whom or what are you looking to find your identity? Are you looking to other people? Are you looking toward what you do? Ask the Lord to help you look at Christ, showing you who you *truly* are, and giving you the desire to be more like him.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, make me more like Jesus. Show me where I can find more of my identity in Christ. Less of me and more of you.*

| **ASHLEY WEAVER**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **COLOSSIANS 3:1-10***



Respond

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7 | A New Heart

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

EZEKIEL 36:26

I have a friend who works with leather. She makes beautiful bags, purses, key chains, and wallets. I'm intrigued when she posts videos of the process and special tools she uses to work with the thick material. Leather is a unique thing. Leather was flesh once, until the animal died—then the skins were tanned, treated, and conditioned. With proper care it can remain attractive and last a lifetime. However, when leather is left untreated or exposed to harsh elements, it quickly breaks down. Once a crack forms in leather, it can never be restored. Glues and fillers or patches can be applied, but the crack will always remain. Over time, leather becomes brittle and working with it becomes impossible. Any attempt to stitch, bend, or handle it at this stage will result in the material disintegrating into dust.

Curiously, it's the same with our hearts. As people of flesh we can't avoid exposure to the harsh elements of a sinful world. Whether it's a mean word spoken by a classmate, the rejection or betrayal of one who should have loved us, abuse from one who should have protected us, the loss of a loved one, or the effects of our own sinful choices, the world weathers our hearts. Cracks form and despite our best efforts to patch or provide "self-care", our hearts harden and break beyond repair.

But God doesn't leave us in this state. He offers us an exchange. When we finally give up trying to cover our messes and mend our shattered hearts he takes the broken pieces and gives us a new heart of flesh. Can you picture it? I do my best to sweep up the dust and offer up whatever dry, cracked flakes remain, and my Father smiles as he joyfully gives me a *brand new*, tender, responsive, *whole* heart!

But our new hearts still reside in a broken world. A "heart of flesh" is still easily wounded. Thankfully with our new heart comes a new Spirit as well. **John 14:16** tells us, "***I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.***" We are given the Holy Spirit who dwells within us forever. As we allow the Holy Spirit to condition us for love, train us to respond with forgiveness, and guide us in obedience, he protects and preserves our tender hearts, not for a lifetime, but for eternity.

Is there any sin, unforgiveness, bitterness, or hurt that the Lord might be calling you to exchange and trade with him? How might you ask the Holy Spirit to soften, train, or protect your heart this week? Take hope in God's promise to you, "***And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.***"

Prayer: *Father, thank you for the gift of a new heart. Help me surrender the broken pieces and root out any sin or stubbornness that may keep my heart from responding and beating in step with you.*

| **SARAH VANDERREYDEN**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **EZEKIEL 36:22-36***



Respond

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ALL YOU NEED IS
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ALL YOU NEED IS
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MARCO ANTONI
ISABEL
HENRIQUE
YALON
ASHIR BEDE

LULA

LIVRE

LEO WOLU
ALWAYS
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JUSTIN CURTIS

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STEP LIVING AT AS
BECAUSE YOU R. ERS
MAYED ME CL

I Love Mimi
TRUST
Always
Own
MUSICIAN
TUCK THE KSCW!!!
chimaee
JANE

Maria
Gabriella
17.12.19

BE HAPPY!
AMOR P/A
11/2019



8



Love

“All you need is love, love... love is all you need,” so sang the Beatles. “Looking for love in all the wrong places...” is a famous line from country singer Johnny Lee. In the 70’s Bachman Turner Overdrive, sang, “Any love is good love.” I am sure you can think of many songs with lyrics about love. Poetry, drama, literature—both fiction and non-fiction, and entertainment of any kind is often centered around a framework of love found, love pursued, or love lost. Love, or loving, or the lack thereof, is part of the universal human experience.

In the Greek language there are four words that are all translated “love” in the English language. “Eros” is the first word translated as “love” in English. This refers to physical love or sexual desire. “Storage” is the second word. This word refers not to Tupperware but to love among family members. “Phileo” is the third word and refers to love among friends. It’s seen as “storage” love that’s applied to non-family members. It is the idea that we are to relate to and love our neighbors as we relate to and love our siblings. The fourth word is “Agape.” This is the highest form of love. It is everlasting and sacrificial. “Agape” is unconditional love, it is the love God loves us with. **1 John 4:8** states, “God is love” (*agape*). **1 Corinthians 13** is an entire chapter describing *agape* love which famously begins, “Love is patient, love is kind...”

God alone is the source of (*agape*) love. When a person repents and turns to Jesus in faith and believes the Gospel about Jesus’s death for our sin and his resurrection they are born-again as a child of God. At the moment we are born again the Holy Spirit comes to live inside **35**

us and the Spirit produces “fruit” in our lives. These new enhanced character qualities are called the “fruit of the Spirit.” They are defined in **Galatians 5:22-23**: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is LOVE (agape), joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..*”

The phrase, “Any love is good love” is not true. “Eros” love can only be expressed in a God-honoring way between a husband and a wife. “Love is all you need” is not necessarily true either. It is only true if you are speaking of the love of God as seen in Jesus Christ. Every human being has a longing to love and to be loved. God alone is the source of true, lasting, unconditional (agape) love. Have you been born-again? If so, God the Holy Spirit dwells in you and desires to produce the fruit of love. If not, ask the Lord to forgive you of your sins and pour out his love on your life. If you are following Christ, ask God to pour out more of his unconditional love upon you.

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, I want to be blessed with the fruit of love. I ask that you produce it in me and show me how to share it with others*

| **TOM SPEICHER**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **1 CORINTHIANS 13***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.
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9 | Joy

*And do not be grieved,
for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*

NEHEMIAH 8:10

“I searched for happiness for decades, but joy eluded me,” said John, a seventy something self-made man. “In the late 60’s and 70’s I was certain that contentment and joy were to be found in sexual excess and drugs. In the 80’s I was certain that joy was found in wealth. I became a businessman and accumulated wealth. When I realized in the late 90’s that material wealth did not produce joy, I tried philanthropy. Surely, doing good deeds would produce joy. I was wrong.”

John spent the next ten years in the throes of clinical depression. A dramatic change took place when a friend shared the Gospel with him. John repented, believed the Gospel, and in Jesus found the joy and contentment he had sought so long.

In the introduction to my 2005 journal, I wrote the following words:

“As I enter 2005, one on the outside looking in might conclude that I am a miserable, discouraged man. I am not. I had many anxious moments in 2004. There were nights I slept poorly. I had entire days when I was so sad I could not think straight and my gut was icy with uncertainty. But I am not a miserable and discouraged man. Why? The answer boils down to one word: FAITH. I am absolutely convinced that God is my Heavenly Father, that Jesus Christ is my Savior, and that I am filled with God the Holy Spirit. I am absolutely convinced that my God is sovereign and absolutely

loving and absolutely true to his promises to me and absolutely working for my good through whatever comes my way."

Even in those dark days of my life, I knew the joy of the Lord.

God alone is the source of joy. When one receives Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit indwells them. As we walk in faith the Holy Spirit changes us. **Galatians 5:22** states, **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness."** This joy is not like anything the world can produce in us. This joy is of the Holy Spirit to our hearts. The joy of the world is of the flesh, which is sinful and fleeting.

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). On the night before Jesus suffered on the cross he promised joy to those who believe in him. Note it is "his joy." The joy that comes through faith in Jesus is based on forgiveness and a new, clean heart. His joy is permanent and cannot be shaken. These qualities are as sure as the power of God, who is the gracious source. Since joy is a "fruit" of the Holy Spirit, the joy God offers is unlimited in quantity and quality. So we are exhorted: **"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).**

If you want to experience true, lasting joy, come into a right relationship with God and ask Jesus for true, lasting joy. God alone is the source of joy!

Prayer: *Lord, the world's joy is counterfeit.
I ask for your true, supernatural, lasting joy.*

| **TOM SPEICHER**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **PHILIPPIANS 4:3-9***



10 | Peace

Peace is a noun defined as “a state of tranquility or quiet; freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions; a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity.”

Mary was in her mid-fifties and felt like she had never known a moment of peace. Her father was domineering. She was in a church that was legalistic and focused on keeping rules. Her children were typical of their peers while growing up, but poor Mary could only concentrate on their times of what she saw as rebellion. Financially the family “got by” but never “ahead.” In her mind she was a total failure. How could God love her? Mary felt like her tough situation was because of her own wrong decisions she made when she was younger, and now God was rightly punishing her. Every day seemed like a never-ending cycle of self-condemnation and worry over where her next failure would appear.

Mary’s life began to change in her fifth decade of life. Thirty years before she had trusted Jesus as her Savior. Mary had “repented,” meaning she had changed her mind about Jesus, and turned and moved toward him. But her repentance was done in a church and religious system where “repentance” was strictly choreographed for other people to see and a months-long, religious exercise. She was taught her salvation could only be retained by consistent “good works.” Hence, Mary was miserable, and peace eluded her.

What enabled Mary to change? She realized God alone is the source of peace—for her and everyone. **Isaiah 26:3** promises, “You will **43**

keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.” She learned that the Holy Spirit produces peace as a “fruit.” *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, PEACE, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...”* (Galatians 5:22). Furthermore, she learned Jesus promises his peace to all who follow him.

Just before he went to the cross Jesus promised us, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid”* (John 14: 27). Mary believed this promise. As Mary came to a right understanding of the nature of God as her Heavenly Father, she came to know the joy of true peace. Paul expressed this beautifully in his letter to the Philippians:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, give me a right understanding of the loving nature of God, that I may know his peace and the freedom it brings!*

| **TOM SPEICHER**

A black and white photograph of a utility pole. The pole is covered in a rough, textured material, possibly paper or fabric, which has been partially removed, revealing the metal underneath. A black strap is wrapped around the pole near the top. Below the strap, there is a circular sticker with a black border and white background. The sticker contains the text "DUDE, BREATHE." in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the sticker is a vertical metal plate with a black border and white background, containing the numbers "378569" in a bold, sans-serif font. The background is a blurred cityscape with buildings and a cloudy sky.

**DUDE,
BREATHE.**

**3
7
8
5
6
9**

11 | Patience

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

GALATIANS 5:22-23

Ahh, patience. A glorious thing when we're on the receiving end of it, but sometimes like a rock in our shoe when we have to exercise it ourselves or extend it to others. Maybe that's why some of the older English translations of the Bible render patience as "long-suffering". Two words that none us like to combine.

Paul lists patience as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5. I think he had two things in mind when he listed patience. First is the ability to endure something for a long time. Maybe opposition, suffering, pain; it's persevering when it'd be easier to quit. The second type of patience is the ability to put up with other people. Their weaknesses, their quirks, their sin. Bearing with them.

Patience is tough work. It's costly. And it doesn't come naturally to us. When we just try harder to muster up patience on our own it never works. We need God's patience, the kind that only the Holy Spirit can grow in us. Ultimately that's what the fruit of the Spirit is—it's God's own character growing in our character. His life producing life in us. Patience is not something we achieve, but something we receive from God.

If we really want to see God's patience grow in us, then the best place to start may be to simply take a breath and look at God's patience toward us.

Below are a handful of Bible passages where we see God's patience in action. Look up and read each one, then do three things in this journal. First, jot down what most strikes you about God's patience in that passage. Second, sit patiently in silence and think about it for a bit. Third, pray and talk to God about what you noticed. Ask him to grow that same type of patience in your own heart and make you more like Jesus. He loves to do just that.

Exodus 34:6

Psalm 103:8-10

Isaiah 53:4, 6, 12

John 13:1

1 Peter 2:20-24

2 Peter 3:9

Prayer: *Father, thanks for Jesus. Thanks for your patience toward me, a sinner. I ask that you'd grow more and more of your character in my own character, especially patience.*

| **JOSH WEILAND**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **COLOSSIANS 3:12-17***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.

F A I T H F U L L N E S S

G E N T L E N E S S

S E L F -

C O N T R O L

12 | Self-Control

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

2 TIMOTHY 1:7

Anita began her day curled up in a fetal position in bed, sobbing. “How could I have made such a mess of things?” she wondered. She hated what she had become. In her young 40’s she was morbidly overweight, unemployed, and she knew her alcohol consumption was way over the line. “I don’t know why I even try!” she cried, “How could anyone love me?” She knew her depression and alcohol abuse were alienating her husband and children. Anita was angry, too. “I’ve tried every gimmick imaginable to gain control of my life, with no success. It is hopeless.”

This could be any one of millions of people, but Anita was different in one critical way. She was a Christian; a believer in Jesus Christ as her Savior from sin. As a young woman and mother she had repented and turned to Jesus, asking God to forgive her of her sins and be Lord of her life. Anita was born-again. She was later baptized to publicly identify with Jesus in her new life.

As Anita lay there on that day, a flicker of hope sprang up in her. Anita realized she had never tried giving control of her life to God. She remembered that the Holy Spirit was in her; but that she had resisted all the Spirit’s urgings to change for many years. She

remembered that the Holy Spirit desired to produce 'fruit' in her life, not apples or oranges, but character qualities coming from the character of God himself. She remembered a passage, Galatians 5, and looked it up. In **Galatians 5:22-23** she read, "**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, SELF-CONTROL...**" "This is the answer!" she thought. Anita prayed a simple, but sincere prayer; "God, I know I have walked away from you and rejected your provision. I'm sorry. I repent, I turn back to you, I trust you to change me and teach me to exercise self-control in my daily life." God alone can enable us to consistently exercise self-control.

Anita was sincere, and slowly but surely the changes came as the Holy Spirit produced the fruit of self-control in her heart and life. This power of the Holy Spirit to give us self-control is available to all of us who follow Jesus Christ. What areas in your life could use the fruit of self-control through the Holy Spirit working within you? Perhaps you are ready to pray Anita's prayer.

Prayer: *Father, I trust you to change me and teach me to exercise self-control in my daily life. Increase in me through the Holy Spirit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

| **TOM SPEICHER**

For further reading & encouragement, see 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-16



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



13



Strength

He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

ISAIAH 40:29-31

Ordinary birds hide and flee from storms. Eagles fly *toward* them, facing the darkness and using the powerful updrafts to be lifted up above the storm. Eagles glide far more than they flap their wings. They catch the currents of rising hot air, then fix their outstretched wings in position, and let the currents lift them. This is a picture of how God gives you strength.

We may liken the rising air currents to the power and person of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 says, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*** And later Paul writes to Timothy, ***“for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control”*** (2 Timothy 1:7). Both of these verses were written first in Greek, and the Greek word for power is ‘*dunamis*’ by which you may recognize dynamite or dynamic. Power is further defined as might, strength, force, energy, or ability. The Holy Spirit gives you might, force,

and energy to tell others about Jesus. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of strength and ability.

From the Lord you receive strength, he has promised. One of my life verses is Isaiah 41:10, *“fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”* Joshua 1:9 states, *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”* And Deuteronomy 31:8, *“It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”* He promises to be with you. He promises to strengthen you. Hang on to Bible promises like these in times of doubt, exhaustion, and anxiety.

Pray and ask God to fulfill his promises. Ask for energy, ask for might, ask for ability, so God may be glorified in your life. The Apostle Paul prays in Ephesians 3:16, *“that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being.”* From the Lord you can receive new strength each day. Whatever you are facing, his strength is there. *“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us”* (Ephesians 3:20).

Prayer: Lord, thanks for giving me a spirit of power, love, and self-control. Strengthen me with your power through your Spirit in my inner being.

| DAVE WINTERS

For further reading & encouragement, see **ISAIAH 40:18-31**



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



14 | Grace

Who is the best gift-giver that you know? Was it your grandmother when you were a child? Maybe a special friend or sibling who knows your likes and dislikes well? What kind of gifts do you remember getting?

Jesus gave us good gifts such as humbling himself to live among us, mercy, love beyond what we can imagine, and ultimately his life. His gift of grace is one that helps in our daily lives. The definition of grace is “getting what we do not deserve.” Grace goes beyond any earthly gift we have ever received; yes, even that favorite gift from grandma!

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

JOHN 1:14, 16

Jesus dwelt among us, fully as a man. “Dwelling” or living with us, implies his life reflected ours. He experienced all that we experience. He knows our feelings intimately and truly. Yet going on through this verse, he is “**full of grace and truth.**” Grace during the everyday struggles, feelings, and situations that are less than best. Grace that shines through his glory. In verse 16 we see from Jesus’s fullness of humanity, we have ALL received grace. Received, just like that meaningful gift. And not just grace, but grace upon grace, unending and through all of life’s struggles.

Because Jesus dwelt among us, our lives are able to reflect his glory by accepting his grace.

The same sentiments are echoed in **Hebrews 4:15-16**, ***“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”***

This grace is given to us freely with the knowledge that Jesus knows what life regularly throws at us. As the verse says, he sympathizes with our weaknesses and has been tempted as we are, yet remained without sin. Because of this we can approach Jesus with confidence and allow him to pour out his grace on our lives. Jesus wants us to come to him for the good gift of grace to help in our times of need (in our everyday lives too).

Grace allows you to live in the freedom of knowing Jesus is there to help you. He understands us. Today, draw near to him in prayer and ask him to help you find grace in the hard places, even though we don't deserve the gift. Jesus would love to give grace to you!

Prayer: *Lord, thank-you for the generosity of your grace that I don't deserve. Thank-you for completely understanding all of my life's nuances and being my help not only in times of need but in everyday circumstances. Jesus, pour out your grace upon my life.*

| **ERIC & MANDI JACKSON**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **JOHN 1:1-18***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



15



Freedom

Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

JOHN 8:31-33

Jesus is talking to a group of Jews about what it means to be free. The people were confused because they had never been enslaved to anyone. As Jesus often did, he stretched his listeners to think deeper. To go beyond what they had always thought or believed. While it was true they had never been a slave to another person, apart from Christ they very much lived as slaves. We all do. Apart from Christ we live for ourselves, this world, the approval of other people, things that won't last, fill, or satisfy. Sin rules and reigns within us. But in Christ... there is freedom! Jesus declares, *“Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”* (John 8:34-36). Jesus breaks the chains of sin and releases us from the grip of all that's broken and marred from the Fall. What fell apart in the Garden (see Genesis 3), Jesus put back together through his life, death, and resurrection. In Christ we are free, but what exactly does that mean?

I like lists. Breaking something down into a list helps me work out all sides and parts of an issue. It helps me see the full scope of something. So let's do that. When someone puts their faith and trust in Christ, they are a new creation. They are saved from an

eternity apart from God and are free—positionally and experientially. When God looks at us, he sees Christ. Jesus fulfilled the Law and stood in our place, paying the penalty for our sin. Because of him, we are free. The debt has been paid. It's done. So positionally, we are free from...

- **the power of sin and death**
- **the requirement of the Law**
- **religion and having to get it all right**

But did you know it doesn't end there? As if that's not enough on its own! Through Jesus not only do we stand free and clean in the sight of our holy God, but he gives us the gift of living free. We can experience freedom this side of heaven. We receive the gift of living free of...

- **condemnation & shame**
- **fear & worry**
- **people pleasing**
- **anxiety & depression**

And then we're free to...

- **love**
- **leave our lives in God's hands**
- **sing, dance, & have joy**
- **follow his lead**
- **experience peace**
- **serve others**

Jesus purchased our freedom with his blood so we can live free as sons and daughters. Go live free.

Prayer: *God, help me to live in the freedom you have secured through Jesus. May the truth of your Word move from my head to my heart, prompting me to live and love fully in freedom.*

| **HANNAH WEILAND**



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



16 | Obedience

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

JOHN 14:15

You are cooking a special meal for guests coming in the evening when suddenly you hear a loud pop! Off goes the electricity, everything stops, and the house is silent! Again, it's a very hot summer day. Everyone has their air conditioning and fans going when “bam” the power shuts off and you immediately panic at the possibility of losing all the contents in your freezers and refrigerator. Will the power be restored in a few minutes, a few hours, or a few days? Will you have to totally depend on people and various linemen or entities working feverishly to restore power while you wait?

My hope for you is to see the correlation of a power source that never fails, has no glitches, is always constant, no 220 voltage required, and *his power* is free! The Almighty Generator supplies all our needs. He is never too hot, too cold, or dim. Our Lord provides perfect energy. If Jesus is your savior, you are able to connect to the power strip and able to obey and follow him.

Let's look into God's Word in Acts 1:8. After his death and resurrection Jesus declared, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*** To summarize this would mean if you believe in Jesus Christ as

your savior, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. We can obey and follow God's instruction and show and tell what he has done for us as witnesses to his goodness and love.

1 Corinthians 4:20 says, "**For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power**" (NLT). I want you to understand in a practical way from these verses that we can be locked into this same power source named Jesus Christ and experience his power in your life. We want to please the Lord with our obedience. The Lord wants our hearts, and obedience is a sign of our love for him. When we are not obeying we are sending a message to our Lord that we have a better plan than him. When we obey, it glorifies the Lord, for we are trusting him for the outcome and not in ourselves. He provides the help and strength to keep us connected. Filling our minds and ears with good music and TV choices are uplifting and healthy to our inner spirit.

Obedience is a choice we must choose. We can believe 100% that the Lord will provide his power if we choose to obey and follow him. We don't need to waste time flipping on and off the switch. We can leave the light on. Jesus will never leave you in the dark.

Prayer: *Precious Father, I love you and I ask you to strengthen my ability to obey and follow you where you lead me.*

| **BOBI DOLL**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **PSALM 119:1-16***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



17 | Wisdom

Before the reunion you get two phone calls from different family members who are fighting. Both explain why they are right, why the other family member is a terrible person, and that you need to be on “their side.” You need wisdom. You receive a new job offer which will pay more and is more appealing but requires moving to another state. You need wisdom. Your child wants to play two sports, band, karate, and battle-bots. Wisdom? We need more wisdom than we have. The good news is God promises to give you wisdom for whatever you are facing. My hope is for us to learn to consistently ask God for wisdom. In what relationship or situation do you need wisdom today?

James 1:5 says, ***“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”*** What an amazing promise! *“Lacking”* means to be wanting, needing, destitute. You have to confess you are *lacking* the wisdom in yourself for the situations you face. It’s healthy to admit we need a wisdom higher than our own. A great prayer is, *“Lord, I don’t know what to do, give me wisdom!”* God gives wisdom in generous amounts without reproach. This means God gives us wisdom without shaming us. God doesn’t say, “I can’t believe you are so needy,” or “you have no one to blame but yourself for the mess you are in.” God doesn’t frown at you and give you a tiny bit of wisdom. Instead, God delights to be generous, gracious, and rescuing. Ask with confidence.

God promises his wisdom, not the world’s wisdom. James 3:17 says, ***“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable,***

gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy” (NASB). God’s wisdom is never about us being proven right, defeating someone, getting our way, or maneuvering a situation to our personal advantage. God’s wisdom serves God’s purposes not our own. God’s wisdom is also the best possible good for you. God’s wisdom has pure motives, not selfish ones. God’s wisdom is loving, peaceable, full of mercy. God’s wisdom is unwavering and without hypocrisy; meaning his wisdom is sincere, true, without a hidden agenda, and steadfast.

No one “wins” a family fight. Ask for God’s wisdom which is gentle, peaceable, and full of good fruit. Ask God for his wisdom which is reasonable and unwavering in regard to your job choices. Ask God for wisdom in setting limits for your kids. By so doing you will begin to teach your child wisdom at an early age. In what situation or relationship will you ask God for wisdom today?

How do you ask for wisdom? Make a time and a place to be alone with God. Ask God out loud, “*Lord give me wisdom for _____.*” Talk to the Lord, tell him your fears, hopes, and concerns, and repeat your request for wisdom several times. Don’t hurry this. Slow down, listen, and see what God might bring to your mind.

Prayer: *Lord, grant me your wisdom, the wisdom which is pure, full of mercy, sincere, true, and unwavering.*

| **DAVE WINTERS**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **JAMES 3:13-18***



18 | Spirit

The disciples went from “confused and hiding” to “courageous and focused” in only a few weeks, with the apex of that change happening one morning as recorded in the Bible in **Acts 2**. Those men and women were transformed from an uneducated, unfocused, and unorganized group into the most amazing spiritual movement this world has ever seen. But what happened? **The Holy Spirit was given.**

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. We see evidence of the Holy Spirit throughout the Bible from creation (**Genesis 1:2**) to the final chapter of the Bible (**Revelation 22:17**). The main role of the Holy Spirit today is to interact with and live within believers and guide and direct those who follow Jesus Christ—the Church.

Acts 1:8 declares, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (NIV). The same Holy Spirit who formed the mountains and oceans, and gave power and strength to Jesus during his ministry here on earth, is now living inside of you, and giving you power to be free of sin and live for Jesus. Do you really believe this? Stop and think, the same power present at the founding of the world, the same power Jesus used to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and feed the thousands, that same power is available to us when we surrender to Jesus as our Savior through the Holy Spirit. We just have to learn how to receive and employ it.

The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to each of us to accomplish his purpose of making and growing disciples. **1 Corinthians 12:11** says, *“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines”* (NIV). When we discover what our spiritual gifts are we can begin tapping into the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit that heals bodies and relationships, which moves people to do amazing things in their lives, and raises people from being dead to being alive.

So the question each of us has to ask ourselves is, *“do I want to sit in the dark for the rest of my life feeling unfulfilled, misunderstood, not growing spiritually, scared and confused, or do I want to turn on the Spirit’s power in my life, help fulfill God’s purpose here on earth, and experience greater joy as I do what Jesus wants me to do?”*

Prayer: *Father, fill my life with the power of your Holy Spirit. Please guide me to know the gifting of the Holy Spirit in my life and how to use those gifts to help make disciples in all the world.*

| **TIM STIFFLER**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **JOHN 14:15-27***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life. You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



19



Family

Special times with family are great memories. Nights of board games and snacks, or snuggling in the living room for a movie night with popcorn and blankets. Some families don't have regular game or movie nights but they take amazing trips to the beach or road trips to see the sights of our beautiful country. Family can be the place where we belong, but family may also be a place of hurt or heartache in our broken world.

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus said, “there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, who will not receive a hundred times more, now at this time—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and eternal life in the age to come.”

MARK 10:29

When we choose to follow Jesus, sometimes we have to give up things close to us. This may include family. This could be a physical moving away from all your family and relatives, or it could be a torn relationship within your family because you have chosen to believe in the gospel and other family members haven't.

It's heartbreaking when this happens, but Jesus warns his disciples this could and would happen. Family members may start pulling away from you when you choose to follow Jesus. Maybe you won't go to certain parties with them anymore, or you stop going to the baseball game on Sunday mornings because of your commitment

to serving at church. But even through the heartache of leaving family, God provides a family for you. The Lord promises 100 times or more a family of fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters through Christ when we follow him! One time Mary and Jesus's brothers came looking for him. When someone told Jesus his mom and brothers were outside looking for him, this was his reply: ***“Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother”*** (Mark 3:33-35). Jesus says if we do the will of God, we are family!

I had a friend who moved several states away from her family. She was unable to have regular get-togethers to see her siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins. It can be really lonely when you are away from the people you came from! But in her church at her new location she was able to find family and community. She found other women who felt like sisters and some men who felt like uncles or brothers. And the kids? They were the nieces and nephews she would love to spoil and share giggles with!

The Lord is faithful to provide a spiritual family when we choose to follow him. We receive from God a true family we need, no matter what state our earthly family is in.

Prayer: *Thank-you, Lord, for providing a true family for me. Thank-you that when I am not close to members of my own family, you have blessed me with more. May you satisfy my need for belonging through my church family.*

| **ASHLEY WEAVER**

For further reading & encouragement, see 1 PETER 2:4-10



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



20 | Adoption

I had the blessing of growing up in a relatively healthy home. My mom and dad were both involved in my life, they stayed together to the end, and my three brothers and I never doubted their love for us (even if we might have put it to the test now and then!). Because of this it was never a stretch for me to believe I had a heavenly Dad who loved me, too—unlike many others who struggle with that concept.

On the other side of the state (“out east” from where I grew up in western Iowa) lived my two Korean cousins. I remember when each of them were adopted. First Megan, then a few years later, Brandon. As a kid I never thought of them as anything but family. We had the same cousins, the same aunts and uncles, the same grandma and grandpa. But for whatever reason they were born in Korea while I was born in Iowa. I didn’t realize it at the time (and I’m sure they didn’t either), but God was giving us a glimpse of what it means to become part of his family. The bible speaks of becoming a Christian as being adopted by a good Dad into his family.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

ROMANS 8:15

A child that is adopted by a loving father into a loving family will have an identity transformation. They retain their uniqueness, but they get a new name, a new family, a new heritage, and a new future. Everything changes.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

EPHESIANS 5:1-2, 8-10

Paul calls those of us who believe in Christ “children” of God, reminding us that after we put our faith in Jesus we were adopted into God’s family. Now that we’re part of the King’s family, everything changes. We get a brand new identity—a new heritage, a new future, and a new family! If you grew up with a good dad, now you have a heavenly Dad who’s even better. If your dad was lacking, stingy, wicked, or absent, now you have a Father who is good and loving, lavish in every way, gracious, and always present. God is a Father in the way fatherhood was intended, and one worth imitating. Welcome to the family.

Prayer: *Father, thanks for Jesus. Thank you for adopting me into your family, not because I’m a good kid, but because you’re a good Dad. Thanks, too, for loving me and delighting in me the way a good Father always does. Help me remember who I am and Whose I am as I go about my life today.*

| **JOSH WEILAND**

For further reading & encouragement, see **EPHESIANS 5:1-21**



21 | A Good Dad

I always wanted my dad to be proud of me, especially as his oldest daughter. I loved it when he was pleased with something I did or something I made. My dad was my soccer coach as a little girl. I remember hearing him cheer when I scored a goal, that always put a big smile on my face. Though I always looked up to my dad growing up, he still had a lot of short comings. As an adult now, I know he was just doing the best he knew how, but he was still far from a perfect father. He would be the first to admit that.

One of the best things we receive from God is himself as a Father. For many of us this can be difficult to grasp, because we think of our own fathers, and all we see is their many short comings and how they may have failed us or neglected us. Then maybe we start to think that God, as a Father, may be like our dad was; angry, or absent, demanding, or full of broken promises. Why would we want to see God as Father when the word 'father' triggers so much hurt? The good news is your imperfect father is only a mere shadow of God and doesn't even compare with our Heavenly Father. The truth is our Father is perfect, and everything we could want or need that our earthly father failed to give us.

John 1:12-13 declares, “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.” The glorious King of the Universe has made you his own son or daughter! It's such

good news to know God is your Father, and a more perfect Father than your earthly one is or was. It's greater news to know that you are his child! Through Jesus you are no longer a slave of sin, or a religious servant, or enemy of God, but you *belong* to him. Receiving God as Father is an amazing gift! In Jesus Christ you are no longer an orphan or alone. You have a good, good Father who sees you and knows you and loves you.

Do you rejoice or wince when you think of God as your Father? Think about how you can live as a child of God on a daily basis. Reflect on the ways that God is a good Father. The Bible says that he knows how to “**give good gifts**” to his children (Matthew 7:11). It says he is “**merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness**” (Psalm 86:15).

Pray and ask God to show you what kind of Father he is as you read his Word.

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for being my perfect Father. I am so grateful to be your child and so thankful Jesus made a way for me to be adopted into your family.*

| **ASHLEY WEAVER**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **EPHESIANS 1:1-10***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



22



Blood

When I was a little boy I had a little girlfriend named Jennifer. A couple boys insulted my little girlfriend and so we were going to fight. We squared off in the field behind the woods where such things took place. I was bigger than them but they both had little hammers to even things out. The “fight” consisted of them trying to get me with the hammers and me blocking them. Finally, one of them got me on the head with a hammer and the fight stopped. The boys looked at me, their eyes got big, and they took off running. My little heart swelled with pride as my enemies fled with my little girlfriend by my side. Except she looked scared and asked, “are you okay?” I said I was fine. Then I noticed a little red spot on my jacket. When I bent my head down to examine the spot a bright crimson stream of blood fell from my head onto my jacket. I burst into tears and went running for mommy.

Talking about blood is one thing, seeing blood on TV another, and seeing a decent quantity of real blood yet another. Lots of real blood is unsettling, perhaps terrifying, and traumatic. Real blood, God’s own blood, was given to save you.

Hebrews 9:22 says, *“Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”* Whenever we are tempted to think our sin is no big deal remember blood. If we think, “I’m a pretty good person,” think of real blood. Blood reveals the true cost and horror of our sin. Our sin cost real blood, God’s blood. The blood of an innocent man was required to cleanse your conscience, so

you could serve the living God and not meaningless things. Hebrews 9:14 states, **“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”**

Ephesians 1:7 declares, **“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”** Blood reveals the true power and glory of God’s love. God is spirit (John 4:24) and does not have blood. So Jesus, God becoming man, presents us with the amazing truth of ‘God bleeding.’ Blood proves his love for you.

Blood reminds us to be grateful. We can never repay God. We can only say “thank you.” Communion is an opportunity to remember his blood and be filled with gratitude. Jesus said, **“Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”** (Matthew 26:27-28). His real blood poured out for you, so your real blood stays in your body! **“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7). His blood is powerful to save you, cleanse you, and renew you. Believe, rejoice, and praise him for his blood.

Prayer: *Father, thank you for the blood of Jesus which cleanses my heart and conscience.*

| **DAVE WINTERS**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **EPHESIANS 2:1-13***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



23



New Self

But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

EPHESIANS 4:20-24

At Mammoth Caves in Kentucky I was led into a large, cavernous, underground room. The guide warned us not to move and then shut the lights off. Total darkness! After thirty seconds our guide asked us to slowly and carefully place one hand in front of our face. My palm was barely touching my nose. It was so dark I could not even see my hand! Suddenly the guide lit one single match, and the whole cave exploded in light. In my former life before Jesus, I existed in spiritual darkness, blind to who I was really serving. Jesus unexpectedly came crashing into my world, and once I started to follow him, the brighter the light became.

I'm reminded of the 2004 movie "National Treasure." Near the end the main characters enter a very dark room and find a small pile of treasures. Nicolas Cage's character, Benjamin Gates, then puts a torch to a channel with oil that ignites and illuminates a giant room, bigger than several football fields, overflowing with

thousands of artifacts and treasures. This is a perfect metaphor for us when we accept Jesus as our Lord. We cease to live in darkness and realize there is so much more than we had been led to believe. We clearly see our lives and the world around us for the first time, we understand truths we didn't in the past. We become a new person through Jesus, we become alive and we begin to understand we are part of something vast and amazing, the eternal Kingdom of Jesus!

But do we ever want to hold onto things that brought comfort and contentment to the "old self" we were before Jesus? We have to learn to walk away from our old self, and the things in the dark, and God is there, ready to help.

The more you involve yourself in the things of the Light—the things of God like prayer, bible, worship, serving, encouraging others, practicing daily repentance—the more distance you put between your new self and the old person, the more you will grow and establish your new self—the person God intends you to be.

Jesus gave each of us an unfathomable gift when he struck the spiritual match to fill our hearts and our lives completely, fully, unreservedly **if** we choose to let him.

Prayer: *Father, strike the match in my heart. Fill me with your light, and in the name of Jesus I put on the new self you made me to be.*

| **TIM STIFFLER**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **ROMANS 6:1-14***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



24 | New Life

Adelina was a mess. Her life was an uninterrupted stream of abuse and exploitation from every authority in her life, including her family. It was as if there was a little dark storm cloud that was continuously over her head. She had just been bailed out of jail for drunk driving when she came to see the pastor of a local church.

Adelina spoke of being a total failure in life. She was so ashamed. The pastor began encouraging her that God loved her. He shared the Gospel—that Jesus died to pay the penalty for her sins, that he was buried, and rose again from the dead. As he continued, Adelina interrupted him, saying, “Pastor, I’m afraid we are going to run out of time. I want the new life, the fresh start, the clean slate you’re talking about.” Adelina turned to Jesus (repented) and received the free gift of Salvation that day.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 the Apostle Paul gets to the heart of the matter, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”** Notice it says, if anyone is *in Christ*, he is a *new creation*. Everyone needs salvation. Everyone needs to be born again. Everyone needs a clean slate. Everyone needs this because everyone sins. This is true of people like Adelina to the person who has lived a very moral, clean life, according to the world’s standards. Please understand no one has ever sinned too much to be forgiven by Jesus. Please understand everyone needs forgiveness. No exceptions.

Have you received a new life through faith in Jesus Christ? If not, there is no acceptable excuse before God. If you have not or are not sure, you must repent—or turn around in your understanding of your sin and who Jesus is—and seek his forgiveness today.

If you have been born again (or saved or reconciled) then we are called to honor him with our lives. The basis for living a God-honoring life is love and gratitude toward God, who graciously made us a “*new creation*” in Jesus. When God looks at me, a reconciled sinner, he sees me through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is a rock-solid truth; the promise of “*...an inheritance that imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...*” 1 Peter 1:4.

Adelina still struggled with some with the scars of her past, but knowing these scars were a part of her past—not her present or future—enabled Adelina to continue in her victorious walk with Jesus.

Prayer: *Thank-you, Lord, for granting me forgiveness and new life. Grant me strength to serve you daily.*

| **TOM SPEICHER**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **1 PETER 1:3-9***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



25



Healing

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again! Ever felt like Humpty Dumpty and no one can put you back together again? In J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Return of the King" a mysterious cloaked figure slips into the House of Healing and proceeds to take over the care of a dying warrior from the head nurse. The head nurse is deeply suspicious but when the dying man revives she remembers the prophecy, "*when the true King returns he will be a healer.*" Jesus the true King is a healer and he alone is able to put us and our lives back together again.

We often say "Jesus saves" and one of the meanings of "saves" is "heals." You can't read much in the Gospels without Jesus healing someone of a disease, blindness, or demon. **Mark 1:40-41** says, "***And a man with leprosy came to Jesus, imploring him and kneeling down, and saying to him, 'if you are willing, you can make me clean.' Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out with his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed'***" (NASB). Jesus is "***moved with compassion***" meaning he felt emotionally charged seeing the leper. "***Moved with compassion***" means his gut got tight and upset as his heart ached for the leper. Jesus cares about you deeply. No one in their right mind wanted to touch this gross sick man, but Jesus touched him. Jesus declares, "I am willing..." Jesus by his nature is inclined to heal you and put you back together again.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

1 PETER 2:24

By his death and resurrection Jesus is able to bring us healing, freedom from sin, and new life. And one day when the King returns, *“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore...”* (Revelation 21:4).

The true King is a healer. Ask Jesus for healing—whether emotional, mental, or physical. It’s not putting God to the test by asking him to heal you but it’s expressing faith and trust in God. We pray in faith and love and leave the results to the Lord. We ask God for healing without making demands, we ask and then we trust him. Think about a baseball player. When he goes to the plate he won’t always get a hit or home run, but it’s also true he won’t ever get a hit if he doesn’t leave the dugout and go to the plate and take a swing. Walking with Jesus is going to the plate and taking a swing in faith. Ask great things of a great God. He loves you. Nothing is impossible with God.

Prayer: *Lord, I ask great things of you because you are a great God. Jesus, come with your healing power over my heart, my soul, my mind, and body.*

| **DAVE WINTERS**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **MARK 5:21-43***



26 | Endurance

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-10

If we're honest, endurance is one of those things we don't want to pray for. It's like patience. We've all heard the joke "watch out if you pray for patience...God will test you." I have trouble with that thinking because our God is kind. He does not punish us or bring things into our lives simply to make us miserable. He does, however, want us to grow and depend fully on him. Endurance, like patience, tends to grow best in the soil of hardship. Of trial. Of things not going the way, in our broken state, that we would choose. Endurance is a gift from the Lord that allows us to take one more step, continue trusting, and set our hope on things that will not disappoint.

The Apostle Paul had a lot of experience with endurance. He was given opportunity after opportunity to place his trust in the Lord even when it didn't make sense. Shipwrecked, beaten, abandoned, misunderstood, imprisoned, hungry, tired, and cold. (Those last

three alone would do me in!) Yet throughout Paul's ministry we see his focus is not on things of this world, good or bad, but on what is eternal and will last. His hope is fixed on the goodness of the Lord and he knows his circumstances are temporary in light of eternity.

Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**, *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."* Paul knew this world was not his home. He had his eyes on a future that could not be soiled or stained by sin, pain, or death. He acknowledged the hard things of life and rightly grieved. Yet he was carried by such endurance that he could hold up the bad against the good, and still see the goodness of the Lord.

In this world we will have trouble. That's a certainty (Jesus himself said it in **John 16:33**). But we can take heart because endurance is a gift from the Lord. We aren't left on our own to simply "figure things out". God alone can sustain us, giving us true lasting confidence that in him we can endure whatever comes our way.

Prayer: *Lord, give me your strength, your hope, your power to endure the hard things of this life. Fix my eyes on you and the hope that will not disappoint. Yes, life can be hard, but you are always good.*

| **HANNAH WEILAND**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-11***





Where, oh where, are you tonight?

Why did you leave me here all alone?

I searched the world over, And thought I'd found true love,

You met another, And, 'Poof' you was gone!

So went the gloom and doom song from the beloved, comical, country TV show, “Hee-Haw.” Both humorous and true the song resonated with so many people. Such is the experience of far too many people in search of a loving, lasting, secure relationship. In the summer of 1972, Gilbert O’Sullivan’s melancholy ballad, “Alone Again, Naturally” spent six weeks at the top of the charts. A signature lyric was, “*In my hour of need, I truly am indeed, alone again, naturally.*” It is very sad, but true, that a common heartache of humans is to feel unloved and all alone.

Yet the good news of Scripture is God is *always with us*. We were not created to be alone. The first time God said “*not good*” was because Adam was all alone! “***The Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone***” (Genesis 2:18). Many times in Scripture God promises his children he will never leave them. So, who are “*his children*”? Who is God the “*Father*” of? The answer is God is the Father of all human beings who have repented of sin, who’ve turned to Jesus from the pursuit of sin, and who have by faith received the good news about Jesus’s death for sin, burial, and resurrection from the dead. When one stands by faith on this truth about Jesus Christ, one becomes a child of God.

God will **never** leave his children alone. God will **never** forsake his children. If you are his child, he will never ever leave you. In **Matthew 28:20** Jesus promises, **“I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** In **Hebrews 13:5** he promises, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”** In **Psalm 73:23-24** he promises, **“Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You will guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.”**

If you are a believer in Jesus as your Savior, you need never to fear being alone. He promises. When you look back on your life and you thought you were all alone, Jesus was there. In this present moment you may feel alone, but you are not. If you anxiously look ahead to a future moment, know that Jesus will be there with you. Have a lonely ache in your heart? Be reminded of his promises. Be reminded that God the Holy Spirit dwells in you (**John 14:17**). Feeling too weak, too fearful, and inadequate to do what you feel led to do? **Isaiah 41:10** says, **“fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”** Be reminded of his nearness and indwelling. Take courage. You are **never** alone!

Prayer: *Lord, remind me daily of your constant presence. You will never leave me. Grant me faith to believe and courage to act, because you are near.*

| **TOM SPEICHER**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **DEUTERONOMY 31:1-8***



Respond

Take a moment to respond to how God is at work in your life.

You might write a prayer, jot some notes, or simply copy down all or part of the extra Scripture listed at the end of the devotional on the previous page.



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28 | Deliverance

One summer when in seminary I did a two-month mission in a Mexican and Puerto Rican area of northwest Chicago. The apartment I rented had three different locked doors to pass through before getting to my room. My days consisted of contacting and meeting men and sharing Christ or discipling them. I'd drive to various apartment complexes, go up several flights of stairs, walk down several dim and dirty hallways and knock on a door.

One time after hearing I'd be meeting with a rough hombre named Hector the office ladies insisted I call them afterwards to make sure I survived. I wrestled with a lot of fear leading up to and during that mission. I was reading Deuteronomy at the time and one day read **Deuteronomy 9:3**. The Lord impressed on me that this was my verse for that summer in Chicago. ***"Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God."*** All summer long God went before me. From the Lord we receive deliverance.

One of the great things about belonging to the Lord is he fights our battles, and sometimes we just need to be still and let him fight for us and deliver us. The Jews were hopelessly trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea. Moses declared to them, ***"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still"*** (Exodus 14:13-14, NIV).

When life is falling apart the last thing we think we need to do is be still. Yet it is a gift to consciously say, “*Lord, I give up, I’m going to stop fighting, and let you fight for me.*” The idea of laying down and letting God fight for us seems too good to be true, but it is. Deuteronomy 3:22 says, “***Do not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God Himself will fight for you.***”

In 2 Chronicles 32:7-8 King Hezekiah encourages the people, “***Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.***” We can be strong knowing it doesn’t matter who’s against us or what we are facing if the Lord our God is with us.

The Lord fights our battles for us for his own glory, not ours. Psalm 79:9 is a great prayer, “***Help us, God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name’s sake.***” Just like in salvation, you didn’t win your salvation—you couldn’t win it—Jesus won your salvation. By grace he fights for you, as a father for his son or daughter. So stop thinking of ways to fight your own battles and let God fight for you.

Prayer: *Father, fight my battles for me, for your name’s sake, so Jesus is glorified through me.*

| **DAVE WINTERS**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **PSALM 46***



Exit

Exit

29 | Resurrection

Can you think of any big hinge moments in your life? By “hinge moments” I mean those times where the direction of your life changed, the door swung a different direction, and the future was forever different. We all have them in our lives personally—some good, some bad. History itself has a number of major turning points, too. Events like 9/11 and Covid immediately come to mind. But the New Testament describes a moment that all of history hinges on.

The New Testament tells us that if this one thing didn’t happen—like really, truly, actually happen—we’re all a bunch of fools (and subject to Mr. T’s pity). But thankfully, Jesus’s resurrection from the dead did really, truly, actually happen—and it stands at the very center of human history. A man who was clearly dead and put in the ground rose from the grave.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:17-22

As you read Scripture and study the early church, the thing people hinge their faith on is not the cross but the resurrection. In fact, one of the earliest examples of a cross used in Christian art is from the

5th century, on the doors of Santa Sabina (built A.D. 430) in Rome, and it's tucked away in a corner almost out of sight!¹ The cross is important, don't get me wrong, but the cross doesn't matter unless the resurrection happens. It's the *resurrection* that proves Jesus's death on the cross in our place for our sins worked. It's the *resurrection* that validated everything Jesus preached before his death. It's the *resurrection* that proves that when we die, we won't stay dead (**John 11:25**).

The earliest Christians were focused not on Jesus's death but his *resurrected life*! We should be too. The resurrection is why the word often used for salvation in the New Testament is "life". "***I came that they might have life and have it abundantly***" (John 10:10). "***Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life***" (1 John 5:12). "***Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ***" (Ephesians 2:5).

Through the resurrection, God gives us life. Real life. Eternal life. Abundant life.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

ROMANS 8:11

Prayer: *Father, thanks for Jesus. Thank-you for his resurrection. Thank-you that the same power that raised him from the grave is at work in my own life. Help me remember it and experience it by your Spirit.*

| **JOSH WEILAND**

*For further reading & encouragement, see **ROMANS 8:1-11***



30 | Home

I used to lead a Bible Study in a coffee shop in Syracuse called Downtown Grounds. One of the old guys in that group, Gene, was in poor health. Basically blind, he had been on home dialysis for some time. We got a call from his wife, Sherry, that Gene had experienced a “brain bleed”. Though he was awake and conscious, after three weeks in the hospital and a dismal prognosis, he told his wife he wanted to go home, knowing he would have about a week before he died from kidney failure. Sherry asked if we could have our Bible study at her house so Gene could be there. Sherry brought Gene home Sunday, and we all showed up Monday.

Gene lay in a hospital bed in the living room, and although he wasn’t talking, he was waving to all of us as we came in. We were in 2nd Corinthians where it describes what our heavenly bodies are going to be like. About half-way through the study, Sherry realized Gene was not breathing. Sure enough, Gene had slipped from this life into the next while hearing what he was about to experience in Heaven himself. Gene’s passing from this life into eternity is an event I will always remember and cherish. It’s from the Lord that we receive the certainty of a true and eternal home.

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Jesus makes three reassuring promises in these verses:

First, God's house has many rooms. **"In my Father's house are many rooms."** God's house doesn't have limited capacity. He would tell us if there was 'no vacancy.'

Second, Jesus himself is going there to get it ready for us—**"I go and prepare a place for you"**—so it is going to be amazing. To quote Jack Black, **"He is going to blow our minds!"**

Third, Jesus promises to return for us one day, and take us to his Father's home, where we will live with him for eternity. **"I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."**

Heaven is real. If you belong to Jesus you know where you are going when you die. Because you are a Christian you don't have to fear death. You have a forever home with God so remember what Jesus said, **"Let not your hearts be troubled."** Believe Jesus is waiting to take us home. In Christ you have received a true and eternal home.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

Prayer: *Lord, come again and take me to yourself,
so I may be with you forever!*

| **TIM STIFFLER**

For further reading & encouragement, see **1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18**

Notes

RECEIVING & RESPONDING

30-day devotional | **VOLUME I**



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